

Landis/Kimmage

Paul Kimmage interviewed Floyd Landis a few days before Thanksgiving of '10. Their 7 hour conversation was distilled into Kimmage's Sunday Times article published yesterday, meant for a general audience. Kimmage, however, felt that Landis' detailed views on cycling needed to be aired, so he offered us the transcript of their interview. Naturally we accepted. The transcript is presented here in the form Kimmage intended, with no edits from us. We'd like to thank Kimmage and Landis for speaking freely, and note that the opinions within are strictly theirs.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO FLOYD.

An interview with Floyd Landis by Paul Kimmage.

Last May, a couple of days after the first scraps of his doping confession made headlines around the world, I sent an email to Floyd Landis reminding him of some notes I had written on July 13, 2006...

We drove on to the summit finish at Val D'Aran. I watched from my usual position in the press pen as three riders – Denis Menchov, Levi Leipheimer and Floyd Landis – broke clear and sprinted across the line. One of the great joys of covering the Tour is access to the riders and I was so close to Landis, the new race leader, that I could almost touch him. A helper handed him a bottle of water; he pulled off the top, took a swig and poured the rest over his head. He removed his jersey and towelled his sweat-covered chest; every fibre of his body was twitching. His American coach embraced him with tears in his eyes. Five television cameras and at least a hundred hacks were wrestling for a comment before he was taken away to the podium. I was more interested in how he looked than anything he had to say; I scanned his arms and legs and the crack of his ass; I was looking for needle pricks and bruising, the telltale signs of a guy who knows the game. I reached for my pen and scribbled the following note in my pad: 'I would kill to interview Floyd Landis. He is one of the toughest athletes in sport and his background is fascinating. I want to tell the world your story, Floyd. But how can I be sure that what I am seeing is real? How can I be sure that I won't be betrayed?'

A few hours later he sent a reply...

Well, I betrayed a lot of people for reasons that nobody will be able to put into words. I hope some good comes out of my attempt to clear my conscience but even if it never does, I love my parents too much to continue to lie to them. And I could never tell them the truth and ask them to keep the lie to themselves. Hopefully we'll get to have a beer (allegedly I like that stuff) one day and talk about it.

Six months later, on a sunny, late November afternoon at his home in the San Jacinto Mountains we (allegedly) had a beer and talked about it...

Paul Kimmage: There are so many places we could start but lets go with Val D'Aran and that day you took your first ever yellow jersey in the Tour de France. What did it mean to you?

Floyd Landis: When I started racing mountain bikes it wasn't something I thought I would ever do but there were several shifts in my career that gave me more and more reason to believe that one day I would be able to race the Tour de France and it slowly evolved from being a dream to a goal. And so by the time I got to 2006, having been through some good times (mountain biking) and then some rough times on the Mercury team (1999-2001) and then being fortunate enough to get a job on the Postal service team (2002-2004), by the time I got to the Tour in 2006 with Phonak, there had been so many times that I had given up on it, and thought it wasn't going to happen, that when it finally did, I didn't really...I shouldn't say I didn't appreciate it but considering that the rest of the race was in front of me, I had to stay focused on that. I didn't have time to stop and really acknowledge that it was real.

You looked happy at the time.

Well, it's funny you ask that because I haven't stopped and thought about that in five years but...yeah, I was extremely happy and I remember that it was not how I thought it would feel. I thought it was going to be stressful. I thought 'Now there is going to be pressure and I have to live-up to so many expectations' but it wasn't like that at all. I had watched Lance (Armstrong) do it and it was hard to tell what

he was feeling because he never showed anything on his face or said anything. So I didn't exactly know how I was going to feel but I did know that I had been there with somebody that had had the jersey and that was another lucky thing that happened to me.

The fact that you had raced three Tours with Armstrong?

Yes, I was on a team where I had seen how it was done and...yeah, I can't speak for other people but my experience, and the way I felt that day, directly contradicted what I was told I was going to feel. It didn't get harder, it got easier – all of a sudden I'm at a threshold where I know I can do it.

That's interesting.

And it stayed that way. There was no doubt in my mind I was going to win. And that feeling stayed with me until stage 16 when I had a bad day (Landis exploded on the final climb of the stage to La Toussuire and conceded eight minutes and his yellow jersey to Spain's, Oscar Pereiro) and had about 12 hours when I thought 'Okay, maybe this isn't going to happen' but even then, I wasn't devastated.

Did you feel you had lost it after stage 16?

I can't say I knew it was over but I was pretty sure that the odds of me winning were just about zero. I thought the best possible scenario was that I was going to attack (the next day on the stage 17 to Morzine) and two or three guys would come with me and I'd end up on the podium. But when they didn't come along and I got away on my own and got (a lead of) nine minutes I thought 'There is no way they are going to catch me. I don't know if I'm going to win the Tour but I'm going to win the stage' and...Yeah, I went through some extreme feelings during that stage.

I could not believe what you did that day.

On the seventeen stage?

Yeah, I could not believe what you did. When you lost the jersey on stage 16 I thought 'This is great. This is a sign that there is less doping in the Tour when you see the yellow jersey having a bad day.' I mean, we hadn't seen that for years.

Yeah, I remember people saying that.

And then I watch you win the next day and...

It had got worse overnight! (Laughs)

Yeah.

I hadn't thought of it that way but...I remember reading some comments that were not exactly supportive the next day and those didn't really affect me that much because once you are in the middle of it, and you get to that point, you are used to doping talk. I wasn't used to being directly asked and accused but you're used to it being a subject so it didn't take away from anything. I just figured...whatever, they'll talk a bunch and get over it.

Given the history of the Tour, and the fact that so many of the wins are soaked in doping, what you did that day on stage 17 was possibly the greatest ride of all time.

Well, thank you. I don't ever want to be the guy to say that it's okay to do what I did because everybody else was doing it...that doesn't justify it, that doesn't fix it but knowing what I knew, and knowing the magnitude of it (the doping problem), that's why I was happy when I got the lead. That's why I felt the normal feelings that you would feel because in my mind it was justified. I haven't said this before because no one has asked but if I had any reason to believe, and didn't have specific knowledge that Pereiro was also doped, then I would have felt like I was cheating somebody but I knew it, I had seen it first hand. (Pereiro had raced with his team a year before.) It also made it a lot harder to deal with when everyone pointed at me and Pereiro was talking about how bad it was that I had robbed him of standing on the podium – that was really hard to deal with. I mean, not to go on

a tangent here, but people's opinions didn't really affect me as long as they were consistent but the hypocrisy was probably the worst thing I had to deal with for the last four years. I didn't care if he was lying, I just didn't want him pointing fingers at me and saying I robbed him. There was no doubt in my mind that whoever I might have kept off the podium, didn't belong on the podium.

How did your feelings after stage 17 compare with Val D'Aran on stage 11 when you first took the yellow jersey?

It was by far the best moment I have ever felt in cycling.

The best moment?

Yeah, that was better than standing on the podium in Paris because it was such a contrast to the way I felt the day before and by the time I got to Paris I was tired and had accepted that barring accident I was going to win. I mean, I knew what people were thinking just watching it – and I'm not talking about doping here but just the fact that you just didn't do that in any race in cycling, let alone the Tour de France – because the guys that are strong enough rarely end-up in a position where they are that far down. So, yeah that was the highest point I have felt in my life... not happiness, I felt a real sense of accomplishment.

You say not happiness?

No, what I mean is...I was equally happy when I first got it (the yellow jersey) but when I got it the second time there was a sense of accomplishment on top of the happiness. I did something that people didn't think I could do and I'm not the kind of guy that feels like I need to prove people wrong but it hurt when they said in the paper that my chances were finished. And it made me more determined and so I had a different sense, a sense of...I don't know, I guess accomplishment is the right word and maybe pride in what I was doing. I have always tried to separate my sense of identity from being a bicycle racer and what I think of myself. I was always afraid – partly because of the doping and the strange politics in the sport – to let too much of who I am inside my head be altered by what I did on a bicycle.

What do you mean by afraid?

I was afraid to let (what I thought of myself) be based on cycling because I didn't like what cycling had become; I didn't like that it had become a game of doing all these other things; I never liked the bad politics; I never liked the fact that we had to dope. I shouldn't say I had a moral objection to it because I had accepted it but it wasn't something that I felt in my mind I should be proud of. At that point it became just a challenge: 'Okay, let's see if I can make what I set out to make in the first place but if I do or don't its not going to change who I feel like I am inside.' I guess that's what I'm trying to say. What I ended-up being in the press is in no way how I see myself or who I really am. I mean, I don't think that there is any way that someone who has never met could get even a remotely accurate picture of me.

No, that thought has already struck me since we sat down.

They couldn't! And it kept getting worse and worse to the point where I just stopped caring. I mean, I didn't stop caring that I wasn't telling the truth but stopped caring that I couldn't fix it, you know? I wish people could get a true sense of who I really am because I never set out to hurt anybody; I never set out to cheat anybody out of anything. The public view-point of me changed the day when they found-out I had doped but they didn't get to see the steps it took to get there and the small decisions I made along the way.

On the issue of your identity, this is a photograph of you taken of you a couple of months before the 2006 Tour de France. (I hand him the photograph. He is wearing jeans, designer shades, a black leather jacket and sitting on a Harley Davidson.) This looks like a guy who has it made and is enjoying the trappings of fame.

Oh yeah, I loved it. It wasn't part of what I wanted to do in the first place – I enjoyed racing my bike and still do – but the opportunity for this to happen came along and I wasn't going to turn it down. I mean, people treat you differently, you get more respect; things are easier. It comes with some complications but the people who complain about it are just trying to justify some other behaviour...No, I loved it.

How do you feel when you look at this photograph now? What are you thinking when you see the jacket and the motorbike and the star?

(He pauses for a moment to reflect.) I was proud of who I was at the time but I was never forced to really sit down and look at myself – and that's not to say that I didn't treat people well and wasn't the person I wanted to be. But I was never forced to sit down and just analyse how I had gotten there or where I was. And as much as I was proud to be that guy, I'm much more proud of myself today, not to use that word (proud) too much because I don't want to come across as arrogant or as if somehow I am better than other people, but I always liked being me. And in hindsight, having thought about all of it, the decisions I made were all small steps along the way and with the information I had in front of me, I took some risks that I don't think most people would have turned down. And I would never say that I'm glad I went through that but I think I'm a better person now.

You've said in a previous interview with Bonnie Ford of ESPN that you don't feel guilty about having doped and I understand that given the context of who you were riding for (Lance Armstrong) and what you saw on that team (US Postal). The question I would ask is 'Do you feel regret at having doped?'

I do feel regret and I'll define exactly why I do...These decisions that I made, that I don't necessarily feel guilty about, ended up causing people that I care about – my family and people around me – tremendous amounts of stress, and that part I regret. But I don't want to take that too far because if I had never made those decisions, in all likelihood, I wouldn't have raced the Tour de France ever. Because of my career and the team I ended-up on, if I wasn't willing to do that (dope), I wasn't going to be there. I wouldn't have experienced any of the good things that I got out of it or any of the bad things, so for me, it's okay, I can handle it. But they affected other people and for that reason I regret it.

Okay, allow me to rephrase the question: What if I handed you a blank sheet of paper? What if you had the chance to do it again?

To start over?

Yeah.

My whole life?

Yeah.

Well, in the context of what happened since, I would do everything the same and I would just admit it, afterwards.

When you tested positive in 2006?

Yes.

You would admit it?

Yes, but I would do everything exactly the same. I wouldn't change a thing. I wouldn't have missed that.

Okay, let's take it from the beginning. You are the second eldest of six children – four girls, two boys - born to your parents, Paul and Arlene. And you were raised in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in the traditions of the Mennonite faith?

Yeah.

Tell me about your brother and sisters?

Their lives are all very similar to the way we grew up and the way my parents live now. My older sister has a family and stays at home and takes care of her kids. My brother has a small landscaping business. Two of my sisters are not married and still live with my parents.

They still live in Lancaster County?

Yeah.

Have any divorced? Can Mennonite's divorce?

No, you don't get divorced.

Are they happy?

They think they are happy, yeah.

But if they think they are happy, surely they are?

Yeah...not always.

What do you mean?

Well, there different ways you can be happy. There are the brain chemicals that make you happy when you have the lead in the Tour de France and there's...

Sorry, are they content?

Yes, they are content.

There is a lot to be said for being content in this world?

Absolutely, yeah, not many are.

I'm curious about why it was that you were the only one who left? You have the

same genes and blood as your brothers and sisters but you were the only one that flew the nest?

I don't know. For some reason typically in the Mennonite community parents will send their kids to private schools, to Christian schools, but for some reason because my parents went to public school, they sent us to public school but the change that happened from when they went to public school and when I was old enough to go to school was pretty drastic. Lancaster County is not far from Philadelphia – about an hour or so – and when they went to public school it was predominantly Mennonite people, or much more than when I went, so I think that had a much bigger effect on me than they thought it was going to. And after I became something that they didn't want me to become, they sent my younger brothers and sisters to private school. So I think they would probably attribute some of it to that, and some of it is just a personality thing.

So going to public school exposed you to this other world – *our* world?

Yeah, which I otherwise would not have seen at all. We didn't have a television, we didn't have a radio, there was no exposure whatever to anything else. And then all of a sudden I was the odd one and I was forced to look around and say 'Why am I behaving this way and they are behaving that way?' And then I just started to analyse everything that I saw.

At what stage did you start asking those questions?

Early. Some people don't question it but if you have the personality that I have then you start to ask. So I would just question everything – and not because I wanted to be defiant, I just wanted to know. They believe that if you don't go to church on Sunday you are misbehaving and possibly offending God and so we were not allowed to go shopping on Sunday's and not allowed to work on Sunday's – but immediately that's a grey area, even when you are twelve. I mean, what's work? Where do you draw the line? We don't do laundry on Sunday's because that's work but we can cook food and wash the dishes and use electricity which necessitates other people working, so why is that okay?

Can you give me an example of raising this with your parents? Was it confrontational?

No, it wasn't confrontational...starting when I was 12, regularly or every week, I had philosophical conversations with my parents and the more I got told 'That's just the way it is' or 'You just have to believe it' the less likely I was to believe it. And the more complex the questions got, the more likely it was that the answer was 'Well, that's just what the Bible says.' Well why does the Bible say that? And why does the Bible contradict itself in a different place? I mean, it was just torment as to why I wasn't even allowed to think certain things, and I almost couldn't get through life without thinking them...

What things?

I was always taught – and maybe this is a character flaw of mine but ever since I have been able to think, I have taken things literally and applied that to what is reality and so...We were taught that the Bible says that not only is adultery a sin but lust is a sin. And when you are a 12-year-old boy, you're going to hell!

(We laugh) There's no way around it and that was a major source of my questions because I couldn't will myself to not think about women if I saw a woman. It made me extremely frustrated that that's somehow a sin.

What was her name?

There weren't any specific ones but you know how it is, you've seen 12-year-old boys. They can't help it. So I wouldn't say that any of my conversations with my parents revolved specifically around that but that was the source of my confusion. That was the main source of my confusion...

'I'm going to hell because I feel this and I shouldn't?'

Yeah, and so now I want to question other things. 'Why is it that I have to go to church on Sunday's? Why is it that half of the world has never heard of this religion and they are going to go to hell? I can't possibly accept that unless you give me a reason.' And for the first 20 years of my life, all of my philosophical issues in my

own head revolved around questions in the Bible. And that's the way I ended up thinking about everything – I applied black and white rules to reality and tried to reconcile how people made decisions or how I would make my own decisions. I didn't stop believing that certain broad moral categories weren't right...things my parents said: 'You should tell the truth; you should be nice to people; you shouldn't go around causing other people harm.' I didn't need an explanation for that. I could accept that.

