

Pelhamite Plans to Bike Cross Country to Raise Awareness for Cycling Safety, Make Movie

By Amanda Kaufmann

On the morning of June 29, 2006, Pelham resident Pearson Constantino was having his regular morning bike ride when he was struck by an SUV on Central Avenue in Scarsdale. The driver didn't stop and Mr. Constantino was left unconscious under a parked vehicle with a broken back and

hip. He spent the next nine days in repeated surgeries to set his leg with a rod and to reconstruct his L2 vertebrae. He has been in physical therapy ever since and still experiences daily migraines, nausea and fatigue.

But he has also been training. Contrary to what most people would think he would do, Mr. Constantino has be-

come more determined than ever to get back on his bike. His goals are to ride 40 miles a clip and 100 miles a day. "In training, I've climbed mountains I couldn't have done before," he said in an interview. "I feel fresh and different about being on a bike. It's taken on a new identity."

Mr. Constantino's ultimate goal, though, is a cross country trip with his brother, Peter, from Oregon to Massachusetts in order to raise awareness for bicycle safety. While traveling, Mr. Constantino plans to stop in various towns and talk to schools, local ride clubs, and citizens about road safety and the importance of drivers to be aware of cyclists. He will also try to encourage more people to ride bikes.

The trip, which will begin this coming Aug. 12 on Mr. Constantino's 30th birthday, will be filmed and turned into a documentary entitled *The Long Bike Back*. The cyclists will be followed by a small crew of two cameramen, one sound man, and the driver as well as

Mr. Constantino's wife, Julia Wrona, a filmmaker and the documentary's director. Mr. Constantino has been fundraising for the project for the past year and the film has been given 501c3 non-profit status through the Film Forum in New York City. He has additionally reached out to the state and federal Departments of Transportation.

Eventually he'd like to use the film to lobby Congress, saying that these accidents happen more often than people realize and citing that in the same month that he was hit, three cyclists were hit by cars on Houston Street in the city. "I know it's bold for me to say, but I hope people will be inspired and encouraged to think about cyclists," he said.

To make a tax-deductible contribution to the film, send a check payable to "The Moving Image" to Julia Wrona, 125 Fifth Avenue, Pelham, NY 10803 or to donate using a credit card, visit www.filmforum.org/sponsorship.



Pearson Constantino (left) and his brother, Pete (right)