# Running Through the Millennium 



## Lynn David Newton

A slow, fat, geezer with gumption

# Running Through the Millennium 

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## Chapter 1

## In the Beginning

## Fleety

Call me Fleety. That's the nickname my uncle Dick gave me when I was eight years old. It was short for fleet-footed. Dick called me that for roughly the same reason that four-hundred-pound oafs with necks thicker than their heads are called Tiny, and six-foot, eight-inch walking broomsticks are doomed to bear the moniker Shorty. It may have been a term of endearment, but it was not a compliment.

As a kid I hated being forced to run laps in P.E. class. We all did-even the boys who were good at sports. The most horrible experience in all my school days was learning in seventh grade that we would be required to run an impossibly large number of laps around the basketball court in gym class every day, all year long, until spring, when we would be timed to see how fast we could run a whole mile, or else vomit on the field in the attempt. The final test was a tribulation, resulting for me in an asthma attack.

Until I was well into adulthood, I rarely ran any distance for any reason. The only time I ever ran hard willingly was once when I was nineteen years old, on a bitter cold February night. I ran as hard as I could to my friend's house. This exercise, too, induced an asthma attack, which on this occasion was the desired result.

The next morning I was required by my draft board to show up for a physical examination. I had a note from my doctor (my pediatrician!)
confirming that I had a long history of asthma.
"When was the last time you had asthma?" the examining officer asked suspiciously. "Last night, sir!" I replied truthfully. He scribbled something on his clipboard. The asthma kept me out of the army, one year before Vietnam flared up, when the government began sending any young man who could stand upright into a controversial and tragic war.

For many years thereafter, that was the only benefit I could attribute to running. I swam well in college, and enjoyed walking then and later, during the eight and a half automobileless years I lived in New York City. But I never ran at all.

In summer of 1972 I saw the television preliminaries and coverage of the Olympic Marathon, at which the great Frank Shorter won the gold medal. Before then I had barely even been aware that people did such things. I was utterly intrigued by it, and watched every second of what they had to show, but my interest was strictly as a curious gawker. Such feats were clearly the domain of masochistic one-in-a-million super-athletes, of which I was manifestly not one, and never would be. I remained untempted to take up running myself.

In July of 1977, at age 34, I was living in Searsport, Maine, on the central coast. One Sunday that month I was scheduled to give a lecture in Steuben, 65 miles further down east, and was invited to stay with a large, vibrantly healthy family in the area. During the summer months they turned off their water heater and would all carry bathing suits, soap, and towels to a stone quarry five minutes walk down the road to bathe. That's the sort of people they were. I joined them in this and enjoyed it immensely.

The wife, a woman in her forties, had seven children, and jogged daily with one of her sons. This scenario was by no means common in those days. I was so impressed by it that it inspired me to run myself the next day. It was only after working at it steadily for the first two weeks that I first learned an astonishing lesson: Running can be both beneficial and enjoyable! From then on I did it regularly for two or three years, then sporadically, then not at all once again. It was not until June of 1994, at age 51 , that I started running in a way that permanently affected my life.

It's not my purpose to bore you with details of my uninteresting running career. The tale of how I lost fifty pounds, then started running 10 Ks , followed by half marathons, and then marathons, has become commonplace in these days of the second running boom.

Nor will this book thrill you with accounts of my blazing speed, race victories, and age groups awards, for there is none of that to tell about. As a racer I compete infrequently compared to many runners who are deeply involved in the sport, and who seem to find races to compete in twice a month or more. Since January, 1996, I have run seven 10Ks, one 20K, three half marathons, seven full marathons, and one 50 K .

At this writing the date is January 12, 2000. Less than two weeks ago I ran my way through the change of year from 1999 to 2000 in my first 24-hour race, for me a spectacularly successful endeavor.

I'm now 56 years old, I am and always have been slow, and I'm a little bit overweight. Hence I've appended this descriptor to my by-line: A slow, fat geezer with gumption.

## The Original

Running Through the Millennium (which I abbreviate RTtM) was written originally as a series of over 100 messages cross-posted on two Internet email lists devoted to running: Dead Runners Society, and the Penguin Brigade. Installations took the form of elaborate running journal entries, containing more than mundane statistical data about distances run, paces, and related information, although there is indeed also much of that. They included personal reflections, anecdotes, and narrative about peripheral matters simultaneously taking place in my life.

People who call themselves runners are not merely running machines. Each of us is an individual human being with a life, personal circumstances, system of values, schedule, set of goals and aspirations, and Godgiven abilities, unique unto ourselves. Information about all of this is essential to understanding the working out of our running goals, because for most of us, running is not our single all-consuming raison d'être, nor should it be. Rather, running is simply another element that we make an effort to fit into the complex fabric of our lives. Baring one's soul publicly is risky, but can make for good reading when it works.

This project zeros in on my running and training experiences from midJune of 1999, until the first week of January, 2000; thus the title, Running Through the Millennium. The oft-debated question of whether the year 2000
really constitutes the first year of the third millennium is covered within the journal proper. ${ }^{1}$

Early in the series it became my intention, when it was completed, to rewrite the entire accumulation into its present form, deleting and adding material, and making it read more like a book than a series of email messages.

Naturally, this revision was made from the perspective of having already experienced everything written about, so there is no longer any suspense in my mind over what will happen from day to day. Nonetheless, I've left most expressions of anticipation in, because that's how it was originally presented, and because it makes better reading that way.

## The Internet Running Culture

There are numerous email lists and at least one Usenet news group on the Internet that are devoted to running. I subscribe to three of the email lists.

Dead Runners Society is the parent of many of the best running lists on the Net, and is one of the best. Over the years it has grown into much more than a mere email list. It's a Web-based running club, and a governmentregistered non-profit social organization. Running gear emblazoned with the club's name and motto, carpe viam ${ }^{2}$ is available. Many long-lasting friendships have developed within the group. More enthusiastic participants get together for encounters when they travel around the country, seeking to meet fellow runners they had previously known only by email. Every year there is a World Conference, where a hundred or more runners come for a weekend of running and healthy fun.

Penguin Brigade is a spinoff from Dead Runners Society. It was started by Runner's World columnist John "the Penguin" Bingham as an online training and support group for several runners partial to John's philosophy of running, in preparation for the Marine Corps Marathon. Since then it has grown to about the same size as Dead Runners Society, and provides essentially the same benefits. Its emphasis is on unreserved support and acceptance of runners of all categories and abilities, and thus has come to

[^0]be preferred by many runners who are beginners or just plain slow, even though claiming alliance with the Penguins in no way implies that one is either slow or a beginner.

The Ultra List is devoted to the rarefied world of ultrarunning, running distances beyond the standard 26-mile, 385-yard marathon, an activity for which I've cultivated a deep interest this past year. Many of the list's participants are among the best-known ultrarunners in the US, and many are impressively well-informed in the scientific disiplines related to human endurance and performance.

The original RTtM series was not posted to the Ultra List, except for the Across the Years race report segments, because until the last few weeks it was not directly concerned with ultrarunning. In reality, though, the whole series, and therefore also this entire book, is about ultrarunning. Although I passed through the training and running of two regular marathons on the way to my 24 -hour race, since January 1, 1999, it was my plan to run Across the Years. All my training for the whole year was directed toward that target race.

All the running lists I mentioned are beneficial in some respects. A great deal of intelligent information about running is passed on through them. Many participants publish race reports and even accounts of daily training runs. Each one of these lists is a source of unlimited and unreserved encouragement and support. I've personally learned almost as much from the lists about running as I have from reading the technical literature and periodicals. They have enabled me to remain essentially self-coached. The lists have given me the opportunity to get to know and communicate individually with a great number and variety of highly experienced runners in a way that would not have been possible for me otherwise. And when I've asked questions or talked about my own experiences, whether successes or failures, I've always received generous, informed, positive feedback in return.

Each of these lists has its own culture and profile. New subscribers may find that fitting in bears some similarity to watching a serial soap opera. It takes a while to become familiar with the characters, the regular posters, none of whom are particularly important or amazing in any Shakespearian sense, but as in a soap opera, before long we start to care about them. Unlike a soap opera, eventually we find ourselves becoming characters ourselves.

The Internet also has the news group rec.running, which I frankly don't care for. It's uncontrolled, impersonal, has no culture, and tolerates participants who are prone to posting raunchy material and starting flame wars. I stopped even downloading it years ago, and even before then rarely posted anything to it.

## I Me Mine

In some styles of writing it's considered uncouth to talk about oneself. The nature of this book makes talking about myself unavoidable. The subject of this work is me-it's about my training, races, and experiences, and about thoughts I personally have had.

Therefore, I'm compelled to apologize in advance if the nature of the writing seems egocentric, overly filled with " $I$ did this, and then $I$ did that, this happened to me, and here is my plan." Be assured that it bothers ... ummm ... yours truly, too.

In the rewrite I've attempted to eliminate some of that, but because the book is entirely a first person account of an adventure, it seemed preferable to implement the style that I have, thus avoiding the use of the passive voice and expressions such as the author or the formal we as though I were talking about someone else. Notice the different effect of the following renditions:

This sentence was written by the author. very weak
This sentence was written by me. still weak
I wrote this sentence. strong and direct

## Junk

Running is much the same from day to day. It's only natural, when writing about it, to relate that I ran so far in so much time, it felt this way or that, and it went well or not so well. On many days I just put in the work, and failed to become the recipient of any blinding insights or revelations over which to wax poetic for my readers.

It is often difficult to describe a repetitive activity in refreshing new ways. My biggest challenge in composing the original was to crank out new material in a continuous flow, not falling behind in updates. To accomplish this, my poor readers often had first draft material foisted upon them, just the bare narrative facts with little in the way of refinement and reflection. As writer William Safire likes to say:

First drafts are always stupid.
Ultrarunners say that the way to get through bad patches, when you're feeling down and want to quit, is to keep running until you don't feel that way anymore. Remarkably, this technique works! Sometimes it also works when reading literature that has become arduous.

In the words of a Chicago columnist:
"You find every facet of your obsession to be incredibly interesting. Other people don't."

Nevertheless, I do believe that if you hang in there on the reading, like an ultrarunner pushing through the tough parts with RFP, ${ }^{3}$ you will find some rewarding moments in the pages that follow.

## Real Life

In the emailed version of RTtM, I made frequent reference to Real Life, spelled as you see it, with capitalization. Real Life is a catchall term that covers all the activities that are a part of our lives in addition to running. In my case it was also a euphemism, utilized in part to shield my private life.

## Credit Where Credit Is Due

In the course of RTtM I mention certain people in a way that suggests that my readers already know them. Some readers of the running groups do,

[^1]but likely you do not. Therefore, for the record, allow me to introduce you to my family.

- Suzy is my wife. Sometimes she deigns to be known as Suzy Newton. More frequently she goes by Suzanne Powell Newton. Sometimes it's Suzanne P. Newton (when she's giving away our money) or Suzanne Powell-Newton, and on occasion it's even Suzanne Powell, a source of endless confusion at box offices and airports. As a woman who has gone through six last names in her life, she has the right to be fickle. I have never once called her anything but Suzy myself. Suzy is not a runner, but supports my efforts in that realm.
- Cyra-Lea is my daughter. At this writing she is a few days short of age eighteen, about to become a "woman." We've all been having a good chuckle over that notion at home. Cyra-Lea is good-humored and a great sport. She is studying health care with the aim of becoming a nurse practitioner, is greatly interested in good health, works out regularly, like me is untalented athletically, but has run several 10 Ks and 5 Ks .
- Aaron is my son. He is now age 26, and has lived on his own for several years. He appears briefly near the end of the journal, as a valuable crewman at Across the Years. Aaron used to be a capable cyclist who participated in biathlons, until he became affluent and started driving everywhere.

Finally, I'd like to give credit to the Beatles. Why on earth would I do that? One day in late September, I used the title of a Beatles song for a section header. From that time until the end of the journal, I continued to use others of their song titles, when I could find ones that fit. This was a cheap but fun device for generating section headers, breaking up the text for greater readability. In some cases it may seem a bit of a stretch to find the connection between the title and the text that follows. In my mind there always is one.

People who know me are aware that at one time the music of the Beatles meant more to me than it does to most people. The reasons for this are the subject of a memoir I wrote several years ago, and possibly of another book sometime.

On a few occasions I use the titles of songs not authored by any Beatle. Please be aware that I do know the difference, and am not mistakenly suggesting that I attribute such songs to the Beatles.

The next chapter begins the revised version of the journal as it was progressively sent to the running lists.

## Chapter 2

## Geezer's Big Adventure

You are invited to join me on a journey that will take me into the so-called new millennium. It is my hope to submit accounts of my running activity to this journal more or less daily, beginning today, Thursday, June 17, 1999, until the first week of January, 2000. During that span I plan to pursue some training goals that promise to impose the greatest test of my meager abilities to which I've ever subjected my so-far 55.90-year-old body.

Why would anyone be interested in the running diary of a talentless geezer who has been running conscientiously for barely five years? Wouldn't it be more instructive to learn from the likes of Haile Gebrsellasie or Ann Trason?

Yes, it probably would be. But their training logs and personal reflections aren't available to us. Mine, however, are, and for free!

In addition, I believe many readers will benefit from a record of the experiences of the common man. The regimens of Geb and Ann have little in common with the disciplines of runners like me, whose travails are much closer to that of the majority of runners.

## Bringing You Up to Date

At the beginning of 1999 I carefully laid out my training plans for the year. Remarkably, I'm still on target to accomplish everything I set out to do, except losing the weight I had hoped to. I like to eat.

Some runners, when itemizing their goals, think in terms of races. Not me. I race relatively little, and because I finish consistently around the eightieth percentile, regardless of distance, have little expectation of ever doing well in a race, in the competitive sense. My personal running goals are oriented around training, not races. The six events I've scheduled for 1999, an all-time high number for me, are merely target points, punctuation marks at the ends of training phrases.

So far this year, in chronological order, I ran a 10K in February for a PR; a 7:26 training run through a mountain preserve with steep hills; my first 50K, mostly steeply uphill, at Crown King, Arizona; and Whiskey Row Marathon, a standard 26.2-mile course, but considered an ultramarathon by many because of the hills. During May and early June I recovered, while working on shorter, more intense runs, with nothing over ten miles for over a month.

Last week I began to increase mileage once again, with a 37-mile total, topped by a twelve-mile long run. This week I will run forty miles, with an anticipated half marathon long run on Saturday.

## What's Ahead

I've arrived at the leading edge of a large surge of activity. The race events I've committed myself to for the rest of the year are

- Twin Cities Marathon, October 3, 1999;
- Tucson Marathon, December 5, 1999;
- Across the Years 24-hours race, December 31, 1999-January 1, 2000.

Across the Years will be the year's climax. What will be interesting for me will be to find the answers to these questions:

- Are my target goals at cross purposes with one another? Is it reasonable for me to hope to do well at Twin Cities, then set a PR at Tucson two months later, then in less than a month participate in and survive his first 24-hour race?
- Is running a 24-hour race an unrealistic goal for a geezer like me who has never run further than 50K?

I'll have much to say on that as the days go by, in the record of my responses to the training efforts I've mapped out.

## A Beginning

My training week runs from Sunday to Saturday. This year I'm counting walking mileage, because of the ultrarunning training. Last year (1998) I counted only running miles. I accumulated 1825 miles for the year, exactly five miles times 365 days. This year I'm behind that pace, averaging 4.82 miles a day as of June 1. This was deliberate and expected, but I expect to surpass last year's total by the end of the year.

This week has gone as follows: on Sunday 5.7 miles of both slow running and walking at an overall 13:13 pace; Monday two miles of easy running and one walking, plus weight lifting; Tuesday was four miles of interval training at the gym, where after warming up I did four laps hard followed by three laps easy. It was an exhausting run.

Yesterday (Wednesday) I ran eight relaxed miles. It was one of those character-building efforts, when I felt tired and wanted to be done before I started. Only rarely do I give in to those urges, unless there is something terribly wrong physically.

The flood of ideas that surfaced during yesterday's run has already faded, so I'll leave you with the colorless version for now, a simple statement of the facts. Later today I plan on doing a five mile tempo run.

So this concludes my introduction to the beginning of Geezer's Folly. What the future will bring remains to be seen. Meanwhile, let the mad festivities begin!

## Chapter 3

## Getting Stronger Every Day

## Why I Run on an Indoor Track

Thursday, June 17, 1999
Thursday usually means tempo runs on the track at Bally's gym: five miles of following the white line on the Road that Never Ends (tRtNE).

These days every run means a trip to the gym. I live in Phoenix, Arizona. When I arrived at Bally's it was 105 degrees Fahrenheit outside. Few persons can train effectively for distance in heat like that. It will be that way until October. I don't even try to deal with it.

People wonder how I do it-all that running on a 155-yard track. I've been doing it that way during warm weather for nearly five years. Physical training is largely a matter of mental discipline. Running indoors is, for me, a part of the discipline. I've gotten used to it. I even like it. It's that or no running at all.

## A Quality Five-Miler

Fifty-seven laps around tRtNE adds up to 5.02 miles. For me a good brisk pace is anything under 9:27 a mile, a simple thing to monitor with the wall timer, because it comes out to precisely six laps every five minutes.

Today my plan was to run a relaxed mile, or until I felt warmed up, then to run hard for as long as I could endure it.

At twelve laps I was 31 seconds ahead of pace-running too fast. Whenever that happens I know one of two things will happen. I'll either hold on bravely to the end, or I'll go down in flames. In either case it was going to hurt.

By 24 laps the suffering had begun. It was one of those days when I thought of nothing but the run every step of the way. Relax the hands and arms, don't slap the feet, straighten the back, open the mouth, forcibly eject more breath, forcibly inhale more breath, look straight ahead, not at the comely twenty-year-old girl stretching in the northwest corner.

The halfway mark is always psychologically meaningful, at any distance. It's like coming to the crest of a hill. It's at that point I suddenly become aware that for every lap I have run there is also one less lap to go: 29 down, 28 to go; 30 down, 27 to go. One lap run and the difference increases by two. Somehow it seems as though I'm gaining two laps for one every time around, though I know that I'm not really.

Unfortunately, when I'm conscious of the passing of each and every lap, it means I'm miserable.

My officially tested sub-maximum heart rate is 171 BPM. In tempo runs I try to maintain a heart rate between 145-150 BPM. Every time I looked at my heart rate monitor I saw readings in the 150s, never in the 140 s. At lap 36 I let up and took one relatively easy lap, but my heart rate was still 150, so I picked it up again.

And so it went. By 48 laps I knew all I had to do was hang in there, but at fifty I took another easy one, with the same result: still gasping for air after shuffling along for a lap. If I was going to suffocate, I might as well go as fast as I can to get it over with. Somehow, I called up enough extra resources to sprint the last lap. Whew! I was whupped. It was a quality run, so noted with a $Q$ in my log.

My total time was not extraordinary: a 9:10 pace, my fifth fastest five miles ever, of 82 recorded runs at that distance, but the fastest of 1999. Twice I have run it at a sub-9:00 pace. My HRM told me I averaged 151 BPM ( $88 \% \mathrm{MHR}$ ) and peaked at 159 ( $93 \% \mathrm{MHR}$ ). I rarely ever get it above 161 while running, except when I'm doing intervals and recovering completely between times, when I can occasionally pop it up to 164 for as much as a lap.

Tomorrow, Friday, is my weekly day for complete rest-no cross training, no walking, no nothing. Just the couch, a good book, and probably
snacks I'll regret-but not too many, because I'm hoping to recover well enough to do a decent half marathon training run on Saturday afternoon.

## Getting Out of Sync

## Sunday, June 20, 1999

In the next few reports I'll address problems of maintaining discipline while coping with the unexpected.

Saturday afternoon is normally my hardest workout of the week. I do my long run, follow it with some weight training, and sometimes even finish off with a swim.

Yesterday Real Life encroached upon my plans. I had an unusually busy day planned. One weighty obligation would occupy me all morning, then another starting at 4:00 P.M., which I anticipated would take an hour or two. I would be within a few minutes of the gym, so I could dart over there at noon and be back by 4:00 and have time for a half marathon long run at least.

It was not to be. I became entangled in the morning affair beginning at 10:00 A.M., and finally left the building at 10:40 P.M. If I hadn't brought a PowerBar and a banana with me I wouldn't have eaten all day.

Fortunately, the business I was occupied with was utterly necessary and worthwhile. It was a painfully long day, but well-spent. It left me mentally exhausted, unable to do anything else at all of value upon returning home.

With a big zero in my running log for yesterday, I had a total of 26.55 miles for the week, instead of the 39 miles expected.

Because I arrived home hungry, I ate a full meal consisting of a salad, pasta, and carrots at 11:00 P.M., which Suzy had waiting for me-nutritious, to be sure, but too much for that time of night.

