



Red Rider Spotlight

Earle Richards - Half a Century with Type 1

It's taken more than tenacity for Earle Richards to reach the 50-year mark for living with Type 1 Diabetes – it's taken thousands of syringes and vials of insulin, tens of thousands of lancets, five insulin pumps, the support of family, daily exercise, and an infinite amount of vigilance. Earle, who will be 83 when he rides in the 2015 Tour de Cure at Lake Nona, recalls the “bad old days” of diabetes management, when he had just one glass syringe with a needle he sharpened when it got dull, and when the only way to learn his glucose level was to go to the doctor for a blood draw. “They'd put it in a centrifuge, and look at it under a microscope, then came back and told you what it was. There was no A1C, and there was no home testing.”

Once at an office visit, he says, the doctor told him there was a new home testing machine. Earle bought one and started testing his blood four times a day, before each meal and bedtime. “As time went by, though, I found that three hours after meals gave me a more accurate picture,” he explains. So he started testing that way, then increased to 8 times each day.

The next big thing was the pump. “Nuthin' like this!” they told me,” he laughs. “You're almost cured!” Earle's on his fifth insulin pump now, and says they keep getting better. “The first one, they made me sign a contract that I'd check my blood sugar four times a day. I was already checking 8 times a day. The pump made all the difference.”

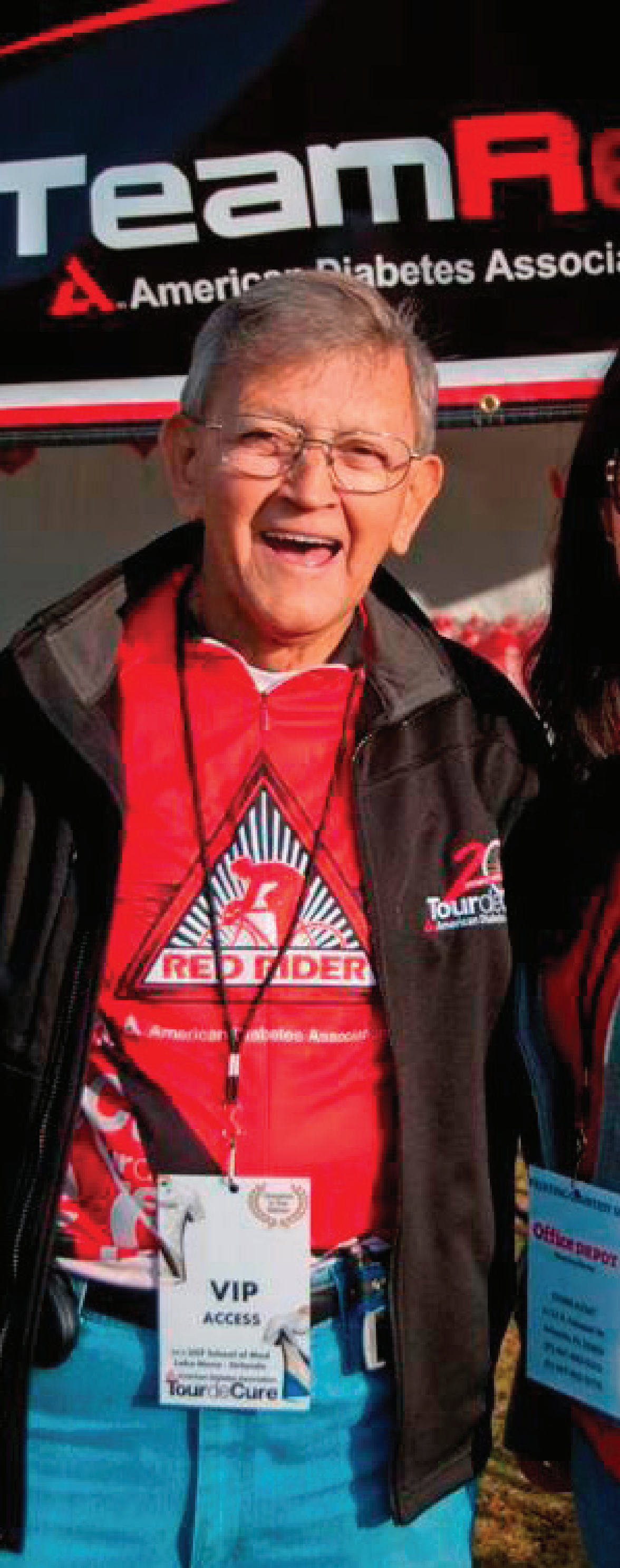
He also had a continuous glucose meter for a while, but quit that “because it's pretty expensive. You have to replace the transmitter every six months, which is more than \$400 out of pocket.” So he's back to testing 8 times a day, and adjusting his pump as necessary.

Earle also exercises regularly. In fact, when asked to give advice to those newly diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, he says, “Exercise, go on the pump, check your blood sugar, and watch your diet.”

Earle will ride 25 miles in the March 15 Tour de Cure, which will be a victory not only over diabetes, but over serious injuries from a bad fall on June 15. He had a compound fracture of the bone above his elbow, and broke his pelvis in 3 places while in Nebraska. He had two surgeries on the shattered elbow – one to clean it up, and one to repair it with two plates and fifteen screws. Even the trip back to Florida was a challenge. He couldn't put any weight on his right leg because of his pelvic injury, and couldn't sit in a car. The family van, a common sight at ADA events, broke down and couldn't be repaired. His wife and daughter rented another van, slid him into the back of it on an air mattress, and drove him 1400 miles to a Kissimmee Rehab Center. Slowly, physical therapists got him up and walking, and then started working on regaining movement in his arm. “It's very close to 100% now,” Earle says.

Earle has participated in every Tour de Cure in Central Florida. “I volunteered for the first one, and rode in the second one,” he says. And he's ridden every year since, inspiring riders much younger to keep pedaling. “My distance has shortened, and my time has lengthened,” he laughs. Earle has been riding his recumbent trike with his younger daughter to get back in shape for the Tour, and will be proud to don his Red Rider jersey on March 15. He's sure to inspire not only his fellow Team Red members, but every one of the cyclists riding to Stop Diabetes.

Story by – Heather Nagy, ADA Volunteer



To remind us of what we do, we want to share the story of one of our Red Riders.

Today we celebrate Earle E. Richards. Earle lived with Type 1 diabetes for over 50 years but never let it define him. He always proclaimed he wanted to live to 100, just like his mother. In an effort to stay in shape, Earle became an avid cyclist. To motivate others with diabetes to do the same, Earle became the Team Red Captain for both Step Out and Tour de Cure in Central Florida while also serving on each event's planning committee for many years. Unfortunately, Earle passed away on July 4th, 2016, but he has left a legacy to never let diabetes hold you back and to pursue every single one of your passions.

In honor of Earle, at this Tour de Cure we will be presenting the inaugural Earle E. Richards Red Rider Award, given to a participant that goes above and beyond to manage their diabetes and Champion our Mission to improve the lives of those living with diabetes.

Earle is one of the millions of reasons we ride. Why do you ride?