

# Just Wingin it at La Marmotte

## A day in the French Alps

I'm sitting on my Delta flight in seat 17-B, with stiff legs and a sore lower backside some 48 hours after the toughest 112 miles and 16,500 vertical feet of bike riding I have ever experienced. I have never written a post ride journal before, But ever since I read the accounts of the La Marmotte bike race after my brother in law Jeff Peter and Rob Cocanour did it 5 years ago, I promised to give them my account of the day. In fact in preparation for this race, I read the detailed accounts that Jeff and Rob gave me from their race journals and it really helped.

The reason I traveled half way across the globe to ride the La Marmotte had nothing to do with bike riding, in fact I would never had planned or thought of the ride if our family hadn't planned to travel to Switzerland to pickup my son, Clark, after serving his 2 year mission in the Zurich, Switzerland mission.

I had heard the stories from Jeff and Rob that La Marmotte was a "rite of passage" for the Danish riders, I read on the internet the 16,500 feet of vertical. I heard stories about climbing the "L'Alpe d'Huez" and the Glandon and the Col du Telegraph and the Galibier, but stories and reading can do nothing to prepare you for a ride like this. I also wanted to ride some of the climbs that the Tour riders have ridden to see what they were really like.

This trip was not your typical "Bike Europe" type trip, this was a family vacation that had some biking worked into it. Now I'm not saying I just grabbed my passport and a bike box and rode La Marmotte, I had 5 century rides under my belt in the 6 months leading up to the La Marmotte, and some climbing in the canyons of Utah, but with the wet spring in Utah, I

wasn't really feeling like I was peaking as I went to Europe.

In fact, I had never taken my bike overseas in a bike box before this trip. My family and I spent a week in Germany and Austria before arriving in Switzerland to pick up Clark. Again this was the main purpose for our trip and the bike riding was secondary to this. (I'm probably not going to write a separate travel log of our vacation, so I will just have to tell you the things we did. Suffice it to say, the steepest hill I climbed was a quick 3 mile climb from Garmish Partikirtchen to the base of the tram station of the Zugspitze in Germany., other than that most of what I did was work in a morning ride before my teen age kids wok up for the day.

A day on a bike in the Alps has no compare in my opinion, forget all of the biking history, legend, etc., the sheer awe and majesty of the Alps are something to behold, Even for a guy who lives in some amazing mountains, the Alps are unique, they shoot out of the ground like a skyscraper surrounding a small village.

I planned for the LaMarmotte for about a year and trained for the same time frame. Jeff had connected me with Reilly Cycling which runs bike tours in the Alps. Fintan McCormac and Dave Weiss are the principles in the company and know the La Marmotte very well. Fintan is a New York Police officer and David is a professional photographer living with their families in NY.

The La Marmotte race was held on Sat July 3<sup>rd</sup> this year and thanks to my wife and family they drove the long drive from our vacation place in Corbeyrier, Switzerland about 3 hours outside of the tiny town of Bourg d'Oisans, France.

After a lengthy drive we arrived in Bourg d'Oisans and this tiny French village is a exactly what you would envision. Bakeries, small family owned restaurants and tons of hiking and biking shops. We arrived Friday afternoon about 4 pm and based on Peter's advice I headed right to the bike shop to get some stuff, you know, new biking jersey, etc. One can never have enough biking jerseys. The bike shops in the Bourg d'Oisans were jammed with riders.

Not to mention the World Cup was going on and anyone who has spent any time in Europe knows the World Cup is King. One of the games was on in this tiny bike shop that I went in and riders from around Europe were standing shoulder to shoulder in the store, “shopping” and watching the game. Kathy said that I had to be the only guy in town that didn’t have shaved legs. BTW I will never shave, not even for LaMarmotte.

I was probably the only guy in the store really looking for something in this shop with literally hundreds of biking jerseys., it was very cool.

We made our way to the chalet where Fintan and Dave were hosting our group. Most of those riding with Reilly Cycling Tours had been in that town for 3-4 days riding the hills that the race would eventually be on. They knew the course very well. Riding the race were Bruce and Dave both from Canada. Steve who was from Michigan and Robin also on the police force with Fintan was from New York. Only Steve and Dave from Canada had attempted to ride the



### **Dave Weiss and Fintan Mc Cormac of Reilly Cycling the night before the race**

LaMarmotte before. In 2009, Dave from Canada, was on a descent when he blew the sidewall on his tire and a messed up rim forced him to drop out in the race. He was doing the ride on his own that year, totally unsupported., a feat that makes this ride nearly impossible. Steve from Michigan was on the trip with

Rob and Jeff some 5 years before and was back for more fun in the Alps. They were all great guys.