Then I topped it off with a bolt of bourbon while we watched a sleazy movie Suzy had rented, thereby staying up until after 1:00 A.M., knowing I had another too-busy day ahead today. Dumb. I should have scrapped the movie and gone to bed.

To some degree the flow of daily events is beyond our control. We are all subject to the foibles of time and unforeseen occurrence. But part of the
discipline of physical training is learning to adjust to these circumstances, while continuing to progress. It is necessary to learn to fit running into our life, not to fit our life around running.

When I arose today at 4:58 A.M. to do some serious studying, sleep deprived, still digesting food, and with that edgy feeling that even one drink of hard alcohol can leave you with after a short night's sleep, I knew I'd failed to make the best choices last night, and that I would pay for these in reduced performance today. It was my own fault.

I had an event-filled Sunday morning, as I always do, but was free after 12:30 P.M., when I headed to the gym. It was my determination to run the half marathon today that circumstances would not allow me to do yesterday-149 laps on the Road that Never Ends. (It's technically 67 feet further than a half marathon, if the posted distance of a lap at Bally's is taken as correct.)

But it's not as simple as that, as anyone who trains regularly knows. You don't just head out and run that far without the right context. It's true that I had the rare advantage of two consecutive days of rest from running, but I was also tired, and my mind is not adjusted to running long on Sunday afternoons. To do so represents a change of habit, heaped upon my weary, distracted condition. Added to that was the disadvantage of not having hydrated properly this morning. I started under less than ideal conditions.

Getting out of phase has other consequences as well. I happen to be taking vacation this coming week. Tomorrow I will be home, and on Friday as well, but will be out of town from Tuesday through Thursday, indulging in pure folly-sightseeing in Las Vegas! It's not my choice of a way to have a good time, but Suzy got one of those freebie plane and hotel deals by listening to a timeshare pitch and wanted to go. She's generously indulgent of my running fantasies, so I owe her the same consideration in return. I don't know what the week will bring in the way of opportunities to run, or how it will affect my volatile eating habits. I'm not optimistic.

But today was today, and once I got to the gym I had that to deal with. One thing at a time is enough.

The next day will have its own anxieties. Sufficient for each day is its own badness.-Matthew 6:34

Because I'm starting the week with a long run, and will try and resynchronize with another next Saturday, I could $\log 44$ miles total for the week. Therefore, I decided to run slowly the whole distance today, not pushing it at all, but merely putting in the miles.

Within just a few laps I was dismayed to find that my right shin was hurting and on the verge of cramping. It was disturbingly uncomfortable for a while, and I worried about inducing shin splints. I kept trying to run slowly and loosely, periodically shaking my right foot at the ankle on the forward stroke to loosen up. By thirty laps I wondered if I would ever push through it. I'd taken three Advil and a Succeed! capsule before I started.

Sure enough, by fifty laps the leg relaxed, and I was fine. The rest of the run was uneventful.

Weekend afternoons are usually placidly quiet at the gym. Most reasonable persons are home recreating with their families, as they ought to be. Only irresponsible nuts like me spend a whole afternoon on the weekend at the gym working out. But it was 107 outside today, and the alternative was to clean the pool. No thanks. That can wait until tomorrow morning.

Runners handle their time running in one of two ways. Elites tend to focus on the mechanics of the run itself. Others dissociate, losing their thoughts in their personal cares.

I find that I do both at different times. I'll never be an elite runner, but I think about my run more often than not.

Today I did bits of both. For a while I reflected on the import of yesterday's activities, and on how genuinely successful and worth doing they were.

## Thinking about Balance

For a while I thought about balance. Many years ago, during a bass trombone lesson with with Ed Kleinhammer of the Chicago Symphony, Ed said, "If you look at any musical organization, you'll notice that the guy who's playing the best is also playing the easiest." It was a profound revelation to me at the time, and has stuck with me ever since.

This truth can be applied to any physically challenging activity. I thought about the trick of balancing a broom upright in the palm of my hand, something I can't do well. When that broom is in perfect balance, the body controlling it moves the least. All motion and effort is directed toward getting under the center of balance, trying to achieve stasis.

Similarly, one runs best when properly balanced, even if it requires effort to achieve the optimum posture, as contrasted with sluffing along slowly while slouched over, as some of us talentless geezers are prone to do. For some period of time I worked diligently to find the position at which I feel perfectly centered. Doing so on a regular basis is similar to practicing scales and arpeggios on a musical instrument. Once the mechanics become habit, it helps you out later on.

Pass it on.
Today's run went well. By 120 laps I started to feel fatigue in my butt muscles and in my right hip flexor. For a few laps I ran faster, then faded. By the end I was tired, wobbling slightly, and glad to be done.

My final time was 2:15:52, a 10:21 pace, not my worst ever, but the slowest by four minutes of ten recorded runs at that distance. It surprised me when I added it to my records, because I thought I had tracked at least twice as many half marathon efforts, and I know I've run it as slow as 2:20. Both my first and third half marathon races were slower than 2:15. My training PR for the distance is 2:04:08, and four months before that I ran it one second slower.

No matter. Today I was slow on purpose, and achieved exactly what I wanted to do. That's why we go to work out in the first place.

## Sumer Is Icumen In

## Monday, June 21, 1999

On this Monday of summer solstice, I had the pleasure of sleeping in until 8:00 A.M., a luxury I rarely have. After a tough weekend, I needed the sleep.

Although I have two more marathons ahead of me this year, and am aiming to PR the second one, for the rest of 1999 I consider myself to be in training primarily for the Across the Years 24-hour race.

Even some dedicated runners are unaware that such events exist. The object of a fixed-time race is to go as far as possible in the time allotted. They are generally run on a measured loop course so that laps can be counted and the distance accurately calculated. Across the Years will be run on a certified 400-meter track at Arizona Boys Ranch, in Queen Creek, Arizona. The event also features a 48 -hour race and a 6 -day race. These races go around the clock; they are not staged.

The marathons I'll run in a few months are merely commas on the way to the year's final exclamation point. Therefore, my biggest concerns from now on will be with escalating my mileage, and with learning to run when I'm tired, while avoiding injury in the process.

Yesterday I related how my routine got out of whack over the weekend. Offsetting my long run by a day introduces problems for this week, which is further complicated in that I'm on vacation all week, and will be out of town indulging in craziness the next three days.

Even though I ran 13.12 miles yesterday, with no walking and no drink stops (my usual practice in runs up to fifteen miles), I headed out today to do a supereasy five-mile run-walk combo, but forfeited the strength training I usually do on Monday afternoons. I started with twelve laps of walking (slightly more than one one mile), followed by 24 laps of snailpaced slow running, at about 11:30 pace-so slow it seems to take extra effort to stay in motion-then another twelve laps walking, and wrapped it up with nine more laps of slow running, a total of just over five miles.

Last winter, while training for Crown King 50K, I ran over five hours in the Phoenix Mountain Preserve one Saturday, then went to the gym the next afternoon and ran an additional three hours. On that day I learned to establish a slow shuffle pace using a weird motion unlike anything I've tried before. I was comfortable, was getting airborne, and going only about thirteen minutes a mile. I've never since been able to repeat that exact motion, although I came close today. I'd like to rediscover and develop that technique for use in future ultra runs.

Tomorrow we're off to the breeding ground for Elvis impersonators, while my running plans for the next three days remain a big question mark.

## On Becoming a Certified Geezer

## Friday, June 25, 1999

Yesterday proved to be a red letter day for me, a milestone I will never forget. On Thursday, June 25, 1999, I was officially inducted as a lifetime member into the Worldwide Society of Geezers. The initiation went as follows.

We had just walked over two brisk miles north on Las Vegas Boulevard in 105-degree heat to a resort called the Stratosphere, a gambling joint that supports a needle-thin tower ${ }^{1}$ which reaches 1,081 feet into the air, the tallest building west of the Mississippi. There is an observation level at the top. Admission costs $\$ 6$ for adults.

That is, of course, unless you're a senior citizen! According to their sign, that applies to anyone over the age of 55. I'm a few days away from being 56, well past the age for my bar mitzvah of Geezerdom, by Stratospheric standards.

So I stepped up to the cashier, and for the first time in my looong life said, "One senior and one adult!" Seniors are not adults in this establishment.

She didn't ask for ID or proof of age. Evidently my qualifications were obvious in her eyes. Somehow I snuck by her that I just happened to be wearing a T-shirt that says WHISKEY ROW MARATHON 1999, in oneinch letters, arched across the top. Perhaps she saw it, but assumed I drove the sweep vehicle.

After collecting my ticket, at a savings of $\$ 3$, I hobbled weakly over to the entrance gate, to avoid arousing any suspicion, and we went up to take a look around. My life will never be the same.

In true Las Vegas spirit, they have a couple of thrill rides at the top to loosen the bowels of visitors. The High Roller is the highest roller coaster in the world. The Big Shot is one of those rides where they pull you up to the top and then drop you and let you bounce a few times. It costs extra money for this.

Of course, such excitement is far more than a person at my delicate stage in life can tolerate. I could only watch while brave young'ns demon-

[^2]strated their courage for their elders, screaming in terror as they tore by just a few feet over our heads.

Following that experience we walked hurriedly the two miles back in the blazing heat, arriving just in time to pick up a shuttle and get out of town.

As I anticipated might happen, I did no running whatever from Tuesday through Thursday. Precious little opportunity was available for it, but there was no need for it either. Suzy and I walked for several hours each of the last three days, much of it in scorching desert heat.

We had never been to Las Vegas, except to stop for dinner at the Luxor (the one shaped like a pyramid) in October, 1997, on our way up to St. George, UT, for the marathon. On that occasion we arrived at 6:00 P.M., while it was still light, and left by 8:00 P.M., when things were lit up. It was an amusing experience, but that was enough of it for me at that time.

On Tuesday we got off the shuttle bus near the south end of the Strip at 1:00 P.M., looking and acting like garden variety dumb tourists, and began walking north, in and out of resorts, seeing what there was to see. We finally folded up and headed to the hotel (Palace Station, a short distance from the Strip) about 10:00 P.M., and got a good night's sleep.

Wednesday was our long day. We hit the Strip at 10:00 A.M., saw everything we could see, walked plenty, took in the Cirque Soleil show Mystère at 10:30 P.M., and didn't return to the hotel until 1:00 A.M.

## An Oasis in the Cultural Wilderness

The frenzied pace was broken briefly at midday by a visit to Belaggio, at $\$ 1.4$ billion in construction costs, the ritziest place in town. The classiest tourist offering by a long shot is the astonishing Belaggio Gallery of Fine Art, featuring paintings by Rembrandt, Renoir, van Gogh, Matisse, Manet, Monet, Pisarro, Pollack, Kandinsky, and others. We learned that $\$ 300$ million of the cost was invested in the works of art alone.

The works in the collection are all genuine first rank masterpieces, things we've all seen in picture books, not sketches or unknown lesser works. At one point I found myself standing in a doorway, within three feet on either side of two van Goghs, one of them his last work, paintings

I have known of for years. The hairs on my head nearly stood up. It was like unexpectedly coming face to face with a couple of Beatles.

Viewers stood transfixed in hushed silence, whispering when they dared to speak at all, with wands of wisdom pressed to their ears, which spoke the tale of each work on display in response to the keying in of their numbers.

What a strange contrast this storehouse makes with the environment not far out the door: thousands of perfectly tuned euphonious slot machines singing a C major chord in unison as they consume the life savings of hapless hopefuls who don't understand math. I would have sooner expected to stumble upon a clavichord recital of Canzonas by Girolamo Frescobaldi played by Gustav Leonhardt at the Stardust Lounge.

Yesterday's exploration was largely taken up by the forementioned jaunt to Stratosphere, with secondary stops along the way. By the time we finished with late lunch, we were obliged to make the return trip quickly.

There was no opportunity for running the entire trip. Being on foot for so long surely accounts for something. The sore calf muscles I experienced from Wednesday through this morning testify to that. It's impossible to know exactly how much we walked, but I've recorded five non-aerobic miles per day in my log, a conservative estimate. It could easily have been double that amount.

This level of exertion was not at all difficult for me, but was another experience for Suzy, who is not an athlete, and has within the last two years experienced first a full-blown case of plantar fasciitis, followed by a bone spur in her heel, and most recently a metatarsal stress fracture. However, she would crawl up the side of a mountain on her knees if she knew there was some kind of good time to be had at the top, so she endured the trekking without complaint.

## True Confession

"Hi! My name is Lynn, and I'm a foodaholic."
There, I've confessed it in public. Yes, I'm the sort of person who will eat whatever is within reach until it's gone, regardless of whether I'm hungry.

There seems to be an unwritten law among peoples of the western world that vacations and good times go hand in hand with eating too much and other forms of overindulgence. Therefore, for me the biggest problem with traditional vacationing is eating.

Food is available in Las Vegas (along with other vices) in vast quantities. The eating is good, and it's cheap. The best dollar value is in the all-you-can-eat buffets to be found at every single resort we visited. We ate at two of them. The seafood buffet at Rio was exceptional.

One simply mustn't go into such a place with the idea of nibbling. You go to have the sort of banquet that health-minded persons allow themselves perhaps once a year. Two days in a row is a bit much.

It's a sad fact of life that not all persons can handle unlimited portions of food properly. I've never gone into a buffet restaurant and not seen at least one person in the 400-pound range, sometimes sitting alone, crushing a chair, and loading up on enough nourishment to kill the average buffalo, probably thinking what a great deal he's getting.

## Back to Reality

I'm still on vacation, but now it's time to get back in the groove. It's 109 degrees here today, and is predicted to be 112 tomorrow and Sunday.

So off to the gym I went to do laps. I ran an easy five miles in a time that ranked seventieth in 83 recorded runs at that distance, the third slowest of 1999. My average heart rate for the run measured exactly $80 \%$ of my MHR. After that I did conscientious stretching and went home.

## I Hate to Eat and Run

## Saturday, June 26, 1999

This has been one mighty strange running week. This afternoon I ran a half marathon. Bumping my Saturday long run to Sunday last week results in a total of 52.68 miles for the week.

Yes, it's silly to record mileage in hundreths when I can only estimate some sessions, but that's how I do it. The distance on the laps I run at the gym is accurate enough to count to two decimal places.

When I got home and recorded my figures I realized my schedule said I was supposed to have run only twelve miles. Whoops! I ran too far.

Today's run went fine, but slowly once again. I ate more than I needed before starting. In addition to the usual admixture of three Advil, a Succeed! capsule, and a Pepcid A/C, I consumed a whole quart of Gatorade before even leaving the house, plus around 800 calories between breakfast and what I ate when I got home from being out trying to teach the world this morning.

I've learned that when I'm properly fueled and hydrated at the beginning of a long run, I'm usually a little uncomfortable, bordering on bloated. This leads to early labored breathing. I've learned not to panic. This always passes within half an hour, by which time I start to feel the benefits of the liquid, fuel, and drugs all at once.

Come to think of it, that phase feels good!

## A Shady Character

I always wear my Oakley sunglasses when I run, even indoors. I have the M Frames, the ones that don't fold. I can wear them all day on the top of my head, and they never slip.

The reason I wear them is not just because they look cool, even though they do. I'm too old to impress anyone with that sort of vanity. No one has ever accused me of trying to impress anyone with my looks.

When I run I wear them normally. I also wear a headband. The broad frame sits flush against my forehead all the way across, up against the bottom edge of the headband, and forms an effective seal against sweat from dripping in my eyes, which are particularly sensitive to the salt in perspiration. It drives me crazy when I forget either the headband or my shades, as I constantly wipe burning sweat out of my eyes with my fingers or my shirttail.

The Oakleys filter out ultraviolet light from the fluorescent ceiling fixtures. They reduce the amount of wind striking my eyeballs. Best of all,
the darkness gives me a sense of isolation, as if I've climbed into a runner's cockpit. They enhance my ability to concentrate.

With the assistance of my cool shades, I tend to fall into a semi-trance when I run long. Much of the time my eyes are almost shut, allowing only a sliver of light through my left eye, to avoid running into anyone. I can do this for a half hour or more at a time without bothering to look at my lap counter, timer, heart rate monitor, or the clock on the wall. At such times I'm able to work out many of life's problems.

Shortly after I started my run Sheryl Crow whined over the sound system, "Every day is a winding road." Yeah, tell me about it! Perfect. At that moment I hit my rhythm, and before I knew it thirty laps had passed, the bloat was gone, the drugs were working, and my shades and I were running synchronously.

## Close Encounters

Running often at the same gym you get to know the regulars. The place was a little busier than usual today, and I met up with several folks I talk to often. This not a disagreeable thing, except on rare occasions when I'm seeking metaphysical solitude. Today was not one of those days.

First there was Darla, a young woman I've known from my Real Life outside running for at least eight years. She teaches the children's aerobics class at Bally's. At barely age twenty she married a handsome foreign bodybuilder, the sort of guy who can do chinups continuously for twenty minutes, and who happens to be in practice as a pediatrician with his similarly endowed identical twin brother. Darla is now six months pregnant and already looking ripe but healthy.

Next it was Mike from Eritrea, who has lived in this country a long time. He told me that he was on vacation the last two weeks, and that from Monday through Thursday of this past week he and his family were staying at Belaggio in Las Vegas, where we visited Wednesday and saw the art exhibit. Small world. Mike ran for just a few minutes today.

Finally there was sad-eyed George, a slow runner who always looks depressed, though I doubt that he really is, normally. Today he looked more depressed than usual. As I caught up with him I exchanged the
usual, "How's it goin'?", expecting to pass right on by, except that he responded that he's terribly worried because a week ago he got laid off of his job after twelve years. With thirty years in his line of work, he wasn't hopeful of finding a new job soon. Meanwhile he has a wife and family to support. So I ran with him for a half dozen laps, offering words of comfort.

He asked if the company I work for, Motorola Computer Group, is hiring people with his skill. We are, since our small piece of Motorola recently got an enormous contract and we're hiring people right and left. So I told him how to get to the job listings on our company's Web site, and he expressed gratitude for the lead as he dropped back in pace.

It seems that getting the information from me caused him to go into oxygen debt. There are a few people that I consistently run faster than. George's younger brother is even slower.

That was the last of my encounters. From then on I ran solo, as slowly as last week, but in a groove. Today was my eighth consecutive day of exercising without a rest day, and I didn't want to overdo it, just to get the miles in.

A few laps before halfway I hit a zone, but it lasted only a short while. I was running so easily at mid-run I didn't want to stop for water and an electrolyte tablet, so I didn't.

Ten laps later I reasoned that I should either decide to run straight through without a break, or stop soon so I would have enough run left to get the benefit of the rest, water, and electrolyte. The next lap I walked one, and downed an entire twenty-ounce bottle of water, then started again.

At 120 laps my left knee started to throb, so I tried running a few steps lifting my knees up high, which helped. Other than that, I got through the run with no unusual tiredness, and picked up the pace the last two miles. As I finished, a woman was singing over the sound system, "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" My sentiments exactly.

## About Walking Breaks

Dig this: my time was 2:15:53, exactly one second slower than last Sunday's run at the same distance. That made it a new personal worst at that distance by that interval. Now about that walking break I took?

I'm not one who practices the Galloway method of running with walking breaks at timed intervals. Gallowalking works well for many people, but not for me. I walk when I absolutely must on extra-long runs, maybe a minute or so every four miles. This pattern roughly approximates the scenario at water stops during a marathon. I've never learned to drink and run, and I'm not anxious to do so.

After walking four more laps to cool down, I headed for the weights and worked hard for seventy minutes, counting stretch time at the end. After that, I hit the pool for fifteen minutes and relaxed another five minutes in the whirlpool, satisfied with my geezerly workout for this day.

## Big Talk

## Sunday, June 27, 1999

I've slowed down significantly since this time last year, by an average of perhaps thirty seconds a mile. I'm not sure why.

One factor is advancing geezerhood. Another is being several pounds heavier. Yet another is that I'm working hard to increase endurance once again, and running often on tired legs. Other than that I don't have much of an explanation for it, because I'm working just as hard.

My immediate goal is to ramp up mileage from the roughly 35 miles a week I've been doing to fifty miles a week by the first week of August, and to hold it there for a month. On Labor Day weekend I'll run an indoor 50 K training run. Then I can begin to taper for Twin Cities Marathon on October 3. If I accomplish all that, I'll reach a new high-water mark for sustained distance, and will be well along the way to being prepared for my 24 -hour run at the end of the year.

Big talk, huh?
"Did he really say he's going to run a 50K training run on a 155-yard indoor track?" you may be chortling to yourself. Yes, that's what I said.

What it all means, looking from this end of the project, is being willing to run when I'm tired, and to endure those character-building runs that cause persons with less gumption to give up.

