



Ride a bicycle 200 miles through Death Valley with 17 hours to finish. That is the goal. Why would anyone want to attempt to ride a bike 200 miles through Death Valley in less than a day? Especially after reading a description of the course which states that the ride begins and ends in a town called Furnace Creek and the course consists of nearly 10,000 feet of climbing; including a 6.8 mile 2000 foot climb to Hell's Gate. I promise that if you take a few minutes to read this letter, you will understand why this ride is so important to me.

I was reading a recent issue of Kentuckiana HealthFitness when I came across an article titled "Races We Remember." I started to think about all the races I have participated in over the past 25 years. I have won quite a few races during my running career but my most memorable race was not a race that I won and it certainly wasn't one of my fastest races. My first Boston Marathon in 1999 was most memorable because of what it meant to me and to a 12-year-old boy.

The road to the 1999 Boston Marathon began back in November of 1997 when I received a brochure in the mail from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. I had been a competitive runner for many years dating back to high school track and cross-country. I even achieved a measure of success, having the opportunity to run for the ASICS shoe company in 1990 and 1991. However, when 1992 rolled around, I had lost my love for running. I felt as though I had accomplished everything I set out to do as a runner. So, I hung up my running shoes and moved on to other things. It wasn't until late 1997 that I realized there was still one running goal I had yet to achieve – running the Boston Marathon. I decided to start training for a marathon in order to qualify for the 1999 Boston Marathon.

Shortly after I began my training, I attended an informational meeting for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team in Training program. I went to the meeting not really knowing what to expect. After listening to several people speak about the program, I still wasn't completely sold. Then an 11-year-old boy, who was battling leukemia, got up in front of the room and talked about what it meant to him to have complete strangers run hundreds of miles to train for a marathon in order to help kids like him. The boy who spoke at that meeting was Matt Lewis. His words inspired me to sign up with Team in Training.

I soon discovered that Matt lived in my neighborhood and he was assigned as my Patient Hero. I didn't know Matt or his family prior to hearing him speak at the informational session but I signed up for the 1998 Rock 'n' Roll Marathon in San Diego. I was going to run this race in Matt's honor. I had no idea at the time just how much of an impact this young man would have on my life. Matt was like any other seven-year-old boy when he was diagnosed with CML (Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia) in April of 1994. CML rarely occurs in children (only 3% – 4% of childhood leukemias are CML). In 1994, the only consistently successful curative treatment for CML was high-dose chemotherapy and total-body radiation, followed by a bone marrow transplant. So Matt endured the chemotherapy and radiation. After that, he had a successful bone marrow transplant. Matt's younger brother Greg, 2-years-old at the time, was his marrow donor.

When I met Matt in January of 1998 he had been in remission for almost four years. He enjoyed playing hockey and little league baseball. He had even run a couple of 5K races. We hit it off right from the start. I was able to teach him a little about running when he joined me for some of my shorter training runs. I also learned a lot from Matt. He taught me a great deal about the true meaning of courage, strength, and compassion. These lessons will remain with me forever.

My training for the 1998 San Diego Marathon did not go as well as I had hoped. I battled with achilles tendonitis during the final two months and I missed a few long training runs because of it. When I arrived in San Diego the weekend of the marathon, it was hotter and more humid than I had expected. The San Diego Rock 'n' Roll Marathon did not turn out quite like I had planned. Unfortunately, many of the race volunteers did not show up to man the water stations so they ran out of drinking water on the course. In the later stages of the race, I became dehydrated and my legs began to cramp. Every step I took was more painful than the last. I was in dire need of some encouragement. Then, I thought about a poster Matt had made for my trip. It said: "I will be with you every step of the way." I began to think about everything Matt had experienced in his short life. My pain and suffering were



February 1998: Running with Matt

immediately put into perspective. Matt was with me...just like on our weekend training runs...he was right beside me. I realized that while I was slowing down, I still had to reach my goal of qualifying for Boston, for Matt as much as myself. I finished the race exhausted and dehydrated in 3 hours and 6 minutes. That finish was good enough to qualify me for the 1999 Boston Marathon, with a little over 3 minutes to spare.

I had the official marathon finisher's medal engraved with both of our names on it. I was looking forward to my trip back to Pittsburgh. I couldn't wait to give the medal to Matt since he had been my inspiration to qualify for Boston. When I arrived at Matt's house to tell him about the race and give him the medal, my excitement quickly vanished. While I was in San Diego, Matt had gone to Children's Hospital for a routine check-up, only to find out that after nearly four years in remission, his leukemia was back. He had suffered a relapse. While I had conditioned my body to try to reach peak physical condition, Matt's body had been under attack by this horrible disease. I felt helpless and angry. I was devastated and yet I couldn't begin to imagine what Matt and his family must have been feeling. I decided to do the only thing that I could – I would run the Boston Marathon for Matt.



**My Most Memorable Race: The 1999 Boston Marathon**

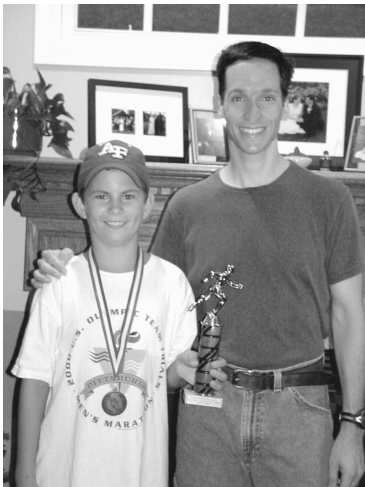
My 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday fell on the same day as the 1999 Boston Marathon. I can still remember standing at the starting line with 12,000 of the world's best marathoners, thinking how lucky I was to be there. The starter's gun fired and we were off and running in the 103<sup>rd</sup> Boston Marathon. The crowd support was amazing. The streets were lined with more than 1.5 million spectators. There wasn't an open spot along either side of the road for the entire 26.2-miles. This race was even more special because Matt and his family had traveled to Boston to share the experience with me. I knew the Lewis family would be with my family at the 17-mile mark. As I approached that point in the race, I didn't think I would ever find Matt among the mass of people lining the street. Suddenly, up ahead a boy ran out of the crowd and onto the course. Could it be...it was...Matt was the first person to spot me and he wanted to let me know that I had his

support. He extended his hand for a high-five and then ran with me for about 50 yards back to where our families were standing. At that moment, I understood the true meaning of the marathon and Team in Training. This wasn't just a race. It was a celebration of life and a celebration of hope...the hope that we will find a cure for leukemia so that Matt and the thousands of other kids like him will be able to live long healthy lives. The smile on Matt's face as he ran beside me provided all the strength I would need to make it to the finish line. I completed the Boston Marathon in 2 hours and 52 minutes. My finishing time placed me in the top 3 ½ percent overall. The best part of the Boston Marathon, however, was running for Matt and with Matt and raising over \$8600 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society...bringing my two race total to over \$16,000. I couldn't have asked for a better birthday gift.

Not long after the marathon I received some incredible news...Matt was back in remission! He has proven to me, many times over, that the human spirit is capable of miracles. Largely because of Matt, I have become even more involved with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. I was honored to be nominated to the Board of Trustees for the Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia Chapter in 1999. I also helped to create the Team in Training bicycling program for this chapter. I served as the head cycling coach from 1999 - 2002 and I'm proud to say that during that time my cycling teams raised more than \$500,000 for leukemia and lymphoma research and patient aid.

After running the Boston Marathon in 1999 and 2000, I decided to seek out a new challenge. I wanted to explore the world of ultramarathons. The race that I chose was a 52.4-mile race (a double marathon) in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. As if running 52.4-miles was not difficult enough, I decided to attempt this distance on trails at 9000 feet altitude. I don't think I had ever been so nervous before a race. Everything about it was new to me...the distance, the terrain, and the altitude. I had also learned at the event registration that I was the only rookie ultramarathoner participating in the race and a majority of the other participants lived and trained at high altitude. It didn't take long for me to realize that I was in for a challenging day. The course was a true wilderness trail; complete with log piles and other obstacles to negotiate. In addition, there was a swampy area, so my feet were wet from mile 5 to the finish. Needless to say, I developed some pretty severe blisters along the way. The hills were also more difficult than I had expected. There was one hill, at the 8-mile mark, that was extremely punishing. Since I had to run 4 laps on a 13.1-mile loop, I encountered this grueling hill at miles 8, 21, 34 and 47. To describe the hill as steep would be an understatement and, to make matters worse, it was almost a mile long.





The first three laps (39 miles) weren't too bad. However, heading into the final lap, I knew I was going to have to dig deep to get to the finish line. Despite being the only rookie in the race and having done very little altitude training, I had one big advantage over my competitors; I had Matt Lewis. When the pain in my legs became almost unbearable, I thought about all the pain Matt had endured. His incredible determination was proof to me that anything was possible. Now it was my turn to return the favor. I focused every ounce of energy I had into putting one foot in front of the other. As the final miles passed under my feet, I also thought about the children I had met who had lost their battles with cancer. This 52.4-mile journey was for them too. The finish line was now in sight. I made it and, to top it all off, I finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall.

It's hard to believe that 9 years have gone by since I first met Matt Lewis. It seems like just yesterday when I attended the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team in Training meeting in early 1998. The life lessons I have learned from him and his family have been immeasurable. They have opened their lives to me and allowed me to share in both their celebrations and their most vulnerable moments. Since running in the 1998 San Diego Rock 'n' Roll Marathon, I have raised more than \$59,800 for cancer research and patient aid. I couldn't have done any of this without the generosity of family, friends, co-workers and even complete strangers. The money we raised has undoubtedly helped researchers get closer to a cure but we still have miles to go.

A lot has happened in the last few years. We moved from Pittsburgh to Cleveland in the summer of 2003 and have ultimately settled in Louisville, Kentucky. I remember stopping by Matt's house when we learned that we would be moving to Cleveland...it was one of the toughest days of my life. I made a promise to Matt and his family that day...that we would stay in touch and I would never give up my efforts to help researchers find a cure for cancer! We have been back to Pittsburgh to visit with the Lewis family on several occasions; including a visit in the summer of 2005 to celebrate Matt's High School Graduation. I told Matt that every milestone he achieves in his life will always be celebrated by our family too. I mentioned above that we still have miles to go in the search to find a cure for cancer. I intend to keep the promise that I made to Matt and his family. In the past couple years I have lost a good friend to lymphoma and a cousin to breast cancer. At times it seems like we haven't made any progress in the battle against cancer. Then, I think of Matt and realize he is a living example of the progress we have made. He continues to inspire me every day.

Last summer a good friend of mine, Crickett Julius, was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was one of the most optimistic people I had ever met in my life. Lance Armstrong once said that it's a fact that children with cancer have higher cure rates than adults with cancer. He believed that this was due to their natural, unthinking bravery. Although Crickett was not a child, she certainly possessed the optimism and unthinking bravery of a child. She took this new challenge head-on with the strength and courage of a prize fighter.

Some people might say that Crickett lost her battle with cancer last October. I, on the other hand, say that she finished her race. Along the way, she inspired hundreds of people with her optimism, her zest for life and her bravery. I would like Crickett to know how much she inspired me so I have decided to do something a little over the top this year. I know Crickett would expect nothing less. In October I will be participating in the Death Valley Double Century – a 200 mile bike ride that must be completed in less than 17 hours. I will be competing in this event in honor of Matt and in memory of Crickett, my friend Mark and my cousin Karen. Although a one day 200 mile bike ride through Death Valley might seem challenging, it pales in comparison to the challenges cancer patients face every day. I will be doing this event for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. It's funny how I used to think that competing in races was only about winning and losing. Now, I realize that competing in these endurance events can mean a whole lot more. I look forward to the day when people will no longer have to fear hearing the words ***“you have cancer.”*** You can join me in my fight against cancer by sponsoring me through a donation to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society or The Lance Armstrong Foundation. If you would like to sponsor me, please send a check made payable to the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society or the Lance Armstrong Foundation and mail them to:



[Tim Hamburger](#)  
4811 Stanley Farm Ct  
LaGrange, KY 40031

## LaGrange's Hamburger to Ride Across Death Valley for Charity

**Hamburger rides in memory of his lost loved ones and friends**

**By Helen E. McKinney**  
Contributing Writer

LaGrange, resident Tim Hamburger is not afraid to face difficult obstacles. He is undertaking a challenging one day, 200 mile bicycle ride through Death Valley in the hope of finding a cure for cancer.

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, Hamburger will ride through the border of California and Nevada to raise money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. He will traverse a valley where the temperature soars to 130 degrees in the summer and below freezing at night.

The ride will begin and end in a town called Furnace Creek and the course consists of nearly 10,000 feet of climbing. Death Valley is 282 feet below sea level and is certainly not the most desirable course for cyclists.

Hamburger, 41 has been participating in fundraisers for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society since 1998. So far, this Columbus, Ohio native has managed to raise \$66,000.

Although the ride through Death Valley "might seem challenging, it pales in comparison to the challenges cancer patients face every day," said Hamburger. This ride is dedicated to the memory of his good friend Crickett Julius and his cousin Karen, both who died from breast cancer.

The ride in Death Valley has been in existence for several years. Hamburger chose this particular event because it will take place almost one year to the day that his friend Crickett died. He wants to suffer through the extreme conditions "to serve as a reminder of the pain that his friend and cousin endured and to remember that there are many other cancer patients still suffering today."

Hamburger had been a competitive runner for many years before taking up bicycling and even had the opportunity to run for the

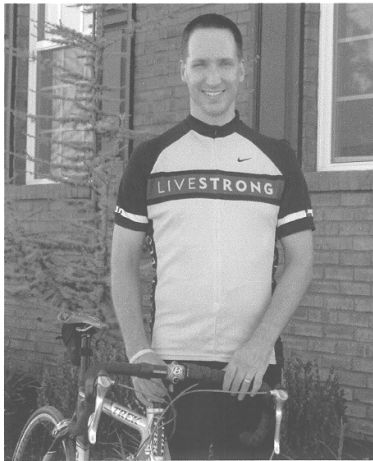


Photo provided

**Tim Hamburger has raised \$66,000 for charity.**

ASICS shoe company in 1990 and 1991. "I was burnt out on running," said Hamburger. However, he decided to give it one more shot and in late 1997 he began training for the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon in San Diego to qualify for the 1999 Boston Marathon.

That same year he received a brochure in the mail from the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and he attended an informational meeting for the society's Team in Training program. Attending the same meeting was 11-year-old Matt Lewis who stood up in front of a room full of people and "talked about what it meant to him to have complete strangers run hundreds of miles to train for a marathon to help kids like him. Matt ultimately sold me on the program."

After signing up for the Team in Training program, Hamburger was then assigned to a local Patient Hero. In a twist of fate, the Patient Hero turned out to be Matt. Another amazing fact was that Matt lived in the same Pittsburgh neighborhood as Hamburger.

Matt had been diagnosed with leukemia when he was 7 years old. His younger brother Greg, who was only two years old at the time, was Matt's marrow donor.

Matt would endure doses of radiation and chemotherapy before his transplant.

"I had no idea at the time just how much of an impact this young man would have on my life," said Hamburger. He decided to give the marathon his best shot in honor of Matt. He ran the San Diego Marathon in extremely hot conditions in 3 hours and 6 minutes, which qualified him for the Boston Marathon.

He decided to get the official finisher's medal engraved with both his and Matt's name on the back. When Hamburger took the medal home to give it to Matt and to tell him he had qualified for the 103<sup>rd</sup> Boston Marathon, he was met with a shock. He learned that Matt's leukemia had returned.

Matt began the hardest part of his battle all over again so Hamburger decided to run the Boston Marathon in honor of Matt. When he ran the 1999 Boston Marathon, the streets were lined with more than 1.5 million spectators. He remembers "standing at the starting line with 12,000 of the world's best marathoners, thinking how lucky I was to be there."

Also there that day was Matt and his family, who traveled to Boston to share in the experience. Matt even broke through the crowd at the 17 mile mark and ran about 50 yards with Hamburger who completed the marathon in 2 hours and 52 minutes, placing him in the top 3 % overall.

Because of Matt, who is now a healthy 20 year old college junior, Hamburger has become very involved with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. He helped create the Team in Training cycling program for the Western Pennsylvania and West Virginia Chapter in 1999 and served as the head cycling coach until 2003. During his 3 ½ years as the coach for this program, Hamburger's cycling teams raised more than \$500,000 for patient aid and Leukemia and Lymphoma research.

■ To sponsor Tim Hamburger on his Death Valley ride, mail checks for either the *Leukemia and Lymphoma Society* or the *Lance Armstrong Foundation* to: **Tim Hamburger, 4811 Stanley Farm Ct., LaGrange, KY 40031.**

October 30, 2007

Hello Chris,

I really enjoyed the Death Valley Double Century. You sure know how to put on a great event! I returned to my home in Louisville yesterday afternoon and received several more donations while I was away in Death Valley. I sent out 500+ reminder letters to friends, family and co-workers about 7 - 10 days before the ride so I still expect to receive quite a few more donations. I have received \$2545 for the Lance Armstrong Foundation and \$5275 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society for a grand total of \$7820. I am quite confident I will raise at least \$10,000 because of the Death Valley Double Century once all the donations have arrived and I might even hit the \$15,000 mark!

When I started fundraising for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society back in 1998, I never imagined that I would raise \$67,630 for cancer research and patient aid. The generosity of my donors never ceases to amaze me.

I appreciate you featuring my fundraiser in your email newsletter and ride website. I will send a link to your email newsletter to my donors. Who knows, maybe it will inspire a few more people to travel to Death Valley for the ride next year. I have already spoken to a few of my cycling buddies about the Furnace Creek 508. Plus, after reading the book "To the Edge," I have added the Badwater Ultramarathon to my list of races to complete.

Thanks again for everything Chris!

Livestrong!

Tim Hamburger

PS If anyone would like to support me in my efforts to raise funds for cancer research, they can send a check made payable to either the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society or the Lance Armstrong Foundation to:

Tim Hamburger  
4811 Stanley Farm Ct.  
LaGrange, KY 40031

