Pat and Bob Gillham

5030 Bentgrass Circle

Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

September 12, 2020Two people sitting on a bench posing for the camera

Description automatically generated

Wow, what an understatement to say that things are different this year! Because of the corona virus pandemic, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) has not been able to have any Bike MS events. Since Bike MS is the A group of people posing for the camera

Description automatically generatedSociety’s major fundraiser throughout the U.S. each year, it has taken a major financial hit, and it is responding to the prospect of dramatically reduced funding for vitally important patient services and medical research programs. I have included a separate pamphlet from NMSS that explains how it has been adapting to the challenges of the pandemic.

So, something new for us: a virtual ride. Instead of our traditional 2-day Bike MS to Daytona Beach and back, there will be a one-day event on October 17 that involves the participation of multiple chapters riding “together” linked by the magic of the Internet. Being old school, I will continue to ride the usual 150 miles over 2 days, likely a combination of riding in our neighborhood and, if bad weather, riding indoors on my bike trainer (while watching reruns of the Tour de France as motivation). Pat, Michelle, and Netta will participate to take care of my rest stops, the hospitality tent, our Saturday night dinner, etc. The only consolation I anticipate is to sleep a little longer and hit the road later than the typical 7 AM start.

Pat and I appreciate the long-time loyalty of our family and friends. We pray that you all have managed this time while realizing the corona virus may have impacted some of you more than others. Clearly, many non-profit groups, especially smaller local groups, has been dealt a staggering blow by the pandemic. Many fine organizations need help. We encourage you to be generous wherever the need, and if you judge that includes the NMSS, we will be forever grateful.

A pile of hay

Description automatically generatedTwo people standing in a room

Description automatically generatedOn the home front, Pat is stable with her MS. As mentioned in letters from recent years, her MS, initially diagnosed in 1977, was followed by many years on a rocky road. It seems “status quo” in recent years. She continues to benefit from theA person sitting on a bench posing for the camera

Description automatically generated excellent care she receives from Michelle, Netta, the Mayo Clinic and the VA. Durable medical equipment: power and manual wheelchairs, standing frame, pool lift, etc., allow her to have an active life. Her vision should improve with future cataract surgery and that likely will result in an uptick of QVC shopping. We celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary in June, surrounded by all our family. At least we think it was them because everyone was wearing a mask and keeping away from us. Self-quarantine has been a fairly benign experience for us in coastal Florida. Pat has enjoyed the yard and pool, and in my case, biking and woodworking fit all the criteria for social distancing.

Photos clockwise from top Right: 1. Pat with Michelle and Netta. 2. Trib with Pat and Bob. Trib took all the pictures for our anniversary weekend. 3. Our family: We are hiding in the front row with Everett, Beth, Debbie, Sarah, and William. Behind us Netta, Chris, James, Matthew and Michael. (Michelle was in Jamaica) 4. Our only visitors this spring: a family of Carolina wrens took up residence in a wreath on our front door. 5. June 27, 1970, USAF Academy.

The Society has updated its donation platform for this year’s multi-chapter virtual ride. There are two main ways to support us this year: as always, you can mail a check to us, made out to National Multiple Sclerosis Society or NMSS. Even easier, assuming you have keen eyesight and good typing skills, is to find me on the web at <https://mssociety.donordrive.com/participant/RobertGillham>. At the bottom of the screen is the option to donate by credit card.