## Training Versus Racing

It should go without saying that all the while I'll continue measuring, observing, and analyzing, to be sure I don't overextend myself to the point of overtraining or inducing injury. I say this because apparently, based on some reports I've read on the lists, some beginning runners believe that succeeding at distance running is largely a matter of showing up at the starting line of a chosen race, gritting one's teeth, and being willing to bear any adversity regardless of the cost, until one arrives at the end.

Bzzzt! Wrong!
For me, running is all about preparation and training, not completing races. The races are just the frosting on the cake; the cherry on the soda; the whipped cream on the pie; the butterscotch on the sundae; the ... Never mind.

Now you know why I gained eight pounds last year despite running 1825 miles.

The point is that without the cake, the soda, the pie, and the ice cream, the frosting, cherry, whipped cream, and butterscotch become meaningless.

Well, not exactly. The real point is that races are not standalone objects, but goals toward which one reaches with training. By the time I get to the starting line of any race, I know I've earned the right to be there, because I've prepared for it. And so it should be with everyone.

Today's run was a piddling three-miler at 10:08 pace. Given that I just finished a 52-mile week, including a half marathon yesterday, I was happy with that effort. My next day of complete rest will not be until next Friday, as I continue to ride the ripples in the wake of last week's disturbed schedule.

Following that run I did strength training for 45 minutes and went home satisfied.

## Another Slip into Geezerdom

## Monday, June 28, 1999

Last Thursday I was baptized into geezerdom when, for the first time ever, I asked for and got a "senior" discount on an admission ticket. The slide has begun.

Today I received in the mail a copy of a magazine entitled Senior PagesThe Valley's $55 \mathcal{E}$ Better Guide to Complete Living! It's all ads for heart surgeons, laxatives, and golf stuff. Aaaarrrgghh! The end must be imminent. Note the subversive manner in which they use "better" to mean "older."

I'll fight it. I'll run harder.

## Consequences of Being Shy

I'm a genuinely friendly person, but not aggressively so, because I'm also shy. In my heart I'd like to say a cheerful greeting to everyone I see, but in practice I keep my mouth shut almost all the time.

Therefore, some people I've been seeing at the gym for years I've never even said hello to. One man in particular I've wanted to greet for a long time. Today I was walking around the track to get warmed up and caught up with him at a time when he was walking, too, so I finally said a smiley hello and we exchanged names. His name is Winston. That's as far as the conversation went this time. But he smiled back.

Winston is an impressive runner, given that he appears to be in his mid-seventies. He could well be even older. He always runs with a much younger woman, perhaps his daughter, who appears to be about forty. If this pretty lady is his wife, then Winston is even more of a stud than I thought.

Winston runs exactly one pace all the time, always for the same distance, about four miles, and always the same three days of the week. When I'm running on dead legs and struggling, Winston and his partner can lap me two or three times in the course of their run. When I'm feeling good and running well, I can lap them the same number of times.

Another day, another new running friend. Why are we so afraid to say hello to people we see every day?

## An Unintentional Tempo Run

Today's run was productive-five miles on the Road that Never Ends. When I began I was in a mood to push up the effort a notch, so I started out aiming for a pace of six laps in five minutes. A year ago I did that daily. After 18 laps I was 28 seconds ahead, but already laboring, so I cut back just a little.

By two miles I had to force myself consciously to inhale and exhale deeply and rhythmically. Been there, done that-I used to suffer from asthma. Over ten years ago, long before I took up running regularly, it mysteriously went away and never returned.

At three miles I was uncomfortable. By four miles I was not having fun, and soon after I ran out of gas. Although I almost slowed down to recover just five laps from the end, I caught myself, and willed myself to see it through to the end.

That qualifies as a tempo run for me, albeit an unintentional one, so I won't try to do another one later in the week. My time was 47:25, a 9:26 pace, 27 th of 84 recorded runs at that distance. Last year at this time I rarely ran this distance any slower. My heart rate averaged 151 and maxed at $157,88.3 \%$ and $91.8 \%$ of my MHR respectively, so in that regard it was a good effort.

Oh yeah-I lapped Winston three times.

## Halfway There?

## Wednesday, June 30, 1999

Six months ago today I resolved that six months from today I would be a participant rather than an observer in the next edition of the 24 -hour race I watched on that day. And now I'm halfway to that goal, if time were the only measurement.

But the major effort has just begun. This evening I calculated my monthly totals. So far this year I have run 896 miles, four miles ahead of this day last year, an average of 4.95 miles a day. I'm also five pounds heavier than I was at this time last year. This morning when I got on the scale it said
185.4, the highest I've been since I took up running conscientiously five years ago.

In June I ran 168 miles, second best only to January for the year, when I reached 186. Next month I anticipate covering 190 miles as I escalate from 42 through 50 miles a week. The next two months will be the hardest training I have ever done.

## Burned by the Cookie Monster

Today I planned on running nine miles after work, high for a midweek run. To help me along I brought an extra PowerBar with me this morning. Unfortunately, it was consumed by noon. Food does not keep well in my possession.

This afternoon at work we had a big deal meeting. It was only afterward, at 2:30 P.M., that I realized free food was available. Cookies! My single most favorite drug. I'm exercising as much as I can and still fighting my weight; I know the only solution that remains is not to eat as much, in other words, to starve slowly. But there was a whole tray of large Otis Spunkmeyer cookies sitting there. So I took one that was covered with M\&Ms and ate it.

Suddenly I felt like Adam in the Garden of Eden—naked and hoping no one would notice. But it was so good that two minutes later I ran back up the stairs and took two more. Yum! After all, a man has to have his carbohydrates before his workout, doesn't he?

Bad runner! Bad, bad runner!!
Carbohydrates or no, one hardship that makes me want to bail out of a run is stomach acid. Fortunately, I rarely suffer from it, and if I anticipate there is a possibility I might, I'll take a Pepcid A/C before starting. Stomach acid is provoked by foods with oil and fat in them-for instance, cookies with lots of chocolate in them. So I usually can guess when I'm in for trouble based on what I've been eating, and take steps to prevent it.

I arrived at the gym with my stomach already in a turmoil, hoping I might find a Pepcid A/C in my gym bag. There was none. Neither was there any Advil nor any Succeed! electrolyte caps, both of which I
normally carry and could have used. I took a long drink of water before I started, hoping to dilute the poison.

Sure enough, the cookie monster attacked within a few minutes. Each surge begins as a hot bubble that works its way out until it erupts in flames in my duodenum, causing me to stagger and groan audibly.

I hate it when that happens, which it did every three or four laps. Finally after four miles it began to subside.

But I made it- 9.07 slow miles on the Road that Never Ends at a dismal but manageable 10:30 pace, the end to a good month, if overall pace is not considered.

Yesterday I wrote no journal installment because my run was ordinary in most respects: 10K on tRtNE at a 10:01 pace. Richard the podiatrist, one of the persons I talk to most frequently at the gym, picked me up less than ten laps into it. Richard is six feet two inches, muscular, fourteen years younger than me, and runs a 6:30-7:00 pace, but rarely more than eight or nine miles. He was gracious enough to slow down to my pace and hung with me for the remainder of my run.

One more five-miler tomorrow and I can take a rest day.

## Chapter 4

## Turning Up the Volume

## Taking it Easy

## Friday, July 2, 1999

What a difference there is between resting and loafing! As with so many of the good things in life, rest is best enjoyed in moderation, when it has been earned.

Working at a job or in the home is good. Taking days off is good. Eating is good. Not eating is good. Exercise is good. Rest is good. Both pleasure and worthwhile benefits come from all these pursuits. None should function as a primary end in themselves; each works with the other to make up the pattern of our lives as a whole.

For everything there is an appointed time.-Ecclesiastes 3:1
We live in a world of extremes. Moderation, which means exercising control, has gone out of fashion.

Some persons are dedicated to living a life as office drones, often simply to make money they never have time to make use of. Others live as though the now frowned-upon sentiments of the once popular advertising slogan: "Weekends were made for Michelob!" were an expression of divinely revealed truth.

Some people exercise to work off their overindulgences and lack of self-control. Others eat to fuel their work.

Rest has a special place in among our activities. Sitting and doing nothing is the easiest thing we can do. If we enhance it by putting our feet up, refreshing ourselves with our favorite cold beverage with foam on it and a sweet or salty snack, while watching grown men play with a ball on TV, it's easy to let the advertising we see convince us that "It doesn't get any better than this." It can become our preferred mode, to the degree that getting into that state becomes a primary goal in life, or even an addiction.

As noted previously, rest is good! It's something we need. But the fundamental purpose of rest is to recover, refresh, and restore, to rebuild for renewed activity. ${ }^{1}$

Among runners and other athletes, the application of this truth becomes a matter of science, with the goal of achieving guilt-free rehabilitative pleasure.

As you may have guessed by now, today is a rest day for me. Ahhhhh! It follows thirteen consecutive days of exercise, if you count the three long days of trudging through Las Vegas on foot in the heat. (I do.)

Last night's run was a chore. It was supposed to be an interval training session, but the previous three days I did a five-mile tempo run, a 10 K at moderate speed, and nine miles easy. By the time I arrived at the gym last night I was sagging. What resulted was interval training in format only, not in performance.

My recent routine has been to warm up by walking four laps (not counted in the five miles), and six laps run easily, followed by alternating patterns of four laps hard ( 0.35 miles) and three laps of recovery, including some shameless walking, if required and desired to catch my breath. I repeat the routine until I run out of laps or energy. Last night the energy faded first. I did six segments of hard running, then shuffled the last twelve laps at a barely mobile pace, until I reached five miles. The total time was pitiful, and my heart rate statistics weren't too hot either.

But looking at the big picture, I know for a fact that I've made significant advancement the last few weeks. My escalator is going up.

Meanwhile, I've earned the right to take a day off training.
Bzzzt! Wrong! When properly timed, rest itself is an element of the training that runners do, just as breathing in is as much a part of the pro-

[^3]cess of learning to play a wind instrument as blowing out. And today is my day to take a breather.

So tonight I'm planning on enjoying a nice dinner, sitting and playing Bach and Ravel on my piano, watching a movie, and reading a book until bedtime, probably while consuming a favorite beverage (likely foamless this time), as I hydrate and contemplate the 16 miles I will be running tomorrow afternoon.

Better is a handful of rest than a double handful of hard work and striving after the wind.-Ecclesiastes 4:6

## My Wife's Heinous Plot

## Saturday, July 3, 1999

My wife is trying to kill me. She buys cookies, good ones, on the pretense that she is doing something that will please me, knowing full well that cookies are my downfall. Last night she brought home a king size bag of Safeway store-brand cookies that just happen to be some of the best cookies I've ever laid my teeth into.

She may as well have brought home pure uncut heroin. I ate about fifteen of them last night, and six more this morning. I'm carboloading for my long run today, of course. It's remarkable that I didn't eat them all.

## The Ritual

On Saturdays when I run long I follow a get-ready ritual: Pick out the shorts, singlet, and socks, put them on, pick out the shoes, put them on, pick out the headband, put it on, clean the Oakleys, stick them on my forehead, strap on the Polar HRM, pick up an extra towel, make sure I've got a swim suit in my gym bag in case I want to hit the pool after the run, and sandals, regular shorts and a T-shirt to change into afterward, take three Advil, one Pepcid A/C, and one Succeed! capsule, put three or four Succeed! capsules and a few Advil in a pill box to take with me, drink a couple of glasses of water while I'm getting ready, and finally pull a quart
of Gatorade out of the refrigerator. We buy it at Costco by the case. I don't usually try to eat anything on runs of twenty miles or less, but try to survive on the calories from Gatorade.

It may not sound like much, but it takes me fifteen to twenty minutes to accomplish all this, and it ticks me off when I leave something out.

When I got to the gym I realized I left the freshly filled pillbox with extra electrolyte and Advil sitting on my desk at home. I rarely ever consume Advil during a run (maybe three times ever), but it's good to be prepared. On the other hand, I really wanted the electrolyte. Now I'd have to live without. Oh well, I ran for years without the pills; I would survive the afternoon.

Today's plan was to run 182 laps on tRtNE, a total of 16.03 miles. After half a lap I reached up to pull down my shades and realized I had no headband. Bad runner!

My head is configured in such a way that a wrinkle channel pipelines a river of sweat directly into my left eye. It's annoying and it stings. Sometimes I can tolerate a run of three or four miles without a headband, wiping my eyes on my shirttail, but there was no way I would face a 16-miler with that inconvenience.

So I stopped immediately, cut across the aerobics floor, went downstairs to the locker room, and pulled a headband out of my bag. For good measure I took a bandana to carry in my hand. Then I walked one more lap and started running again. Much better.

## Ooh! My Arms

Recently I've been talking to some ultrarunners about the technique for an ultra shuffle. I already know to aim for short, quick strides, and to remain close to the ground. That's how I run most of the time. Something new I tried today was an improvement in my arm motion. I've always tended to swing my arms across my chest. Someone pointed out it's more efficient to have them go straight forward and back, in order to maintain the momentum in the direction you're moving. This makes sense, so I worked on it throughout my run today. I had plenty of time.

## Another New Running Friend

Fifteen laps into it, I anticipated a good run. Suddenly a younger good runner pulled up beside me, someone I've been seeing for the past month, but hadn't met yet.

He asked me if I was in Arizona Road Racers. Yes. He thought I was familiar. So is he. The fellow is a skinnyfast who favors 10 Ks , but has run marathons. He has the distinction of having been awarded third woman overall in a recent 10 K , but had to give it up because he was not exactly qualified.

This happened because his name is Caroll, and the scorer ignored the $M$ in the sex column on his registration. I know one other man named Carol (with a single " 1 "). Their predicament is not unique. Sometimes I suffer from similar indignities, because my first name is likewise more often given to females than to males.

After fifteen laps of chatting I finally gasped to Caroll, "When I run with other people like this, I tend to speed up. Almost everyone is faster than me and slows down to match me, but I speed up, too. Today I have sixteen miles to run, and if I continue at this pace, I'm going to die an early death." Much to my relief, he immediately slowed down, and I started to recover. A few laps later we parted and he continued on at his usual zippy pace.

## And On it Went

It was my plan to walk a lap while guzzling Gatorade every forty laps, which is almost exactly 3.5 miles. The fresh quart of Gatorade lasted two cycles. At 120 laps I stopped at the drinking fountain. At 159 laps I just walked one and didn't drink anything.

I was delighted by how loose I felt the whole distance. Two or three times I picked up the pace for ten laps, then for two miles I ran almost as hard as I would if I were doing an ordinary mid-week five-miler. I finished with energy to spare, feeling satisfied, having run it at a 10:15 pace, 25 seconds a mile slower than my fastest at that distance, run in May 1997. Given that my times have been generally slower recently, I was not disappointed.

We had to go to a party early tonight, so I skipped the weight training and swim. I wasn't happy about this. The July 4 weekend is when $e v$ erybody leaves Phoenix, so the place was practically deserted and quiet. They had even turned off the sound system, so I didn't have to endure Sheryl Crow. I'm planning on going back for more tomorrow.

## Running Slowly Is Fun

## Sunday, July 4, 1999

Running slowly but with perfect control is fun! That's what I did today, for 3.08 miles.

The object was to work on my 24-hour track ultramarathon shuffle technique, monitoring my posture and armswing in the mirrors that surround the entire perimeter of the gym. I've been told by those who have mastered it that they can run for many hours at a time without stopping this way. The more I work at it the more I sense why this is true.

During this run my heart rate averaged only $73.7 \%$ of my MHR, and never got higher than $78.9 \%$. This not much more strenuous than walking.

This week will be another weird one for me. From Thursday through Sunday I'll be in Tucson. It will be difficult for me to run much at all, especially on Sunday.

I'll do no long run this week, but will take no rest day until next Sunday. With tomorrow a holiday from work it will be convenient to run eight miles. If all goes well, the following three days I'll go $10 \mathrm{~K}, 10$ miles, and another 10 K . I'm expecting to do that second 10 K in Tucson on Thursday evening. I'll be forced to be content with three-milers on Friday and Saturday.

You'll notice that this July 4 report is notably free of fireworks.

## Growing Confident

Monday, July 5, 1999
With an awkwardly-laid-out week before me I decided to front load as many miles as I can get in before Thursday. The weekend ahead will pro-
vide opportunity for token runs at best.
What delights me presently is how quickly I seem to be recovering from my runs in this period of buildup. This suggests that the hard work I've done over the past several years is sticking with me.

As I take aim at the Grand Slam challenge I've created for the last three months of 1999, it's heartening to know that I don't have to start at the beginning every time I set a new goal. As an experienced runner put it, "It's a lot easier to stay in shape than to get in shape."

In my case being "in shape" is a figurative expression. I'm weighing in heavier than I have in the last 4.5 years, and the shape I see in the mirror seems to be getting rounder by the day. I shudder to think what I would look like if I didn't run forty miles a week and work out with weights.

After following through on Saturday's sixteen miles with three easy miles yesterday, I felt as if I had cheated myself out of a good workout. There's no doubt in my mind I could have gone five miles or 10 K with beneficial results.

## More Fun Going Slowly

Today, with the advantage of an extra day off work, I made up for yesterday's blown opportunity. The plan was to go for eight miles while once again practicing my newly acquired ultra shuffle technique. In a 24 -hour race runners need to walk often starting from the beginning. So I rolled my walking laps into the count, and traversed the whole distance as if I had intended to go for five hours or more. The basic routine was to shuffle twelve laps ( 1.06 miles), then walk three laps quickly.

And so it went for eight miles, with one exception. The pattern got skewed when a gym acquaintance I hadn't seen in several months showed up, caught up with me on a walking lap, and wanted to chat.

This fellow (Steve) could be an Aryan Nation poster boy: in his early thirties, about six feet four inches, blond, and white as John Elway, and around 230 pounds; fit as can be, he used to run track in college. His wife teaches aerobics. He still runs, but only short distances. His bulk causes mechanical stress on his anatomy, and he's forever monkeying with new shoes and changing routines just to stay healthy.

He's shown interest in my geezerly running activities, and asks how it's going whenever I see him. It was late last year when we last spoke, before I embarked on my journey into the world of ultrarunning, so there was much to fill him in on, which Steve listened to indulgently.

It took some extra walking laps to relate all this. When I started running again and we parted ways, I tried to make up for it by going two miles without walking.

The numbers didn't matter today. I had hoped to shuffle at an overall pace between 12:00 and 13:00 miles per minute. It came out at 12:07, and I was happy with that.

Technically I'm not much of a walker, at least not yet. Because I do so little of it during training sessions, and most of what I do is directed at recovery, I haven't developed the ability to walk fast. Leisurely strolling won't cut it in a 24-hour race, where the purpose of walking is to avoid running so as to recover, conserve energy, and eat, and still make as much forward progress as possible.

But today I felt good from the beginning, and started to get a coordinated motion going during the walking segments. I wanted to practice it while I had the opportunity.

Therefore, when I finished my regular eight miles, I continued on for an additional two miles of speed walking, just for technical practice. Whee! I felt as though I could have walked until midnight. It was the easiest ten miles I've ever logged.

After that I worked out hard with weights for an hour, and headed down to the pool to see if it was clear. Usually I'll swim only if the pool is nearly empty. Sometimes it's full of bouncing, jiggling, fat ladies doing a water aerobics class. Today all the lanes were occupied with persons who seemed to be seriously occupied with swimming, so I contented myself with coming home and cooling off in my own pool.

Holiday break is almost over; tomorrow it's back to the cubicle farm for two days.

## Gone With the Wind

## Tuesday, July 6, 1999

Today the 29 total miles I've run the previous three days caught up with me-my legs have gone on strike. However, I wanted to get in 10K today, so it was back to ultrashuffle mode. If necessary I would have walked it.

It was indeed a slow run, but not as miserable as I'd feared. By two miles I knew I would survive, and that my time would be unreal, but that I would not walk. I just had to exercise the patience of a farmer waiting for a crop to come in.

At such times I call to mind that training runs are finite. They have a beginning, and they have an end. When I know how far I plan to run, I can estimate closely when it will be done. There is no use whatever fretting that the time has not come yet, any more than watching the clock will make a tough work day end any sooner. So I just stop whining and run.

Being in a good mood can cause one to run faster, just as being in a bad mood can steal the wanna right out from under you. Last week when I encountered sad-eyed, recently jobless George, he was running like a man on the way to his own execution.

Today was quite a different scene. I had a little over two miles to go when George arrived and caught up with me. It seems that on Saturday he got three different job offers. He accepted one that offered him 25 percent more pay than what he had been earning. He started today.

George's pace had improved to match his soaring spirit, and naturally, he wanted to spend the last two miles of my run telling me all about the new job. So instead of patiently lumbering on, I found myself gradually increasing speed to match him, until the last three laps, when I ran extra hard. By then I just wanted to be done, so I sprinted the last lap, with George right on my tail, and came gasping to a grateful halt. I left without doing my stretches, because I had a tight schedule tonight and was in a hurry.

