

Watching a road bike race is worth the few seconds

By Heidi Hill Drum

Finally it is here! The photo was taken several years back at the Amgen Tour stage leaving Sausalito and heading up to Santa Rosa. We waited in the back of our car on the side of a super steep, windy hill in Marin County. Drawing pictures on the closed road kept Dalton entertained (he was only 3 and now 9.)

We thought this would be the best place to see the riders going slow. Well, the peloton (the riders all together in the main pack) don't really go slow. It is either fast or really fast. They sped up that hill with amazing speed.



It took several years, but John Drum's message finally got heard.

Photos/Heidi Hill Drum

It was too early in the day for a breakaway group, so within about two minutes the entire peloton passed us by. Yes, Dalton asked, "Is that it?"

Our souvenir that day was a cowbell handed out by the folks at

Toyota, one of the early sponsors, so he left happy.

We have been to at least a couple of stages of every Amgen Tour de California and its predecessor, the San Francisco Gran Prix. When it was in February it usually coincided with Dalton's break from school, so we managed to get in a few stages fairly easily. Now, since it is in May we have a few more logistics to work out, but it is all worth it. When Lance rode in it last year we saw him in Sacramento. The year before we watched in the rain in Santa Cruz as Levi rode strong in one of his winning years.

Last summer we were fortunate to be able to see the real deal in France. Le Tour de France is so special and an incredible economic benefit to the towns that host a stage. In our opinion, this Amgen Tour is on track to be very similar for our state. We can't thank those enough who worked tirelessly behind the scenes for all they did to bring these first two stages to Tahoe (but thank you Carol and Andy).

We realized last week when we started volunteering that it isn't just a one-day event for our town. Riders, staff, mechanics, and others have been arriving all week. They are staying in our hotels, eating at our restaurants, and likely will be buying lots of hats and gloves in our local shops for today's cold race.



Dalton and John Drum at one of the early Amgen

races. The South Shore guys will be watching the the riders today from their home town.

Highway 50 closing Wednesday before the race instead of the Monday after is unfortunate, as it is likely more visitors will choose to go to the North Shore to see the finish. However, our entire community is still benefiting.

We have been volunteering to drive riders and staff from the Reno airport to their hotels here and those of us who live here sometimes forget how spectacular a sight Lake Tahoe is the first time you come up the hill. Every one of the folks who are a part of this tour have been inspired as they see the lake for the first time. Let's take advantage of this amazing opportunity to open our doors, make everyone feel especially welcome and thank them for their participation in this event. Let's also hope we can show enough Tahoe spirit to encourage Amgen to consider Lake Tahoe as another host city in a future Tour de California.