



Positively False: The Real Story of How I Won the Tour de France

By Floyd Landis

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Positively False is at once a memoir and a powerful indictment of the unchecked governing bodies of cycling that have compromised the integrity of the sport as a whole. From leaving the Mennonite community of his youth in order to pursue his passion for cycling, to riding alongside Lance Armstrong for three years -- with whom he shared the same work ethic and competitive desire -- Floyd Landis details the highs and lows of his career with unabashed honesty. It is this same honesty with which he will clear his name once and for all, as he lays bare the inner workings of the cycling world -- a place where athletes are subject to the antiquated science, flawed interpretive protocols, and draconian legal processes of the anti-doping agencies -- and finally lays to rest the scandal that threatened to destroy everything he's worked so hard to achieve....

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Floyd Landis began his professional cycling career in 1995, one year after graduating from Conestoga Valley High School. In 1997 he was the Men's Under-23 National Champion. In 1998 Landis made the switch to road cycling. He has completed the Tour de France every year since 2002. Floyd Landis lives in Murrieta, California, with his wife, Amber, and their daughter, Ryan.

Loren Mooney is the executive editor of *Bicycling* magazine.

Her writing has appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, *Reader's Digest*, *New York*, and other magazines and books. Mooney covered her first Tour de France in 2006. She lives in New York City.

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CHAPTER 1

Breaking Away

I have nothing to hide.

As far as I'm concerned, people can know everything about me if they want: how much money I've made, when I've been a fool or felt regret or shed tears. I don't care. There's no reason to hold anything back. I don't feel the need to be selective in order to create some image of a person who isn't me. I'm me. That's it.

I ended up making a living in a sport where a bunch of men wear spandex and shave their legs -- and that's not even the funny part. The funny part is that cycling and its anti-doping program are run by people so incompetent they couldn't even run a Ralph's grocery store. I couldn't always laugh about it, because they wrecked my life. But I don't ask for sympathy. I take what I'm given in life and try to make something out of it, always.

In the end, cycling is a beautiful sport, and it deserves better. It rewards focus, strength, and endurance, and also requires negotiation, teamwork, and a strategic mind. You have to be the best at all those things in order to win the Tour de France, and it's a long journey. Maybe the things I've done or the way I've done them will inspire disbelief, and people will think I lied or made things up. If that's the case, then the only thing I can say is, at least they got to hear the whole story.

It starts in Farmersville, Pennsylvania, in Lancaster County, the heart of Mennonite and Amish country. My family is Mennonite, a branch of the Anabaptist Protestant religion that bases its beliefs on a more literal interpretation of the Bible and encourages nonparticipation in mainstream society. It's related to Amish. Basically, the Amish split from the Mennonites centuries ago to become a more inflexible, conservative sect. The Mennonites embrace modern culture more, but not much more.

We lived on Farmersville Road, where my parents, Paul and Arlene, moved to when they got married thirty-five years ago. The road stretches for miles of white farmhouses, red barns, cornfields, and silos, with no variation except maybe when the farmhouse is red and the barn is white.

My parents' house has three bedrooms, one for them and two for the kids. First, my sister Alice filled one of the bedrooms, and then I came along and took over the other. Over the next fifteen years, my parents added Bob, Charity, Priscilla, and Abigail. Until I was nineteen, Bob and I slept in a double bed in one room, and the girls stayed in the other in bunk beds and a double bed.

Some Mennonites are what you'd call "horse-and-buggy," but my parents are more progressive than that. We had cars, but there was no television or video games, no movies, and definitely no alcohol or swearing. We had a radio, but it stayed tuned to a gospel station, and we also played gospel records and sang along. Men wore long pants all the time, and women wore dresses or long pants and kept their hair in buns and wore head coverings -- that's still how it is at my parents' house.

The Mennonite life is simple: Glory goes to God, not to the self. You go to church, you work, and you take care of the people around you. Everyone contributed to the household however they could, with work or chores, but growing up we never had any money. None of the Mennonites did. It was easy to spot a Mennonite kid at the public high school where I went, because we were the quiet ones in whatever plain clothes our parents could find for cheap -- completely outside of the world of teenage fashion.