Despite the surge my total time was still so bad it was almost off the chart: 72nd of 76 recorded runs at that distance, and my slowest since late August 1997.

As Scarlet O'Hara said, "Tomorrow is another day."

## Tracking a New Statistic

Wednesday, July 7, 1999

Today I added a new column to my training log. It shows the accumulation of miles run and walked over the past seven consecutive days.

My theory is there should be a correlation between that number and perceived performance. The higher the mileage the more tired I expect to be, which will manifest itself as slower times or dead legs.

As I said, it's just a theory. Sometimes there's no way to explain a particular performance-today's, for instance.

Because of my skewed schedule, the total for the last seven days before today's run was 52.12 miles. That's high for me. So today I expected a death march.

However, I spiced up my routine with something a little different. Every other Wednesday I take Cyra-Lea to her piano lesson, and sometimes, mainly during cooler weather, I run during the lesson. Last night we had a big storm that cooled things off. It was 99 degrees this afternoon, snowshoe weather for Phoenix in July, so today I powerwalked for one full hour, and credited myself with four miles. It was a little more than that I'm sure, but I was being conservative.

After that we drove to the gym. I took off on a 10 K run at a relatively decent pace of 10:00 flat and never varied it from end to end.

By all outward expectations, and according to my theory of accumulated distance, I should have crawled that 10 K on my hands and knees, but I felt great the whole way, though I didn't press it.

Go figure.
Tomorrow should be interesting. We are driving to Tucson. I was hoping to run there in the late afternoon, but it won't be possible. Therefore, in order to run I will have to do it in mid-morning, with well short of a day's rest.

## Evaluating Progress

## Thursday, July 8, 1999

Despite having only seventeen hours rest since I last ran, I had yet another good run today. A probable factor was nine hours and fifteen minutes of that time spent in blissful slumber.

This morning I got up at 6:30, took care of business at home, read mail, and headed out to the gym. The distance goal was 10 K . I figured that surely by today the cumulative effects of the past several days would tackle me.

At Bally's 71 laps on tRtNE is 6.25 miles, 0.04 miles longer than a real 10K. In 1997 and 1998 I frequently ran that distance three times, and sometimes four, during mid-week, in addition to a long run on the weekend.

The first few laps were slow but not bad. Before long I was running briskly. I kept it up to the end, and had enough left for a strong surge at the finish. My time was 1:00:09, a 9:37 pace. Rats. Good enough to qualify as a tempo run, but I wish I had broken an hour. I've done so only twice during 1999, but did it nineteen times during 1998.

At this time last year my speed had improved to the degree that I believed I should never go over an hour again for this distance except on unusually tough days. Most of my runs at that distance had been in the 58:00-59:30 range.

However, today's run was only my third fastest gym 10K of 1999, and was 31st of 79 of all my recorded runs at that distance.

Is it because I'm too old and too fat and am just slowing down due to forces beyond my ability to control? I thought I had at least two more good years left before I hit my peak and the aging curve began to take over. It appears I'm already a has-been who's really a never-was.

Viewed from another perspective, with today's run, my last seven consecutive days total distance is 53.30 miles. And the first of those seven days was a day of rest, so it also represents what I've done the last six days. Considering that I feel great and that my goal right now is to increase mileage without unduly stressing myself, I shouldn't complain too bitterly that I'm not clocking 55:00 10Ks every time I hit the track.

The lesson I'm slowly learning is that there are many variales to be
considered in evaluating one's progress. Is it possible for a runner to say, "I may be slow, but I'm good!?"

That would, of course, be a bit of an overstatement in my case.
And now we're off to Tucson until Sunday, during which time I'm looking forward to some recovery.

## Fear of Quitting

## Tuesday, July 13, 1999

Non-running friends sometimes ask me how I cultivated the ability to train so consistently over such a long time. The answer is simple: Fear of quitting.

Everyone has heard the tired comparison that runners make, the one that says running is a "positive addition." I prefer to look at it using a different simile. Sometimes I compare myself to a kidney dialysis patient.

Most persons who require this medical treatment need it badly, need it regularly, and are obliged to go out of their way to get it. The typical dialysis patient must go in three times a week and submit to a process that takes about four hours per session to complete.

For most people, this is a gross inconvenience. But is it optional? Would someone with kidney disease reason that he's too busy to make it today and has better things to do, so he'll just skip it? Not if he wants to keep on living.

That analogy may be a bit of an exaggeration as applied to one's need to run, but it's close enough to be useful. To me, not running is not an option. Therefore, I just do it.

I first started running productively in July of 1977, when I was living on the central Maine coast, the day after I met a mother of seven children who ran daily, and was inspired by her grit. ${ }^{2}$ My first runs proved to be a revelation to me, as I learned that after just a week or two of working at it, I could actually enjoy running distances at age 34 that were inconceivable when I was a kid.

[^4]Although I'm not a substance abuser, I imagine the experience was similar in ways to what an alcoholic or drug addict goes through in giving up his self-destructive practice. I acquired health benefits I never thought I would ever enjoy in my whole life.

At the time I never ran any further than five miles, but I kept this up more or less consistently for at least two years. Gradually, the concerns of life encroached upon my running. It tapered off, became a matter of runwalking on weekends when I could spare the time, then walking only, and eventually I stopped altogether. I had fallen off the wagon and stayed off for many years.

By June of 1994 I weighed 220 pounds, and could not run from my house to the end of the block on a warm day.

Then one day I hit a turnaround point. It was not the product of relentless soul-searching and struggling, not a desperation measure following a sequence of frustrated diets and crash get-in-shape plans, and not the result of some quasi-religious conversion that turned me toward physical fitness. The reality was a lot plainer than that. It just happened.

One hot Saturday in that June of 1994, I bought a new pair of sneakers, and later took them out for a trial. I was appalled that I could no longer run at all. But I did my best, running fifty steps, walking until recovery, and repeating the cycle, for a total distance of what I have since measured with a wheel and now know is 1.6 miles. The next week I ran more and walked less, counting steps as I went. Soon I increased the distance. Even though I was doing this only two or three times a week, improvement was being made, though not enough to lose any weight. Yet somehow a good attitude button had been pressed inside my head. It's been jammed in the on position ever since.

The rest of the story is an often told one, having been experienced by countless other runners both before and after me. By mid-October I was working out hard enough that the weight started to come off, over fifteen pounds by the end of December 1994.

That's when I went to a gym for the first time since I was in college. I went, enjoyed it, and have been going five or six times a week ever since.

Meanwhile I've become a runner. I'm clearly not a good runner, but I've gotten such great personal benefits from running that I feel like the drunk who has gotten back on the wagon for the last time. There is no
way on earth I'm ever going to allow things to go back to the way they were before.

But as we know from the experience of those who are or were alcoholics, staying on track takes more than firm resolve at a time when one is peaking and at his best. It takes a permanent commitment to living a different lifestyle, and constant watchfulness to avoid anything that could trigger a relapse and consequent descent into forsaken ways.

Therefore, I've become by necessity meticulously orderly and insistent on sticking to my training, as though I were a runner who is good at it. I happen to love it, so this is not a big deal. If daily runs were an ordeal to suffer through like kidney dialysis, my life would be considerably less joyful than it really is.

## Reasons and Excuses

Throughout life we seek to rationalize what we do. In the process we produce reasons and excuses. Reasons explain why things happen. Excuses point to factors beyond our control, and can let us off the hook when seeking to assign blame.
"I wasn't paying attention" may be the reason someone drives through a red light, but it's not an excuse. In contrast, "I'm stone deaf" is both a reason and an excuse for not hearing someone calling our name, because a person can't be criticized simply for not being able to hear well.

Two weeks ago I was unable do to my long run because I was occupied from early morning until after 10:00 P.M. with something far more important than running. That was an excuse, and I didn't feel the least bit guilty about it.

But any day I blow off a run without some truly good reason, namely a valid excuse, is a day that an arcade full of bells and sirens go off in my head. It's a day that I begin to examine the dam for cracks.

Yesterday at first analysis seemed like such a day. However, I've reconciled it, as I'll explain.

## Across the Great Divide

Sunday evening we returned from our four-day weekend in Tucson. On this trip I was obliged to live all day long in a suit for three days, from early morning until after dinner. Suits and ties are the pits, but I must wear them frequently. Fortunately, I do not have to wear them to work, where shorts, running shoes, and T-shirts are the norm.

I took only one on this trip - a black one, except for the white stains from the instant oatmeal I succeeded in spilling on both the front right and back left leg Friday morning. I brought three shirts. The first was white, the second was white, and the third one was white. However, all three pair of socks were black. One had cows on it. The tie was designed by Jerry Garcia. OK, so call me a wild and crazy rebel.

Since the last installment my admitted age incremented to 56. Because we don't consider birthdays special, I prefer not to publicize the date, but I do notice the passing of the day. Another day older and deeper in debt, as Tennessee Ernie Ford used to sing.

By Thursday I had racked up over 53 miles for the previous six consecutive days. I needed, wanted, and deserved a day of recovery. It was my intent to get up early Friday and walk three miles before heading out for the day. Instead, I enjoyed a little extra sleep.

Oops. Did that small compromise produce a tiny crack in the dam?
On Saturday morning I was up at 6:00 A.M. and out the hotel door by $6: 10$ for what became a profoundly stinky run-walk, which I mostly walked. It took four minutes to negotiate the complicated intersection a block away. I chose the direction that looked most promising, but immediately ran into a sign that says ROAD ENDS. It did. Back to the main street I went, and down another block, where I found a park with an asphalt path surrounding it, quickly loading up with geriatric strollers. Perfect. I felt right at home.

I ran two laps and walked two laps. The time it took to run exactly one lap suggests that the path was about 0.6 miles. The total run-walk was about four miles, in slightly over an hour. Then it was into my straitjacket for the day.

For me, running in the morning stinks. I can't get going. But walking is less of a problem. I was finally just starting to get loose when I had to
quit.
On Sunday I knew I would not be able to run because of a tight schedule, which included packing and checking out of the hotel. This, too, was planned and acceptable.

Traveling stinks. Heat stinks. Humidity stinks. Temperature and humidity are additive properties on a discomfomometer. Sunday my knees started to ache. That stinks, too.

Now that I'd had three days to cut back a little, I recognized that my knees were feeling seriously stressed-not enough to be considered an injury, but enough to get my attention. It's time to start monitoring it closely, and to start doing serious quad work. I've never had knee problems and don't want to start now.

Back home on Sunday night, after peeling off the putrid clothing I'd been stuck in all day, I planned my running for the week. It's time to get back to work. I wanted 44 miles for the week, and Sunday was already a day of rest.

I'm not going to make it. Yesterday (Monday) I was obliged to remain at work nearly two hours later than usual, and I had important matters to care for at home last night. By the time I escaped, I calculated that I was looking at 8:00 P.M. before I would have dinner and a shower, and be ready to tackle the evening. Bummer. So I called my wife and told her I'd be home in a half hour, and chucked my scheduled run more casually than I have in a long time. Phhht. Gone. Fugedaboudit.

Another crack in the dam? Maybe so-maybe not. I realize in retrospect I badly needed an extra day's rest. But that was not the reason I gave myself and my wife for canceling my run last night. I was ready and able to run, but didn't, only because I didn't want to get home too late. I've gotta watch that sort of thing.

Yesterday is history, and today is another day. My knees don't hurt any more, I'm rested, I've eaten right, I feel good, and I want to run. Will I do the 10 K I promised myself tonight, and will the wagon keep rolling with me on it? I think so, but until it's a fait accompli I won't know.

## Recognizing Pain

## Wednesday, July 14, 1999

With three of the previous four days off you would think by yesterday afternoon I would have been ready for a run that was both vigorous and comfortable, but it didn't happen.

The goal was 10K on tRtNE. After three easy laps I ran into Boston Bill-no, not that one. Bill Perkins is a runner I have seen and talked to a couple of times a week for the last two and a half years. He's a history teacher, age 47, and has qualified for Boston Marathon the last several years. He's even run it three times. Bill loves to yack about running, even when he's tearing around the track at a 7:30 pace, at which time he's always talking about it to someone other than me.

Bill didn't get picked in the lottery for St. George Marathon this year, his favorite race, and is ticked about it. He's still looking to run this year's qualifier, and it appears Tucson Marathon will have to be it.

He said he heard a rumor that they changed the course this yearthat it will start further up the road and avoid winding around through the town of Oracle, including the one gigantic uphill. This is good news. The bad news is that they are ending in a different location from previous years, and the last mile is steeply uphill. This rumor was not confirmed by a check of the Web site, however, which still shows the old course.

I picked up speed to go closer to Bill's pace so we could talk. In 9:00 I had covered one mile and was gasping, going much too fast for me to sustain for 10K. So I dropped back considerably. The inadequate warmup aggravated my shins, which started to ache and cramp.

I've had this problem before, and have learned that if I patiently run extra slowly for a while, and shake my feet from the ankle slightly on the forward stroke, eventually I'll loosen up and run through it. It worked, but it took over thirty laps to happen. Meanwhile it wasn't fun. I came close to stopping. I've stopped for pain only twice.

Lest you misunderstand that statement, let me clarify: I don't mean that I ignore the warning signs of pain. For one thing, I'm too much of a wimp to do that. I also have a measure of good sense.

There's definitely a time to stop running: when one is injured or in imminent danger of becoming injured. I've been fortunate in that I've
had almost no problems with injury, other than a chronic bit of Achilles tendonitis that bothered me the first two years, but which I have learned to monitor closely and has been no problem at all for a long time. The two times I've stopped in the middle of a run were both cases where that problematical heel flared up, and I was forced to give up immediately or face serious consequences.

Finally I got into a slow rhythm. It felt as if I was carrying a huge load, as I labored around and my feet pounded hard with every step-slap, slap, slap, slap. Hey, at 183 pounds I am carrying a huge load.

## Where's My Tree?

On the trip home a freak, short, but unusually violent storm tore through our neighborhood. Barely two minutes before I arrived home what may have been a small twister touched down in several places on our block, including our front yard. There were garbage cans and trash scattered on the street.

As I pulled into the driveway Suzy was standing in the doorway saying, "Where's my tree!?" Sure enough, the three-year-old tree we had planted in the front yard was totally gone. This tree was eight or ten feet tall. It snapped off cleanly at the ground level, as if someone cut it with a chain saw, and was carried away by the wind. When Cyra-Lea and I went hunting the neighborhood for it we found it in someone else's yard 200 yards up the street. The owner of the house in whose yard it landed couldn't believe it had come all that way. Neither did we. We were fortunate the house wasn't damaged. Our neighbor's entire side fence was lying in the sidewalk. Cyra-Lea and I dragged the tree back home and laid it in the yard to take pictures for insurance.

It weighs at least 150 pounds. Does that count as strength training? I don't think so.

Today's ten-mile run was a totally different scene from yesterday. My intent was to go slowly, work on good form, and finish with something to spare, saving energy for tomorrow and the long run coming up on the weekend. It was not a day for a tempo run. I began at a slow pace and felt completely relaxed from beginning to end, resisting the temptation to
push it, except for a little bit the last two miles. It was one of the slowest ten-milers I've ever run, sixteen minutes behind my PR, but one of the easiest.

## A Noble PW

## Monday, July 19, 1999

The previous section of this saga was written last Wednesday. Journals, like long runs, being a record of life, can have dull parts in the middle of them. Thursday and Friday was just such a period.

Boredom is judged from the perspective of the one who is bored-in this case me. The daily training sessions come and go, one much the same as another. One day I'm excited, amazed, and filled with the wonder of it all, and the next it all seems like so much horse manure. Then I get over it and life goes on.

Another reason I've been missing is that my ISDN line at home went down on Thursday. It took until this morning, under pressure of five phone calls and a lot of whining, to get it fixed. Consider that an advertisement for US West telephone company.

To fill in the gap: Thursday was a ho-hum 10K run-walk, when I ran a few laps, then walked a few laps until I was done. It was supposed to be a walking exercise. Friday was a rest day. Then things got interesting again.

Saturday's plan was to go twenty miles. I followed my usual long run preparation ritual to the letter, remembering to bring electrolyte caps, a quart of Gatorade, and a PowerBar, and to take two Advil and a Pepcid A/C before starting. All systems were go.

I started slowly, and soon dropped into the 24 -hour shuffle motion I've been working on developing almost immediately and stayed with it. When forty laps came around I was in such a groove that the thought of stopping annoyed me, so I decided to push my break out a little bit.

At sixty laps I still didn't want to stop. Then I played with the idea of going all the way to ten miles (114 laps) before breaking, and doing it regularly after that.

Two summers ago, when preparing for my first marathon, I had not yet started taking walking breaks on long runs. But neither had I ever run
further than eighteen miles. On July 12, 1997, I went fo my first twentymile run. I did it entirely without stopping to walk, and therefore also without drinking anything, because to this day I'm incapable of drinking and running at the same time. I just wanted to see if I could do it. I did. From that time on I have always walked during widely spaced hydration breaks.

Perhaps not coincidentally, from that time on I've gotten fatter and slower. But that's another issue.

As I lumbered around the track on Saturday I thought about that run, and wondered if I could repeat my feat of two years ago. I was moving like a machine, geared to go forever. So while my Gatorade sat getting warm in an alcove beside the track, I rescoped the session and settled in for the long haul.

On long slow runs I increase my sense of isolation by running with my eyes nearly shut, and with my Oakleys on. The gym is usually quiet on a Saturday afternoon. There is just the occasional clanking of weights, the droning of treadmills, and a grunt now and then. When the radio pipes music in, it reminds me of lazy summer days when I was a kid, lying on a blanket at the Wilmette Beach on Lake Michigan, letting my mind drift, listening to the moving sounds of distant voices and portable radios being carried in by park patrons, patiently watching for girls who walked by.

When ten miles came I was shocked as I noted my split time: 1:50 and change. I've run ten miles more slowly only twice ever. Despite this, I was happy to be feeling as good as I did, and gave no consideration to stopping or giving up on the plan.

I never did. By mile twelve I thought I might even run an extra mile, so I could snag a PR for longest distance run without stopping, as long as I was also on course to set a PW on the same run for the time. But it became increasingly difficult to concentrate or to drift into that earlier state of idyllic reflection. From mile sixteen on the run became a chore to be done with, and I dropped the idea of an extra mile.

The lack of water didn't affect me badly, probably because I was uncomfortably bloated and took a Succeed! cap before starting. I was thirsty when I finished, but not dry or threatening to cramp up.

For at least two miles in the second half I sped up markedly, thinking I would try for a negative split, since my first half was so dreadfully slow
anyhow. But the last two miles, even though I managed to maintain good form, I slowed considerably, and wobbled my way down the path. Going faster was not an option.

My final time was a preposterous 3:40:33, with almost exactly even splits. To put this in perspective: this was a PW for the distance by 1:59, and 12:01 slower than the session two years ago I was hoping to emulate. My twenty-mile PR is 3:20, a whole minute per mile faster.

Despite this, I was pleased. In all respects other than speed it was an outstanding run.

## Back At It

Most people would rest the day after an effort like that. But not this geezer. I've got work ahead if I hope to survive a 24 -hour race in a little over five months. I need to work on my walking, and on moving forward when I'm tired. One way to accomplish this and also recover somewhat from running is to go for long powerwalks on days following long runs.

Yesterday afternoon I filled up my Camelbak Go-Be and headed out in the 102-degree heat. I made two mistakes. First, I brought no electrolyte capsules with me. Second, I didn't wear sunscreen, though I did wear a hat, and put it on backwards to protect my neck better.

My initial goal was to walk for two hours. However, I decided I would press on to 1:15 before turning around, which I estimated to be five miles, allowing for a conservative pace of about 15:00 per mile, and therefore ten miles round trip.

On the return I broke into my ultraboogie motion periodically, overall for two miles or more. The total excursion time was 2:17:20, for a 13:44 pace. Walking is an important component of ultrarunning, and needs to be practiced on its own. It seems I've found a satisfactory way to work it in.

And that brings me to today. My total mileage for the previous seven days is running high again. I needed a shorter run. So it was back to the gym for a four-mile tempo run. I didn't wear my HRM, so don't know what my heart rate was, but knew by the time and intensity that it was a good run. It sometimes amazes me when I pull a hard effort out of thin
air, in this case following a weekend with over thirty miles of pedestrian activity. Now my seven-day total is at 57.37 miles. The mileage is adding up.

So why am I so fat and slow?

## Johnny B Goode

## Thursday, July 22, 1999

I've entered the very heart of the most intense training period of my life, and am feeling the effects, both good and bad. I feel strong, and I feel tired; I sleep well when my muscles are not aching too much to prevent it; I'm enthusiastically moving forward and at the same time preoccupied with important matters having nothing to do with running that require even more energy and attention.

Good and bad periods seem to come in streaks rather than as individual days. Presently I'm on a positive roll, with an accumulation of 58.28 miles for the past seven consecutive days, and good strong runs each of the last three days. All three qualify as tempo runs.