What effect did all this have on your parents? Were they worried about you? Was it a growing irritation for them?

I think it became not so much an irritation but more a matter of concern, because the older I got, the more complex the questions got and the more my parents realised that I was just not going to accept 'that's the way it is' answers. For them those answers were easier because they weren't exposed to much else and I don't know that I would be any different than them if I had seen what they saw in life. It wasn't like I thought I was somehow superior or I was right or I was trying to show them that they were wrong.

Where did the bike come in your development?

In hindsight I would say the bike was my drug - and maybe that's the wrong word but it was, and ultimately anyone that rides a bike knows that's what it is, it's a drug, it's an addiction. The bike was my way to forget about what I was doing the rest of the time which was sitting around and contemplating life and trying not to feel guilty. I would go out and ride, thinking I was training for something but all it was, was me fantasising that I was somewhere else. Over time, when it became evident that I could make it a career and that I could get to the Tour de France and maybe even win, it slowly stopped being that and became more of an obsession where I was working towards a goal.

When did you first become aware of the Tour de France?

I had heard of it probably at the age of fourteen or fifteen but it was more of a mythical thing – this race they had in France. The first time I remember reading an

article about it was in a Bicycling magazine my cousin had – I don't know why he had it, he wasn't even into cycling – but it had Greg LeMond on the front (cover) and I remember reading about him.

You were 11 when LeMond won his first Tour in 1986?

Yeah.

And 14 when he won his second in 1989?

Yeah, so it might have been around then. That's the first specific thing that I ever saw or read about it, for sure. I don't even remember what it said, but I remember looking at it and reading it. At that point I was already riding my bike but after that I don't think I ever watched the Tour de France until Lance (Armstrong) won that stage solo after his team mate died in 94/95.

That was the first stage you ever saw?

Yes.

That's absurd! You were almost 20-years-old!

(laughs) Yeah, it was a short period of time when I went from not knowing much to winning the Tour de France. It was shorter than it felt – it felt like an eternity – but I remember watching him that day and thinking 'I would really like to do that. I would really like to win the Tour de France.'

You were riding mountain bikes and had been selected to ride in the World Junior Championships at that point?

Yeah, in '93, that was the first time I was ever on an airplane and the entire trip was kind of traumatic because I hadn't really been anywhere on my own or to a foreign country. I had never seen anyone drink alcohol and I was so overwhelmed by the

way people were behaving that I could barely race – I think I finished last.

You use the word traumatic?

It was traumatic, yeah.

I don't understand.

It was like if you went to Mars. There were so many things that were different. I had never experienced any other food that what you eat in Lancaster County – meat and potatoes and that kind of thing – now, all of a sudden, I didn't know what I was eating and couldn't figure out how to do anything and there was so many things that were different that I couldn't adjust to it all at once and just...withdrew. I just decided I would do whatever I could do to get through this and get home. I decided 'The race is on Saturday, I have 6 more days to get there, here's what I can deal with. I'm just going to stay in the room or ride my bike. I'm not going to even look around.'

I would have thought it would have been the opposite: 'Wow! Look at this!' What made you not want to look around? Was it frightening?

It was frightening because to me it was all distractions. In my head, I wanted to stay focused on the race and the more I looked around, the more I had to stop and think about these other philosophical issues that I had in my won head: 'Here's the way people behave in this country and this is so different to what I'm told and how do they justify it on their heads?' And rather than try to have to face that, I just didn't want to face it...and this goes back to why I said that cycling ended-up in hindsight, probably being a drug because if I ride around and start thinking philosophical things like this, at some point I get the argument in my head: 'Why am I even bothering to do this?' And then I just go home. So, unless I turn my brain off and don't think about it, I don't race well.

And you didn't race well?

No, I barely finished. I stayed for probably two more days afterwards and the other juniors were all hanging-out and having fun and all I could think about was going home. And when I got home I decided 'Right, that's not for me.' I didn't really understand what had happened. I didn't know why I felt so bad, all I know is that I got home and was so relieved and just thought 'No more bicycle racing for me, I don't need that.' But then after two or three months I recovered from the race and accepted what I had gone through and got my energy back and my determination back. And then I started to travel more and got used to being around other places but the first time was not good.

In 1995 you left home and moved to California?

Yeah, I left on my 20th birthday. I had met some friends that lived in Irvine and they said that the winters were nice and sunny – and the winters in Pennsylvania are probably the worst place for cycling – so I decided I was going to spend the winter in California.

How did your parents react when you told them you were leaving?

My mom was upset...not upset, she didn't tell me not to, she just cried a bit and my dad told me not to forget what I was taught and to be careful of everything because they didn't know anything about California but from what they heard it was the wild west. At the time, I thought they were over-reacting but I think in their mind they knew I wasn't coming back. Because they had witnessed the transformation (in me) over time and the questions I had asked and so it was 'Don't do anything you are going to regret and please be careful and call us and stay in touch.' And I didn't do a very good job of that for a long time; I didn't really talk to them very often because I didn't want to feel guilty. Whenever I talked to them, I felt bad for having left; I didn't like to see my mom cry, I didn't like the fact that it hurt my father, but I just couldn't stay. I wasn't happy there and wasn't going to be happy there so... yeah, I spent that winter of '95 in California and decided I was never going back.

What was that first year away from home like?

For the most part, I was really happy just to be there and to be able to think for myself and try to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. And that's when cycling started to change from being an escape to something I wanted to make into a career. So it was good for a lot of reasons and mostly because it was completely foreign to me to have an entire winter where it was sunny and 75 degrees every day.

What about sex and relationships? Before you left, had you ever had a relationship?

Before I left, no I hadn't. I had gone on some dates with a girl that my parents didn't approve of but I had never had any sex with her – they were already making me feel guilty for having gone on a date because you don't really date in the Mennonite religion; you sort of decide what is the most appealing girl to you in whatever way and you sort of get married. You don't think twice about it, you just deal with it; you don't go looking for the best possible fit. It's not spelled out but its sort of frowned upon if you go on dates with more than one or two girls before you get married because something is wrong with you. Being married is about having kids and teaching them how to get to Heaven.

Who was this girl?

I went to High School with her. Her name was Marie. I mean, I was so confused about life and had such a different viewpoint than she did, because she lived in the real world and I never got to the point where I was comfortable enough to even consider having sex with her. I was just trying to understand what was going on.

And when you came to California?

I was still trying to adjust to so many things and it wasn't like I was looking for girls, that sort of happened over time after I was comfortable and had justified the other things that I had to justify at the time; that it was okay to drink alcohol and not feel guilty about it; that it was okay to ride my bike on a Sunday morning and not to go to Church and not feel guilty about it.

Tell me about the first time you tasted alcohol?

It was near my 21st birthday and I went out for sushi with some friends and had saki of all the stupid things. By this time I was around people that would drink at parties and things and it just never occurred to me to drink so finally somebody said 'Why don't you try it?' They had said it before but I actually listened this time and I had some and thought 'That was stupid, now I can't say I never had any alcohol before.' And then I thought 'Do I need to say that? Do I care?' I mean it was fun to say it because people always thought it was a novel thing and then I realised that didn't have any value, although I had to lie to my parents now, and I felt bad about that.

Because they would ask you?

Yeah, they would ask and there wasn't guilt at having done it, there was guilt knowing that I would have to lie to my parents. Because at that moment in time I had justified in my mind that it wasn't a bad thing – I just didn't want to lie about it. Maybe that explains the question you asked about what I would change; I would still do everything exactly the way I did it, I just don't want to lie about it.

Was coffee taboo as well?

Not really.

What about motion pictures?

It's not a technical violation but their argument against it is – when I say 'their' I mean my parents and the Mennonite religion – that it exposes you to sinful things. The first movie I ever saw in the theatre was 'The Lion King' but don't tell anybody that. I went with some friends in High school in '93 and I felt pretty shitty about it because I had to lie to my parents about where I was.

I thought I read somewhere that 'Jaws' was the first movie you ever saw?

I saw that at a friend's house when I was probably nine or ten. I was not okay after that, I was not well because it seemed real to me. I didn't know anything about how you make movies and it looked real to me and I didn't want to watch movies any more after that. I was afraid...but it's strange, I mean, when you listen to music your whole life, which is what most people do, a particular song reminds you of a particular time and place. Well mine is all fucked up. Led Zeppelin reminds me of '97 – but that's not Led Zeppelin time! So everything that I see is on a different timeline than what most people see so when I watch a movie... 'Apocalypse Now' is just a bunch of violence to me. I don't have relatives that went to war; I don't know anything about Vietnam; I don't have a context to put it in until I learn what actually happened. I mean, even to this day, there are movies that I didn't like five or ten years ago that I'm only getting now. I never liked 'Goodfellas' until I went through this shit but now I get it (laughs). I watched it once and thought 'That's a stupid movie. I don't know anything about the mafia or how any of that worked.' For the longest time in my life, I didn't think there was a mafia. I never went to the city, how would I know? But now I get it.

Okay, so you have arrived in California and you want to make cycling your career?

Yeah, but I thought it was going to be mountain biking. I got to professional level in '95 and that was okay but didn't really improve in '96 and was average again in '97. I had moved to San Diego in '96 and was living with a friend, David Witt, who later became my father-in-law and I was kind of getting down on the whole thing and he encouraged me to keep doing it. Up until that point, I'd had a team and always had an income but I didn't have a team for '98 and David said 'Look, you can't quit yet, you've got to give it one more year, try racing on the road. You don't have to worry about rent, I'll pay for everything, just go and train and see if you can find a road deal.' So I rode more than I ever did in my entire life that winter. I was riding ten hours a day and would hang out with David in the evenings and work in his restaurant.

He had a restaurant?

Yeah.

How did you become friends?

I started to get coached by Arnie Baker in '96 and he encouraged me to move to San Diego, so we could go for rides and stuff. And he said 'I have this friend, David Witt, who just got divorced and is going through some depression and (some company) would probably be good for him, he might need a room mate, let me ask him. So David said 'Yeah, absolutely' and I became really good friends with him. He was a wonderful guy.

How old was he?

He was about 48 at the time.

Did he have kids?

No.

I just wondered if that was the reason you got on so well?

Yeah, maybe. He didn't replace my dad but he was the guy that I could ask questions.

I meant the effect you had on him and whether you were the son he never had?

Yeah, I think so, that's kind of what it felt like and that's partly why he was so devastated by what happened in the end.

Don't go there yet, take it progressively.

Got it, yeah, over time he became emotionally invested in my success in cycling and in the ups and downs. I think I would have quit at the end of '97 but he said 'Just try another year, just ride and go to some races in the spring and see if you can find a team. You can live here for free.' So I did that and went to a couple of races in

northern California in February/March and did really well. And that was more or less how my career on (the) Mercury (team) started.

1998 was the year of the Festina scandal at the Tour de France. How aware were you about drugs in cycling at that time?

Up until that point, mostly what I knew was whatever I had read, and it wasn't much. I didn't have any friends on the inside; I didn't have any friends that had been there and I didn't have any open conversations with people about it. But when the Festina thing happened I realised that this was what went on. I thought 'Okay, great, at least now it's out in the open. I don't like it but maybe it's fixed.' Things were looking like they were getting better so I was glad I wasn't there.

You joined Mercury in 1999?

Yeah, John Wordin was the manager and he wanted to go to the Tour de France – that was his goal. I didn't know much about the team because I wasn't really (that familiar) with the road scene and their goal didn't matter to me. I was being paid \$6000 a year - that was my salary. It was fine, David said 'Look, just do it; I'll take care of whatever else you need.' I ended up doing mostly US races that year until we went to the Tour de L'Avenir (September) - that was the second time I went to France.

And you did well there?

Yeah, I got the lead and ended-up finishing third and then I got a call from the Postal Service guys (the U.S. Postal team) but I had already agreed to ride for Mercury again. I was progressing and it looked like the team was progressing as well so I stayed on the team for 2000 and 2001.

When was your first time to meet Lance Armstrong?

The first time I ever had any interaction with him was...I crossed paths with him once at a crit (circuit race) in Austin in 2000 or 2001 and then I met him again at the

Dauphine (race) when we came to Europe in 2001 and said 'Hi' to him there and 'Good luck in the Tour de France' and he said 'thanks.'

And that was it?

Yeah.

Did you read his book ('It's Not About The Bike')?

I did, yeah. I knew that it was a book, an embellished version of a guy; I mean obviously he's human. I figured 'Okay, it's a good book, it's a motivational book; I liked it. I didn't think 'This can't be true.'

Before it was published, he won the Tour in 1999. What were your impressions of that win?

When he won the Tour I was pretty convinced that he was clean.

Which was pretty phenomenal?

Oh yeah, I mean I was inspired like anybody would be; I mean, if that's all you knew it's a good story if it ends there. Which is why I tried to be really open-minded about the reaction people have to the things that I'm saying because that's about what they have.

You met your wife, Amber that year?

Yeah.

Because David had found somebody else at this stage?

Yes, Rose worked across the street from where we lived at a little catholic school,

teaching. David would bring her around and we'd have dinner together and things like that and so one day we had dinner and they said they would introduce me to (Rose's daughter) Amber.

Amber had a daughter?

Yeah, her daughter's name is Ryan.

Tell me about falling in love and getting married?

I met her at David's house. She didn't know anything about cycling and I didn't really know much about anything else but...yeah, we got along right from the beginning. I was kind of obsessed with bike racing at the time and wasn't really looking for a girlfriend, let alone one with a kid but it didn't seem anything out of the ordinary to me. I knew that my mom would be a little caught off guard but wouldn't be judgemental about it; she's not judgemental at all.

Caught off guard by the fact that Amber had a daughter?

Yeah. We dated for probably a year and then decided to get married. I was still racing for Mercury at the time and wasn't making much money, and it wasn't as if Amber's mom could pay for a wedding, so we just got married at the courthouse down in San Diego. I didn't even tell my parents – we just decided to get married and then I called my mom and told her and that wasn't very nice of me. She said 'I have to sit down now and give the phone to your dad and then I told him and it went kind of silent for a while. It probably wasn't the ordinary way to go about things but nothing I did by this stage was ordinary so...

How did you ask Amber to marry you?

I got her a ring and had Ryan give it to her at dinner near Christmas – a dinner at David's restaurant. I had told David I was going to do it, so he was there and Rose was there and I gave her the ring and asked her if she would marry me. We had talked about it before that so I don't think it was a complete surprise but she was

happy, yeah.

Were you happy?

Yeah, I was happy. Up until that point, as much as I was just trying to get through life, I didn't like not being connected to somebody or a family because I had just completely separated myself from my own family, so it felt good to have something else to work for, something that felt concrete that I hadn't had in a long time.

So you married at a time when things aren't great for you? You're riding for a small team and you don't have any money?

Yeah, but I never had any money. I never had any crazy security like that but I knew how good I was at racing on the road and the one thing I did have was a goal and a dream.

What was the goal? The dream?

By this time I wanted to race in the Tour de France and I wanted to win it if I could – that was what I wanted to find out. And this was good for me because all I ever needed was a goal, some kind of mission – as dumb as it may seem a bicycle race – but it was something that I could focus my life on and it would also take care of the rest of my life as I was doing it.

Did Amber buy into that mission?

Yes, she did, it became her life too. She would read whatever there was to read. I never misled her about the doping stuff. I would always tell her 'Look, this is what I am thinking; these are what my choices are' and she would just let me make the decision but she wanted to know. She would say 'Do whatever you have to do but just let me know and then I'll understand.'

