



The Long Reach Long Riders fundraise to help industry colleagues in need through Behind the Scenes and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

# LRLR: Why I ride

BY BILL SAPSIS

100% of all donations support Behind the Scenes and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS

THE FIRST LONG REACH LONG RIDER cross-country motorcycle ride took place in 2004. At the time, Greg Williams and I were looking for an inexpensive way to put a booth together for the USITT conference in Long Beach, CA. The bikes were our idea. The charity part came from a suggestion made by Eric McAfee. The rest, as they say, is history. It was only supposed to be a one-time event. That part, fortunately, didn't work out so well. The 2018 ride this summer will be our 15th.

We ride in a different part of the country each year. The last two rides saw the LRLR in Southern California and New Mexico. After a 10-year hiatus, we'll be back in New England this summer. The 2018 ride, appropriately dubbed the "Gap and Notch Ride," will have the group (horde?) cruising for seven days through the mountains, valleys, and farmland of New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. The route will have something for everyone and all should have a good time. While a

good time is an excellent reason to ride, it's certainly not the only reason. The ride is, first and foremost, a way to raise money and awareness for Behind the Scenes and Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

You can read about the two charities on their websites [www.btshelp.org/lrlr](http://www.btshelp.org/lrlr) and [estalink.us/broadwaycareslrlr](http://estalink.us/broadwaycareslrlr) and I urge you to do that when you get a chance. I thought this article could take a different track and give some of the riders an opportunity to tell us why they participate in this ride.

From founding member, **Greg Williams**, PSAV:

"The network of people we've helped to create outside of, but still attached to, the ride is by far the most important thing to me personally, and the greatest source of pride I feel about the ride. The sheer number of people we've spoken with, shared a meal with, or even just handed a kazoo to as we talked up Behind the Scenes, is astonishing. (To date the LRLR has given away over 22,000 kazoos.) We've spawned



Alice Neff and Greg Williams

two other charitable endeavors. Both Dana Taylor's Short Reach Short Riders and David and Brenda Edelstein's First Night Riders in the UK are direct offshoots of the LRLR. If you toss a pebble into a large pond, the ripples will keep expanding. Toss enough pebbles in sequence, the ripples become waves and begin to sustain themselves. We are the LRLR—tossing pebbles into the pond since 2004, helping create the sustainable wave of giving."





**Eddie Raymond**

**Eddie Raymond**, IATSE Local 16, writes: “My wife, Diana, and I have been involved with the Long Reach Long Riders since 2010. We have been supporters of Behind the Scenes since its inception, and joining up with the Long Reach Long Riders has become a great way to support that organization. The riders are exceptional people both on and off the road. They are generous, humorous, fun-loving, and caring people. We’ve had the opportunity to explore the US and parts of Canada that we never would have seen were it not for the LRLR. They rekindled my joy of motorcycle riding that had laid dormant for a very long time. Having fun while raising funds and awareness of a great charity has been such a pleasure. Out of the Wings and Into the Wind.”



**Mark and Alison Heiser**

**Mark Heiser**, Denver Arts & Venues, shared:

“I’m an avid rider. A 1,500+ mile getaway is pure joy for my wife Alison and me. We could do a long ride every summer and be entirely content. But there is a part of us that recognizes how very lucky we are. Lucky to have good health. Lucky to be married to a wonderful woman. Lucky to be alive. And so, the head in the helmet thinks about those who are not as lucky. As a board member of Behind the Scenes, I understand clearly what this organization means to those in need. Moreover as Treasurer I understand the challenge of raising money to balance the budget to meet that need. This is why I’m a Long Reach Long Rider. It’s a nice thing to be on the bike—lucky. It’s nicer still to know that you’re giving back to members of the industry that may not be as lucky.”



**Kacey and Moe Conn**

**Moe Conn**, CCBC, expressed: “I joined the Long Reach Long Riders for the one time ride from Boone, NC to Long Beach, CA. That ride became an annual event and one that would become dear to my heart. My wife, Kacey and I believe in doing something outside of ourselves and helping others in need—with the LRLR this is an awesome opportunity. We have made friends, seen countryside, and explored locations we never thought we would do and, most importantly,

helped support our colleagues in need every time we ride.”



**Jim Niesel**

**Jim Niesel**, Theatre Projects Consultants, offered:

“For me, it’s the chance to combine something I love, motorcycling, with the opportunity to give back to the amazing folks that use the buildings I have helped design as a theatre consultant. I feel lucky to be associated with a great group of guys and gals who love to ride motorcycles and have made it their mission to do something for our community of entertainment professionals.”

From the author, **Bill Sapsis**, Sapsis Rigging Inc.:

Me? At this point it would be easy to simply agree with the others and that would



**Bill Sapsis**

be true. But I also ride to be an example. I'm not going to be able to ride forever (although, I'll try) and I'd like others to experience what it feels like to do the organizing and fundraising that is needed to make the LRLR a success. I want people to know what it's like to speak with someone helped by one of the charities. I'd like people to understand how a grant helped the recipient get back on their feet or in some way changed their future for the better. I agree with Mark, I'm very lucky. I want other lucky ones to know there's a way to share that luck with those in need. I'm hoping they will follow in my tracks.

At the end of the day it's about raising money and awareness to help our colleagues and co-workers see their way through a crisis and come out the better for it on the other side. If I get to have a wonderful time riding with terrific people on great bike roads at the same time? Yeah, I can do that. ■



**Bill Sapsis** has been leading the charge at Sapsis Rigging, Inc. since 1981. He is the chair of ESTA's TSP Rigging Working Group, a member of the ETCP Council, and Chair of the Subject Matter Expert committee for ETCP Certification. Bill has produced three successful North American Theatre Engineering and Architecture Conferences. He is the founding member of the Long Reach Long Riders and was named the recipient of the Eva Swan Award in 2010, ESTA's highest honor.

## How you can contribute

You don't need to be a motorcycle rider to support the Long Reach Long Riders' "2018 The Gap and Notch Tour: A Ramble through New England," June 23 – 30. All riders and crew pay 100% of their expenses—your full contribution goes to the charity you select. Your support will make a difference to a colleague in need. Please support the rider(s) and the charity of your choice to aid entertainment technology industry professionals who are seriously ill or injured.

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Thank you!