Should I be doing three consecutive tempo runs while I'm working on building up mileage and endurance? Probably not. It's just a case of making hay while the sun shines, running hard when I feel like it. I may not want to on a day when my schedule says I'm supposed to.

Tuesday was a 10 K at $9: 45$ pace at an average $85 \%$ of my submaximum heart rate. Whoop-dee-doo.

Today I ran the hilly streets near Cyra-Lea's piano teacher while she took her lesson. It was 103 degrees when I started. Rather than running, I powerwalked four miles, returning just as the lesson was over. This makes a great warmup. Some would prefer to call it a meltdown. I've been walking in Phoenix summers for 21 years, and love it, even in the hottest weather. It's running in the heat that I can't do.

Bally's is less than five minutes drive from the piano teacher, close enough that I don't cool down completely by the time I get there. I added an invigorating 10K run to my walk, at 9:36 pace. Excellent. But I was in bed by 9:20 P.M., after my head nearly hit the desk while trying to get some
work done, then again attempting to appreciate an Ernest Hemmingway story that seemed less exciting than the reputation that preceded it.

My most frequent rest day is Friday, but later this evening all my time is dedicated to preparing and presenting a talk on Sunday. So I'll rest today and run tomorrow.

The beat goes on.

## The Degree of Struggle Is Relative

## Friday, July 23, 1999

Today I ran 3.08 miles, 35 laps on tRtNE at a 9:21 pace. A single day of rest can revitalize. Because tomorrow I'll run long, I didn't overextend myself, but rounded the session off with 35 minutes of strength training. Time constraints have forced me to neglect this lately.

Someone else has been busy running laps, too. Four people have been running an average of 61.91 miles per day for the past 33 days on the sidewalk around a 0.5488 -mile block surrounding a high school in Queens, NY, in the third Sri Chinmoy 3100-mile race. ${ }^{3}$ They run in opposite directions on alternate days. This is supposed to give them a change of scenery. Sometimes blessings come in small packages.

The leader, Edward Kelley, passed 2000 miles late yesterday. The rest did so today. With only 85 miles separating first and last place, by ultradistance standards they are running neck and neck.

They have 18 more days to reach 3100 miles. I wonder whether they still get a T-shirt if they don't make it?

The four runners have each reached 2000 miles between two and eight times in their careers. The runner in second place, Suprabha Beckjord, is a woman. She led for several days, during the most intense part of the heat wave in early July. Today she is still only thirty miles behind the leader.

All four are vegetarians. I wonder if they like cookies? That's what I eat.

A fifth runner withdrew on the 21st day after a paltry 1170 miles. What a wimp. He probably didn't eat enough Wheaties.

[^5]Somehow my feeble struggle to sustain a month of fifty-mile weeks seems insignificant in comparison.

## Running When You Have a Life

## Saturday, July 24, 1999

Most people, if they did nothing but run and rest, would be much better runners than they are. That's how top performers achieve high levels of accomplishment in their chosen pursuits-they allow their interest to become an obsession and do little else. In the process some of them cultivate personalities that are as interesting as an evening spent blinking and breathing.

There are such runners. They run 100 or more miles a week and rest when they are not running. While they're resting they talk mostly about running and plan for their next run. They place well in competitions, and take home lots of hardware and sometimes even money. They're in wonderful shape, but they have no life.

I will never be one of them. I've got a life outside of running. Sometimes it makes keeping to my program a difficult challenge-like today, for instance.

This morning I was up by 6:00 A.M., as I usually am on Saturday, to do some important study and research. Then I had to be out the door before 9:00 A.M. with a tie around my neck. Nearly every Saturday of my life I participate in a volunteer work, an obligation that takes precedent over other activities in my life, including running.

The temperature peaked at 103 Fahrenheit today, with humidity that was unusually high for Arizona. My clothing was sticking to me before I even got settled in the car. Afterward we remained outdoors most of the time for nearly three hours.

When I returned my stinking, wilted body home it was after noon. After checking email, I hurriedly prepared for my long run. Today I added the element of slathering my feet in Vaseline to the ritual. I've been suffering from blisters the last several weeks, something that has not been much of a problem before.

The goal for today was 149 laps on tRtNE, 13.12 miles, an indoor half marathon. However, I had an extremely tight schedule. At 4:00 P.M. I had to make appearance ten minutes from the gym, clean and wearing a tie. On a good day it takes me 2:10 to run a half marathon training run. The time when my feet started running was 1:15 P.M. If I had a good day I would be done at 3:30, and would have exactly a half hour to cool down, take a shower, and get to where I had to be next.

So I walked only two warmup laps, then laid into it, being motivated by external circumstances that had nothing to do with running. My split times indicated that I was on target, but I didn't know if I could keep it up. However, in the second half I was able to pick it up, and ran a negative split by over two minutes, finishing in 2:13:26, my eighth slowest run at the distance out of ten recorded runs. Both of the slower ones were recorded last month, so I might be headed in the right direction. But I was never comfortable the whole time.

## Yes We're Going to a Party Party

Being unskilled at dealing with deviations from my planned routine, I discovered that I had neglected to bring underwear, socks, and a belt. I brought my biggest pair of pants, which I used to wear when I was 35 pounds heavier, and were way too big for me then. In addition, I dropped my tie on the ground next to the car on the way in, and didn't discover this until I returned to it, dragging my gear with me while struggling to hold my pants up with my spare hand. I was obliged to head home to pick up the missing items of clothing, which made me five minutes late to my meeting. Meanwhile, I had zero time to eat, though I did get to guzzle some water and diet root beer.

My family waited for me, expecting me to arrive home before 6:00 P.M. We were invited to a large covered dish party. My business wasn't finished until 6:22. By the time we got to the party, I was starving and dehydrated. The natural consequence of this condition was to inhale a two-pound plate of enchiladas and other gooey dishes, followed by cheesecake, and chase them with three beers and a glass of wine.

After that I finally started to unwind. I sat down at the lovely grand piano in the living room of our hosts, whereupon I gave vent to the op-
portunity to indulge in totally free improvisation for over forty minutes. I haven't had that pleasure for quite a while, nor have I been willing to do so with other people listening. There were over sixty persons at the party, none of whom understood a moment of my abstract and sometimes avant garde way of playing.
"My, that was certainly interesting, Lynn. Most unusual." That's a polite way of saying, "What in tarnation was that all about?"

Playing music was at one time far more important to me than running is now. In many ways it still is. As creatures with finite amounts of time available we are required to make choices regarding what we do. Music is a part of my Real Life that has been ransacked, sacrificed in part to running because I recognize that at this time in my life I get more immediate and tangible benefits from the running than from music. Therefore I put up with the loss, though sadly, as I reflect on my degenerated playing skills. But I do have fun abusing a piano now and then.

So I may not always eat right, and I may be slow, but I do have a life. Urp. Now I hope the beans will let me sleep.

## Blackbird

## Sunday, July 25, 1999

Last night's party continued to boogie inside me while I tried to sleep. Ah well-every day is a new beginning. Yesterday's poor decisions need not become today's bad habits. My body is finally just now getting the message that I quit my frivolity and returned to a sedate life nearly twenty hours ago.

Walking is the ideal way to pile up extra training miles without killing oneself. For runners who aspire to run ultras it constitutes more than mere crosstraining; it is an essential part of the big picture. It's my intent to work a great deal more of it into my program as time goes on, especially on days following long runs, rather than resting on those days, the course that popular wisdom dictates is the wise and proper thing to do.

I rarely accept popular wisdom as gospel.
Today's training was a virtual repeat of last Sunday's-ten miles of mostly walking outside. The weather has been unusually unpleasant lately,
even for July in Phoenix, because of the increase in humidity. The high temperatures I can handle to some degree, but the heavy polluted air nearly sucks the wanna right out my soul.

This time I remembered the sunscreen. Rubbing greasy goo all over my skin is not a method I would endorse for enhancing the fun to be had on a blazing hot afternoon of vigorous walking in swampy air. But I do it because it's a bad idea not to. Off I went, after filling up the CamelBak Go-Be, starting from my house.

I followed the same routine as last Sunday, walking the identical course, except that I ran a total of perhaps five minutes outbound, in order to test out my legs. My legs failed the test. They were catatonic, worse than I had feared, but there was nothing wrong with my walking.

In an hour and fifteen minutes I traveled about 200 yards further down the road than last Sunday. Just before the turnaround I saw a huge bird, with a wingspan of about three feet, circling not far away. I was afraid it was a vulture licking his beak and waiting for me to keel. In reality, it may have been a large hawk, or even a falcon.

On the way back I did trot a few short portions, but nothing longer than a half mile. My total time was 2:27:30 for roughly ten miles. One of these days I'll measure it with the car's odometer or my friend's surveyor's wheel.

If all goes as planned, I should log over fifty miles for the week by Saturday.

## Strolling

## Tuesday, July 27, 1999

Yesterday I made a scientific effort to measure my fastest walking pace. I've been estimating it at between 13:30 for a powerblitz to 15:00 for a comfortable mosey.

The results surprised me: 23 laps on the flat indoor track, for 2.03 miles in 26:32.52 comes out to a pace of 13:06 a mile, faster than I thought I was capable of.

That was the only aerobic exercise I did yesterday. I rounded it off with thirty minutes of strength training and went home.

Different muscles are used in walking fast than in running. Whenever I try to push a walk hard, sustaining it for more than a few minutes, I pay for it the following days with soreness where I don't usually experience it, usually in my shins.

And so it was. All day, every time I got up from my desk at work, my legs were totally dead, though not sore. I'm living on the edge again.

When I got to the track I had visions of running 10K at low intensity, but my body had visited a different oracle. After walking three warmup laps I started running. It was less than half a lap before I knew it was not going to be a fun afternoon.

Seven or eight laps into it, running clockwise, my shins started to ache, especially the right one. Usually I can run through this trouble if I slow down and wait it out.

I suffered with it for over two miles. Finally I gave up any idea of forcing it and walked two laps, ran two more, walked two, then ran four, until I completed four miles, then threw in the towel, thinking that even though it was my lousiest run in months, at least I had sacrificed only a little more than two miles. Tomorrow I'm supposed to do a ten-miler, so why pre-trash that session with a destructive effort today?

At home, when I recorded the run, I saw to my amusement that I misread my schedule-I had written in four miles for today, not 10K. So in reality I didn't lose any mileage at all, and am still on target to make fifty by end of the week, assuming I cover 22 of that on Saturday. If I had realized the end was that near while I was running I probably would have toughed it out slowly and not walked any laps.

Some persons might be inclined to suspect that these things happen because of overtraining, and that rest is what is needed. In this case I'm sure the problem is not too much running, but too little walking. It appears that I need to work more regularly and harder on intense walking in order to build up those muscles that don't get used as much during running.

## Preventing Pain

## Wednesday, July 28, 1999

A reader emailed a wonderful suggestion on how to get over shin aches. She recommended walking on my heels, and doing it regularly, for a couple of minutes a day.

The technique is to lift your toes and forefoot completely off the ground and walk around a while on your heels. It's not easy to do, looks geeky, and causes the lactic burn to start in a few seconds. The goal is to work up the time. I was able to handle two minutes the first time, but it was tough.

This exercise works the exact muscles that hurt me earlier in the week. They don't get worked nearly as much when running, which is why even experienced runners who don't walk often will get sore shins when they walk hard.

Cyra-Lea had no piano lesson today, so I went straight from work to the gym. Not knowing quite how the day would go, I arrived at the track planning on running ten miles. I wanted to complete the mileage, so was willing to walk any amount of it I had to.

As anticipated, the aching started soon after I started, but was not as bad as it has been. I tried to avoid going too hard in hopes that I would loosen up in time. I did.

This run was one of those backward efforts that started badly and kept getting better all the way to the end. By five miles there was no sign of shin tightness. Soon afterward I picked up the pace, and continued pushing until the end.

Six laps from the end I ran into Boston Bill's wife Cheryl. Bill runs up and down a mountain in south Phoenix every Wednesday, even in the heat, but I usually see Cheryl, who is a more casual runner (a lot faster than me when she tries), but in excellent shape. She asked me if I was doing the Mormon Lake Half Marathon up near Flagstaff this weekend. I'm not. She and her husband both are. She hasn't run a half marathon in two years, and has never run further.

I had to slow down a bit to talk with Cheryl, but I broke away and sprinted the last lap. The time was 1:42:46, mid-range for me, and not bad considering the slow start and the problems I've been fighting.

When I finished I ran into Caroll (see Another New Running Friend in chapter 4), and he, too, asked if I was running Mormon Lake. So I introduced him to Cheryl, who stopped two laps after me. One more link was made in the local running community.

As I walked out the door I felt completely relaxed and untired. There's no doubt in my mind that I could have taken off on another ten-mile run if I'd wanted to.

## Like Nothing At All

## Saturday, July 31, 1999

This afternoon I ran 22 miles ( 250 laps) on tRtNE. For a while it went so well that at fourteen miles the expression "like nothing at all" ran through my head.

I wish. Although it was an excellent run in toto, it was not entirely without a hitch.

Any way you look at it, 22 miles is a long way to run. One advantage I enjoy over some distance runners is that I genuinely enjoy running long, and cherish the time I can get out there and go for hour after hour. They are some of the best times of my life, even on the track. Trails are admittedly better.

Thursday I walked hard for two miles at a pace slower than Monday's similar effort, but still at well under 14:00 pace. I topped it off with forty minutes of strength training. Yesterday was a much appreciated rest day.

This morning I was out on my feet for two hours, as usual for a Saturday. My best Saturday long runs are on days when I can stay home in the morning. Those are almost non-existent, except for those days I take to run races. It's one of the facts of life that adds an extra challenge to my training program, something to find a way to overcome.

## My Gadgets Revolt

At 12:46 P.M., after four laps of warmup walking (not counted in the 22 miles), I began running. After running two laps I checked my watch and
noticed it was on the wrong scale. Rats! Fortunately, I started my run exactly when the second hand on the wall clock hit twelve, so made a mental note to take my time off that clock.

The first 25 laps I had to fight off the onset of cramps in my right shin. This seems to happen lately every time I run the track in the clockwise direction.

A few months ago Bally's changed the direction schedule on the track. The new protocol must have been designed by someone from the planet $\mathrm{Mo}^{\prime}$ ron. The default run direction on every track in the world is counterclockwise, unless explicit directions are posted saying otherwise. All track races are run counterclockwise. On most tracks runners can run any direction they want if no one is there, often the case on school tracks during off hours.

On tracks where the direction changes on different days, I would expect the majority of days in the week, and the days that people tend to use it most, to be designated as counterclockwise days. The track at Bally's was set up that way, until the forementioned Grinch from Mo'ron, or some recliner-dweller from a central office, who has never set foot on a track in his life, changed it for reasons having nothing to do with running, and had signs posted saying that Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday are clockwise days. He probably got a merit raise for a job well done.

Ever since then I've had trouble with my shins. I look on this as yet another little challenge, and an opportunity to strengthen those weaker muscles. Meanwhile it hurts, and gives me an opportunity to gripe about something. I'm allowed to complain about so little.

At what I presumed was 97 laps I looked down and saw that my lap counter said seven laps. Huh?? It had been right all along. It's one of those metal mechanical doodads they use to count attendance at events. It's a virtually failsafe device. Not today. The gearage must have discombobulated itself and jumped a notch somehow. I'll have to keep an eye on it.

For a while I couldn't remember where I was supposed to be. Believing the digits column was correct, I guessed the tens by looking at the clock and making a quick calculation of where I should be, and clicked them off back to the right number by hand. Another problem solved.

## Geezer Gets Noticed

For the past several months I've been seeing a young woman who runs sometimes as much as five miles, and does it well. She maintains good form and posture, with little up and down motion, gliding along at an 8:30 pace or better.

Excuse me if it sounds chauvinistic to say so, but there is nothing quite as entrancing as a well-trained female body in motion. If that weren't true nobody would go to the ballet. The male dancers may be able to leap higher and further, but in a pas de deux we all know who everyone watches, including the women in the audience, and why. It's just a sight worth beholding.

I've never spoken to this lady until two days ago, when she said Hi one evening. First contact. As I mentioned in Consequences of Being Shy (chapter 3), I rarely initiate conversations with people I haven't met. That applies particularly, and with some deliberateness, when it comes to women, who go to a gym like Bally's to exercise, not to be approached and bothered by strange men. Appreciating the possibility of apprehensiveness, I rarely make the first overture on general principles to avoid any misimpressions. On the other hand, I'm openly friendly toward anyone who takes the first step.

Today the lady in question ran a mile, took a break, stretched and did other exercises, then got back on the track for five more, during which time she passed me several times. We were the only ones on the track for most of that time. Eventually she quit, stretched another half an hour, and finally walked several laps.

As I was passing her the last time before she left, she spoke up, asking me how far I was going. When I said I was headed toward 22 miles her jaw dropped and eyes nearly popped out of her head. Ha! Geezer's still not too decrepit to impress a young chick.

Ahem. Enough said of that. As my wife reminded me, when I related it to her with amusement at dinner, she's the one I should be concerned about impressing. Quite so. Suzy is a lot tougher audience, but the rewards for success are better.

Surely I must look a bit nutty to some of the non-running weight lifters as I go by. There's a crowd of regulars in the free weights room, mostly big
fellas with their hats on backwards, some of whom I've been seeing most of the five years I've been going there. Sometimes I can sense that people are looking at me and wondering: "Who is that guy!?"

Just a geezer with gumption, sir or ma'am. And I'd be pleased to make your acquaintance once I stop moving, in just a few hours.

## Geezer Nearly Loses His Cookies

When the lady left the gym I barely ten miles done, but feeling high at the moment. I had no pains and was savoring the experience. But the biggest problem of the day was yet to come.

I followed a cycle of stopping to guzzle first Gatorade then water in great quantities once every 40 laps, while walking the lap. At 80 and 160 laps I also took a Succeed! electrolyte cap.

Finding the right mixture of water and electrolytes is a balancing act, and I'm still learning how to judge it. It is possible to have too much electrolyte, so I'm told.

At 175 laps, twelve minutes after the last S-cap, taken with over half a quart of water, I suddenly sensed a teeny bit of distress from my stomach. I figured either I was imagining it, or it would go away.

It was real, and it didn't go away. As the laps rolled by, the discomfort spread down to my gut, and before I knew it, I was dealing with a mild case of nausea. Though this problem is common among ultrarunners, I've never thrown up during a run. Nor did I want today to be the first time, especially on a track, where I would have to run for a bathroom, and certainly not on a day when I'd just impressed a young lady with my machismo.

Other than the stomach distress I was absolutely fine-no pain, no tiredness, easy breathing, heart rate steady at 135 ( $78.9 \%$ of maximum). I wanted to run forever. But my stomach had a different opinion.

My proposed solution was to slow down and tough it out until 200 laps, the next scheduled walk break. But nope! Suddenly, at lap 190, I found myself taking an unplanned walking lap. During that lap I debated over what to do. At halfway the decision was made for me-I had to hightail it to a bathroom.

If you are sensitive you might want to skip the next paragraph.
My stomach decided not to wait. One little urp with my hand over my mouth. Only a little water off the top came up. Nothing foul, thank goodness. Oops, a second little urp. More of the same. I was getting panicky as I neared the stairway, fearing a major blast of upchuck was imminent. The lockers and pool are on the first floor, and the gym and track are up 22 stairs. Then there was a third little urp. Same story. I was in a hurry.

Welcome back.
I made it and nothing happened. By the time I got into the locker room, I no longer felt the need for it. Cautiously, I parked my derriere on the nearest bench and sat quietly. I remained for less than thirty seconds before determining that this run was by no means over, and whatever just happened, I was once again fit to proceed.

Out the door I charged. I bounded back up the 22 stairs and hit the track, though I walked one more lap to be safe before running again. Instead of walking at 240, just ten laps from my goal, I broke again at 225, and continued to the end without further problem, though naturally I was tired by the time I quit.

## Slow Is Us

I had scheduled six drink-and-walk laps. As it was, I still took six breaks. The barf break at 190 was two laps, with a forgivable amount of time sitting down, which nonetheless altogether put me a couple of minutes behind what I was hoping for.

My final time was 4:05:19, a PW of three records at that distance, but by barely minutes. C'est la vie! Whenever I do my best and can rationalize any anomalies, I'm not disappointed by a slow time. What should I expect? I'm a slow runner. I should hang a sign with a red flag on my butt that says "Slow Is Us."

Judging from the amount I've been drinking all evening, my hydration level must have gotten too low, despite having drunk a full quart of Gatorade followed by a full quart of water. It's four hours since I stopped running, and I'm just now slowing down my rate of water intake.