Fintan and Dave ran a great event. They know how to do this and I am grateful I was able to connect with them. So I arrived Friday night around 6 pm at the Chalet High on the Hills of the Villard Reclues. The “Summer” road to even get to this Chalet is hard to describe. In fact I can’t even think of a road in the US I have driven on, hiked on that would compare to these paved asphalt roads. Like most mtn roads it is one lane and very narrow.

Peters says the French paved roads where the cows and goats climbed., The Chalet was brand new and accommodated our group well. Robin fixed some pasta for us that night as I grilled the other riders about the course., in fact Dave Weiss showed me his helmet cam footage of a descent he did on the front side of the Galibier the day before. It was very cool, but a wake up call for me to the steepness of the roads.

Again, I had been vacationing for about 2 weeks before this, so my nutrition probably wasn’t the best. Every time I had a bratwurst schnitzel, pretzel, chocolate, cheese etc., I kept thinking, “Hey this will help me on the ride. Yeah right.

But I did bring my bag of race day stuff, that has served me well for the past few years, much of it Hammer products but other things I have just found work for me.

We were told to be ready by 6 am, bikes on the car for a ride down the L’Alpe d’Huez and to the town of Bourg for the start. I hit the sack at 10 pm, and was out, I brought some ear plugs, standard equipment when bunking with other riders. I must have helped because that night Ghana lost to Uruguay in a shootout in the World Cup that night and the guys were all glued to the TV watching., Guess my ear plugs saved me that night because I never heard a thing.

I woke at 5 am., and was excited for the day., I ate some banana’s and a bowl of Frosted Flakes., and got my system churning with a few bottles of water. Not

sure why but if I can get a few bottles of water in my system the morning of the ride it helps a lot.

Fintan and Dave explained they were going to split up and park the cars in strategic spots on the race course. Dave going to be right near the top of the Glandon and Fintan, after dropping us off near the start, was off to his post at the base of the Galibier. This was key., Unlike the other riders, many of whom were not well supported, we would be able to stash clothes and food at locations on the course and not have to carry as much on the ride.

I saw backpacks, camelbacks., duct taped food on the top tube of some guys bike, one guy had this long, "Slim Jim" looking sausages sticking out of the back of his bike shirt. There are some supported stops along the way, but let me tell you, all of the etiquette you may think exists in Europe goes out the door when people want water. For food they offered figs and other Euro treats I didn't recognize.

We crossed the summer road in the van, which 5 years previous, Rob and Jeff had to ride to actually get to the ride down the L'Alpe d'Huez, my guess is this added about 10 miles to their race when you add it all up, they were the real men, I just got a ride down. But that was a crazy van ride.

At 6:30 am., there was a steady stream of riders coming off the L'Alpe d'Huez who had been staying on top. And guys were all flying down the Alpe., Fintan had to gun the van just to get into the mix to get us down. Most of the guys were quiet in the van for the ride down., we were all thinking about the day. Riders were actually passing us on the outside lane as they jammed down the Alpe, it was insane. I asked Fintan if he worried about hitting one of them and he said, "It's their job to make sure they miss hitting me."

So around turn 18, which it towards the bottom of the Alpe, we see a guy pulled off to the side of the rode with a flat. Now this was 6:30 am and our start time was 7:50 so we had time and Fintan said, we needed good Mojo today so he stopped., Guess what, a Danish rider, named Casper., yes, Casper the friendly Dane, had a flat, before you know it his bike

was on our van, Casper was sitting next to me and Fintan the good Samaritan took him to get his rim fixed after dropping us off.



**Steve and I at the start line before, little did we know what fun awaited us that day**

Robin, Steve and I rode up towards town, there were 100's of riders and people walking about. We came towards the starting area about 6:40., oh great, we have over an hour to wait., that was actually good., because our #'s were 7355 and above so arriving early got us at the front of wave 3., the real racers left 7:10, wave 2 at 7:30 and wave 3, us at 7:50.



**Looking up towards the starting line in the tiny town of Bourg d'Oisans**

We were corralled in a gated area and luckily for us there was a small space we could lean our bikes up against the fencing. Robin, Steve and I chatted and passed the time looking at all of the cool bikes, many of which I had never heard of before., and yes some very nice bikes., from Italy, France, Belgium, Germany and Trek and Specialized were there as well.

As we neared our start time the 2nd group had left and the group 3 started to inch up the road. We were 10-15 riders across and I looked back and the line of bikes must have gone back 2-3 miles.

They think there were over 8000 riders and my guess is a bunch of them were Danes. A young group of them standing right next to us, Started yelling 3-2-1, and then trying to start the wave..... yes., the wave going back down all the way to the back of the starting group.



**Guys hangin out before the ride got bored and started doing the Wave!**

I could hear what sounded like a German Band playing somewhere near the front of the starting line. Because it's a race we all had race chips, so the electronic pads would track our times.

One guy from Italy was standing near me and I noticed his handlebars had some printed out numbers taped to them., like from his home computer., 2:19, 3:55, 4:25 and the one I remember was 6:19. I asked him what the #'s were for and he said., they were goals for him for the race today. So basically 6:19 was his goal to be at the base of the L'Alpe d'Huez for the climb., to compare I was at the base of the Alpe at 9:30 hours, yeah, this guy was fast. The actual event winner of the 2010 La Marmotte, did the entire race in 5:45. Yes, not a typo 5 hours and 45 minutes., the 2<sup>nd</sup> place finisher was only 20 seconds behind him.

The start went off without of hitch, in the rush to click in and not run over anyone I pushed forward and almost immediately lost Robin and Steve. We had not planned on riding together., in fact I never saw them again on the ride., but with 8000 riders I never road alone., I got passed a lot, but there were always riders on the road.



The weather was warm, in fact the French were complaining how hot it was, around 90 to 95 degrees was the high for that day. But the morning was great., I started with arm warmers and that was it., short fingered gloves served me well for the day., no leg warmers, coats etc., the day was very warm towards the end especially. This was much different from years before when it was sleeting on the top of the Galibier and Jeff got hypothermia on the top of L'Alpe d'Huez from his ride 5 years ago.

The start of the La Marmotte, is a flat ride out of town, good to get the legs warm, Riders are starting to stretch out and teams were starting to form groups. I noticed some guys on what look like those duel sport bikes, 1/2 mtn 1/2 road bike with the straight handle bars., Most of the Euro riders wear kits., even if they are not on a team., don't ask me what the jersey's said, but they were very cool. I decided to represent and wear my Lotoja Kit that I had bought the year before. No one had ever even heard of the Lotoja., not even the guys in my riding group.

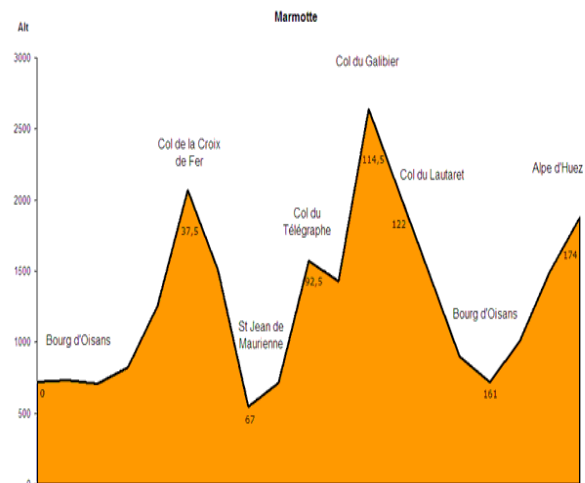
I never like to be in a group at the start., so I rode a safe distance from any of the fast groups., We were moving along pretty good., air was cool and the sun was just coming over the Alps., We started to wind through a few small villages., all still flat for the most part until we started our ride up the Glandon., it was kind of strange because the way La Marmotte puts its riders, it doesn't ask for a Category like in the US., so the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave was made up of guys who registered a little late., like me, I guess.

Point is you could have racers like the 6:19 guy or slower guys like me all in the same group., the reason I bring this up as we started at the base of the Glandon, some riders were heads down slowly making their way up the climb., carefully watching their heart rates., etc.,

Others were moving up the hills at 8-10 miles per hours weaving through the slower riders., it was very different to have that many riders of all different abilities. Guys were passing going uphill and I kept saying to myself I hope you have the gas left when you reach the L'Alpe d'Huez.

The Italian riders were always talking., laughing, or at least the ones that rode by me., It must have been 2 hours before I even heard a word of English. The first guy was from London, who I struck up a conversation with, it was his 2<sup>nd</sup> time on the ride., he hadn't finished on his first try and had a goal to make it this year. In fact I never talked to an American on the ride the whole day., only Brits, French, Dane's and one angry German guy, never pass a German on the inside lane even if he hogs the entire road.