You married in February, 2001. At what stage did you become aware that the

drugs problem had not been fixed and that you would have to make these choices?

2001 was supposed to be the big breakout year for Mercury. John Wordin was determined to get (an entry) to the Tour de France and (hired) a bunch of European guys because we needed a wild card. I would have conversations with different people here and there; Gordon Fraser was a close friend of mine and a good bike racer. He had been on (the) Motorola (team) and said that he didn't like needles and didn't want to be part of it so he came back to race here (the U.S). And then sometimes the conversations became more specific with other guys...When (Peter) Van Petegem joined the team I would have discussions with him about how you justified it in your own mind because at this point I was still completely against it. I didn't like the idea, it didn't represent what I felt cycling was to me. I still had this idealistic way of seeing it.

Is 'repulsed' too strong a word?

No, I don't think I was repulsed so much as...I was really confused as to how many people could just accept that that was the way it was. I didn't know that in any given system – in this instance cycling, something that big – that the people at the top could actually manipulate it. I didn't think that was possible. I couldn't wrap my head around that. I thought 'I can't believe there is that many people willing to take the risk of getting caught.' But it turned out that not only were people willing ready to take that risk but everyone is in on it, or at least everyone one with any power is in on it. I did not expect that turn of events. I didn't expect that the guys that were publically decrying the whole thing, and stating that they were the ones trying to fix it, were in fact making it happen.

How did you reach that conclusion?

Well, like I say, 2001 was supposed to be the breakout year for Mercury when they got this other sponsor, Viatel, but it was a complete knockdown. We got paid for three months and that was my first experience of dealing with the UCI (Union Cycliste International, the sports governing body) and basically being told 'We don't care what the rules are, this is how we do it.'

What was the context? Explain it to me?

I was supposed to be paid \$5000 a month all year, so I was paid for three months and then they stopped. When a team registers with the UCI, it is required to set up a bank guarantee to ensure that employees get paid if the team runs dry. After thirty days of not being paid, an athlete can request in writing to be paid from the guarantee. So I filed a claim to the UCI and they sent a note back saying 'Look, he's (the team manager, John Wordin) getting his finances together, please don't file the claim right now. We'll pay you when two months go by so just wait.' So I wait for two months and then I was out of money, and I needed money, so I file the claim and they said 'We just want you to wait one more month to see if this will work out' and by this time it was July or August and I was broke. I had my lawyer send them an email saying 'I need to be paid and if you don't, then I'm going to have to pursue some legal way of doing it' and we got a letter directly from Hein Verbruggen (the UCI president) stating that 'This is not the United States, this is Switzerland' and that 'threatening to sue us is going to get the wrong reaction and I'm going to advise all of my people to deal with you accordingly.' It was basically 'Fuck off, you're not getting the money.' It took two years to get the money, and every time we would try to contact them they would just tell us to fuck off basically and 'sue us' and 'we don't care' and it was just one thing after another. So then, as that was happening, and I was still trying to get it (the money) I got hired by the Postal service.

When you joined Mercury in 1999, you didn't seem to care about money – they were paying you hardly anything - but in 2001 you're in a serious dispute over your contract? What changed? I know you were married that year and somebody suggested to me that Amber was 'ambitious' and 'pushed' you. Is that fair? Was that it?

No, Amber never pushed me. I have a very black and white way of dealing with money. Here are my rules 1) If I say I am going to pay somebody, I pay them no matter how good a job they did or didn't do. For example, I paid Michael Rutherford (his agent) 10% of my contract in 2006, even though I was only paid until July and then fired. 2) If somebody hires me to do something – even if I think I'm worth more – I do the best job I can possibly do as long as they pay what they agree. 3) If somebody agrees to pay me and has a legitimate why they can't, I forgive and forget and never think of it again. 4) If someone agrees to pay me for services and does not but is able to do so, I get mad and make a point of making

them pay, no matter what expense to me. It stems from what my parents taught me – if you agree to something you do it, no matter what.

Okay, so you join Postal in 2002 and the dispute with Mercury and the UCI is ongoing?

Yeah, I was still trying to get it (the money) when I started racing with Lance and I made a comment to Tim Maloney in Cyclingnews at one point – two or three months into my Postal Service contract – that I was upset that the UCI hadn't followed any of their rules. And so Verbruggen called Lance and had him come to me and say that I had to retract my statement and apologise in Cyclingnews. And this was the context in which...I had started to talk to Lance about doping and he was giving me advice about things we were doing and explaining how Ferrari worked, and the rides that he and I were doing together. This came up during that time, so one of the conversations was 'Look Floyd, you have got to do what this guy says because we're going to need a favour from him at some point. It's happened in the past. I had a positive test in 2001 at the Tour of Swiss and I had to go to these guys.' He said 'It doesn't matter whether it's true or not.' He said 'I don't doubt it, I'm sure you're telling the truth, I'm sure they didn't follow the rules but it doesn't matter. That's not one of your choices. You have to apologise.' So I said 'Okay, I didn't know that's how it worked but fair enough. This is the first time I've heard of someone being paid-off to make a test go away but that's all I need to hear. If that's the kind of favours I need, I'm not going to insult that guy.' He said "Here's what I'll have you to do. I'll call Jim Ochowicz (the president of USA cycling) and he'll arrange a phone call with Verbruggen and you will apologise to him and tell him you're sorry.' And this took place in 2002. This is where they tried to manipulate what I said in my email into something else. The conversation took place in 2002.

Why was Ochowicz called? What was his role?

He was the guy, the in-between guy, that's what Lance explained to me. He said 'Look, Jim Ochowicz is the guy that orchestrates this kind of thing.'

So did you apologise to Verbruggen publicly or privately?

Both.

Who did you do it publicly through?

Tim Maloney. I said I was told by Verbruggen. He said 'Yeah, I figured that's what happened, we'll put it on the front page' but he didn't publish it on the front page. I mean it got printed but...

But there is a record of the apology?

Yes, without a doubt.

What about the private apology?

(Pauses to reflect) I may have merged the two incidents (the retraction in Cyclingnews was published in 2003) but I'm pretty sure the phone call between Verbruggen and I took place prior to the Tour de France in 2002. I know it was in St. Moritz and I know I didn't use my US cell phone while I was there because it was too expensive. For some reason I believe we stopped on a ride and I used Lance's phone to take a call from Ochowicz who had conferenced in Verbruggen. But I don't believe LA just stood next to me listening, he sort of kept riding around. The call only took a matter of minutes...and again, I didn't do it because I was forced to do it, I did it because I completely understood the situation. I thought 'I'm saying sorry whether I am sorry or not' because now I know how the UCI works. The fact that the highest level was manipulating things left me with two choices – I can quit and not say anything or I can accept that this is how it works and try to figure out how to manoeuvre my way through it.

How many of the decisions you made after that were coloured by this experience you've had with the UCI and their relationship with Lance? How big a factor was that in the decision you made to dope?

That's all of it. If I had any reason to believe that the people running the sport really want to fix it, I may have actually said 'If I wait long enough I'll have the chance to win without doing this (doping) but there was no scenario in my mind where in my lifetime I was going to get a chance to race the Tour and win clean. So, all of it had

that as a backdrop.

Okay, that makes sense.

I'm glad you're asking these questions because it more clearly states what I've tried to say a hundred times but never gets stated properly. I take responsibility for doing it. I made these decisions. I don't point fingers and no one forced me to do it but the circumstances were such that the decision was almost made for me...I hadn't justified it in my head until that point (the conversation with Armstrong) and then I just decided 'All bets are off here. There is no chance it is going to get fixed so you either accept that or quit.' And at the very same time, to make matters more difficult, I am now being paid well. I now have the chance to ride the Tour de France with the winner; I've just found out that things aren't quite as simple as I thought they were; I have a chance to race my bike and make a lot of money and I mean...yeah, I wouldn't walk away.

Okay, go back a little to the start of that first season with Postal and your first meeting with Lance. In a major piece with the Wall St Journal last July, you described the first training camp in December, 2001 and piling into a van to go to a strip club in Austin one night. You said Lance was driving and was breaking the lights...

(Smiles) Oh yeah, he was breaking all the rules.

So that was your first sense of him being above the law?

Yes. I was really hesitant to say anything about the strip club because I didn't want to come off like I was trying to make Lance look bad every way I could but it made a really good point that I didn't want to miss and that was...the way he was behaving could in no way be reconciled with what the book (his autobiography) said. I mean, in cycling people talk and they would say he's an asshole and this and that and even rumours about doping but all I really had was the book and then some rumours. So, now I knew for sure.

You were seeing it first hand?

Yeah, there was more to it than there appears to be and that's fine, if that's the way it has to be. I never had any experience with the press at all, so I didn't know how hard it is to actually do what he was doing; to live one thing and manipulate it into another; to maintain a story like that, that was nearly 100% fabricated; to live such an obnoxious life and not even try to hide it. I mean, I'm a guy that he has never really even met; he didn't give me any sort of period to prove that I was trustworthy; he just threw me in the car and went to the strip club. So this was a guy that wasn't even trying to hide it and yet somehow the story stayed the same; this guy is going around acting like an asshole and we got another story over here and it's a good story – he's motivating people and giving them hope. I live my life the way I want to and I'm not going to judge him for what he wants to do but I know one thing – these stories don't add up.

The quote from the Wall St Journal piece was: *Mr Landis said that he was surprised Mr Armstrong would be at such a party but not offended. If Mr Armstrong was different in private than in public he said he could live with that.* But given how you had been raised, how could you live with him being different in private than he was in public?

Well, when I say I could live with it...At that time, I didn't believe that I would want to do that, or even could do that but I was speaking as if I was in the moment, then I could live with it. And I was still a little star-struck because by this time, even though I wasn't raised watching cycling, I knew this guy was a big star.

A global star?

Yeah, he's a real star - I mean you would have to be oblivious not to know that - so I was a little star-struck. So to me...I didn't think that was the best way to live your life but I only knew so much; I didn't know why it had to be that way or even how it was that way but I was okay with it as in 'I don't mind working for this guy because he knows what I don't and fine, so be it.' When I say I could live with it, I mean 'Well, I guess that's the way it is.' Again, I'm not in a position to change it or even tell him he shouldn't do that. I don't know him well enough to make a judgement.

Did it change how you felt about him?

No, it did. I mean, I had heard rumours about what he was like and that he wasn't really as nice a guy as the book tried to make him out, so I wasn't caught completely off guard but it was confirmation that I have got to now figure out who he really is. I don't really know.

Was it disappointing?

Yes, absolutely. I distinctly remember feeling disappointed because I wanted the story to be true.

So from your first contact with him at that training camp in Austin, you are pretty quickly a member of the inner circle. And seven months later, during a pre-Tour training camp with Lance at St. Moritz, you dope for the first time?

Yes.

Testosterone patches?

Correct.

Had you seen any doping before then?

I had done some research on my own because I like to be informed so I would have seen pictures...

You hadn't witnessed it on the team?

No, I hadn't.

This is another quote from the Wall St Journal piece: *During the camp (Austin, December 2001) Mr Landis said he had a private conversation with Mr Armstrong's team director, Johan Bruyneel. Mr Landis said he told Mr. Bruyneel that he wanted to be one of the eight riders who would ride with Mr Armstrong in the Tour de France and that whatever he needed to do to improve beyond the typical training, he was willing to do...Though nothing explicit was said about doping, Mr Landis said, he believed the subtext – that Mr Landis was willing to take performance enhancing drugs – was clear to Mr Bruyneel. Is that accurate?*

It is. It was my attempt at trying to figure out what the truth was because I had been in cycling long enough to have heard enough rumours and I figured the only way he'd be open with me was if I were perfectly happy to do anything. I hadn't made up my mind about what I'd do if faced with having an opportunity to race the Tour with Lance but I'd certainly considered how hard a decision it would be and I figured I'd approach the subject in a familiar place – the USA, home – so I'd know what to expect. For all I knew they were just rumours – I was nearly certain they were not – but I wanted to know so I'd have time to think about it.

I was just trying to balance this with your conversation with Lance seven months later and the apology to Verbruggen?

That was a pivotal point in my decision to dope, however I wasn't oblivious at that point and had been trying for a while to figure it out on all levels. It wasn't clear to me how they (the team) avoided positive tests for example because I'd never worked with a guy like Ferrari. Or for example, what if they only doped in the Tour and I was faced with that decision once I was already there? Things like that and a million other things were going through my head when I signed with Postal and I figured I might as well just ask.

Okay, so the first time you dope is the testosterone patches in St. Moritz but you don't feel guilty?

I will try to explain the context of why I didn't. I was now feeling like I had made real progress; I'm going to the Tour de France; all I had was things to look forward to; I wasn't looking back. I was closest to my dream than I had ever been so I never stopped to think because I had already justified it in my mind and I had already

accepted it.

You weren't repulsed by the act of sticking a needle into yourself?

I never liked it but I wasn't repulsed and left with a bad feeling...and the first thing I did wasn't a needle, it was a patch with testosterone, so it's an easier way into it. Not to analyse it too much, but it gets a lot easier when it's just a lotion – it doesn't even look something bad.

You say that you told Amber at all stages what was happening. Did you tell anyone else?

I talked to David about it a lot.

What did he say? Did he understand?

He did, yeah. He also understood how much confusion it was causing me and how hard it was. I would come home and tell him what I had heard or learned and we would have long discussions about whether or not it was justified. I think we both came to accept that that's how it had to be. He didn't give me advice but was more provocative and would try to get me to think.

To think about what?

About the risks that I was taking and whether it was what I wanted or not or was going to prevent cycling from ever being what I wanted it to be. This was what I wrestled with the most; once I accepted that other people were doing it and I could justify in my mind that I wasn't really cheating anyone else, I still didn't know if doing that and getting to the Tour de France was ever going to leave me with the feeling that I had accomplished my goal. I couldn't quite know that until I just did it. That was probably the last piece I couldn't convince myself just by thinking it through – whether it would work or not.

And you used the word 'risk'. Was this the risk to your health or the risk of being exposed?

I was concerned about the health risk; I was concerned about any risk there might be. Obviously...well, not obviously, but the biggest one for me was the risk of being exposed and having to try to justify this to anyone else. That was my biggest fear. I knew how people were treated that were exposed and I knew I didn't want to go through that but somehow I decided that...well...I can say one thing for sure; it's bad for anybody that gets exposed because they get torn apart by the press but what I could never have foreseen, and never considered, was the scenario that actually happened. How could I have foreseen that the very day that I ride a stage that no one is ever going to forget is the very day that I am accused of actually doing it? Then the entire world is watching and I actually win the Tour de France and at that very moment is when it gets exposed. Now you can sit and consider risk all you want but I wouldn't have imagined that. I couldn't have.

You say you could justify it because you weren't cheating anybody else but you were cheating some people. There were riders in that 2006 Tour who weren't cheating. What is your attitude towards those guys? How do you deal with that?

Well, here's the facts; somebody is going to cheat those guys and I'd rather not be the guy getting cheated. There is no good scenario. There is no going and fixing it. I'm not going to the UCI to tell them – they are bought and paid for.

What do you know about Christophe Bassons (The former French rider who was ostracised when he took a stand against doping during Lance Armstrong's first Tour de France win in 1999)?

It seems to me like he tried to do what I considered as option C as I was thinking this stuff through and figured it was not worth my time, especially in the United States where Lance was now a big superstar and nobody knew who I was. I mean, if I had stood up and said 'This is what Lance told me, this is what I know about cycling – you need to dope to do it and I don't want to do it,' I don't know if anyone would have listened.

I was more interested in what you knew about Bassons during his time with the Festina team in 1998?

No, I don't know what he did or didn't do there.

Bassons was a fantastically gifted rider and raced with Festina at a time when his team-mates were charged to the eyeballs with EPO and the full war chest of drugs. He would sit at the dinner table each night with these guys and they would taunt and mock him because he refused to dope.

Good for him, I like this guy.

What about the strength of character it took to do that?

Oh, I'm impressed because I didn't do it, and I couldn't do it.

You couldn't?

I shouldn't say couldn't...I didn't, good for him, I'm impressed. I don't know how many guys would do that but there's not a lot...Again, I hesitate to say anything because it sounds like I'm justifying what I did...so, no, I'm impressed. I don't know him. I would like to know him though.

Okay, lets pick-up on your relationship with Lance because you are not only a member of his inner circle now but almost his wing man. In his book 'Lance Armstrong's War' Dan Coyle elevated it to the level of friendship. Was that true?

I was friends as much as you can be a friend with Lance but his friendships are limited to a certain distance – you don't get closer than a certain distance with him because for whatever reason, I can't possibly know why, but he just doesn't let people be too close with him. And so, as much as you can be a friend with him, I was his friend. He trusted me.

Did you want to be closer?

Not necessarily, it was fine with me that way.

Because this is not a guy that you particularly like?

Well, I don't know that I would go out of my way to spend time with him. He not the most sociable of guys, he's not...he's not like my friends but I don't care, that was good enough for me. If he wanted to be that close, and I was going to be that important on the team, that was fine with me. I was on the team and I was happy to do my job and demonstrate that I was the bike racer that I know I was.

And that was enough? You didn't want more?

I didn't care. I mean, it was fun to be around and feel important but I like being me and I didn't need him to be me. I didn't care about that – in fact I kind of despised it on some level because I couldn't just be myself when I was around him; I had to play the part of the guy that was next to him. If it was just he and I, I was content because I could talk to him on whatever level I was allowed in and we could have a perfectly fine conversation. But anytime anyone else was around, he was more protective of himself and wasn't even himself any more. The more people there were, the more paranoid he became that he couldn't control the situation in his own mind at least. But yeah, when I say I became his friend it was to a certain extent and no further which was mostly business and if he needed somebody to train with.

Was there a moment when you realised you could only get so close?

No, it took a long time because he can be charming when he wants to. If there are just a few people, and he wants you to be one of those guys, he comes across as being really genuine. And it's not that he's not genuine; he doesn't draw a distinct line so it's hard to tell. It took me a long period of time for me to understand how he interacts with people.

In the portrait that Dan Coyle paints of you in the Armstrong book, there was a sort of zany side to you. And when I say zany I'm thinking of that day in Girona

when you sat down with Dave Zabriskie (friend and former team-mate) and drank 13 cappuccinos. Tell me about that guy because I don't recognise him as the guy sitting opposite me.

I like to do absurd things as long as they don't hurt anybody and I don't always like to do it, just sometimes if I am bored and I not feeling philosophical and I'm hanging out with Zabriskie or even for my own entertainment...(laughs) I mean, why not drink 13 cappuccinos? The problem is it comes across as if I am actually insane some of the time but there is a limit to the things I will do, just because they are funny. I mean, I'm not going to do anything to hurt myself or anyone else... though I guess some people would argue that 13 cappuccinos would hurt you.

How did that start?

It was really bad weather and the other guys wanted to go training and I didn't want to go and I said 'Zabriskie, let's not train, lets just go to the coffee shop.' So we went to the coffee shop and I ordered a cappuccino and then the girl came back and asked me if I wanted another one and it's in Girona and there is always some weird interaction with the language...She kinda thought it was funny when I ordered a third one and so then it just became amusing that I was ordering more. So she just kept bringing them and because she was bringing them I was drinking them and it became more and more funny – especially to Zabriskie. So eventually I drank 13 of them or something...

Was Zabriskie drinking them as well?

No, he stopped after four or five. And then I was exhausted and I went back and just took a nap.

After all that caffeine?

Yeah, I don't know why but I can sleep after lots of caffeine. So we go back and Zabriskie told someone on one of the rides and so it got repeated to Lance and at this time...This was early in the year and I hadn't spent much time riding with him and he made the assessment 'This guy doesn't have any idea what he is doing and he just likes to goof off and he needs to be told what to do.' So he takes me on a

ride and starts instructing me on how to behave and how to train and I wasn't going to argue with him. I mean, here's Lance Armstrong telling me how to train, I'm not going to say 'I already trained hard; I already worked hard to get here.' So I just listened as if I didn't know anything, and I was perfectly happy to take his advice but all I really got out of the conversation was 'I've just got to fit-in here. I'd better not be too flamboyant about anything. I'd better not be seen as the crazy guy.' And I think that's what led to some of his frustration when I left. He felt as though the only reason I had anything was because of his advice; he had no idea how hard I worked or what I had been through to get there.

He didn't ask about where you had come from?

No, he didn't care, which was fine, so ultimately when I left the team he took it personally – and he sort of does that anyway – but I think in his mind he justified it as 'The only reason this guy has anything is because we helped him. He should have a bit of loyalty.' And because we are a little bit alike in certain ways, I was offended because I knew that I did the best job I could possibly have done for \$60,000 a year. I was better than the guys making \$800,000 a year! How could they hold it against me and say that I owed them something? I mean – and this is not unique to cycling – but it's always business when you want something and friendship when they want something and that's the way they ended up making it. And I tried to manage it a little bit but he is so controlling and so adamant that I decided it wasn't worth managing and I didn't really care that much about being his friend because by this time I had learned that you couldn't be his friend, so I said 'Fuck it. I'm just not going to talk to him anymore.' I could have been a bit more astute in the way the politics work and thought 'Maybe I shouldn't make him my enemy' and I don't know that that's why I am here but...

You raced for three seasons with Armstrong and the U.S. Postal team – '02, '03 and '04?

Yeah, that's right.

Your parents travelled to the Tour in '04?

Yeah, and my three younger sisters. They stayed through the Pyrenees and for the majority of the mountain stages and then went home. They didn't go to Paris, they don't like big cities. They can deal with the countryside but they didn't want to go to the city.

Was that their first time on an airplane?

No, I flew them to California once before that...that would have been in 2003.

What did they make of the Tour?

They liked seeing me and they liked watching the race but trying to just manoeuvre through the place and deal with it was mess because it's one thing to go to France, and it's another to try and watch the Tour. I think that part was so stressful that they didn't look around and appreciate the place – they were just happy to be there and see me. But one good thing was that they understood why I was intrigued by the Tour de France, and the magnitude and excitement that goes with it, and that was partly why I wanted them to go because you can't feel that on TV. But I'm pretty sure they were happy to get home once they were done because even if you are used to it, it's exhausting. I was surprised actually; I didn't think they would be able to do it – not for some sort of a religious reason, I just thought they would be too afraid to do it because it's hard in you've never travelled in fifty years of your life and try to go somewhere like that.

What did it mean to you?

It meant a lot to me. I always hoped they could see what was involved and what it meant and it was nice having them there, and nice to see them on the side of the road. I'm glad they got to see it, especially in the light of what happened later when they wouldn't have understood at all what was going on or why people cared as much. I mean, at the time that's not what I was thinking but in hindsight it was a really good thing that they went. They could see how chaotic it is and how people just get caught up in making decisions that you might not be able to understand if you didn't see it.

There was some friction within the team during that '04 Tour. After the time trial to Alpe d'Huez (Landis was 21st on the stage), you were accused of being disloyal by Bruyneel?

I was extremely upset about that because if there is one thing I can say for certain that I am is...you won't find a more loyal team mate. If I am your team-mate, and I agree to do something, I will do it. They asked me not to ride hard (in the time trial) so I would have some energy for the next day and he accused me of having ridden too hard and I got extremely upset. I have never in my life given them a reason to question whether I would do what I was told and that was the moment I decided there was no chance I would ever stay on that team, no matter what they said to me. I was so offended by that, that nothing they could have said would have kept me on the team, nothing.

In the Wall St. Journal interview you described the methods the team used to transfuse blood during that Tour - first at a hotel in St. Leonard-de-Noblat on the first rest day and then later as the race reached the Alps. Quote: *'The transfusions in the hotel room near Saint-Leonard-de-Noblat weren't the only occasion during the 2004 Tour when some team members transfused blood, Mr. Landis said. The second time, he said, was an even stranger scene. After one days stage, the team bus stopped on a remote alpine road. The driver opened the back of the bus to make it appear as though something was wrong, and set about pretending to fix it. The bus had long benches on each side, and a couple of riders lay down on each one, Mr Landis said. The doctors hooked them up, taping their blood bags to the sides of the bus, he said. Mr Armstrong took his transfusion lying on the bus floor, he said. Mr. Landis said the process took about an hour.'* Is that an accurate depiction of what happened?

Yes, it is.

Before that interview, the only insight we had about what was really going on in the team came from two other former Postal riders, Jonathan Vaughters and Frankie Andreu and a widely reported email exchange between them in 2005...

Vaughters: funniest thing I ever heard – Johan and Lance dumped Floyd's rest day blood refill down the toilet in front of him in last yrs tour to make him ride bad

Andreu: holy shit, I never heard that. That's craz!!!

Yeah, I read those exchanges but I don't...I can't for the life of me think of what he was possibly referring to other than...In the incident on the bus, which was the last time I did a blood transfusion on that team, we were riding so well, and we were making everyone else look foolish, that the doctor gave me a half of a unit of blood and just threw the rest out. It wasn't a malicious thing, he just said 'Look, we need to keep this under control and the less we give you, the easier it is to manipulate.' And I said 'Come on, just give me the whole thing.' And he said 'No, we're good enough.' So it was nothing at all and I think that probably when I told that story to Allen Lim or to Vaughters...I wouldn't have told that to Vaughters, that had to be hearsay, but I probably got confused with the contentious things that happened on Alpe D'Heuz a day later and it got turned into something it wasn't. That's just another one of those things that ended up in the press and I would look at it and get confused about what to do. I want to correct them, but if I correct them I have to tell them I actually blood doped, so I just have to ignore them like nothing happened.

One other incident that stands out from the '04 Tour was the treatment of the Italian, Filippo Simeoni. (Shortly after the start of the 18th stage from Annemasse to Lons le Saunier, Simeoni joined a six-man breakaway and was chased down by Armstrong. The Italian was no threat to the yellow jersey but had testified against Armstrong's friend, Dr. Michele Ferrari, at a doping trial in 2002.) What was your attitude to what happened that day?

I was extremely upset with what was going on...I happened to be on the front when Lance came by going twice as fast as us, clearly not wanting anybody to get on his wheel. I knew why he was going up there – he had told us on the bus 'Make sure Simeoni doesn't go in the break' – so I looked at the other guys behind and said 'Somebody get on his wheel' but he was already half way across to the break at that stage. So I got on the radio immediately and said to Johan (Bruyneel) 'You've got to get Lance to slow down. You have to tell him to come back' and the only response I got was 'You guys have to chase him down.' And I said 'Look, I'm not going to look that foolish; I'm not going to chase down the leader of the race on my own team. How dumb do you think I am? I'm going to the back.' So I went to the back and went back to the (team) car and said 'Johan, this is ridiculous. We look really bad. He looks like an idiot. How are we going to explain this? Just tell him to sit up.' And then he told Lance (by radio) to sit up and Lance wouldn't sit up. He

told me to go back to the front and ride. I said 'I'm not going to be part of this. I'm going to sit at the back' and so I stayed at the back of the peloton until they brought Simeoni back. I thought it was stupid and I said what I thought – not because I like Simeoni or don't like Simeoni – I just thought it was a foolish thing to do in the race. I said 'There is no good explanation for this, I don't want to be part of it.' And no one said anything. I was the only one that ever spoke-up against Lance and if I thought something was wrong – and that was clearly wrong – I was going to say it.

Are you saying it was wrong in the context of him as the race leader and you as the team?

No, it was wrong to treat him that way. I just wouldn't do that.

It was wrong to treat Simeoni that way?

Absolutely, yeah, but my argument to Johan couldn't possibly be a moral one at that point. My argument to try and get him to stop was 'Look, this is stupid. He is not accomplishing anything.' But I disagreed with what he was doing. I just wouldn't do that. Alright, I had justified winning in my own mind while I was doping but I would never be able to justify preventing someone else from winning that wasn't doping. Or that had said something to me. I wouldn't do that, ever. I don't race my bike to prevent other people from winning. And this is the distinction between Lance and I – I get satisfaction out of winning or achieving a goal; he gets all his satisfaction out of preventing other people from winning.

You said earlier that in some ways you were alike?

I won't quit. If I decide to do something I won't quit, ever, and he knows that, which is another reason why, as dumb as it was for me to be adversarial with him, I can't believe he ever decided to make sure I didn't succeed in cycling. I mean, he spent a lot of 2005 treating me as Simeoni – they would chase me down for no reason and just do stupid things. I never said anything about it but I knew what he was doing.

You were asked about that in an interview in 2006 but you kicked to touch. You didn't actually address it?

I know, I was still trying to avoid it because I thought it looked petty at the time. And no one would believe it. I mean, I knew it – Chechi (Rubiera) came and apologised to me once in the Dauphine after they chased me down for no reason. He said 'You know why I'm doing it,' and I said 'Well why don't you just not listen to him?' And he said 'I can't do that' and so I just ignored it but I knew. And it was my fault insomuch as I knew that was going to happen when I left. It was a choice I made: 'If I leave the team, that's what I'm going to get.'

What was the difference financially between what you were paid in 2004 and what Phonak paid you in 2005?

My salary was \$230,000 in 2004 and \$500,000 in 2005.

So you doubled it?

I doubled it and they offered to...I know what they do and there's nothing wrong with it except that it just made me more determined to leave...

The U.S. Postal team?

Yeah, (in the 2004 Tour) they had me work on the front every single day on the flat stages for the first ten days; they were going to wait until I was tired and then come and talk to me. That's what they did the first year (I rode) in the Tour – they negotiate when you're completely fucked and say 'Look, everything is going to be fine, we're going to take care of you.' But the problem (in 2004) was that I never had a bad day. And so they came to me when I was warming-up for the last time trial (penultimate stage) and offered me \$300,000 a year for three years, which was less than I was being offered for two years (at Phonak). I told them I wanted to be paid \$500,000 and if they didn't want to pay me that's fine. And they said 'Well, you know we don't match offers on this team, we pay people what they are worth.' And I said 'Well, from where I come from, what you are worth is what people will pay so take it easy, I'm leaving.' So then I just never called them. I went and negotiated with Phonak and then got a call from Johan (Bruyneel) at some point or from Bill

Stapleton (Armstrong's agent) asking me what I was doing: 'Are you going to stay or not?' And I said 'No, you've already told me you're not going to match the offer.' And then I get a call from Lance telling me how disloyal I was by leaving and that they shouldn't have to match my pay because look what else they did for me, helping me out when I was in debt and didn't have any money. And I said 'Look, I'll stay for the same price. If you don't want to pay me what I'm worth, then you are not going to treat me like I am worth anything.' So, at this point, after what had transpired in the Tour with being accused of going too hard on Alpe D'Heuz and things like that, I was not going to stay under any circumstance. So I get another call from Lance saying – and they had to do it because I think they knew I had made up my mind – saying: 'Okay, we never do this but we are going to pay you what they are offering.' And I said 'No, you already told me you weren't going to so I'm not staying.' And that was the end of my relationship with Lance.

Okay, given your ambition to win the Tour; and given what you know about Lance and his power within the UCI; and given that you had been working with Ferrari and a doping programme: Was there no element of you thinking 'How do I do this if I step out of that programme? If I break those ties and provoke them, how will I succeed?' Did you think that through at all?

I did, absolutely, and I was worried about...not how I was going to do it myself, but I was worried they were going to prevent me from doing it. Because by this time I had figured out that all I really needed was blood transfusions and a little bit of anabolic (steroids) over time. I knew I could recover well enough on my own, and could train well enough without other crazy things. Because that's all I did up to 2004, and I was extremely good in 2004, I was about as good as I have ever been. And I knew that if I just improved a little bit from there I'd be good enough to win. So I didn't really need Ferrari's advice any more because I didn't really use his training programmes anyway because I had all his other information. My main concern was: 'Is the UCI going to be told to manipulate something or do something against me?' And when it didn't happen in 2005 I didn't worry about it too much any more because by then I was thinking that my career wasn't going to last too long anyway because of my hip.

At what stage did you become aware you had a hip problem (avascular necrosis)?

That was the other thing that happened in 2004; about two weeks after I had told

(Postal) I wouldn't ride for them, Tyler (Hamilton) tested positive and then it became a question of whether Phonak was even going to exist (because of the fallout from Hamilton's positive). They came back to me and told me I was free to leave and then I got a call from Postal offering me the same deal to come back – even after the exchange I had had with them, they still wanted me back. About that time – or I think the same day - I had gone to get a check-up on my hip and was told it wasn't going to last more than a year or two. So all of a sudden now I've got to decide: 'Who is the most likely team to pay me? Who do I have to tell about this hip problem? I have already signed an agreement with Andy Rihs (the patron of Phonak) without knowing

I had this problem so I am not necessarily obligated to tell him. Or I can go back to (Postal) where I know I'll have the protection of the UCI, and get paid, and they won't ask about my hip. So, I had an operation on my hip and five days later I flew to Switzerland to meet Andy Rihs and had a long discussion with him. I liked him; from what I had heard he was trustworthy and that if you were on his team you got paid. I knew I would have to swallow my pride if I went back to Postal and I didn't want to do that so I decided to sign. After that, I was more worried about me and had to focus on getting my strength back after the surgery and it took most of the year to do it. I wasn't much of a factor in the spring and they (Postal) sort of disregarded me. And then in the Tour, there was a little bit of that (bad) behaviour but not much because I think they toned it (the doping) down a little that year and the entire team wasn't just tearing everybody apart and so they didn't have the luxury of nine guys fucking with other people and winning the race. And then he (Armstrong) was gone. He (retired) and I didn't think there was much risk of him manipulating things when he was gone. I figured he would leave and not look back – that's what I thought he was going to do – so after that I didn't have much concern at all. And at that point I would start talking to Johan more and had a better relationship with him, and things started to get better through 2006, but certainly I was never friends with Lance again after '04.

That Tour in 2005 was Armstrong's 7th and final win. He made a speech on the Champs Elysees: "It's a dream podium I'm standing on here. Jan (Ulrich) is a special person and a special rival. Ivan (Basso), well, you are just tough to race against. You're too much of a friend but maybe you're the future of the race for the years to come." He didn't mention you?

It didn't cause me any concern. We weren't friends at that point but I know that he

knew how hard I was willing to work and that I was as good a cyclist as him.

Later, in the same speech he said: “The people who don’t believe in cycling, the cynics, the sceptics; I feel sorry for you. I’m sorry you can’t dream big and I’m sorry you don’t believe in miracles. This is one hell of a race, this is a great sporting event and you should believe in these athletes and you should believe in these people. I’m a fan of the Tour de France for as long as I live and there are no secrets; this is the hardest sporting event and hard work wins it. So Vive le Tour forever.” So there are no secrets?

What he meant by there are no secrets is...There is a parallel world where the fans see what’s put in front of them and appreciate it for what they believe it to be and beside it is the peloton who know the real story. Therefore there are no secrets within the peloton, management, the UCI and anyone with a financial interest in cycling. That’s how he justified saying all the things he said. The same could be said of me to some extent.

What were your thoughts when you heard what he had said?

I don’t remember having any particular thoughts. By that point I knew the facts and I knew that all of his statements, including that speech, were directed at those on the outside looking in. To me and the rest of the peloton they were just necessary blather.

Where were you two weeks later when L’Equipe ran “The Armstrong Lie” story and revealed that six of his frozen samples from the 1999 Tour de France showed that he had used EPO?

I’m relatively certain I was back in California, and you’ll probably find it hard to believe but I really didn’t pay much attention after I saw Steve Johnson (the president of USA cycling) defend him. That confirmed for me that he was still protected, no matter what.

How did you manage your doping in ’05? The Wall St Journal piece said: *Mister*

Landis said he hired a Spanish doctor in Valencia to take transfusions and paid one person \$10,000 to make two separate deliveries of half-litre bags of blood during the 2005 Tour de France.

In 2004, the Postal Service got rid of Luis Garcia Del Moral, who was the team doctor, and I knew that he was often in charge of the logistics of doing transfusions and things like that, so I just contacted him and asked if he would do it for me. So I paid him to do it.

Del Moral?

Yeah.

You paid Del Moral?

Yeah.

Did that 'work'?

Did it work? Yeah, the reason that I was not as good in 2005 as I was in 2004 or 2006 was because I had surgery that winter and wasn't walking for weeks and it took a while to get back in shape. So drugs or no drugs weren't going to change that. I did the same thing in 2004 and 2005 and 2006; the one variable was that I had my hip issues to deal with and therapy and things like that. I mean, in all of the Tours I did exactly the same amount of blood (transfusing) except the first one (2002); the first one I did one transfusion which is 500 millilitres and the next four I did 1000 millilitres each, three separate times in 2006, because it was easier to maintain the continuous blood parameters that were being checked. But it ended up being the same total volume that I added so...yeah, Del Moral, in spite of denying that he ever saw any doping, like everybody does, that was all he really did.

Okay, so the 2006 Tour de France is on the horizon and Lance has retired and you are now established as a serious contender and a star in your own right. How did it feel to be a star?

It was uncomfortable in some ways but I knew I knew my hip wasn't going to last forever and that there was a good probability that, when it got replaced...well, who knows if I can race again? So I was always acutely aware that it was a temporary thing and that whatever was nice about it wasn't going to go on forever, but I liked it. It came with being treated well and with whatever pressure you put on yourself to win but that didn't bother me...So yeah, it was good, but the majority of my time was either spent training or focused on trying to win the Tour de France. I didn't go to rock star's houses and things like that; I was focused on the Tour and that was it/

What did having money do for you? Do to you?

No, I didn't spend any more money than I did before. I didn't change anything. I didn't buy any fast cars or...

What about the Harley-Davidson?

Yeah, I know it looks like some sort of status symbol but the main reason I bought it – and maybe you'll laugh at this - but they started doing more out-of-competition doping controls in 2005 and 2006, and so I bought it because I could park it in a garage and wear a black helmet with a facemask and a motorcycle helmet. Max, my brother-in-law at the time, would always drive behind me when I trained, so I would have him leave and see if there was anyone outside and if there were I would get on my Harley and leave.

I'm sorry I don't understand.

If there were people there waiting to do a control and I happened to be home, I could just go into the garage and put my helmet and facemask and jacket on and leave on the motorcycle. They might argue that it was me and I can deny it and say 'I don't have any idea what you're talking about.' But if they see you and you leave, you get a missed test. That was the purpose of buying it. I never really ended up riding it.

That was why you bought it?

Yeah (laughs). That was the beauty of putting it in the magazine; terrible, I shouldn't even laugh; it wasn't like I got satisfaction or a thrill of taking those risks. I think some people have a personality where they like the risk part of it, I didn't like that part.

You didn't?

No, it was just a practical thing for me...I've got to do this...I've got to get through it. It caused me stress more than it caused me a thrill, I didn't like it.

How did you actually think of that?

That's all I thought about. There were things I had to manage; I had to manage my training, I had to manage making sure I didn't get caught in an out-of-competition test and in the competition, you really didn't have to do much of anything that was detectable so...

Did you do a blood transfusion in '05 that went wrong?

No.

Did you ever do a transfusion that went wrong?

No, not that I know of, sometimes they felt more effective than other times but...the thing about the drugs is; it's got to the point in the press where they are saying it gives you 40% of an advantage but everything that goes on in the bike race without drugs, goes on in the bike race with drugs. You still have good days and bad days and all the other variables - you didn't sleep well, you didn't eat well, you have a good day and a bad day. Anytime you add the drug card they always attribute everything that happened to the drug but they will happen anyway. It just changes how fast you go relative to how fast you would have gone. I don't know how much, not 40% but it does help. There is no way it doesn't help.

2006 is your best ever season; you win Paris Nice, the Tour of Georgia and the Tour of California and you are one of the favourites for the Tour de France. The race starts in Strasbourg under the cloud of Operation Puerto and the exclusion of several riders including Ulrich and Basso. What were your thoughts when all this was going on?

Well, I seriously considered not doing anything at all. I came really close to just saying 'I'm not going to take any risks' but after thinking about the whole thing, just the fact that it was public and came out the way it did, wasn't going to change how people thought. It wasn't going to change how the UCI dealt with things. These are the very people that had been covering it up, so they're not all-of-a-sudden going to find Jesus. So I figured the risk was the same as every other Tour, that was my assessment and I think that's what happened. I don't think anything out of the ordinary happened; there weren't any police raids or there wasn't any real change in the way that the UCI dealt with things. But I did consider just not being part of it because there was a chance the UCI would say 'Okay, this is our chance, lets just burn the whole thing down and start over,' but I figured if they did that, and started testing old samples for things they couldn't test for before, I might be caught anyway so why not just try to win? So it was a complex thing to try to figure what the risks were, but I came to the conclusion that they were not significantly greater than before, so I just kind of accepted it and went forward with the plan.

What about the logistics of storing the blood and transporting it?

It's not that hard. It has to be kept just above freezing and the easiest way to do it if you don't have a specific medical refrigerator, which I didn't, was to put a big bowl of ice water in the refrigerator, because as long as there is ice in water, its always going to be just above freezing, so you just leave it in there. You really don't need any medical equipment at all, the only thing that's hard to get is the blood bags and I could get those from the Spanish guys (team-mates) or Del Moral or whoever. And once you have that all you need is ice water.

Where did you extract the blood for that Tour?

In Spain, in my apartment.

Did you take it with you to the Tour or give it to someone else?

I gave it to someone else. I can't tell you the name because I gave it to the authorities so they can...I mean there are certain people's names I don't want to give out yet until they do what they have to do.

When did you have the transfusions?

I had one on the night before the first mountain stage and then...here's what I did; I couldn't start the Tour with a haematocrit that's too far out of line, so I waited until after they did the immediate blood checks, to the night before the prologue and then added a 300 ml bag of blood. So I started at (with a haematocrit of) 44 - and it can vary a little but it really wouldn't call it into question, even if they tested me soon after that - then I did one the night before the first mountain stage, where I got the lead, and then I did one again before the first stage in the Alps. It's easier if you do it before the hard stages because the harder you ride, the numbers are naturally reduced just from stress hormones and things like that...If I looked at the course profile I could tell you - email me those questions and I can tell you specifically because I have it written down somewhere.

So you take the yellow jersey in the Pyrenees at Val 'D'Aran, lose it to Pereiro two days later, win it back on Alpe D'Heuz, lose the next day at La Toussuire and move back into the driving seat the next day with the epic ride to Morzine. You submit to doping control after the stage and submit a sample with traces of testosterone. Where did that come from? My read was that it was in a transfusion?

That was the hypothesis that a lot of people came up with and I couldn't defend against it at the time because I couldn't just say 'This is when I did the transfusion and this is when the positive test came.' But then they went back and ran the B samples on other tests and the pattern of the positives they came up with can in no way be related to the blood bags. It just doesn't make sense. And the complexity of the test made it so that they could convict me without anybody actually looking at what they actually did. That lab...they probably do some good tests but the results they came-up with were absolutely senseless. They really never did identify testosterone. And the dumb part is...I actually took testosterone the year before that

- the cream stuff I used the entire race - and I was tested and nothing came up. But then I decided if I am going to carry around drugs, I might as well carry around something that's in a syringe. Doing testosterone was easier but growth hormone worked better.

What does 'worked better' mean?

It felt better. The effects of these hormones are delayed. It's not like taking an amphetamine or a drug where you feel something different immediately; you really have to pay attention because the differences are subtle. Some anabolics work faster than others; some cause you to retain water more; for me, the growth hormone didn't make me feel as stiff and bloated as the testosterone did. And there was no risk (of detection) with the growth hormone at all, apart from just physically having it, so I just decided I would do that. USADA (the United States Anti Doping Agency) have asked me to try and reconcile the tests with what happened, and I don't want to discredit them or WADA (the World Anti Doping Agency) because I do think that there are some people there trying to do the right thing, but I stand by my argument that if you are going to have this strict liability thing, where people are responsible for everything they've got in their system, then you better get it right. I did use testosterone leading-up to the Tour, and I know what the clearance rate is, and I know more now about how the carbon-isotope test works and how long the delta change in the carbon isotope should last and how it should degrade over time and I can't match it up with a blood transfusion. It just doesn't make sense to me.

Okay, let's wind back and apply what happened to the race. So you do this epic ride to Morzine and win stage 17 but you don't actually take the yellow jersey back?

Correct, yes.

You won it back on the penultimate stage in the time trial?

Yeah.

So there is still pressure on you going into the time trial? You still have to do it?

Yeah, exactly but I was relatively sure...I mean, I know Pereiro and I know he wasn't going to have any new tricks that he hadn't already tried so...I had talked to him about it and he told me that he had another blood transfusion to do but I still wasn't concerned because I was a better time triallist than him regardless...

You talked to him about it?

Yeah, we talked openly about this in the peloton, that's why I couldn't believe no one did this before I did it. We literally just spoke openly; he did a blood transfusion and some artificial haemoglobin.

You're kidding me!

Yeah, and then he threw me under the bus (laughs) and I put up with it for four years!

Fuck!

Fuck him is right.

That's astonishing.

(He is laughing.) It's a stupid story, a long stupid story.

What about Postal? They didn't go round telling people they were doing transfusions, did they? Or Armstrong?

Oh, they knew. We spoke fairly openly about it with people - maybe Armstrong didn't so much but people did, yeah. I mean, I remember one specific incident, I think it was in 2003, and we had done a blood transfusion the night before and if you don't do it exactly right, and hold it and keep the pressure on it, (it leaves a

mark/bruise because) it's a much bigger needle. (Next day) I was riding and Michael Boogard came up next to me and he pointed to my arm and just smiled and winked and then he pointed at his arm...like, 'I got the same thing.'

I'm surprised, but I shouldn't be, it makes perfect sense. When Contador was busted recently you had people like Basso and Schleck supporting him.

Yeah but here's the problem - Pereiro said the opposite and that I stole it (the Tour) from him. But he was guilty too.

Yeah, that's worse.

Well I don't know if it's worse but it's harder for me to take. What *do* you say? Fuck! I don't know. I mean what they should say is just 'Look, everyone is immune - just tell us what the fuck is going on?' That's what I suggested to USADA and WADA that they just give everyone immunity and just get the facts but they won't do it.

For me, the giveaway that you were doping, or had doped in that Tour, was the press conference when you were asked about those who had been caught in Operation Puerto. That you dismissed the questions was telling for me.

I'm sure it was but I really didn't want to lie. I remember those questions; I remember being asked and trying not to directly answer them. But then, once there was a positive test, I was put in a position where I had to answer them and was left with a decision - what do I do now?

Okay, we'll come to that with a moment but let's go first to the Champs Elysees: Floyd Landis is the third American in history to win the Tour de France. President Bush called?

Yeah, soon after the stage was over and I was back in my hotel before the dinner.

Armstrong called you?

I believe I did speak to Armstrong; I can't specifically remember what he said but yeah...

How did you celebrate?

Phonak and Andy Rihs had organised a party and had rented a whole restaurant/bar. We had most of the sponsors and friends of the team, so there was probably at least 150 people there. They had made a video of the Tour and showed different clips and then we had a formal dinner and people stood-up and spoke and it was good. We probably didn't get out of there until one or two in the morning; some of the guys might have gone out further but I was exhausted and just went back to the hotel, which was ordinary for me. Normally, after the Tour de France some guys like to go out but once I turn my brain off that's it, I'm tired. Dr. Kay (his friend Dr. Brent Kay) had flown over in the morning to watch the stage and stayed for the party and quite a few of my friends were there. David and Rose were there; they flew home the next day with Ryan and that was the last time I saw David alive. That was it.

Did Amber go back?

No, Amber stayed and came along to Holland, to the criteriums. We were supposed to stay for a week and then head home. We stayed for three days or whatever and were given the news and drove straight back to Paris where Andy Rihs flew to meet us with his lawyers.

Okay, just go back a little bit...You had a criterium in Stiphout on Tuesday evening?

That sounds right, yeah.

So it was on Wednesday morning that you were told?

That's right.

How did you hear?

I was in my hotel room – Amber and I were given a suite with a conference room, a living room and a bedroom. Soon after getting up and having had breakfast, I got a call from John LeLangué from his room - he had come along to the criteriums just to hang out. He said “Floyd I need to talk to you, can I come-up to your room?” His voice was kind of crackly and he sounded really distraught and I knew immediately something was very wrong because I'd known him for two years, and never heard anxiety like that in his voice. I said “What's wrong?” And he repeated “I need to come to your room.” I hung the phone up and was paralysed with fear about what I was about to be told.

You knew?

Yeah, I knew immediately.

Instinctively?

Yeah, just by the tone of his voice. I had never heard somebody sound that stressed in their entire life. I knew it had something to do with doping and Phonak and my only hope was that it wasn't me but inside I knew that it was or he would have just told me on the phone. He came to the room clearly distraught and his hands were shaking. We went straight into the conference room and he closed the door. He immediately said “Floyd we have a positive on the team' to which I replied “Who?” He said you and then I had to sit down. He sat down at the table across from me. I said “What's it for?” He said: “I don't know but I got a call from Martina at the office who said they had just received a fax notifying us.”

Those were your words: 'What's it for?'

Yeah, because I knew what I had done and I thought it might have been for the cortisone I had used for my hip and they just didn't get their paperwork right. That

was the one thing I was holding out for in my mind.

Because you had an exemption to use the cortisone?

Yeah. He said "I don't know but I need to get the fax. They are going to send the fax here from the headquarters." At that point I just wanted to be alone more than anything on earth but it would be weeks before I got that chance. I went back into the living room and I didn't want to tell Amber but by the look on my face she knew something was wrong and I had no choice. I sat beside her on the couch and told her that I had tested positive and she started crying and asked how it had happened. I tried to be assuring but there was no way I could because I knew at that moment that LeLangue said "you" that my life was fucked and would never be the same. I was cold and sweating and unable to make any decision but I did my best to promise Amber that we'd both be okay, and I'd do whatever it would take to make sure of that, but I have never felt anything like that. I wasn't okay for about a month. I didn't sleep at all for at least two weeks; I would just lie there awake. And the longer it went, the worse it got and the harder it was for me to make decisions. I couldn't think clearly.

What happened next?

We waited there about half-an-hour until we got the fax saying it (the positive) was testosterone and I said "This doesn't make any sense. Of all the things I thought it might be this doesn't make sense. I don't know what to do about this." And he said "We should probably get out of here because the press is going to find out. Let's go back to Paris and we'll have Andy fly there." So we got in the car and drove back to the very hotel that I had stayed in the night after I had won the Tour – a big suite with a view of the Eiffel Tower - and I could barely be in that room. It hurts my chest now just thinking about it because I knew what was coming. I knew that whatever choice I made it was going to be ugly and I wasn't prepared for it, mentally or physically. I was tired and I was in France and I wanted to get out of there more than anything on earth. I did not want to be there and so by that evening Andy had gotten there, and his lawyers had gotten there...

What about Amber?

She was with me the whole time, yeah. So we had Wednesday and Thursday morning to talk with the lawyers, and the Phonak guys, but mostly they were concerned with how to manage Andy Rihs' problems because he had been through this before and now Phonak is a public company and he is going to have to deal with that. But it feels like it all ran together into one day. I can't differentiate Thursday evening from Wednesday morning or the following Saturday - up until not long ago I didn't really stop to think about it. I honestly thought that David had committed suicide months after the Tour was over but it was literally two weeks. To me it felt like an eternity so if I am hazy on the timeline...

There was a telephone conference with reporters from the US on Thursday evening and you were asked if you had ever taken performance enhancing drugs. You sounded shaken, really shaken. This was your reply: "I'll say no...The problem I have here is that most of the public have an idea about cycling because of the way things have gone in the past so I'll say no, knowing a lot of people are going to assume I'm guilty before I've had the chance to defend myself."

Yeah, that's what I said, because I hadn't in my own mind quite committed to lying yet and I didn't have the answer right. I didn't want to believe that I had to answer it and I didn't want to say 'no' so I just said the first thing that came into my head...I might as well have said yes...

I found it interesting that you didn't say no?

I didn't want to, I didn't, but I couldn't say yes. I was not capable; I wasn't strong enough; I was too tired; I was too shaken; I was too exhausted to even consider saying yes. And if I said 'yes' I knew what was going to happen - I was going to have a million questions. So if I just said no and kept saying no...but I couldn't even bring myself to do that yet, I couldn't think. It (the news) came out on Thursday and the main print media had it on the covers on Friday and I had to fly out of Charles de Gaulle (airport) to go to Spain because at this point I was just operating on...anybody that had any advice on what to do I was going to take it.

Yes, that seemed odd. Why did you go to Madrid?

I don't know, they told me to go to Madrid, so I went to Madrid.

Who are they? Who was giving you advice?

I asked (the Phonak lawyers) what to do and they said 'We can't represent you, we represent Andy,' so I asked my team-mate (Miguel) Perdiguero – he was on the Tour team with me – and he said 'I know these Spanish lawyers; they got (Inigo) Landaluze off a testosterone charge from the Dauphine, you should talk to them.' So I said, 'Perfect, it sounds as if they know what they are doing, I'll just go there.' So we fly out of Paris into Madrid and I'm on the cover of every paper; I have to walk through Charles de Gaulle and I have never been so afraid. I don't know why I was afraid...I just didn't want anybody to see me, I wanted to disappear. So we get to Madrid and these lawyers say, 'We're going to have a press conference.' And I said 'No, I'm not going to have a press conference. I won't do that. I can't go through that. I just had a phone (conference) yesterday and it caused me so much stress that I can't do it again.' And they came back and said 'You are just going to talk to this one reporter on camera and here's what you are supposed to read.' And he handed this (statement) to me and said 'Okay, let's go downstairs.' So I thought 'Okay, there's just one reporter' and we got down there, and there were probably 80 people in the lobby and they didn't do anything to keep them away from me. They just couldn't get enough of it; they loved it; they were on TV - that's all they cared about.

The lawyers?

The lawyers, yeah, they were terrible. They put me in this room and gave me this paper to read and it's like a Google translation of some Spanish thing and said 'Read this and we'll have it translated into Spanish.' So I read it, and as I was reading it I was changing some things to make sense, but by the time I got done I was thinking to myself: 'Man, I can't imagine how dumb that just looked because I don't even know what I just read. It didn't make any sense.' And then they took some questions and I got up and left as fast as I could get out of there. I thought: 'I've got to get home. I need different lawyers. I'm just going to pretend that didn't happen.' I mean, here I was saying that this was somehow some naturally produced testosterone when I didn't even know what the test results were! I didn't know anything. But like I said, at that point I was not in a state of mind where I was capable of dealing with it. So pretty much everything that happened between the

time I was told, and when I got back home, was just the advice of whoever was around. I was happy to take whatever advice I could get because I couldn't function. I think (deep down) I knew that there was no fixing it. I knew what I should do but I didn't have the strength to do it. I couldn't accept it so I just let whatever happened just happen. It was not the way I normally behave, it was completely out of character. I hope I never feel that way again because that was not me. It wasn't me.

Okay, here's what I am curious about: You had these clowns of lawyers in Madrid making a circus of you. You are confused, you need advice, you need somebody to say 'Okay Floyd, sit down and this is what you are going to do.' Who was advising you?

No, there was nobody.

Nobody?

Nobody. I wasn't Lance. I didn't have any advisors, it was just me and I was...

I don't mean advisors, I mean a friend?

There was nobody there. I was alone. There was Amber but she didn't know what to do...She felt the same way I did.

She never suggested that you should just tell the truth?

If we talked about it, I can't remember it because, like I say, it all runs together. I'm sure we talked about it, I'm sure. There is no doubt in my mind that we discussed what I should do but once I had said no - and not very well but I had said no - then I decided 'Okay, I'm going to stick with that now.'" But I couldn't think. I couldn't process what was going on. I could barely process the magnitude of winning the Tour in the first place, and that was on a positive note, and this was the opposite. This was something so unbelievable to me but on the other extreme. And it happened so quickly that I was just overwhelmed. And again, that's not to try to justify what I did, obviously I lied. And I was used to lying at that point because people would ask every now and then (about doping) but not be so direct about it.

And over a very short period of time I just lost touch with what was going on. By the time I got home, I was so disoriented from not sleeping and being tired from the Tour that it was months before I felt...I mean I didn't feel okay for probably a year. You can not imagine what shock like that feels like. If someone had told me you could feel that way I wouldn't have believed it.

The thing I find interesting – well I find everything interesting – but Lance Armstrong has had the same news delivered to him but he's not shocked. He doesn't react in the same way. He was told he had tested positive during the Tour in '99 but it didn't affect him the way it affected you?

No, clearly it didn't, I wouldn't have been able to race.

Why did it affect you so profoundly?

Because I couldn't call Verbruggen and tell him to make it go away. I didn't have anybody to call. I couldn't call USA Cycling. He was on the inside. He's on the board of USA Cycling - these guys take care of him. There was someone to call. Maybe it's because he's a different human being and reacts differently but I think it was because he had the security of knowing that it will get fixed. Maybe there was some doubt, but at least the majority of him was confident that it could be fixed, whereas I knew that there was nobody to call, there was no fixing it.

David was your best man?

Yeah.

Why didn't you talk to him?

I don't know. I didn't feel there was anybody I could call and ask for advice. I felt 'How could he possibly know what to do? I have no idea what to do. And I know more than he does.' If I would have called, it would have been just to say 'Hi' for comfort and nothing would have comforted me at that point; nothing I could have done would have made me feel okay. I felt the same whether it was night or day or

outside or inside; I felt disconnected, completely disconnected.

Did he not try and call you?

I'm sure he did. I didn't answer the phone, I just turned it off.

You didn't answer the phone?

Not for most people, no. I got many, many phone calls but most of them I didn't answer. I talked to Lance because I figured if there was one guy that might be able to relate (to what I was going through it was him.) All he said was: "You have to learn how to say 'no' better. Just say no and stop talking," that was his advice. Or say 'Absolutely not.' But for the most part I didn't talk to people.

At what stage did you speak to Lance?

Right after that phone conference when I said "I'll say no." I'm sure he had somebody listening in because he knew what I'd said and he called me to say "That's not how you do it."

Because this is always a huge moment for him, too?

Yeah, absolutely.

He must have been wondering 'Is Floyd going to tell all here?'

I'm sure that must have crossed his mind and I'm sure once he made that phone call he knew that he was safe – at least for now.

Jonathan Vaughters has said that he advised you to come clean?

He did, yeah. He sent me some texts saying 'Just tell the truth.'

It was a text message? You didn't actually speak to him?

No, I didn't actually speak to him but I responded to his texts because he was another guy I figured 'Okay, he knows more than most people. I can talk to him. He's not going to be too judgemental.' But here's the problem; in my head the truth is more complex than in Vaughters head, and I've now finally understood that. (Last April), when I was going to tell the story, I had some correspondence with him - because he knew before some other people did - and his advice was, "Just say what you know about you and don't say anything about anyone else." And I said, "Yeah, but Jonathan, this story involves other people. How do I tell the story without that? What do I do when they say 'Who helped you dope on the Postal Service team?'" He said "Just say it's none of your business." Those were his words. I said, "Vaughters, have you ever talked to the press? Saying 'none of your business' is probably the worst thing you can say." In my mind the truth was complex. In his mind it was 'Yeah, I doped now just go home.' That's what he was trying to tell me to say.

This was a text exchange?

Yeah. In my mind there was no difference between saying "I didn't do it" and telling a half-truth like David Millar did: "I did it once and was hoping to get caught and I was too dumb to throw the syringe away." That's not what I was going to do. If I was telling the truth, then I was telling the truth and if I was going to feel guilty about lying then fuck it, I'll just lie and hope for the best. I don't know why Vaughters sees things as simple as they are, they are not that simple.

That doesn't reflect particularly well on him.

No, I agree, that's how I saw it. And that's why I thought 'Well, if I'm going to lie, why don't I just save myself too? I'm saving everyone else!' But no one would have believed it anyway. No one was going to believe a story where I invented doping when I was on the Postal Service team. What was I going to say? I only doped in the Tour de France?

(Kimmage asked Vaughters for his version of the conversation and was emailed the following: "I told Floyd to be totally honest and upfront about everything that was or could be pertinent information to help USADA and WADA fight doping. I attempted to connect

him to Travis Tygart, as I trust Travis to be fair. I did not tell him he should publicly disclose anything about anyone else to media outlets, as media outlets do not serve as enforcement regarding anti-doping regs and public disclosures can actually impede the progress of anti-doping investigators. I felt that the proper authorities were those who needed absolute truth to make meaningful changes in the sport. Not journalists. And that's what I told him.")

Pat McQuaid also claims he told you to tell the truth?

He didn't tell me to tell the truth, he told me there was no way I could win if I fought it, and that I should just keep my money and stay at home. And he was right! But I am absolutely certain he didn't want me to tell the truth, otherwise he would have just said that. At the time, the way I took it (his advice) was: "Floyd, you're the fall guy, this is rigged, deal with it." He didn't say "Floyd tell the truth" – not that I would have anyway. I'm just trying to clarify the way he worded it. It was not the same to me – whether he meant it that way or not, I don't know but that's the way I took it.

Didn't Frankie Andreu come out around that time?

Yeah, that winter I think, the end of 2006.

Would that not have helped in some way?

I kind of envied him at the time. I watched what he did. He said 'I did this and I feel bad and guilty' and that was the end of it. But I was past that, I was over the waterfall.

I knew that I could say that, but that wouldn't be the end of it for me. I wasn't going to be left alone and I wasn't mentally fit to do that, I couldn't do it. So I envied him, I envied the fact that he could say that and just let it be. I wished I could have done that.

But I knew the complexity of trying to tell the truth and then, to add more complexity to it, I didn't want to put anyone else through it. I mean there are plenty of guys that I do care about, and do like and I didn't want them to have to go through that. And I guess, at the very least, they got to race for five more years and earn a living and do what they wanted to do. I feel better having let them have that

at least. I know I'm going to get grief forever for naming other people but I don't know how else to tell the story. And the story doesn't end until you tell the truth, and then there are people involved and it's bad but...

Okay, so you return to California after the debacle in Madrid and was it two weeks later when David committed suicide?

Probably a week after I got home...so about two weeks after the end of the Tour.

I know this is painful for you but can you talk about that please?

I spent most of the time on the phone to Howard Jacobs or lawyers trying to find out what to do for those few days before it happened. Amber's brother, Max, was staying with us. He was standing by the back door and the phone rang and it was Rose (his mother) and so he answered it. He said "Hello" and then his voice kind of crumpled and he turned white and as soon as I saw his reaction I knew David was dead, there was no way around it. He almost fainted. I grabbed him and sat him down and said "Max give me the phone." He said "No." He wouldn't give me the phone. He started crying. I said "Give me the phone" and he finally gave it to me. I said "Rose, what's going on?" And she said "David shot himself." I said "Is he dead?" But she didn't want to admit that he was dead. She said "Oh, he has some brain function and he's in the hospital but I don't know if he is going to live." I said "Alright Rose, where are you?" She said "At the hospital." I said "Just stay there and we'll come down." So we got down there and the doctor in the hospital wouldn't let us see him because he had shot himself in the head. Arnie was there. He was trying to (comfort) Amber and Rose. I remember the conversation, he said 'People often have heart disease or illnesses, and sometimes they survive and sometimes they die, but people rarely look at mental disease the same way. But it is the same, sometimes you don't survive. David suffered from depression his whole life and sometimes it's fatal.' The strange part was that it didn't really have any effect on me, because I was already in shock, all I did was just react. It wasn't that I didn't care it was...I already felt so bad that it didn't feel any worse. Rose was in complete disarray. She came to our house for a while and stayed there and I tried to talk to her whenever I got the chance: "Look, things are going to be alright. I'll make sure they're alright. We're going to figure out a way to get through this." But I guess, at the time, I couldn't really see it because I wasn't really looking ahead at

all. I couldn't see that this was going to take a long time. And it's probably good that I didn't know it was going to take a long time because I don't know that I would have made it.

Really?

About that time, I ended up in the hospital with severe chest pains. I thought I was dying. I did all these tests and thought I was dying. I didn't know what was going on but I guess it was just from stress. I did MRI and all these things and they said I was alright but it didn't go away for about a week. And it honestly hasn't come back since until (I've started talking about it) now, but it's not like it was then. I couldn't lift my arms above my head; my chest was tight, and I sort of have that feeling now...but don't worry, you're not causing me to have any breakdown or anything. A lot of these things happened and I immediately had to dismiss them, and not think about them, or it was overwhelming. I could only deal with what was immediately in front of me at the time, and so a lot of the decisions I made were completely short-sighted. I guess, looking at it from the outside, anybody could say 'Well why didn't you just tell the truth?' but it wasn't that simple. And it wasn't like that would fix it either. My life was now upside down whether I told the truth or not, and I just didn't have the state of mind and the wherewithal to even think about changing paths at this point.

David didn't come to see you when you came home from Madrid?

No. His restaurant wasn't going so well. I had loaned him money and would gladly have given him more money and I didn't call him because I figured if he needed something he would ask and I just...didn't see him. It wasn't that long but it was long enough that you would think best friends would see each other...so, yeah, as strange as it sounds that I didn't see my best friend, I think he saw it the same way. Because he kind of thought the way I did and figured I would just ask if I needed something and he didn't want to bother me. I spoke to him on the phone once or twice but I never saw him again. And he only lived an hour away but...

And when you spoke to him on the phone?

He acted like he was fine. He didn't want to cause me any stress. He never said a single thing.

And you can't ascribe motive to anyone who takes their own life?

No, you can't. The problem is (winning the Tour) was such a magnificent thing to happen, it was so big, so how do you separate anything that happens within that context and say that doesn't have anything to do with it? For me it was not difficult because I already felt so bad that nothing really changed. I just put it on the list of: 'That's one more thing I'm going to forget about until I can deal with it.' If I had stopped to think about it, I would have just given up. I don't know what that means but I didn't want to find out.

Your decision to go to arbitration and to spend all your money fighting the case... I mean, if you had doped - which you had - what was the logic of that?

My immediate reaction was just one of 'This is what I have to do because I can't imagine admitting to it right now.' But over a period of time, when I started to understand the circumstances and the details of the case, I became more and more upset about the way it was handled. I was upset about how the test was performed and the haphazard way the lab operated but I was more upset at the way the politics had worked and the way that I was just taken and (made a scapegoat). I didn't have what Lance had: Lance had tested positive in the Tour de France and USA Cycling defended him. I spoke to those guys and asked them for help and they just basically told me that (I would get a team) and get back into cycling. I was assured that, whatever I do, I need to just not talk and I'll have a team.

What about the option of taking the two year suspension and accepting that you were being screwed but you kept your money?

Who cares about money? Who cares?

You don't?

No, man, I didn't have money before and I don't have money now and I'm the same guy. It's nice to have money and it makes things easier but I can earn money by doing other things. I don't need to just ride off into the sunset and tell people I am rich – what is that all about? Yeah, I wish I hadn't spent all my money. I thought at some point that I would be able to race my bike again and earn a decent living but that doesn't mean I ever was concerned that I couldn't earn a living doing something else. But the ultimate answer to that question is 'Who cares?' I would have spent more if I had had it.

How much of your book 'Positively False' was false?

The doping part; the story of my life, I was quite happy and quite proud of but unfortunately...here's the problem with the doping part. It's not like a criminal case where they can't ask you 'Did you ever commit a crime?' I mean, if you fight a speeding ticket, they don't ask: "Did you ever speed?"...not to equate it with a speeding ticket but you have to say nothing happened because if I admit to something then they just drop the testosterone case and get me on that.

Tell me about the Floyd Fairness Fund. You had some big donors and some small donors and the photograph I am going to show to you now is a smaller donor waving a placard that says 'Floyd is innocent.' (I show him the photograph.) What's going through your head at that moment?

Its okay with me because I know that if I was given ten hours to sit down and talk to him, and tell him what happened, he would understand...well, he might not understand but at least he would have a better understanding of how I came to make the decisions. He might not agree but at least he would have a better perspective. But I can't tell him. I can't tell the truth because if I tell the facts to the press it's not going to come out right. And I'm going to get ripped apart by other people and I can't explain to him why I did what I did because I just don't have the time. I would love to; I wish I could sit down with every person and just explain to them but where do you even start? Where do I go back to the beginning? I mean, that's the problem I have with Jonathan's statement that I should just tell what I know about me. That's not the story at all. That's not the truth. There is more to it than just the doping. And if you don't see the whole picture you don't know anything. You might as well not know. And I didn't want to be the guy to have to explain it, but ultimately I wasn't going to be okay if I didn't explain it, so here we

are. But I don't know (back then) that telling the truth would have made me feel any different. I was still in shock and still feeling badly. And just accepting everything that had happened was so hard that I wasn't ready to tell the truth; I wasn't ready to try to explain it. And yeah, I probably waited too long but I can't put into words what it felt like during those five years so I hope people will just give me some benefit of the doubt on that.

What about the bigger donors? You did tell some of those?

The majority of them, yeah, because a lot of them had a financial interest either in Tailwind Sports or with USA Cycling and I figured I'd tell them the facts and if they helped then...I mean I was advised both by Jim Ochowicz and Steve Johnson – the president and CEO of USA Cycling. I talked to them openly about it and their advice was 'Get through it and you'll get back in cycling and we're sorry but we can't help you.' And again, that's not to pawn it off on them, I could have told the truth, that's not blaming anyone but all the indications were that the wise thing to do, the prudent thing to do, was to shut up and go home. But I can't do that - maybe it's a personality fault - but I can't just take it and go home. In the big picture I was wrong but I focused on the part that I was right about and justified it in my head.

What about the effect on this and your relationship with Amber?

There is no doubt in my mind that my entire life would be different if this hadn't happened. I can't say if this hadn't happened that everything would have been wonderful forever but I wasn't the same. I became obsessed with fighting this far more than I was obsessed with racing bicycles. I spent 24 hours a day reading stuff. I became a scientist and a lawyer and I'd spend all my time at the law firm. I couldn't stop and think; I couldn't rest; I couldn't sleep; I didn't want to stop; I wanted to work 24 hours a day until this was fixed. That was the only way I could get through it. It destroyed everything around me and whether things would have been fine with or without that I've no idea but it affected everything. And I feel bad for a lot of people; a lot of people close to me went through...well, not as much as I did, but they were as emotionally invested in the Tour de France as I was...

You say emotionally invested in the Tour de France. But this is your wife you are talking about? She doesn't give a fuck about the Tour de France?

No, I was just stating in general about the people around me, but you're right. To her, she didn't care about that but I guess I was being selfish in the fact that I was in shock and wasn't able to even care that other people were as well, whether it was over the Tour or how I was feeling or behaving or whatever. I just didn't care about anything else; all I cared about was that this needed to get fixed and I was obsessed with it. It wasn't healthy but it was my way of coping with it. I couldn't just leave. I couldn't just go away somewhere and forget it.

What about the process of writing the book? Did that help?

At the time it did help a little, but I wished I wasn't writing it. I had to because I needed money; I was paid a total of \$130,000 which was spent on lawyers but everything I could do to get the money to finance this thing I needed to do. I knew that I should wait and write the real book. I knew it was a bad idea but I was committed to this and I couldn't separate myself enough to look at what was really going on. I just couldn't do it. It sounds crazy that you could know on one hand and not know on the other but...

But it was a kind of craziness, wasn't it?

It was such a twisted situation that I couldn't really figure it out...I was doing what I could do and then, on another level, the more complicated outcome was: 'What if something else happened in the meantime and I had to admit it? What if more evidence came out? Or somebody talked? Then what?' There was so many things that could happen that I just figured: 'I have no control over any of this.'

Tell me about the night you smashed the porcelain bowl you got for winning the Tour? Was it night?

It was in the morning when I got the phone call from Maurice (Suh), my lawyer, saying that they were going to announce the ruling of the first hearing, the USADA hearing. At that point, I had started to accept reality but I had a lot of hope. I thought there was a chance they might say something like 'We think he doped but

you can't operate a lab this way.' That was my best possible scenario. I refused to believe that it might not go that way; I refused to prepare myself because I couldn't think forward, all I could do was tell myself: 'This is going to work; this is going to be fine.' My friends, Will (Geoghegan) and Brent (Kay), were both there in the morning and we were going to go for a ride and we got a call saying they are going to tell us (the verdict) in 20 minutes or something. We had gone half-a-mile and we just turned around and rode back and I just sat in the garage. I had 20 minutes to think about what was going to happen and the more I thought about it, the more mad I got about the entire thing. I got the phone call and Maurice said 'We lost' and he wanted to explain (the case) to me and I said 'I don't care, I don't want to hear the reason.' I went inside and tried to talk to Amber and she just started crying because things were already (pretty strained). I was obsessed with it already and I think she knew this was going to be more of the same. I went upstairs and walked by where the (trophy) cabinet was and I had walked by that thing a hundred times, and every single time I walked by it I wanted to smash it. I don't know, I thought it would make me feel better, just to demonstrate that I didn't need that stupid thing and I didn't want it. It wasn't me. It had made me into something that I wasn't and so, as I was walking by, I just grabbed it and said 'I'm gonna smash it' and I did. I felt better for about five minutes (smiles) and didn't ever regret it. It felt good to get rid of it and I was happy that it was gone but Amber wasn't happy...

She wasn't?

No, she was mad, because we didn't have much left at that point. I had sold most of the things I had got - all of the yellow jersey's and stuff - to try to raise money; everything I had ever got, all the shit you collect at the Tour of France was gone and that was the only thing that was left. She wasn't happy that I had smashed it. I guess she had at least still some sentimental attachment to it just because it was part of her life.

You say the trophy had made you into something you weren't?

Yeah, it represented a turning point in my life where I had to lie, and I didn't want to lie, not like that. I mean, I'd been asked about drugs before but it wasn't like this; innocent people weren't invested in it before that. The people that were invested in it before that, the people who might otherwise have won, were doping as well and I didn't feel like I was taking anything from anybody. But now I was. Now there

were people that didn't deserve to be involved that were, and it was too complicated to just walk away, and that thing (the trophy) was the last piece that represented what made me do that. And I was disappointed in myself that something so stupid – a bicycle race! - would even make me do that. I wanted it to go away, that's all. It was one of the more irrational things I did but at least I didn't have to look at it any more after that and for a while I decided I was just going to tell the truth – both times I lost I seriously considered doing it – but I started to think about what it would do to other people and...

Why did you appeal when you lost the USADA case?

Because I was pretty sure that...again, I had learned a lot of things along the way that I couldn't have known before, but I was relatively certain that the arbitrators in the first case were already too invested in the other side winning. I thought 'Okay, we've got to appeal (to CAS, the Court of Arbitration for Sport) where we've got some reasonable arbitrators that will listen.' I wasn't ready to quit yet, but one thing that upsets me is that they didn't just speed everything up. They blame me for dragging it out, but I spent close to a million dollars in filing briefs back and forth between WADA, just to get the documentation from the lab. They wouldn't give it to me. They said 'You're not entitled to that.' It's not like a criminal system where you are entitled to the evidence against you and it took six or seven months just to get the paperwork. And then it took three months to analyse it and then the first hearing was over. And then in the second hearing, because there were three different arbitrators from three different countries and it was hard to get a date that actually worked for all of them, it ended up taking another nine months. And then they waited another three and a half months to give me the ruling, so effectively they took two years to give me the ruling.

And then they gave me an extra six months (suspension) because I had to settle a case in France – because I couldn't fight two cases in different places – and they used that against me. I was given two and a half years and I was upset about that. For whatever it's worth, I have no faith in any of that. The way that works will never solve doping, that whole (process) has to be completely overhauled but on the other hand, I'm no better, because unless people tell the truth it's not going to get solved either, so I've got to do my part first.

When did you reach the point of separation or divorce from Amber? What was the breaking point?

It was just a process. It was probably a year after I won the Tour that things were just...I just wasn't myself.

You didn't have kids together?

No, we never had any kids but Ryan is effectively my daughter. I never adopted her but I take care of her and she calls me Dad.

Didn't you want kids?

I never in the last five years stopped to even think about it. I couldn't. The last thing I needed was more stress than I already had and...

What about before that? You were married for six years before you won the Tour?

Yeah, but before that I always felt young and that there was going to be time. And then this happened and the five years went by and in some ways it felt like a million years, and in some ways it felt like a day. From either of those perspectives I wasn't in a position to think about adding any more stress to my life. I mean, on top of all that, a month after David committed suicide I had my hip replaced and couldn't walk for six weeks and was on painkillers. It was just one thing after another. If I never feel like that again it will be fine with me. Everybody goes through some period in their life, or many periods in their life, where they have a lot of stress, and I'm hoping that was mine. I'm hoping I can find a way to just be happy without setting any goals that are too high or find a way to be happy by helping other people or something, just something. But first I've got to be able to tell the truth and if I can't do that, I am not going to be able to help anybody else.

When did you hit rock bottom?

Man, about ten times - I always thought it was rock bottom but I was so low

already, I really was severely depressed for the last five years. There were times when it felt better, and I thought I felt good, but I never really felt good, just a little better than before. I couldn't remember what it felt like to feel good. The thing is, maybe you would expect that rock bottom is when you decide to tell the truth but I went through all the bad times, and I was starting to get better, and I finally raced my bike last year (2009). I didn't race well. I was feeling just bad about the whole situation and wasn't really that focused but it was good for me; I had a routine and I would set little goals and even if I didn't achieve them it was something, right? And getting through a year of that was critical in feeling...human again. And so rock bottom was a while ago. It has been getting slowly better since. I am not perfectly fine yet but I don't feel completely disconnected from the world like I did. And I was lucky I had never in my life been exposed to recreational drugs, or other things, or I probably would have had real problems but it never crossed my mind. I just don't do that.

What about alcohol? Did you drink?

For a while I did, yeah, I mean not all day, every day or something like that but I would have a few drinks every day for quite some time and it got to a point where I realised that I had to stop. I went to some therapy for a while and realised that I was just trying to avoid thinking again - except that this time I was using alcohol rather than riding my bike. I realised that I was not going to be alright if I just keep avoiding it. I can't go back and make it different. I can't change the facts. The facts are going to remain the same forever, so if I just deny that they exist I am not going to get through it. So then I had to face it and that was equally as turbulent - feelings of up and down and trying to figure out what the response was going to be. Or what was going to happen to me, I didn't know. Some of the lawyers told me I was going to get arrested for perjury and put in prison; some of them said 'Just don't do it because you will get sued.' I had to go through all that and weigh all these things that might happen to me and ultimately I came to the point where it didn't matter what the risk was, I was going to pay the price for what I did regardless, and that was okay with me. I hope its not prison but if it is, then at least when I get out of there, I can tell the truth and I'm going to feel better. And I will sleep better at night and won't be worried about what I dream about or think about how things used to be because they are just not going to be that way any more, that's it, its over. Then I got to the point where I made the decision to come clean and I had to try to figure out what to do, because there is no template for this...

Practically every doper in the last five years has been welcomed back to the sport with open arms but not you. What was it about you?

Because I tried to point out the corruption in the system; they didn't point at the UCI, they didn't point at WADA but goddammit I won't go down like that, I won't be that guy.

And what about the injustice of that? You were obviously aware of that in '09 when you could not secure a ride with a Pro Tour team?

It was clear that I never would, yeah.

You asked?

Yeah.

Who did you ask?

At the end of '09 I made some calls...

Not before?

No, before that I had decided I was going to come clean in July of '08 and then I went back into my depression and decided I didn't want to do it. I got to the end of that year and Dr Kay and a couple of other guys that had helped pay for things, and sort of knew the facts, thought it would be good if I raced again and offered to finance the team. Because I didn't want to go ask a team; I knew that if I went on a Pro Tour team and tried to race, I was going to be a failure because I hadn't ridden my bike (for three years). I hadn't done anything, all I did was drink and hang around law firms. So I was lucky to have friends like that to put a million dollars into it. We didn't put up enough money so that I could actually be paid - unlike Lance, I really did race for free that year - but I didn't care. I just wanted to race and thought 'Maybe I'll feel better,' but I didn't. Some days I was okay, and would

race okay, and other days I just didn't like being who I was...

You seemed particularly irritable at the Tour of California?

I was, because at that point I realised that I should have done something sooner, I should have just come clean. That was the first time I was allowed to race and in my head I had this idea that once I would get there something was going to be different, that I would remember what it felt like and be better. And I got there and immediately realised that it was never going to be like that again until...at least until I tell the truth.

Did the fact that it was also Lance's comeback race – or the second race of his comeback – add anything to the mix?

Sure, that was particularly irritating but not more than a lot of the other things I had gone through. I was fully aware the UCI could have done something about it and didn't; I was fully aware that USA Cycling had defended Lance and got him through that stuff and wouldn't help me, so I blamed them just as much as him. It wasn't like I singled him out. I mean, at the risk of sounding like it was about him, there was plenty of things that irritated me but I won't deny that that was a problem for me.

That he was being feted as the hero again?

And that he was allowed back before he should have been allowed back. I asked USA Cycling about it and they told me it was because he had never had a positive test. And I pointed out that if fact that was not true and they said 'Well, that's not what the UCI says' and it was just one thing after another. And eventually the levee breaks, that's what happens.

Before I interrupted, you said you asked (about a Pro Tour team) at the end of '09?

I did. I asked Vaughters because he would at least tell me the truth. He said that he

would call the Tour of France and ask them if it was okay and according to him – I didn't talk to the Tour de France society – but according to him, he called them and they told him that they weren't sure and that they would get back to him. And they never did. That was his response – that they never gave him an answer. He wouldn't take the risk. I also talked to Johan (Bruyneel) and he said that there is just no way that a new team like RadioShack would be able to hire me and still get into the races.

But Bruyeel is the guy who wanted to hire Basso?

No, I understood, that's why I quit asking. I knew that there was somebody... maybe not telling them specifically but they knew that you just don't hire me. So then I decided I would race for Rock Racing. I didn't want to race for (Michael Ball) for various reasons – I knew from a PR standpoint that it was the worst possible thing I could do, but I also disliked the guy. But it was my only choice; no one else would hire me so I thought 'Okay, I'll take the risk.' And then, according to him, the UCI's main contention was that he had hired me and it was causing problems with getting a licence. I don't know that I believe him. I don't believe that the UCI would not do that but I don't know that I believe that's the only reason, he had a lot of things going against him so for him to say that it was my fault might have been a little bit disingenuous. They notified him in February that he didn't have a team and then, in another strange coincidence that I find hard to believe was a coincidence - they notify me a few weeks later that I have been taken-off the out-of-competition testing list, which immediately eliminates six more months for me, because as soon as I am out of it, I can't be on a team again for six more months. And I didn't ask to be taken off, I didn't have any contact with them at all, they were free to come test me. And that was it. I decided I was going to tell the truth. I had been considering it all along anyway and had been closer and closer to accepting that this is what I've got to do but I decided: 'Alright, as much as I have to lose in hurting other friends and emotional distress, at least now I've confirmed that there's nothing else to lose, nothing.'

What do you mean by there was nothing else to lose?

There was nothing else for me in cycling. There was no team for me, no matter what I do it was going to get worse and worse until I leave, not that that's a deciding factor, but at least I didn't have to consider that any more. And then, the

thought process was 'How do I do it? Who do I trust?' So I went to USADA and didn't tell them any names. I said 'Here's what happened. Here's how we did it. What do you think I should do?' And all they wanted to know was names. They wanted to know who would give them information against who, and basically how to get information about Lance. I said 'Look, the only thing I'd feel comfortable with is if you tell me you would give everybody immunity. Don't ban anybody, just bring 'em in here one at a time and keep it confidential. Give them a first strike if you have to, but immunity, and find out what the fuck is going on, because you don't have any idea.' They didn't have the first clue about the magnitude of it and that's when I was relatively convinced that at least they weren't on the inside, because if I had told Pat McQuaid this stuff he would not have been surprised, but these guys didn't know. So then I wrote some things down on emails and started copying people and decided I would tell USA Cycling, just to demonstrate to USADA what those guys actually do when this happens. So I sent them some emails just to see what the reaction was and of course, I started getting calls from their lawyers, and Bill Stapleton contacted USA Cycling's lawyers and asked to talk to me, through them, before they ever talked to USADA about it. And because the Tour of California had let me into the race the year before, I went to Andrew Messick and explained everything to him and he said: "What are you going to do about it?" And I said "I don't know. I've thought about going (back) to USADA but I haven't done it yet. I want to tell them but I want them to be fair and for all of it to come out at once and find a solution, not just destroy peoples lives." And he said "Yeah, I think that would be a good idea. I think you should go to USADA." He was clearly distraught over what he had been told and as much as he kept asking why people would believe me, it was clear that he believed me. And then, at some point, I started copying more people because I started to get paranoid; I started to get scared because I knew once Lance found out about this, he was going to do whatever he had to do to stop it. I still hadn't figured out in my head how I was going to get the story out but I knew it would have to be public, because that was the only way I was going to feel better, if I could tell the story. And then, when I was finally comfortable about who I could trust – I was pretty sure I could trust USADA and had spoken to (Jeff) Novitzky by this time – somebody, and I don't know who, sent those emails to the Wall Street Journal.

They broke the story and then you gave them an interview?

Reed (Albergotti) wrote a story that I thought was reasonable – it wasn't slanted one way or the other – so I sat down with him and and talked to him and gave him

the majority of the details. And I talked to Bonnie Ford as well because she had always been fair and then I had to kind of just sit back and let people say what they were going to say. That's the part that hurt the most because then there was nothing I could do. It was just waiting and hoping that what I did was the right thing to do. At least I could accept that this was it, there was no going back, and slowly I've been feeling much better.

When is the last time you (saw your parents) were home?

I haven't been home for a while. I only had the chance to talk to them on the phone. I got a call to say it was going to be in the Wall Street Journal and so I called my mom and told her 'Don't be home, just go somewhere.' I explained to her what I was doing and that I was sorry I had lied to her and she said it was fine. She was happy I had talked to her, and was happy I was telling the truth. I wish I could have seen her face to face – that part I could have planned better – the problem is, I had so many people I cared about that didn't know and just telling them all on the phone was exhausting.

You said something about your parents in an email a couple of months ago that blew me away: 'Maybe they were right all along.'

They were right about a lot of things. The way they live their life is a lot simpler and a lot more...you end up being a lot more content if you just accept it. And at some level, whatever life you live, you have to accept things before you can be happy and content, no matter what it is, whether it's having very little, like they prefer to have, or having everything. Until you are content with what you've got, then you are always chasing something, or you are running from something, neither of which is good.

Where are you now?

I'm stuck in the middle between chasing something and running from something and at the same time trying to be content. That's what I want, and I know how to do it, it's just that I've got myself into a situation where things have to be done before I can get there, that's all.

How do you do it?

It's just going to take time for me to tell the people that need to know what really happened; just see them face to face and tell them my point of view because what they get in the press is never going to be the complete story. And then I can let it go, then I can move on.

And in terms of the investigation and the outcome, what's a happy ending?

Well, one thing about life is, there is no happy ending. I mean, the ending is never good (laughs). I think a good outcome would be if somebody gets to race their bike and not have to face those decisions (that I had to face). Other people getting hurt, or other people paying for something they did, that's not going to make me feel better.

So if Lance gets away with it...Don't tell me that's going to make you feel good.

The unfortunate part is, if he gets away with it then probably no good comes of it. But just the fact that he doesn't get away with it isn't enough to make me feel good, no. There needs to be something better so the next guy that comes along is given the option, and is told at the very least, the guys that are doping aren't paying off the guys that are preventing doping. And that's not going to happen overnight. But as far as me being okay with me, that's up to me; that's not up to the investigation; that's not up to someone else.

Addendum

It was pitch black outside when the interview ended. We shook hands and I drove towards Palm Springs, wondering if I would ever meet him again. That's mostly how it works in this business – we listen and leave them – but Floyd felt different, personal, and we kept in regular contact during the days and weeks that followed. He was still riding his bike and planning to race in 2011 and still raging against the hypocrisy that sometimes threatened to consume him. On December 13, he sent me an email after reading some quotes (“McQuaid says there will be no Contador

Verdict until 2011") from Pat McQuaid in Cyclingnews.

Fuck! I hate this asshole. He announced my positive before I was notified and then requested my B sample be tested before I had a chance to decide (an unprecedented move by the UCI) and now he's all over the map with his opinions. Not to mention it's suspicious that he knows the timing of the verdict in a case which is completely removed from the UCI. What a joke.

Four days later, he read a couple of particularly dumb interviews with Moreno Argentin and Mario Cipollini and sent another...

Why don't Argentin and Cipollini go fuck each other while listening to Springsteen sing "Glory Days" so we don't have to hear their drivel about how much better they were (when there was no steroid testing).

On January 17, I found myself thinking about him and we began exchanging emails...

P.K Floyd, we need to talk again. This sport is not healthy for you (or me for that matter). The only way you will ever find peace is if you walk away and never look back. I know that's easier said than done but I honestly believe that's the bottom line.

F.L I know you are right man. I don't know why I keep holding on when there's nothing to hold on to. I'd like to talk when you have time.

P.K What number are you at?

F.L My ** number but will be in a more private place in a few hours or tomorrow if

that works. I really do think you are right. I need to walk away from this twisted story. I've become so disillusioned that I don't trust anybody.

P.K Okay, I'll call you tomorrow. Do you have a preferred cycling website in the US for the transcript? I like the NY Velocity guys.

F.L I like those guys too. I hope they run it because it's the last interview I'm ever going to do about the first 35 years of my life. I guess I just needed somebody to tell me what you just did in plain English. I quit cycling today. Jesus man I can't stop crying.

Ten minutes later, he forwarded me an email he had just sent to Travis Tygart, the CEO of USADA.

Please take me out of the testing pool. I'm retiring from cycling effective today. I don't know how I'm supposed to go about notifying USADA and don't want to put one more minute of my life into trying to figure out anything involving riding a bicycle. I quit.

P.K Floyd, crying is good but not alone. Get out of that cabin. When are you going to go back to your parents? For years, I never spoke to anyone who didn't like you and I never really got it until we met for the first time. You are a good person Floyd, and you have many brilliant qualities. You are still young enough to start again and build a new life. You will never find peace or happiness in cycling. It's the most beautiful sport in the world but it's governed by ****s who have turned it into a crock of shit. And it can't be fixed. Get some sun on your face and we will talk tomorrow.

F.L I'm going to pack up my bike and go see them in a few days. I feel free already for the first time since I can remember.

P.K Great. That's exactly what you need to do. The next step is to stay away from Cyclingnews and all of the cycling websites, but keep riding your bike, that will always feel good.

...But that too, was easier said than done and a couple of days later he was making headlines again: "Floyd Landis calls for legalised doping."

P.K There is only one thing worse than reading Cyclingnews...talking to them.

F.L Yeah, I'll never make that mistake again. Fuck them.

P.K What was it about the piece that annoyed you so much?

F.L The problem with the piece was that without any context it stated that I think that drugs in cycling should be 'legalized'. First, that is the wrong word, I was suggesting 'allowing' them until there is a real way of controlling them by a trusted agency, certainly I'm not suggesting breaking any laws. Currently the selective application of the doping rules has given no confidence to the athletes that things wouldn't be more fair if drugs were allowed. Moreover it's suggesting a broadening of what rules are already in place. For example, prescription opiate pain killers such as hydrocodone are already allowed and probably lead to equally bad addiction and physiological problems when abused. Also the hormone tests which try to distinguish between endogenous and exogenous hormones such as testosterone and EPO use thresholds and result in certain amounts being undetectable. Therefore without risk, those who wish to break the rules do so at the expense of those who don't.

P.K Okay, that's fine. There is one last question. A lot of people were puzzled when you named Michael Barry in the emails and a month later, May 2010, he posted the

following response on his website: *I am shocked at the allegations from Floyd Landis. A few years ago, I cycled the Vuelta a Espana race and trained two days prior to the Vuelta with him – one 6 hour ride and one two hour ride. I did not share or use any banned substances such as EPO when I was riding with him and am dismayed at his allegations. Landis is either lying or has mistaken me for someone else. Did you mistake him for someone else?*

F.L Nobody is more or less guilty than anyone else here but it's time to tell the truth. I understand the difficulty and the risk in admitting to doping. I am in no place to judge because I denied it for years as well. Michael Barry is going to do what he feels he needs to in order to protect himself, but unfortunately in this instance his choice is to do what I did and lie. I hope for his sake that someday he can tell the truth and feel free.