My only other physical problem today was an unusual amount of chafing. Yes, ye olde nipples took a scraping, not to mention my inner thighs, one curious spot on the underside of my right upper arm, and other places too delicate to mention. My feet fared well-no blisters or black toenails, even though I forgot to slather them in Vaseline.

I made my mileage goal for the week with a grand total of 51.57 . The escalation phase is over. Now I hope to sustain it in the low fifties for the entire month of August.

Meanwhile, the four runners in the Sri Chinmoy race continue to run an average of 61 miles every single day on New York sidewalks during a record heat wave that is killing the rats who live in the sewers. Makes ya wonder, doesn't it?

## Analysis Time

This being the last day of the month, it's time for me to analyze my month's totals and averages.

Most notable was a PR for a monthly total of 206.06 miles, my first PR of any description since March 20, and only my fifth of the year, as compared with 25 for all of 1998. But it was a whopper: a gain of 25.34 miles over the previous best, a $14 \%$ improvement.

This brings the year's total mileage up to 1102.73, an average of 5.20 per day. Last year I predicted that I would run fewer miles this year than last year (1825), but this will likely not prove to be the case. I'm on track to hit 1900 for the year, and will probably do even more.

The customary bad news is that my weight is holding steady at the third highest maximum of the year (184.6), and the highest minimum (179.0). The gauge seems to be stuck permanently on: => TOO FAT!

Next month will be harder than this one. Now the real fun begins.

## Chapter 5

## Peaking

## Blame It On the Gumption

## Sunday, August 1, 1999

Normal people, if they were inclined to run 22 miles in one day to begin with, would probably rest the next day while basking in the glory of their accomplishments. But I'm not like normal people. I'm on a mission, and in a fever to accomplish it. It must be the gumption.

The last two Sundays I've gone for ten-mile street walks. Today I kicked it up a level with a ten-mile walk on Christiansen Trail, a.k.a. T100, in the Phoenix Mountain Preserve. This was my primary source of long runs in preparation for the Crown King 50K in March.

I'm glad it was. When I got to that race, I found that the last sixteen miles the terrain is comparable to T100—rocky trail with steep hills, and nearly unrunnable in places. But it's good for walking.

Today it was 105 degrees, and felt more like 110. I filled the Go-Be to the brim with icy water and headed out. The trailhead is only seven minutes drive from my home. After slathering myself liberally with sunscreen, I began walking at full steam, starting my watch at 1:53 P.M. I wasn't sore from yesterday, just a bit fatigued. The plan, as it was the last two weeks, was to walk as hard as I could for 1:15, giving myself credit for five miles, then turn around and head back.

I hadn't gone far before I realized that in my slathering routine I once
again forgot to Vaseline my delicate parts, and was still feeling raw from yesterday. It was going to be a long day.

Although I had resolved to walk only, it was not long before I found myself driven to run the downhills, while fully realizing that the harder I hit the outbound direction, the more distance I would have to cover in returning. I couldn't help it. I ran no uphills at all to speak of today, but ran almost all the downhills. I was amazed that I was so strongly motivated after yesterday's run, and given the difficult conditions I was running under. But the trails are gentle on the legs, and I couldn't resist.

I'm bad at drinking while running. However, I'm quite good at drinking followed by choking, sputtering, gagging, and gasping for air. This holds true even when I'm aided by a tube coming out of a fancy hydration system. It's just plain hard to drink when you are also trying your best to suck in enough oxygen to avoid blacking out.

Perhaps I should practice running a dozen steps or so at a time while holding my breath and then recovering. Once that's mastered, it's mainly a matter of managing the mechanics of drinking.

Today I learned a good trick that I'd like to share with people who carry Camelbak-type hydration systems with tubes. I may be the last person on earth to figure this one out, but it was new to me.

I've always hated that the water sitting in the tube while running gets hot, and that hot water is the first gulp you get when you most need a cool blast. When water is short, I hate to spit out or even splash my face with any of what I'm carrying, but I likewise hate to swallow it.

Then I discovered that if I can suck on the tube, I can also blow into it. When I do this after taking a drink, I force whatever water is in the tube back into the insulated bladder, leaving only air in the tube.

This works well! Although I was out in scorching heat for two and a half hours, I was getting cold sips until past the turnaround point, and the tiny bit of water I had left at the end was still drinkable.

Pass it on.
The biggest problem I had today was with the stinging sweat mixed with sunscreen pouring in torrents into my eyes. I was losing sweat by the gallon. It was painful enough to take much of the pleasure out of the run, as I constantly took my sunglasses off and wiped my eyes on my saturated sleeve. It did little good.

Finally a light bulb went on. I'd been wearing a bandana around my neck, which probably did more to heat me up than protect my neck from the sun. I took the bandana off and turned my hat around backwards, then used the bandana the rest of the run to wipe my face. This proved to be so much better, it's a mystery why I didn't think of it sooner. It just goes to show you what the hot sun can do to your brain.

T100 is normally heavily traveled by bikers and hikers during more reasonable weather. Not today. I didn't see one single human soul until 1:55 into the run, a mountain biker who said a cheerful Hello! as he wheeled by. He was the only person I saw the entire trip. If I'd collapsed from heat exhaustion out there, it might have taken several hours before someone came along and found me.

Happily, I didn't see any rattlesnakes or scorpions today either, though there are many in the area. They had the sense to stay in the shade.

Remarkably, I scored a small negative split on this trip, despite the greater amount of uphill on the return. I turned around on my heel precisely when the stopwatch said 1:15:00, and stepped into the parking lot at the trailhead at $2: 28: 31$. Don't ask how I did it. Maybe I was just anxious to be done.

Sometimes I wonder how it is that trail running is easier on the legs than running on streets. It must be because concrete and asphalt are harder than the random scattering of rocks, scree, gravel, dirt, and leaves found on trails, and landing on a level plane with no give to it jolts the spine and hammers the muscles and joints.

But ten miles on a trail does not equal ten miles on a street. The trail effort is immensely greater, because the running technique is much more demanding.

When running on extremely rocky surfaces, every footstrike is a crapshoot. You never know what you're going to land on. No two steps are on the same level and you rarely get a whole flat foot's worth of terra firma to push off of. Sometimes the rocks move when you land on them. The next step may be six inches higher than the last one, at a slight change in direction. You may have to adjust the length of your stride, and may get only a forefoot on the front edge of a rock rather than landing on your heel. Then the next step presents a whole new problem.

The angles and muscle responses to what is under the feet change with every step, and must be compensated for with strong ankles and joints.

The eyes have to see what is coming and enable the mind to make decisions as quickly as new terrain comes into view. Doing that every step for two and a half hours in blistering heat leaves one not only physically whipped, but mentally exhausted as well.

Somehow, though, trail running is way more fun than running on a street or track, unless I misjudge and fall down, something I've done more often than I care to recall.

When I got home I weighed myself. The scale showed 5.2 pounds less than after yesterday's 22-mile run. Almost all of that is water loss, of course. It's now after 11:00 P.M. and I still haven't stopped drinking for the day.

Tomorrow I get to do nothing but lift weights.

## The Wanderer

## Tuesday, August 3, 1999

Some days running is a little tougher than on others-today, for instance. I'm still recovering from a many-miled weekend. Yesterday I lifted weights and did no running at all. Today it was my intent to do an easy three miles. I did the miles. They were certainly slow, but they weren't easy.

When I opened my gym bag this afternoon I saw that I forgot to pack either a running shirt or a T-shirt. Most days I wear a T-shirt to work, but today I wore a shirt that would not do for running.

So home I went, where I hopped into some running clothes, intent on running outdoors. I can handle up to four or five miles in 105-degree heat if I have to. So I loaded up my insulated water bottle with lemonade and drove off to the high school to the north, hoping to use the track there rather than enduring the asphalt streets of our boring neighborhood.

When I arrived at the school, the parking lot was full to the brim. On August 3?? I have no idea what was going on. I was obliged to drive to the city park three blocks further north.

The run that followed would have frustrated most people. The crushing heat and tiredness were tough enough obstacles to begin with. After a few minutes my body got used to the idea that I was going to be running
for a while, but the heat prevented me from gaining any kind of speed at all. It felt like I was carrying two large suitcases.

It was strange having no predetermined route. All I wanted was to run for thirty minutes. First I ran the park's outer perimeter, then around an adjacent baseball field, through a field full of weeds, across a tennis court, up an alley, and around a fence, where I found a break that enabled me to get onto the school track I had wanted to run on in the first place. There wasn't a soul around. Obviously, the cars had nothing to do with pre-season football practice, my first guess. Given that I was going so slow I decided at least to run 33 minutes rather than 30. After six laps around the track I wound my way back, returned to my car too soon, so ran past it for two minutes, turned around, was still back too soon, ran past it again in the parking lot, turned back once more, and arrived again at 33:02, whereupon I came to a staggering halt. The Chicano workmen sitting in the bed of their pickup truck enjoying an after-work beer gave me a strange look, probably wondering why this loco gringo was acting like a pendulum. Sheesh.

But did I have fun? You bet. I did the best I was willing to do for today. As long as I can continue to do that every day, it's all I ask.

## When Body and Mind Disagree

## Friday, August 6, 1999

Occasionally my mind and body disagree with each other. Wednesday my mind told me I had little desire to spend ten miles as a pedestrian. After leaving Cyra-Lea at her piano lesson I readied myself for a four-mile walk, and promptly took off in the 102-degree heat like I was shot from a cannon. Within a few steps I was having a wonderful time.

The route that I walk on lesson days, being near the base of some small mountains, covers some reasonable long hills. I learned on that trek that when walking I prefer moderate uphills over comparable downhills. Leaning into an uphill vigorously causes a pleasant stretching of muscles from the top of my leg to my midsection that don't get exercised as much when running. Despite there being quite a bit more uphill than down in the inbound direction, I returned to the start with a negative split by a margin of 1:07.

Two minutes later Cyra-Lea came out from her lesson and we headed for the gym. But I felt adequately worked out for one day. My mind told me that it was late, I was hungry, I had other things to do that night, and I didn't want to run at all, much less begin a whole 10K. However, if I cut my run, Cyra-Lea would have to miss her own workout.

So run I did. Much to my mind's surprise, my body reminded me immediately that walking four miles outside serves as a great warmup, and that coming a few minutes later into the air conditioned gym is refreshing. Before I knew it, I was running resolutely and enjoying it. The net result was a satisfying training session at medium pace that left me tingling and dripping.

Yesterday (Thursday) my mind and body traded places. I had only three miles on the agenda, and arrived at the gym enthused by the prospect of running them hard. My body said huh-unh.

In half a lap I knew I was by no means recovered adequately from Wednesday yet. I forced myself to go harder than was fun, knowing that at least the discomfort would not last long. The best I could do was barely under a 10:00 pace, over a minute per mile slower than I'm capable of on a good day. (I've run 10 K at an $8: 51$ pace.) No matter. The miles still count, and the session is behind me now.

The lesson I've learned the last two days is: When the mind and body disagree, the body wins.

This month will be grueling. Piling up large numbers of miles is the number one goal. In other training phases I would act more reasonably, and be inclined to give myself more breaks. But there is no way around it-the only way to meet a mileage target is to get out and put one foot after another. If I drop or cut short a session, I fall behind, and because I'm pushing the outer limits of what I'm capable of, I probably won't make it.

It's the same problem one encounters when setting out to achieve a PR. It requires a complete and uncompromised effort from beginning to end, or else it will fail.

Today is a rest day. Ahhh. Tomorrow I will go 24 miles. Why I'm doing that after doing 22 just last Saturday is a topic for the next installment.

## Bottle Me Up and Sell Me

Saturday, August 7, 1999

This afternoon I ran 24.04 miles, 273 laps on the Road that Never Ends. I felt so good the whole way someone could have packaged me and sold me on the black market.

My time was 4:14:06, a PR by 1:45, the best of four recorded runs at that distance. I owe a debt of thanks to Mike from Eritrea for the PR, because for nearly six miles he ran me harder than I would have gone without him. Given that my recent paces have generally been slow, this represents an admirable effort on my part, and a major step forward. I'm pleased with myself.

With today's run I tallied 51.07 miles for the week. Next week's long run will be only a half marathon. The week in toto will be more difficult than this week. With a shorter long run, I will have to run more during the week, with no days of rest until Friday.

## Why Train Beyond the Marathon Distance?

Most distance runners in my class alternate weeks of long runs with weeks that have shorter runs. So why did I run 24 miles today after running 22 just last week? Because somehow I got out of phase in June, like a marcher leading with his right foot, and have been on course for a head-on crash with this week ever since.

One solution would have been to take two light weeks in a row, but I didn't want to at this stage of my project. Another was to remain out of phase, but that would leave me with my longest run before Twin Cities Marathon either too soon or too late for my liking. It seemed that the best plan was to bear down and get through unusually long runs two weeks in a row.

Being no longer a beginner, and in training for ultrarunning, I don't consider the marathon distance to be quite the Holy Grail and sine qua non of running that I used to. Therefore, though I have never yet done it, I have no compunction about training beyond the marathon distance. My upcoming Saturday long runs will be: a half marathon, full marathon,
half marathon, and on the first weekend in September an indoor 50K. (Yes, that's nuts. I'm not likely ever to repeat the feat.) Then I can cut back for two weeks, before tapering until Twin Cities on October 3.

## The Dirty Details

Today I did many things right. I began with getting over nine hours sleep last night, and eating the right things during the morning. As usual on Saturday, I was up early, and was out on my feet in the heat visiting people from door-to-door for over two hours. This doesn't make a great prelude to running, but is a circumstance of my life that I gladly accept, and it will not change. It's a handicap I don't have to deal with when I take off to run a race.

I chose to wear my Montrail Vitesse trail shoes rather than my Brooks Addiction IIs. The Montrails, not widely-known by runners who run no further than marathons, are immensely popular among ultrarunners, including those at the top. They're definitely better on trails than on streets or the track. I wore them because I like them, they are comfortable when my feet are under great stress, and they are a half size larger than my Addictions. Recently my toes have been taking a drubbing-I currently have three black ones-so I theorized a little extra room in the toe box might help. It did.

At 1:00 P.M. I arrived at the track, toting a quart of Gatorade, a quart of fizzy water, three packets of GU, two bandanas, and a pillbox full of Succeed! electrolyte capsules and Advil. The only thing I forgot to do today was to take a tube of Vaseline. My delicates got annoyingly chapped again.

I stuck faithfully to my break schedule, drinking and eating and walking every forty laps, and running all the rest. Last week I got mildly nauseous at seventeen miles and had to make a slight adjustment to overcome it. I experienced none of that today.

At 165 laps, Mike from Eritrea showed up. Mike runs much faster than I do when he wants to. Often he chooses to run with me. Whenever that happens, no matter how hard I try to resist it, I always wind up increasing my pace too much, even when I try hard not to. He asked me how far

I was going. Twenty-four miles. How far did I have to go? Nine and a half. Great! He hasn't been running much recently and needed a good workout, so said he'd be delighted with himself if he could hang with me for that long.

Uh-oh! I had been in a euphoric state of runner's high for at least the past eight miles. I've never told a runner who has wanted to run with me that I'd rather he not do it. Would I be induced to run too hard, ruining my groove? Physical energy during a run is like money. Everyone who has ever lived on a limited budget knows: if you spend all your money at the beginning of the week, you eat Top Ramen instant soup the end of the week. There is only so much to draw on, and when it's gone, it stays gone until next payday.

Sure enough, it wasn't long before we were running much harder than I had been. I'd been cruising along with a heart rate of around 128 BPM, $75 \%$ of my MHR, hard enough for a long run. When I checked my receiver, I was ticking at $149 \mathrm{BPM}, 87 \%$ of MHR. The pace was a bit rich for the distance. Despite it, I was still feeling wonderful, so I didn't resist it.

On top of it, Mike wanted to chat. It seems they just found out his wife is pregnant. It will be their fourth. They have three boys already; the oldest is 17 , and the youngest is 6 , so there is quite a spread there.

Eventually we were joined by two other runners I see often, one I know only as Steve, and another with an Italian accent, around age forty, whose name I have not yet learned. The Italian is a superb runner. He can run ten miles or more if he wants to. Most of the time he runs shorter, and he is fast. His stride is unusually compact. When he sprints his turnover rate must be well over 100 cycles per minute. This afternoon he graciously joined our little excursion for a dozen laps.

This proved to be my opportunity to break off from the rest. As I finally started to wind down, and the others became engrossed in conversation with each other, I dropped behind.

When I stopped at 200 laps to pick up my water, I planned on taking an electrolyte capsule. My Tupperware pillbox was gone! The only conclusion I can draw is that some lowlife pondscum feeder stole it from me. I definitely had it before, took an E-cap and an Advil out of it, and put it right back. And now it was gone.

It's a cute little pillbox. But the thing that frosts me most is that I really
wanted a capsule. Here I came to the gym, intent on doing a hard afternoon's serious work, prepared for it by doing everything right, brought all my gear and GU and liquids and pills, and some pea-brained stoop just decided to take it for himself, as though he couldn't tell that the Tupperware box sitting on top of a towel alongside two bottles, a row of GU packets, and a soaking wet bandana, wasn't lost or left there accidentally, but belonged to someone who was at that moment working on the track. The loss may have been minor, but that's a plain old case of stealing, not to mention being callously inconsiderate.

The toughest part of the run was the next forty laps, until my last break at 240. Mike dropped out after six miles, and I was left alone again. At 220 I slowed down to a wobbly shuffle. At the last break I took a long drink at the drinking fountain and splashed cold water all over my face and head. This worked. From then on I felt revived. I didn't have any kick left for the end, but my last 33 laps were run considerably faster per lap than the 40 before it.

With the increased intensity of that middle section, my average HR for the run was $134,78 \%$ of MHR, higher than it would have been without Mike's companionship. There were times when I was pulsing in the mid150s, and my HRM said I maxed out at 161. I rarely get it that high, except in interval or tempo runs.

## Boredom Comes from Within

People often wonder how I avoid boredom on long runs, particularly running on a smallish track. They usually add that they would certainly be desperately bored themselves. My knee-jerk inclination is to respond with a comment such as, "I'm sorry you find yourself such a boring person," but I don't because it wouldn't be nice.

Boredom comes from within. I feel sorry for persons who must be entertained by things external to prevent boredom. I can't remember ever being bored while running. It may sound egotistical, but when I'm running, I'm with myself, and I don't find myself boring. I'm a creative person-a musician and a writer and an engineer and a spiritual person, in addition to being a runner, and can always tap into a plentiful supply of interesting notions to occupy my thoughts.

Sure, I get impatient sometimes, wishing the run was over for a variety of reasons, from tiredness to concern with other matters that need tending to, or from lack of concentration. But I don't get bored.

## Putting Things in Perspective

As I write these words, I'm aware that by now, and no more than two or three hours ago, Ed Kelley has completed and won the Sri Chinmoy 3100 mile race, running 5648.69 laps on a sidewalk around a high school in Queens, NY, in a time of 48 days plus probably about 11 hours. Two of his competitors will likely finish tomorrow, and the last one will finish on Tuesday.

The human soul is capable of more than most of us ever dreamed of.

## Saying Uncle

## Monday, August 9, 1999

Hokey dokey, folkeys. I know when to say uncle.
Uncle!
It isn't just that I'm tired from an unusually hard weekend of running, although I most definitely am. Real Life stepped in and added an important chore into the scheme of things-two chores, actually.

Yesterday afternoon, when I tried to clean the swimming pool, the end of the vacuum hose broke. Both ends are split, so I needed to go buy new ends, fix the hose, and clean my pool before it turns green with algae.

Today, rather than heading to the gym, I went to the pool supply store a few blocks from my house and then went home, fantasizing that I might still be motivated when I was done to go for a walk of some sort. However, as I opened the front door, my wife said to me in her inimitable way, "PICK YOUR BROTHER UP FROM THE AIRPORT!!!"

Oops! Last week I had picked up Dwight and Julie at 5:00 A.M. to drop them both off at the airport. Dwight was on his way to see our mother.

Julie was on her way to Istanbul, Turkey, to clean up a toxic waste dump. ${ }^{1}$ When I left them, I assured Dwight I would pick him up and return him home at 3:45 this afternoon. I forgot to add the task to my calendar and it never crossed my mind again from the time I left them at the airport last week.

Putt, putt, putt! That's the sound of Lynn scurrying to the airport, where Dwight was waiting patiently in the heat. Putt, putt, putt! That's the sound of Lynn scurrying back to Dwight's house on the northwest side of town. Putt, putt, putt! That's the sound of Lynn scurrying home to do the job he had originally intended to do.

By the time I finished it was close to 7:00 P.M., and although I was no longer feeling inordinately tired, and it was not horribly hot, I decided to play it safe and call it a rest day. Even with no mileage today, my last seven consecutive days add up to 51.07 miles. More would be too much right now. That statistic has proven to be a useful guide recently.

There is a possibility I may snag the lost miles on Friday instead of resting, since I'm doing only a half marathon on Saturday. If so, I'll make my target of a fifty-mile week. I'll have to see how it goes the rest of the week.

Meanwhile, three people have now finished the Sri Chinmoy 3100 mile race. The last, the lone woman, who was ahead for a week in July, will finish late tomorrow.

## I Feel Fine

## Wednesday, August 11, 1999

Silly me. Yesterday I forgot entirely to mention that I did my ten-mile walk on Sunday afternoon, when it was 102 degrees. Because I'd run a great 24 -miler the day before, I limited it strictly to walking-no running at all, except to get across a few intersections. But I pushed it hard.

In the evening we entertained guests, so by Monday I was beat, as previously described. I could have walked if I'd forced myself, but running

[^6]was out of the question.
What a difference a day makes. Yesterday I ran-walked 10K at the track, wanting to cover the distance without unduly stressing my still throbbing legs. I walked the first four laps, and thereafter ran eight and walked one until done, except that I ran the last eleven laps without interruption.

The real test of recovery was today. Could I muster up the energy for a full-blooded ten-miler on the third day after a 34-mile weekend?

I both could and did. I arrived at the gym anxious to get started, and enthusiastic about the run. The first three laps I ran slowly in order to get my body used to the idea. Then I picked it up, and ran steadily, increasing intensity significantly the last twenty laps. The time was 1:39:39, my eleventh fastest of 36 recordings at the distance, and fourth fastest of 1999.

This installment isn't particularly instructive, funny, philosophical, reflective, or even very interesting. I have no lessons or anecdotes to share. But one thing I know-I'm in a solid groove right now, and am headed in the right direction. Everything I've been planning for months is working out. Life is good!

## Goofy Runners

## Thursday, August 12, 1999

Many inexperienced runners show up at the gym to do a few laps. One sort in particular I refer to as the goofy runners. My objective here is not to ridicule them, but to make an amusing, self-deprecating comparison, which will follow.

We were all beginners at one time. We started working out, and whether deliberately or by sheer experience, we got better. And we learned in the process to be analytical and observant. At least I did. One advantage of running at the gym is that I get to watch many other people running.

As for me-although I remain slow and will always be so, I've tried hard to correct any biomechanical problems I am aware of. I'm sure a coach could point out plenty of flaws. However, I believe I run basically correctly for an uncoached runner.

In this month's Runner's World there's a two-page spread of a guy running, demonstrating what is supposed to be perfect form. Whether it really is or not I won't debate here. It looks mighty good to me.

Two nights ago I sat and studied the picture carefully, reading each paragraph accompanying the various body parts, and compared my own running. Then yesterday during my entire ten-mile run, and all through today's 10K, I paid attention to form. Sometimes I would forget for a while, then it would pop into my mind suddenly, whereupon I'd give myself a surprise inspection.

In auditing myself this way I was reasonably pleased with what I saw: my face, shoulders and hands are consistently relaxed, my arms are at the right angle and swing back and forth, not across my chest, my position is straight up and down, my hips are forward, I land on my heel and push off from my toes, and I take quick steps with a turnover rate that is around eighty cycles per minute. I don't bob up and down, slouch, or tighten any muscles, at least not until I get desperately tired.

My stride is short, which is one reason I run slowly. The perimeter of the track is covered with mirrors, giving me plenty of opportunity to watch myself, in addition to increasing the feeling of openness in that closed space.

Now you know why I run with my eyes nearly shut most of the time.
The goofy runners are the ones who violate these principles of form, sometimes all of them at once. Some look like escapees from an Australian zoo. Some rock back and forth, rotating their whole upper body from the hips on every step, swinging their arms in front of them, bounding up and down as though they were leaping over sleeping dogs lying on the track, pumping their knees, heads held like they're looking for ants crawling on the ceiling, heaving chests puffed out rather than breathing diaphragmatically, landing on their toes, running with loping six-foot strides, their feet striking far ahead of their bodies. Others run with their toes splayed out, landing as though they are trying to lead with their heels.

Most of these runners last no more than a half dozen laps, and most I never see again. The younger ones, who often show up in pairs, can sometimes be seen five minutes after they first appear, bent over double and clutching their sides beside the track. Some of the kids among them probably think to themselves, "Well, I guess I sure showed that geezer
how to run!" As a teenage friend laughingly told me once, "They storm by older people because they think it's funny. They're kids. What do you expect from children?" Coming from him it was a funny remark.

Little do these hot dogs know that sometimes I've already been running for hours before they get there, or will still be running hours after they have left, or both.

The amusing thing about it is this: Nearly every single one of those goofy runners is way faster than me. In a dead sprint of fifty yards almost anyone with two legs, or even one leg, a good crutch, and a little practice, can beat me. But I'll bet there aren't many who can run longer than me, even if they slow down to my pace. Even my seventeen-year-old daughter, who occasionally runs 10 Ks way slower than me, can beat me on a single lap burst.

## The Beat Goes On

I'm still going strong. Today was a reasonably good 10K at 9:39 pace. I was never comfortable, but I didn't weaken and slow down. I avoided looking at the clock the whole time, and when I finished, found I missed going under an hour by 22 seconds. It seems I should be able to go sub1:00 consistently, as I was doing a year ago, but presently I'm finding that magic goal to be elusive. Perhaps if I would precalculate split times and watch the clock more closely I would do better.

On the other hand, the cumulative total mileage for my previous seven days now stands at 57.28. The first of those seven days was a zero, so if I run five miles tomorrow to make up the session I missed on Monday, tomorrow's accumulation will jump up to over 63 miles, pushing the upper limits of what is practical and plausible for me.

There's little room for flexibility in a schedule that is closely packed to allow for fifty pedestrian miles a week all this month. When I was forced by circumstances to cancel my run last Monday, I thought I would lose the five miles and not make the goal this week.

Then I considered running the missed session yesterday instead of resting. But I seem to perform better doing a long run following a day's rest rather than a medium long run without any rest preceding it. So yesterday

I rested, and instead of running the half marathon I planned to run today, I ran eighteen miles.

I'm glad I did. My last three Saturday runs have all been superb. And next Saturday I'll attempt a full marathon at the gym.

Quick, someone send me a gift certificate from Dr. Kavorkian!
I wasn't as rested as I had wanted to be, and was worn down from being out in the heat for two hours this morning. It was only in the low nineties, but the humidity is way up. It would have been better if I could have just done my run. That's not usually how my life goes, so I just have to deal with it.

At Bally's, on the Road that Never Ends, eighteen miles is 205 laps. I decided to divide it into five sections of 41 laps each, drinking and walking laps $41,82,123$, and 164.

At the start it was tough going. At lap 36, four laps before my first break, I noticed that I was finally running smoothly and enjoying it. I was tempted to run through the break, but decided not to mess with the plan.

Segment two was better, but not great. On the third leg I suddenly caught fire and cranked up the pace considerably. Once again I was tempted to run through the break, but decided against it by reminding myself I was not running for time today, and that I have a big week coming up, in running, in work, and in Real Life, so I didn't want to take a chance on blowing a gasket.

At the beginning of segment four, a big, long-haired, young guy I'd never seen before and who had been watching me, said as I went by him, "Awesome, deewde!" He was still around an hour later, and I hadn't slowed down. Segments four and five were both better than the first and second, but the third took honors for best effort.

My time was 3:08:43, my second fastest of five recorded runs at that distance. I was pleased with that, given that I've been running so much recently. Going the extra distance left me with a total of 52 miles for the week. I finished off today with twenty minutes of light weights, something I've necessarily neglected lately.

Presently I'm content to hover above but around the fifty mile a week level. Raising it higher than that would not bring me any significant additional benefits, and it could put me at risk of injury or overtraining. At the
same time I'm continuing to extend my long run, with a marathon training run planned for next week, and a 50 K in three weeks before I begin tapering.

A simple arithmetic consequence of fixing the weekly mileage while increasing the long runs is that I can rest a little more next week. Tomorrow I'll do the ten-mile walk-run routine that I've been doing every Sunday for the last month, and a ten-miler on Wednesday. Subtracting those and the marathon from fifty miles leaves me barely four additional miles needed between Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. I've decided to do them all on Tuesday, and cross train on Monday. I have some important research and teaching to prepare to present on Thursday evening. If I have time I'll do a little strength training after work, but I'm more likely to rest both Thursday and Friday, setting me up nicely for Saturday.

The beat goes on, and it's as strong as my heart. I'm feeling invincible.

## Running On Another Planet

## Saturday, August 14, 1999

Runners who live where they can nonchalantly put on shorts and shoes and head out the door, maybe with a bottle of water, have no idea what it's like to go out in the desert heat. Ask yourself if you'd dress the same for a spacewalk as you do for your run and you'll get an idea what I mean. Running in the Phoenix Mountain Preserve in the dead of summer is not merely hot. It's like stepping onto another planet.

Running in the desert is no less inconvenient than running at the gym. It takes a good twenty minutes just to get ready. First I start drinking. I put on my magic Montrail Vitesse trail running shoes. I wear shorts with pockets because I have to carry stuff like keys, ID, food, and pills. I need to be sure to drop the darker lens set into my Oakley M-frames to get maximum protection, unless I want to acquire a splitting headache. Usually I choose to wear a cotton T-shirt, probably because it covers more of my body than a Coolmax singlet. I put on both a headband and a running hat. I carry a hand towel, not just a bandana. I grease up all my tender parts with Vaseline. A PowerBar goes into my pocket.

As the last preparation before leaving, I put three cups of ice into my

CamelBak Go-Be, and top it off with filtered water from the refrigerator. I love my Go-Be, but anyone who has one knows that filling it is no trivial task. Usually then I have a mess to clean up in the kitchen before I leave.

When I get to the trail, only seven minutes drive away, I go through the disgusting ritual of dousing myself with gobs of gooey sunscreen, strapping the Go-Be on tightly, picking up all my gear, and making sure I've put my key in my pocket, not in the trunk of the car. Then I'm finally ready to start walking or running.

It's a chore to be sure, but if I want to get away from the Road that Never Ends, that's my alternative. So that's what I did today.

Furthermore, I hammered it. My routine on these Sunday walks has been to get as far as I can in exactly 1:15:00, call it five miles if I've put in a good effort, and then make my way back as fast as I can.

This time I resisted the temptation to run the downhills going out. Coming back I trotted every downhill I could. There's definitely more uphill returning than going out, but I finished in 2:22:27, a negative split by $7: 33$. I ran out of water, but was only 15 minutes from the end. The drinking fountain at the trailhead pumps about a quart of cooled water before it runs hot; I emptied it.

The trail is heavily traveled during the cooler months. Today I saw only two bikers and one walker the whole time I was out. I didn't see any other living creatures at all, not even birds.

This has been another highly productive running weekend. Tomorrow I get to do only strength training and can rest my legs. I've earned it.

## My Own Niche

## Tuesday, August 17, 1999

I've formed a singular relationship with the Road the Never Ends, the 155yard track at Bally's gym. Most runners can run faster than me. Quite a few can even run farther. But even some experienced ultrarunners have told me they would have a hard time doing what I do. It seems my curious circumstances in life have led me to find my own niche in the world of running. Somehow I doubt that it will make me famous, though-except maybe in the National Enquirer.

Runners have different reasons for running. For instance, some runners talk about running fifty miles a week so they can qualify for Boston. I would have to knock fifty minutes off my PR to qualify for Boston. When I run fifty miles in a week it's for a different reason. I run fifty miles a week so I can say I ran fifty miles a week. It's all about the training, not the races.

I would run even if I didn't produce this journal. I have in the past, and will again when this project is completed. Nevertheless, I will admit that going public with my activities has provided me with extra incentive to keep working at my goals. I used to be a musician. Every performer does better with an audience.

Yesterday the theater was dark. I worked out with weights for forty minutes. I was careful to avoid leg work entirely, other than to do some good stretching.

When the curtain went up today, I needed only four miles. After half an easy lap I felt like a big hand pushed me from behind. I changed my motion from lazy warmup-shuffle mode to run-like-I'm-leading-Boston mode. OK, I thought to myself, I don't know where this spark came from, but I'll stretch it out for a lap or two just to see how it goes.

By the third lap I was gasping. My options were the same as they always are under these circumstances: slow down and wimp out, or stop whining and run. Today I took the latter, wondering how long I could keep it up before my lungs burst into flames. Somehow I managed to hold the pace the whole four miles. It wasn't fun and it wasn't pretty, but it did the job.

I've read that one should practice speed work for the sake of working on form. This theory holds true for about two laps. As exhaustion sets in, followed quickly by discomfort and then desperation, the whole act falls apart.

I finished with my fifth best recorded time at the distance of 46 entries, a full 1:48 off my PR, but still my best at the distance this year.

The question that now presents itself is: Did I ruin myself for my ten miles tomorrow?

## A Marathon at the Track

## Saturday, August 21, 1999

This time of year many distance runners who race are getting down to the nitty-gritty polishing phase of their fall marathon training. Some runners here in the southwest desert don't do fall marathons, at least not an early one, because it's too blasted hot to train for them in the summer. That is, of course, unless you're a nut like me who trains for marathons in an air conditioned gym.

It could be worse. I could be running on a treadmill.
Today I ran 298 laps on tRtNE, officially 26.24 miles if the posted distance around the track is correct. That's 137 feet farther than a marathon, if my calculations are correct. Close enough.

Details will follow. But first this message from our Sponsor.

## Running and Spirituality

Recently on the Ultra List there has been a discussion on the theme of spirituality and racing. A subscriber requested that readers submit socalled spiritual experiences they have had in connection with running.

The honorable good Doctor George Sheehan used to punctuate his more strenuous runs with frequent loud outcries to his Lord. I don't think this's what the inquirer had in mind.

I've been known to call on mine while running, too, and I keep Him close in mind at most other times, but prefer to do so privately. I don't think that's the sort of spiritual experience the spiritual inquirer was looking for either.

It seems to me that what he expected, and what people responded with, centered largely around feel-good spirituality. Many people believe that when you feel good and are happy about something, that is a spiritual experience. Most of what was described as spiritual experience had to do with the enjoyment of attractive scenery, and feeling high on endorphins and other substances during a run.

It's not a coincidence that in ancient Greek the word for spiritism (the practice of communicating with supposedly dead spirits) was pharmakia,
which means "druggery." In those days spiritistic religion was characterized by mumbo jumbo ritual and was closely associated with the taking of drugs. If one believes that spirituality means getting emotionally pumped up, whether from caffeine, or a natural drug like endorphins, or whatever else pins the needle on his spiritometer, he should ask himself honestly whether it's possible that he is getting a false reading.

One reader of the original version of this segment responded that she worships a different God from me. I'm sure this is true.

Another said she finds God under rocks and in the woods. As innocently naïve and simplistic as this may sound outwardly, her statement is not altogether emotional poetry or without foundation. It is undeniably true that rich satisfaction can be had by anyone from experiencing our natural surroundings close up.

For his invisible [qualities] are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, ... -Romans 1:20

But don't make the mistake of confusing experiences enjoyed while running with spirituality. There is no substitute for the real thing. Spirituality deals with concern over matters of the spirit. Put plainly, it has to do specifically with concern over matters relating to God.

As his opening statement in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." It has been my long-time personal experience, based on talking face-to-face with thousands of persons about it over the past thirty years, to observe that many persons manifest no consciousness at all of such a need, yet live quite contentedly without it. They substitute other things for this need, just as a person with one leg substitutes a crutch or prosthetic device for his missing leg, and gets along happily without the missing part as though it was never needed in the first place.

Others think of spirituality in terms of devotion to some ideal. If a person is a dedicated runner, and running is the main thing in his life, then running has taken the place of spirituality, but even then it is not the same thing as spirituality. Running is a pleasant, healthful, and richly rewarding activity, but running is just running. It has no deeper meaning.

Show me a person to whom running is the most important thing, and I will show you a person who needs to get a life. Here is a simple truth: We are what we do. If all we do is run, then all we are is runners. Being a runner is good, and I'm proud to call myself one, but it's not enough.

That ends the preaching for this book. We now return you to our regularly scheduled program.

## The Big Picture

Most people who run marathons do them early in the morning after a good night's sleep, and it is the primary activity in their day.

Today I slept in until 6:30 A.M., a little later than usual for me on a Saturday. I did some studying, then went out in the heat, on foot and in a tie, as usual. Although I cut my work a little short this morning, by the time I got home and out the door to the gym it was 11:30 A.M. It was going to be a long afternoon.

This time I performed the detailed offices of my ritual with accuracy: I got the right shoes, the right (ahem) drugs (just Advil and electrolyte capsules!), Vaseline in the right places, plenty of GU and Gatorade, and all the rest. The only thing I forgot was to carry my bandanas up to the gym floor. I decided to do without them.

Running 26.24 miles on a two-lane track is a chore, there's no two ways about it. I saw only two people I ever say hello to all afternoon, so was essentially alone the whole time. But I wasn't there for social visits or to impress anyone else. It was time to do a big job.

It was my earnest desire to run the whole 26.2 miles except for hydration breaks, allowing myself one lap in forty to chug fluids and gobble GU. In this goal I was successful.

I'll spare you the lap by lap account. Each one is much the same as the next one and the one before it. Each one takes about 140 steps, and the fast ones aren't much faster than the slow ones. There are no oceans, rippling ponds, flowing brooks, redwood forests, or flowering meadows for me to run near and have a "spiritual" encounter with; just four right turns per 155 yards, lots of mirrors, and a white stripe down the middle of a hard,
dark green rubberized path surrounding a bunch of machines being used by sweaty, grunting people.

Sometimes I get through these long ordeals by viewing them one lap at a time: "OK, I got through that one, now let's do another." It seems I can always do one more, no matter what.

Today may have been the exception. My split time at the half was 2:18, on target for a 4:36, which would have been very good for a training run. I wasn't pushing for a great time. I felt strong and steady right up to twenty miles, the traditional falling-over juncture in a real marathon. From then on it was no longer fun, but a laborious job that urgently needed finishing.

With only twelve laps to go I began to feel distress in my stomach, like the nausea I felt on July 31, that took me off the track for a few minutes, thinking I was going to lose it. Being almost done, I didn't want to blow it, and I didn't want to walk. By this time I had slowed greatly, but my heart rate was the same as it had been most of the afternoon, hovering around $135,79 \%$ of my MHR. So I proceeded cautiously. One at a time the remaining laps clicked off. Finally I finished, exhausted, with a positive split of six or seven minutes, with the final time of 4:43:20.

Afterward I didn't even take a warmdown walking lap. I went straight to the aerobics floor fifteen feet away, found a mat, and laid down for five minutes before proceeding to do a little stretching.

I was out of there in less than ten minutes. My day was far from over. I had things to do. We had guests arriving for dinner in less than an hour, and I had to go home, help out, clean up, and be ready to be a lively, cheerful host for our on-time company. And so it went, bringing me finally to my back-room office, the computer, the writing of this account, and the end of a lovely day. And tomorrow I will be up early once again to continue the studying I left unfinished this morning.

It's only in retrospect that I can appreciate what great shape I must be in, when I consider what a busy day I had. Up early to study, out walking in the heat, run a little old marathon (as if it was a chore like mowing the lawn), entertain guests at a dinner party, and write a column-length article. I believe I'll sleep soundly tonight.

## Catching Up

## Sunday, August 22, 1999

Yesterday I neglected to remember that the previous report was written last Tuesday, and forgot to account for what I've done since then.

On Wednesday I repeated the same routine I've done several times recently, walking four miles outdoors while Cyra-Lea was at her piano lesson, then following that with a moderate 10 K at the gym.

On both Thursday and Friday I rested completely, in preparation for the indoor marathon I ran yesterday. My week's total distance was recorded as 51.59 miles, bringing me to today.

This morning I was up at 6:30 to get finish preparing a lecture I gave this morning in another part of town. After the meeting, some friends took us to lunch, where I ate spicy jalapeño chicken on pasta, probably not the best thing to eat prior to heading out for a desert walk.

It was 3:00 P.M. before I was free to go for a long walk. I've been choosing one of two routes each Sunday: the difficult mountain preserve, or the streets starting from my house. Today I chose the latter, not feeling up to the challenge of the hills and rocky trail.

The whole trip was an ordeal, as I struggled to keep moving quickly the whole way. It seemed hotter than usual. I thought it was just my imagination, or else the jalapeños, and that I was just suffering from a combination of tiredness from yesterday and a heavy meal at lunchtime. When I got home I learned the high temperature was 111 degrees today, and the current temperature was 109. That would explain a thing or two.

This week will be one of the toughest I've ever faced. A constant mileage goal, with a shorter long run, which I'm planning on next week, means longer short runs during the week. It seems I can handle the long runs, but the short midweek runs nearly do me in. The next four days I'm planning five miles, 10 K , ten miles, and 10 K , before I take a rest day on Friday. Frankly, I don't know if I'm up to it.