We went to church twice on Sundays and sometimes on Wednesdays, and on top of that there were prayer meetings, Bible school, and seminars with intensive Scripture study.

To support our family, Dad owned a self-serve carwash/ laundry down the road. It never really made much money because almost everyone owned a washer-dryer, and if people weren't going to wash their own cars, they went to an automatic carwash. The equipment at the laundry was old, so I spent a lot of time figuring out how washing machines worked and fixing them.

For a while he made money as a real-estate agent and did other odd jobs. When my uncle was diagnosed with a brain tumor, my dad started driving my uncle's delivery truck part-time to help out, hauling stone to concrete and blacktop plants in Delaware and New Jersey. When my uncle died, Dad kept driving for two years to support my aunt. Then he bought the truck.

My mom stayed home to raise the kids. Every afternoon she practically danced around the kitchen as she made home-cooked dinner with fresh, homemade bread, and if I sat at the big family dining table while she was working, she'd talk to me in a way that sounded almost like a song. My dad always spoke so softly that sometimes you had to lean in to hear him, and he chose every word carefully. I can say with 100-percent certainty that they are the most wonderful parents I could possibly have.

Everything we had was old, so we spent a lot of time making repairs. We had crappy cars that my dad taught me how to work on, even in the middle of winter when my fingers were freezing off. I painted the house and barn, and pruned trees. We had a septic tank that would fill every few months. It had wooden boards on top and we'd have to stick shovels in through the liquid to shovel out the solid parts at the bottom, and by the time we were done my sneakers would be soaked. Dad wouldn't pay anyone to come pump it out, because he never

liked to pay money for anything.

When it was time to have fun, I spent a lot of time with my cousins and my best friend, Eric Gebhard. Eric wasn't Mennonite, but his family was conservative Christian. His parents were divorced, and he lived with his father, so my mom pretty much adopted him and he was at our house all the time.

We went fishing or swimming or swinging off the rope swing in the river down the road. Some of my cousins had an aboveground pool that they stocked with catfish, and we'd fish in the pool, which I'm pretty sure means we were rednecks. If there's any doubt, my family had an aluminum fishing boat we'd take to the river, and Bob, Dad, and I sometimes hunted squirrels from the boat, and that night Mom would make squirrel pie, which doesn't taste very good.

For family vacations, we always went camping, because it was cheap. We'd load up the family van, hitch up the aluminum fishing boat, and pile everyone's bikes into the boat to haul them to the campground.

Everyone in the Mennonite community had bicycles. I once saw a guy riding with a shotgun perched across the handlebar and a rack in back that held the deer he'd just shot. On Sundays the roads were cluttered with Amish horses and buggies and Mennonites on bikes riding to church. Even today, my parents often ride their bikes to church, six miles each way.

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A few days later, I went to my dad to talk about the bicycle. He said I'd have to pay for it myself, and besides that, he didn't think I needed it. "You already have a nice bike," he said. "But you make that decision yourself, you're old enough to do it."

I went back to him after a few more days and told him I wanted to put a deposit on it. "I'd rather you didn't," Dad said. "But it's up to you." This was my dad's way. We never argued or even had disagreements. He never told me no. It was clear that if I was going to buy it, I'd be going against his wishes, but he believed it was important for me to think through things in life and make my own decisions. I went back to him once more, and he gave me the same answer. "I'd rather you didn't, but it's up to you."

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Eventually, we started making pit stops at the shop even when our bikes were fine. Mike called us "shop rats." We liked hanging out, eating whatever Jen gave us, talking bikes, and meeting some of the older guys who raced for the shop's team. There were mountain bike races pretty much every weekend, and Mike also put on a training race every Wednesday night. It didn't take long for me to ask if we could come one Wednesday. Mike said, "If you get permission from your parents, then I'll drive you there."

It was in Brickerville, about 15 miles away. "No, thanks," I said. "We'll ride there." We pedaled up in sweatpants, T-shirts, and sneakers on our three-hundred-dollar bikes. Everyone else had bike shorts and jerseys, biking shoes, and three-thousand-dollar bikes. We got creamed. But we kept going back. Throughout the summer, even when it was ninety-plus degrees, I went on four-hour ride...

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