

# Red Ribbon Ride Faced the Challenge

## Local Attorney has 'An Experience of a Lifetime'

By Michael James

Sunday, April 1 over three hundred bicyclists rolled into Young Circle Park in Hollywood. It was the end of a three-day trek across Florida to raise money for several AIDS organizations.

Local attorney Larry Flaster participated in the ride. He said, "It's one of the best experiences of my life. It was incredible."

The Walgreens Ride 2001 was not a race, but a ride that brought together people of all ages, from all walks of life, from all around the country. Whether they went to ride, be part of the Crew, or volunteer, they all participated in the Ride for their own reason. Flaster stated, "Each day everybody did the best they could to the best of their

individual ability."

There are several reasons Flaster became involved in the event. He said, "I have a lot of gay friends and saw how HIV has ravaged the gay community through the years and thought it was a worthwhile charity. I found that most of the money would end up in the right hands."

According to the Center for Disease Control, Florida has the country's third largest population of HIV-related cases. The numbers continue to grow in an indiscriminate fashion.

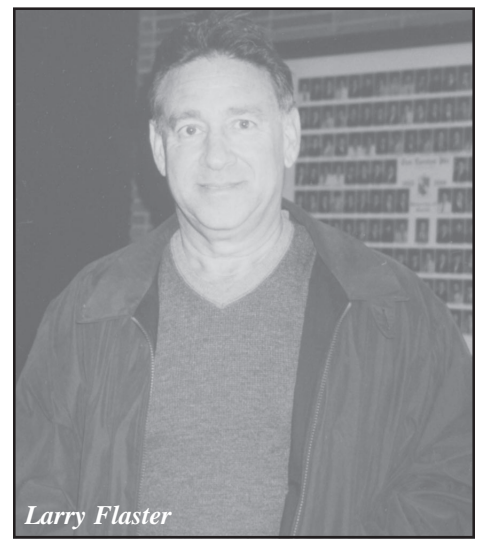
This was the fourth annual ride and raised approximately \$500,000 that will benefit six Florida AIDS organizations, including CenterOne in Fort Lauderdale,

Action for AIDS in Miami and Care Resource in Miami.

He went on to explain, "I was turning 50 [his birthday was in March] and I've gotten myself in pretty good shape to get ready for the ride. This was a personal challenge that I wanted to meet, something that I wanted accomplish." The first day of the race was also his wedding anniversary.

The journey took place during less than desirable weather conditions, including 20mph winds, intense heat, and heavy rain. Although the ride was intended to begin in Orlando, the riders had to be transported to Melbourne due to the weather.

At the conclusion of the ride in



Larry Flaster

Hollywood, the riders gathered two miles from Young Circle and waited for the rest to arrive. Federal Highway and Sheridan were closed off by the police as the crowd of family-members, friends, and onlookers gathered. The mass of bicyclists then proceeded to the circle, lead by one rider who had made the entire journey with a large pride flag mounted to his bike.

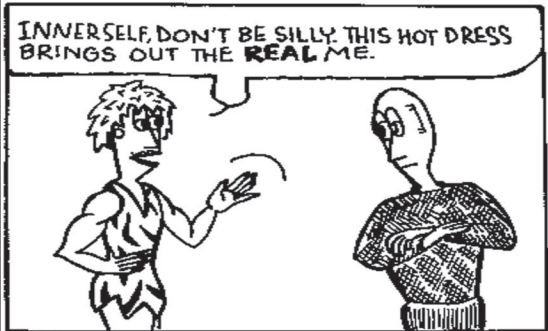
"It wasn't just the riders," Flaster said, "it was also the support staff, those people were just as dedicated the riders. Those people should be patted on the back as much as the riders, if not more."

Flaster's experience was so fulfilling that he has already signed up for next year's ride.

Even with all of the sense of accomplishment, some of the riders were slightly disappointed by the low turnout of supporters when they traveled down Las Olas Blvd in Fort Lauderdale.

Flaster concluded by stating, "With the help of *The Express* and people throughout the community, I was able to raise about \$8,000 for a good cause."

### Urban Drag Queen



By Billy Rayon

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