## Fat Man's Misery

Thursday, August 26, 1999
In the summer of 1954, after completing sixth grade, at 106 pounds I was an overweight eleven-year-old early adolescent. That summer I got my first and only crew cut, because the singing group called the Crew Cuts had made this the latest fashion statement. It did nothing to enhance my blubbery appearance. Frankly, I looked like what I was-the kid who was always chosen last in sports.

In July my father took one of my younger brothers and me on a camping trip through the Wisconsin Dells, where we hiked a guided tourist trail that had a narrow pass between two rocks, aptly labeled Fat Man's Misery. It was indeed narrow enough that an unusually large person might have difficulty squeezing through it. There was room to crawl under it, but not much.

Being somewhat worried at the time about my future body configuration, the experience stuck with me. I concluded that I did not want to be a miserable fat man who got asthma every time he did something strenuous.

Remarkably, I grew out of that phase during the next two years. By the time I graduated from high school my weight was normal. I had even been chosen to be the drum major of the band my last two years, a job that I was glad to have, not for the glory, but because then I didn't have to suffer trying to play my trombone while marching around on a cold and windy football field. But I did have to fit the uniform, which was made for a trim person.

Later, like most persons who never exercise and eat all the wrong things after they leave college, my weight crept up once again, until in mid-1994, at age 51, I had become an out-of-shape 220-pound blob who no longer could fit into any of my clothes. That period marked the beginning of my present involvement with running, as described earlier in this journal.

My weight bottomed at 170 by August of 1996, not long before I ran my first half marathon. That reading was probably taken in a dehydrated state after a long run. Not long afterward I stabilized at between 173-175, which I held for at least two years.

Then my weight started to creep back up. For I while I held it under 180. This morning my deadly accurate won't-tell-a-lie Tanita digital scale
with strain gauges strained its gauges all the way up to 184.6 , two tenths of a pound less than the most I've weighed since I lost a big chunk after starting to exercise regularly.

The by-line I've appropriated for myself includes the expression "a slow, fat, geezer with gumption." There's admittedly a certain amount of calculated exaggeration in that description, aimed at adopting a writerly persona. I'm slow, it can't be denied, as my consistent eightieth-plus percentile finishes demonstrate. But I neither look nor act my age, ${ }^{2}$ nor at twenty pounds heavier than I would like to be, would most persons other than me consider me to be much overweight, if compared with the average non-exercising recliner-dwelling sloth. Whenever I've stood up properly the excess hasn't even been noticeable until recently.

In any case, it remains true that underneath the outer layer of pudge lives a strong body that can carry my bulk a long time for a long distance. And I recently measured my resting heart rate while sitting at the computer, tanked on coffee, at 42.

So the thing that has me concerned is the trend seen in light of the knowledge that I'm in my second year of sustaining an average of over thirty-five miles of running a week, and am now in my fifth consecutive week of fifty-plus pedestrian miles, with more than a month of forty-plus weeks before that. And though I haven't talked about it much in this journal, I do as much strength training as time and energy allow, in addition to the running.

The solution for most afore-described gutpiles begins with more exercise. In my case more running and working out would not only be impossible, it would be ineffective. All that's left is for me to eat less, even though I don't think that I eat all that much to begin with. Therein lies my personal "fat man's misery," and a summary of the only thing wrong in the present state of affairs in my training.

## A Prophecy Fulfilled

The prediction I delivered on Sunday about how difficult this week would be has so far proven to be true prophecy.

[^7]Sunday's ten-mile walk, the day after that indoor marathon, was tough enough. I neglected to mention that the distance I covered in 1:15 was a quarter mile short of the intersection I've been reaching in previous jaunts. I turned around anyhow, and gave myself credit for only 9.5 miles rather than the usual ten.

On Monday I scheduled five miles, hoping to rest on Friday, but it would have been useless even to try. The weekend's effort finally caught up with me. Though I was not sore, I had no energy or leg power at all. So I rested Monday, but am planning on making up that distance on Friday.

On Tuesday I wanted to do 10 K at the gym. It was one of the silliest excursions of my life. I sloughed two miles, then alternated running a few laps and walking one until five miles, when I finally came to my senses and stopped.

Wednesday is my usual mid-week ten-mile day. Could I do it?
I did, running the entire distance by concentrating on the task without feeling sorry for myself, in the recognition that I was much better off than the day before. Though I won't say that I suffered, I can't imagine I could have run much more slowly and still have been moving in a forward direction. All but one of the runs I have ever recorded at any distance, where I have run the whole thing, including Saturday's marathon, have been at a faster pace.

That brings me to the present. It's to be a 10K. I don't expect to do well today, tomorrow, and maybe not on Saturday's half marathon either. But I'm doing what I set out to do, including, in part, disciplining myself to run when my body is tired. And I'm counting on the belief that a good night's sleep, seemingly the single biggest determining factor in how well I do on a given day, together with a couple of days off next week, will serve to prepare me for my final assault on the indoor 50 K I have planned for September 4.

## It's All Too Much

## Friday, August 27, 1999

The sign on the wall at Bally's claims the distance around the track is 155 yards on the white line down the center. I pretend that figure is a physical
constant as reliable and accurate as the time it takes an electron to revolve around the nucleus of a cesium atom.

There are only two lanes: inside and outside. The track designers from $\mathrm{Mo}^{\prime}$ ron have posted signs that say "Slower runners use the inner lane." I've always wondered-Slower than what? So I made my own judgment: Slower than me. I always run in the outside lane.

Most of the time I hug the white line, but if people are passing me and I see them coming in the mirrors, I swerve to the outside to let them pass, giving them enough room to remain outside the white line if they want to. Regardless of what the signs of the track architects from Mo'ron instruct, every runner prefers to pass on the inside. It's shorter, and therefore faster. Meanwhile, I get the full benefit of the advertised distance.

If I report that I run 10K, I mean I run 71 laps. In the Emacs Lisp functions I wrote to keep my running records, I set the elisp constant bally-lap equal to 0.08806818181818182 miles. Close enough, OK? That times 71 equals 6.252840909090909 miles. 10 K is 6.21371192237334 miles. Expressed in elisp it looks like this:

$$
\begin{aligned}
& (-(\star \text { bally-lap 71) (meters-to-miles 10000)) => } \\
& 0.03912898671756881 \text { miles }
\end{aligned}
$$

which is about 207 feet more than 10 K , plus or minus one or two one-hundred-quadrillionths of a mile. Every distance I record is really the next whole number of laps more than the round-number distance I claim it to be.

Naturally, I round all my distances to two decimal places.
Oh! You didn't think I recorded it to seventeen decimal places, did you? Gracious, what do you think I am, some kind of a numbers-obsessed nut? Huh?

Hang with me, I'm not done yet.
Today I walked the track. As I trudged I wondered how much difference in distance there is between running the outside and inside lanes. So I made a rough estimate. I walked several brisk laps at a constant pace on the inside edge, counting the steps. It came out consistently at 139 steps per lap.

Then, because the track was nearly empty, I walked three laps right on top of the white line, counting steps. It measured exactly 146 steps
every time. Assuming a constant length stride, that's a difference of 0.004222447073474467 miles per lap less on the inside track. That amounts to 22.29452054794518 feet less per lap, seven steps with an average stride length of 3.18 feet.

Let's switch to more realistic numbers. A 71-lap 10K will be about 1583 feet shorter run on the inside edge than on the white line. That's nearly 0.3 miles. And a 298-lap marathon would be 6644 feet shorter, a whole 1.26 miles. So it makes a difference.

That's why I always run the outside lane and never cut the corners deliberately. What would be the point of recording a 10 K run when I've really run three tenths of a mile less? There's no benefit to deluding myself about the numbers. "Just gimme some truth!" as John Lennon once cried out.

## I'm So Tired

All day my legs felt like stumps. There's no way to deny it-I'm pushing my outer limits, and must watch myself carefully to get through this next week successfully without getting injured.

My original intent was to run the five miles I canned on Monday today. By the time I got to the gym I had decided to walk it, or crawl it if necessary.

To my surprise and delight, walking felt wonderful. Once I started I snapped immediately out of my lethargy. My only problem was with encountering acquaintances who wanted to walk a few laps with me, but couldn't keep up, so I had to slow down for them.

It's difficult for me to walk hard enough to get my heart beating fast. I wasn't wearing my monitor today, but I doubt it ever got much over 100 BPM.

The further I went, the harder I walked. I finished the five miles in 1:09:40, a respectable 13:52 pace, giving me a formidable seven consecutive day total of 63.47 miles, and left me wide awake and refreshed after feeling like death all day.

## Misery

## Saturday, August 28, 1999

Normally I don't use an alarm clock, but get up when I want to. The last few years this has usually been between 5:30 and 6:00 most work days.

This school year Cyra-Lea is a high school senior in a health careers program, aiming ultimately to be a nurse practitioner. She doesn't drive yet, so I drop her off every weekday morning at 6:10 A.M. The last two weeks, for the first time in many years, I've been setting my alarm clock, and my foot has been hitting the floor at precisely 5:25 A.M.

This schedule has worked out well except that I still haven't mastered the art of going to bed when I ought to. Some people are morning people and some people are night people. I'm one of those unusual folks who loves the early morning (but not for running), and also the late evening. It's the middle of the day when I'm supposed to be hard at work that really rots.

By last night I had built up a sleep debt and was in serious need of some rack time. Fortunately, I got a solid eight hours. However, it wasn't enough to absolve me from the consequences of 63 miles of running the previous seven days.

This weekend I have a schedule that is altered from the norm. This morning I was at home doing some work. I broke away by 11:30 A.M. to get to the gym. Today was to be a half marathon, 149 laps on tRtNE.

I felt immediately upon starting to run that my lower right back was in a knot and my right leg showed the potential of cramping up on me. My middle body felt as if it was locked in a vise.

To make matters worse, I was bloated and suffering fallout from whatever I ate yesterday. As I ran I left a jetstream behind me. Pffft brat-a-blip. Blup, blup-blup brrrap. You wouldn't have wanted to be drafting behind me. Fortunately, the best remedy I've ever found for this condition is a good hard run.

A few laps into it my breathing was labored, forced, and shallow. If I can't breathe well, I can't run well. No one can. It was going to be a tough session.

At least it wasn't unbearable, and I knew that I would get through it one way or another. I concentrated on making the best of the situation.

When I hit the halfway point I saw that I was on a pace to finish at 2:18, a PW by several minutes.

## Getting Better

Sometimes the unexpected happens. At exactly halfway, for reasons that were unplanned, I started to run faster. When I did I felt better. It seemed easier, so I kept doing it.

As I continued, I loosened up and started to enjoy the exhilaration of pushing. I had to concentrate hard on breathing. When I do this I always work on forcefully exhaling. Some runners suffocate themselves trying to inhale deeply into lungs that are already too full of carbon dioxide saturated air. I've learned that if I breathe out hard, pursing my lips and making a whooshing sound, I have no problem getting enough air in me on the inhale part of the cycle. But I have to do it deliberately.

That's my tip for today. Pass it on.
Suddenly the laps were flying by, my legs were turning over well, and my form was smooth. Best of all, it felt wonderful. I was having fun again.

With three miles to go I pulled out all the stops and decided to run as hard from there to the end as I could. Nothing could stop me. I flew over the finish like I was trying to beat a batch of close competitors in a 5 K .

My final time was still deep in the crummy zone, but the strenuous increase in effort gave me a negative split by over five minutes. Given the added aerobic benefits, I had turned what would have been a poor token effort into an excellent tempo run, and pulled my finish time into the normal range, rounding out the week with my fifth consecutive fiftyplus mileage total.

## Why Don't We Do It in the Road?

## Tuesday, August 31, 1999

Sunday I did my usual streetwalking trick, except that I intentionally covered eight miles instead of ten. This week I don't need to cover much
ground because of my anticipated 50 K on Saturday. I'll put in the twenty miles I need, but won't push it.

My schedule was disrupted Sunday. I had to give a public lecture on the other side of town in the afternoon. We were home in the morning, but preoccupied with study and weekend chores. Later a friend took us to late lunch; I couldn't begin to claim any part of the day for training until we returned after 5:00 P.M.

The weather is barely growing more temperate. It's still over 100 daily, but cooling off when the sun sets. I weathered my two-hour walk, starting at 5:30 P.M., without sunscreen, and didn't even take water. It was downright pleasant when I got back.

On the return cycle I interspersed a pattern of gentle short runs between walk segments, starting with 50 steps, and working up to 200, with 100 walking steps between. I ran with about the same intensity I imagine I will have after twelve hours at Across the Years in December. Reeeeaaal easy. I ran nearly half the distance back in this way.

Doing this sort of thing is physically refreshing even when I'm tired. Soreness and muscle fatigue seem to be aggravated by complete inactivity. The day after a hard effort I often find myself stretching and twisting into unusual positions, even when sitting and watching TV, just to give my body the benefit of the increased circulation that results. Otherwise I become stiff as a board, and slow my recovery.

Normally my long run is on Saturday. Nearly every Sunday of my life I conduct a one-hour Bible study of an article in The Watchtower magazine, unless I'm giving the public lecture that precedes it. In either case I spend about an hour standing behind a lectern in front of a lot of people. Friends have noticed that I tend to rock back and forth and othewise move about more than other speakers while I'm conducting. It's not a mannerism, merely a case of trying to keep my recovering muscles from aching. It hurts a lot more to stand perfectly still. I do try to do this as inconspicuously as possible, and make it look more like I'm fired with animation than doing calisthenics.

It's a joy to trot along, tripity-stepity, tripity-stepity, feeling as though I'm floating, while the street passes beneath my feet. I've come to where I crave to start running, even for short segments, and even when I'm tired, simply because it feels so good to be in motion.

Yesterday I enjoyed 65 minutes of strength training at the gym, but no running. Now my upper body aches a bit.

## No Reply

The last three months I have trained harder and more consistently than at any time in my life. I'm obliged to ask myself whether I'm any better off for it.

One point I've noticed frequently the last few years when I've been working hard is that I feel trashed much of the time. Sometimes I wish I had a few days to sit back and enjoy my assumed superior health without having to prove that I've got it by engaging in strenuous activity. I can't always perceive it directly by the way I feel. If I were in any better shape I'd have to be carried around on a stretcher.

The jury is still out on the question because the evidence is incomplete. The reason the evidence is incomplete is because the project isn't finished and won't be until early January. I'll let you know what I decide.

Meanwhile, today is the last day of another month, giving me occasion to run some totals and do a little analysis. I'll do that after I complete my three miles later this afternoon.

As Arnold says: I'll be back.

## Get Back

## Tuesday, August 31, 1999 Again

I'm back.
This afternoon I did a brisk three miles at the gym at 9:20 pace, not super fast, but sixteenth out of 74 recorded runs at the distance.

My end-of-month statistics are satisfying. The most noteworthy figure is a total of 216.43 miles for the month, my second consecutive PR, by a margin of 10.37 miles. This should prove to be my sixth fifty-mile week in a row, heaped on top of a series averaging in the mid-forties.

After cogitating through the numbers, I mapped out my runs as closely as possible for the whole month of September, with weekly totals after this one of $40,30,20$, and finally 11 miles early in the week of the Twin Cities Marathon. The hardest part will be not eating too much as the miles decrease.

I'm theorizing that my endurance buildup with a bit of intensity now and then, followed by a good taper and rest is going to add up to a superior performance, if not at Twin Cities, then certainly by Tucson.

It's now only four months to go until Across the Years.

## Ask Me Why

Five years ago I was not aware of having ever met anyone who had really run 26.2 miles, and was on the side of the fence with those who question why any person would ever do such a thing.

Now I know or correspond with countless hordes of regular marathoners, including persons who have run hundreds of ultramarathons, for whom weekly thirty-mile training runs is what they do when they're taking life easy. I no longer ask why any person would ever do such a thing, because I know, but I'm sure I can't explain it adequately to someone who hasn't tried it.

One thing is certain: I don't do it to demonstrate how good I am at it. Persons familiar with running readily recognize there is nothing remarkable concerning my training program, other than my singular devotion to an indoor track, which I regard as a necessity. Variations of the same routine are being carried out by persons of every description in all corners of the world. The only thing that makes my program unusual is that I'm immodest enough to publish my bumblings and fumblings on the Internet.

Gumption, rather than any physical attribute, may be my strongest attribute as a runner. But that gumption translates into effort, and effort pays off. In baseball sometimes the only difference between a home run and another ho-hum fly out is swinging just a little bit harder. Maybe if I run just a little bit further, and a little bit harder, I'll get the results I'm hoping for.

## Chapter 6

## The Slide

## When I'm 64

## Friday, September 3, 1999

Non-running geezer and geezerette friends will complain with a sigh when I greet them: "Ah'm tahrd!" They add parenthetically: "I guess when we get to be our age we just can't do all the things we used to."

Speak for yourselves, ancient ones!
In fairness, there is some truth to what they say. I no longer do heavy yard work. I gave it up ten years ago when I realized that every time I did it I would be as sick for a week from allergies as if I had caught a bad cold. What's the point of mowing your own lawn if it makes you sick, even if it is good exercise? So I pay a landscaper.

I've worn glasses for the last twelve years. I regard them as just another form of prosthetic device. I need them while sitting in front of a computer, where I can be found most of the time. I still see well at a distance. I can count the ants walking up a signpost across the street, so I don't wear glasses when I run. But if I have to read something I'm holding in my hand, I need the aid of lenses. For those occasions I wear bifocals. They're part of my geezerly street gear.

I've lost quite a bit of my hearing. It's a hereditary condition. I don't use hearing aids, but I should, and certainly will before long. I'm getting tired of saying Huh? in response to everything that people say, and I suspect my family, friends, and colleagues are, too.

I'm cautious about lifting things that are either heavy or awkward. I'm afraid of what I might do to my back. I have no fear of weights at the gym, but I'd rather not pick up a television or a piece of furniture unless I plan the lift carefully.

The first thing my wife does in the morning when she stands up is to make the bed, or her half of it. I try to do that myself, but it's painful for me when I first arise to bend over just that little bit. Sometimes I have to get down on my knees to pick my socks up. When I'm thoroughly awake and warmed up, I can do anything I ever did.

Other than those activities, I can't think of anything that I ever did in the past that I can't or won't do now just as much or more and as well or better.

## The Fool Over the Hill

Perhaps true geezerhood is largely a state of mind. People usher themselves into the fellowship and find they have suddenly become lifetime members.

The authors of articles about older runners always define "older" as starting with age forty. Thursday morning I read Jeff Galloway's article "Masterful Aging" in September's Runner's World. Sure enough, he cites the turning point as age forty.

Yup, according to him and other experts, when we get to be over that age, there's no question-everything falls apart. We need to warm up more, rest more, walk more, and make all kinds of adjustments we never would have dreamed of before.

So some readers of RTtM might wonder: Since I'm 56 and obviously waaaaaaaaayyy over the metaphoric hill, why on earth am I working so hard on increasing my running? Shouldn't I be slowing down and taking up stamp collecting, resigned to the inevitable consequences of what is built into every living human being's genes? Shouldn't I buy myself a wheelchair for when I need it, and reserve a spot in a retirement home where I can take up shuffleboard and play pinochle on rest days?

The problem is, you see, I neglected my body for most of the first fifty years of my life. It's true that I ran a bit in my mid-thirties, but most of
my forties I was close to inactive except for occasional weekend hikes and yardwork.

An article by Joe Henderson in April, 1999 Runner's World stated his belief that runners seem to have around ten peak years, regardless of when they start. By that principle, a seventeen-year-old high school cross country champ might look forward to being a good college athlete, then having a few good years, but being a has-been by age thirty. A person who takes up marathoning in his middle twenties might peak in his early thirties, and even be competitive.

And we all know about people who don't start until their thirties or forties. Now, with the second running boom, we have stragglers like me who buy their first pair of real running shoes and start hitting the streets after age fifty, and who progress so quickly that suddenly they believe they're invincible and cut out to be ultrarunners.

Whatever the truth is in my own case, the circumstance remains that at five years, if the philosophy is valid, I'm still in mid-form and near the peak of what I will ever accomplish, and have at least two or three more good years left. One thing is certain: My peak running phase is destined to be short. I'd like to think that I'll still be running marathons ten or even twenty years from now, but whether that happens remains to be seen. Even if I do, my PRs have already been set, or will be soon.

Meanwhile, I sense that now is my time. It's now or never, so I'm reaching for the brass ring. Distance running is not one of those experiences I'll think about in old age and regret that I never had the gumption to get into. I'll be able to say: Been there, done that, got lots of T-shirts.

## Carry That Weight

On Wednesday something wasn't right at all. I hit the track wanting to run, but did eight miles in a personal worst time by a margin of 1:59. My previous PW at that distance was in January, 1997, the first time I recorded it. My PR is 10:00 faster. