

My 6th PMC is in the books, and it still isn't getting old. In fact it always amazes me that each one seems so different and special. This year it was my joy to have Abby back riding again, after her two year absence due to being pregnant and then giving the world the most precious grandson. She was in better condition this year and much stronger and consequently really helped me along and kept me going.

Tim and I did the same routine, driving to Boston Friday morning to have lunch, then meeting up with Abby and Bryant to get on the bus and head to Sturbridge. We checked in, settled our stuff in our room, once again procured by Tim's superb fund raising success last year, and then went to meet friends before the big feast. Lance Armstrong was present for the opening ceremony and the Saturday ride to Bourne. He made a great speech to us all before the dinner and gave us lots of inspiration. This year Tim slept in one of the big beds and did not have a bloody battle with the cot. We were all up in plenty of time to get to the 5:30 AM start. The singer of the Star Spangled Banner this year was exceptional and really got all of us energized to get going. The lead out group consisted of Lance Armstrong, Senator John Kerry, Senator Scott Brown and Billy Star. It does take some minutes for everyone to funnel out through the 15 foot opening onto the road. It is very common for many to get out on the road and get going fast. I try to go slow and work up to my rhythm. As I started my ride my thoughts were of the many different people in my life who have suffered and fought to survive cancer and of those who have lost their struggle. It was an emotional start for me and many of those thoughts stayed with me the entire weekend. They still do. After a couple of miles, Tim and Bryant were itching to catch Lance and ride with him for a bit, so they took off and did just that. Abby and I stayed together and got into our rhythm. As was the case last year, I did not train as much as I should have and worried if I could get through the whole event. At the last minute I purchased a new bicycle just three days before the event, and I have to say the bike did make my two day ride much easier and more comfortable. I must admit that it was an upgrade from my previous bike.

Saturday was a perfect weather day for riding as it was overcast and in the 70's. Abby and I cruised through the first few water stops. She informed me that we had to stop at Cherry Lane, a small road on the route where the residents put on a wonderful reception for all the riders. People get dressed up and make signs and offer fruit and water, and even have a live band playing for us. There we looked for and found a sign that was specifically made for Abby. It read "Thank you Abby Mitchell for riding". Friends of friends had it made, so we had to stop and take pictures. Also, I found a father and his son on the side of the road holding a sign that read "I'm a survivor, Gregory Conrad, Thank You!". I asked if I could have the honor of getting a picture of the three of us. The head PMC photographer just happened to be there and snapped the picture. It is on the PMC site and I put it in my pictures too. Further down the road at the big lunch stop at mile 85, we met up with Bryant who was waiting for us. We ate and rested for a bit before heading out for the finish in Bourne.

Bourne sure was a welcome sight! After cleaning the days road grime off we joined the party. It is always fun to meet up with all the old friends and new ones we have made after a day of cycling. In addition to the usual events in Bourne, I had the honor to join a new club at the PMC. I became part of the 300+ riders this year who are survivors of cancer. At 6:15 PM, a group photograph was taken at the water's edge of all this year's riders who have been diagnosed with cancer. This photo has become known as "The Living Proof" Photo. We all received special T-shirts and, this being the tenth year of this tradition,

a glass of champagne to toast each other. It was amazing to look around at all the people this year that have been diagnosed and are riding. The range of different cancers is also amazing, as is the cross section of people that have been stricken with this terrible disease. It was both uplifting and somber. If you go to see my pictures from this year you will also see that I, along with Abby & Bryant, joined another PMC team – “Path to the Cure”. This team dedicates its efforts to Pediatric Oncology. It’s for the kids who are stricken with cancer. I am proud to be a member!

We all turned in pretty early, around 7:30 PM, and were worried about the forecast for Sunday – Heavy Rain! We awoke at 4 AM and found it damp and drizzling but no downpour. After loading our baggage on the trucks, we ate breakfast and hit the road around 5:15 AM. The day was ominous and there were some crashes from riders slipping on the wet painted stripes on the road, but we rode on and missed all the downpours. Abby and I reached Provincetown a little after 12:30 PM and were the last of our group to finish. We showered, got our bikes and baggage on the trucks back to Boston and proceeded to find our friends to celebrate the end of our efforts for this year. We ate and had a few beers and then headed for the ferry boat ride home. The skies opened up just as we reached the pier, giving us the excuse to stop at our now favorite local bar for some celebratory cocktails. Hey – our work was done!

The walk down the pier could be 300 yards, so with the rain still pouring down we were pretty wet by the time we boarded the boat. Most everyone went down below to the covered deck to stay dry, but we went up to the second deck to get under the overhang where only a handful ventured. The good part of this was we had the outside bar all to ourselves. The bad part came when the ferry tried to leave the dock. The only way the captain could get off the dock was to back down directly into the wind and the blowing rain, which blew in under the protection of the roof and completely soaked us. We were drenched! I mean to the bone. My phone, which I thought was safe in my raincoat pocket, got so wet it was ultimately ruined. Once we got underway we were protected from the elements and by the time we reached Boston harbor, three and a half hours later, we had mostly dried out. It definitely was a boat ride to remember, but we were all glad the rain hit us on the boat instead of on our bike ride. We landed in Boston to another cheering crowd and felt relieved to have completed another wonderful effort. Back on dry land, we gathered our stuff and headed home, once again with wonderful memories and the determination to do it again next year.

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your support in this effort. You have helped me participate in something that has become very important to me. But more importantly, your support is helping countless others, who benefit from the research and care given to cancer patients and their families at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute. With your help we will conquer cancer.

I thank you most sincerely!

Please view my pictures from this year’s event at www.98provence.com