Like a lot of the climbs of the La Marmotte the first 4-5 miles are the steepest., then the longer grinds start in. We made our way above the tree line and started a long grind up to the Glandon., I'm glad Dave was looking for me, I didn't see him, but he caught me right before the summit., there were a bunch of cars., flags, people ringing bells and 500-1000 riders at the summit all trying to get some water. Luckily thanks to



### Elevation profile of the La Marmotte 16,500 in 110 miles of riding

Dave and Fintan, I had my peanut butter and honey sandwich waiting, some Gu, etc., and restocked and climbed the remaining 50 meters to the top.

What I saw on the summit I have never seen before. I had to stop., get off my bike and carry it around a traffic jam of riders., even the race motorcycle as stopped and couldn't get through there must have

been over 1000 riders jammed on top trying to refill their water bottles before the descent of the Glandon. I saw a little slot on the grass up and around the group, made sure I cross the timing pad, and then I started the descent of the Glandon. But the top of the Glandon was just mayhem. I felt like I escaped the Gladon.

There were a series of hairpin 180 switchback type turns that you see in the Alps all over. Each one had a race person with a flag yelling, „ Slow! Slow! Slow!

Many of the young bucks on the ride must not had heard because I was doing anywhere from 25 to 35 mph and some of these knuckleheads were passing me like the Ferrari that passed my minivan on the Autobahn.

The ride down the Glandon is great., about 50 mins of downhill and you feel like, “Hey the uphill isn’t so bad when you get to go downhill like this. “

Oh I was so naive.

The race down the Glandon is like living in the video game, Mario Cart., racing around corners, hairpin turns and other riders., it was really a rush. I kept saying don’t end up as road rash, and sure enough I looked over and saw a guy carrying his bike and his bike shorts and shirt were ripped to shreds. He must have fallen but I couldn’t figure out why he was carrying his bike., I didn’t see any blood on him .

I reached the flat on got in a small line of riders across the valley floor to the base of the Col du Telegraph. I was expecting the upcoming two climbs to be the hardest part of the day and given the hot temps for the day this was probably the hottest and hardest 2 climbs I would encounter.

Unlike the Glandon which is a long grind up to the top, the climb up the Telegraph was a sign of more things to come. Miles and miles of steep switchback’s that seem to go on forever, starting in a small village at the base and winding its way back and forth towards the top. It was about 12:30 or 1 pm so I had been riding for about 5 hours and felt pretty good, but other riders were feeling the impact the heat was having on them. There was a water stop half way up

the Telegraph which I was glad for. I carried my own Gu/Perpetuem mix so I refilled here. Again a box of figs were all the riders would have to eat.



### **Ahh the small town of Valloire, at the base of the Galibier**

As you grind up the Telegraph you see that the village is becoming smaller and smaller and the houses become tiny as you make your way to the top. After reaching the top of the Telegraph there was another water stop. This one was littered with thousands of plastic water bottles from the riders that had been through ahead of me. I thought the French would be more concerned about the environment but not at this stop. Bottles were littered everywhere.



## Up the Galibier

I knew that Fintan would be somewhere up the road at the base of the Galibier so I stopped for a quick photo and break and then headed up the road. My mind set was I was out to “enjoy” the day, so I took more stops than I normally do because I knew this was a once in a lifetime type ride., so I wanted to document what I could.

Not too far up the road I saw the Reilly Cycling Van and Fintan waiting. It was great to be able to refuel my food items, Gu’s, banana’s and water there. But the best part was Fintan offered me an ice cold Coke., which I couldn’t resist. I don’t usually drink soda on my rides but let me tell you, this was money. I can’t remember a Coke tasting so good. It also good to talk to someone who could give me some advice about the next climb. Again I had never ridden any of the course so as Fintan said, I was just “Winging it”.

Not too far behind me was Dave from Canada and he rolled up a few minutes after I arrived. Somehow I ended up with his Ironman water bottle filled with some Euro energy drink, “No wonder it tasted so

weird”., I swapped the bottle., new water of course, with him and got some advice from Fintan on the climb.

“Don’t try and push it too hard up the Galibier, or it will beat you” he said. I debated for a minute on taking a jacket or at least a wind breaker, but decided against it. I was glad I did. Not only was the day really hot, but the weather on top of the Galibier was overcast and cool., no snow or sleet like in years past, so I really lucked out.

After climbing 14 km up the Telegraph you see a sign that says Galibier 17 KM. I was always glad to see these signs to let me know the process of the climb was starting. The first part of the Galibier is a long grinding climbing with a few switchbacks following the glacier fed river. Much like the Glandon, this ride seems to just go on forever. At this point we were well above the tree line and there was no shade or escape from the heat. It’s like riding on a Glacier with no snow. Green pastures through tiny villages but nothing but the summit to look at.

Many riders were really suffering at this point. I reached a small village at the base of the final climb of the Galibier, where the final 3 to 4 Km begin. This is the steepest part of the climb but by this time in the day the cloud cover had come in and the temps were dropping. This turned out to be a good thing for me because the cooler it got the lower my heart rate went. It seemed that as long as I could focus on the climb and not the heat my heart rate settled into a comfortable place. Others were not so lucky. During long rides it’s not uncommon to get “Hot foot” where your toes and your feet fall asleep., it can be painful. I actually got “Hot foot” a few times on this ride but was able to get around it by taking different positions on my bike. Other riders I saw at the base of the big push up the Galibier had taken their shoes off and were sitting on the road resting waiting for the feeling to return to their toes.

Now there was snow everywhere. On the side of the roads., all over this Glacier. Melted snow ran like tiny streams across the road as it melted from above. This was not a big deal because at 5 mph you are not



going to slip., but I was worried how the descent would be if there was water on the road. Luckily there wasn't much on the descent.



**The final 2-3 KM up the Galibier are killer it's like you are riding on the moon**

Finally I decided to use my iPod for the climb and thanks to "Cool and the Gang" I reached the top of the Galibier. I wanted to get a photo, with the sign of the Galibier. So I saw a rider sitting down and in my worst French, said "Pardon Masseur, photo?" He said "No problem Mate."

Turns out I was asking the only Brit on the top of the Galibier to take my photo. It was hilarious we both laughed and I took one of him. There were some French Military guys handing out water and they had a box of figs for those that wanted them. I looked over at the descent and really, one wrong turn you are off what looks like a never ending cliff. I knew this was not time to be a hero and that if I hit gravel or a patch of water I could be toast. But not wanting to get caught in any weather, I quickly gathered my stuff and headed down. The ride down the Galibier is about an hour and half of switchback turns.



**My new British buddy snaps a photo for me, Thanks Mate!**

At the top there are race officials with flags telling everyone to slow down! Slow down!. For some reason there were some cars on the Galibier coming down., this was a very dangerous thing because some guy in a VW Golf was passing riders on the way down, the problem was there were also riders and cars coming up the other side of the Galibier road. I could just see this guy passing a bike and running right into an oncoming car or another biker coming up. Remember the bikers riding up the Galibier on the back side were just doing it for fun, they were not part of the La Marmotte but it added to the confusion on the descent.

I've never been on a ride where the ride down took 90 minutes. By the time we got off the mtn, the temps started to climb and the heat was back up in the 90's. The ride to the base of the L'Alpe d'Huez has a series of tunnels that you have to go through, some short and some long. At one of the tunnels it was literally pitch dark. There were cars and riders all heading down. I felt like I was in a video game dodging cars and riders, and all I wanted was to get to the Alpe.





**Get ready for a wild ride down the Galibier, no wrong turns**



**Looking off the backside of the Galibier the best downhill there is**

One of the Tour riders in past years had crashed in the tunnel when he hit one of the metal grates on the side so I made sure I stay in the middle of my lane.

Finally arrived at the base of the Alpe. I had been carefully watching my heart rate and never once

stood up to climb. This may explain why my nether region was numb.

There was a final water and a rest stop at the base of L'Alpe d'Huez. I fueled up and I saw Fintan and Steve looking for riders. It was good to see friendly faces, I asked Fintan for final advice before the climb up the Alpe. He said take the first 4 turns on the climb and maintain your heart rate and take it easy, after that you will be fine." I thought, "No problem". Remember the other riders had ridden up the L'Alpe d'Huez so I had no idea of what to expect.

From the first pedal the L'Alpe d'Huez lets you know who is boss, At the base the Alpe is a 21 turn climb, with each turn numbered for some famous Tour de France rider and race. After turn one I looked up and thought after 103 miles of riding, these turns were brutal. I looked over, there was a guy sitting on the side of the road in a daze, staring off into the abyss. The first 4 turns are so steep you have to be careful to keep your front tire on the road, if you lean too far back it will pop off the ground while you are climbing.



The heat was killer. I was drinking all I could but I worried I didn't have enough water to make it all the way. I kept saying to myself, Fintan said after the 4<sup>th</sup> turn things would mellow out. Well, I now know he was just being kind. All of the turns are killer. It would take me over an hour and half to reach the top of the Alpe, Marco Pantini did the fastest ascent of L'Alpe d'Huez in 36 min and 50 seconds, at the Tour de France, just to give you an idea.

Kathy and the kids had arrived in the Bourg and met up with Fintan to get the reminder of my things. Kathy had asked him how I was doing and he responded with, "He is now in the Cave of Pain climbing up the L'Alpe d'Huez." Comforting thoughts for Kathy.

Towards the middle of the Alpe I saw one rider walking up the hill pushing his bike, with his bike shoes off and his socks off. He looked like a walking zombie in his bare feet. It was hot and at each turn I saw guys sitting on the side trying to get the energy the go on. I kept telling myself to keep going and get to the cooler part of the climb. It looked like a battle zone with bodies at every turn. As Fintan would later say, "there was carnage on the L'Alpe d'Huez today."

When I got to turn 7 there was water, which really saved me. I was out of water and it was starting to finally get cooler. I fueled up used my last bit of energy drink and ate my last Gu and started the final part of the L'Alpe d'Huez.

I seemed to get more of a bump of energy as it cooled off, but by the time I got to turns 4 and 3 the turns seemed to get longer and longer. Not knowing the course was a disadvantage and an advantage. Since I didn't know the climb I didn't know how much longer each turn would be.

For some reason I started to get mad that these turns were taking forever. I had been watching my heart rate like I was told and keep it low all day and this is what I get!!!!!! Endless switchbacks with no sign of the final 3 turns? I got so mad I finally said forget this and got up off my bike seat and pounded up the final 3

turns. I said to myself, if my heart explodes on this climb up so be it, but I am not going to sit any longer. I also looked at my watch and saw I had 9 minutes to try and finish under 11 hours, my goal.

I was passing guys as I started to climb but my heart rate had jump way up., I didn't care, I unzipped my bike shirt, which was soaked with sweat, for more ventilation and was now laboring with each breath. The elevation didn't bother me, it was the sheer vertical nature of these climbs that are so brutal. I got to turn 2 then to turn 1 and said yes., the finish line, I could see it., but for some reason as I got to what I thought was the finish it really wasn't the finish. It was the faux finish line they use to take pictures., By this point I was really ticked off, can't the French get a real finish line? I thought. So in my being mad state I pushed through the resort town wondering if this thing would ever end? Did I mess up and miss a turn? Where the heck was the finish line? Then finally, I saw it, the real finish and pushed across the time pads to the finish. 10:59:36., luckily I had made it just under 11 hours.

The finish line was packed, I saw Dave at the top and was glad to be done. The top of the Alpe is a mtn ski resort and they were hosting a dinner for all of riders. I wasn't feeling like eating anything so I went to the bike shop and got a few things to remember the day by. Dave asked me if I wanted to put my bike on the van and ride down the L'Alpe d'Huez in the van., "Are you kidding me? I rode up this beast I'm going to ride down." So I stuffed all of my goodies I bought at the top of the Alpe in a plastic bag under my bike shirt and headed down.

On the ride down, I was thinking about the day, the race and all the great Tour de France riders who made this ride before it was really a cool experience. You really get a perspective on how steep the L'Alpe d'Huez is when riding down. You also have a tremendous respect for those that race at the professional level.

There we still riders laboring to climb up the hill and I looked at them and knew the pain they were going through. They were in the Cave of Pain. I saw guys sitting on the side of the rode resting waiting for a

little more strength to make it up to the top. Cars were racing down one side and cars were going up which added to the overall stress of getting down. My adrenaline was still flowing but I was able to relax a little with the relief that the ride was over.

When I got to the bottom., I saw Kathy and the kids waiting for me. It was great to see them.

Clark and I took my wheels off my bike and my rims were so hot they were hard to touch. I quickly changed and hopped in the van for our 3 hour ride back to Corbeyrier.

Thanks again to Reilly Cycling, to Dave and Fintan for a great day of riding. Thanks for all of the pre race information from my riding buddies. Thanks to Kathy and my family for driving back and forth to pick me up. Thanks to Rob and Peters for doing the ride and sharing their journals. It's a day of riding I will never forget.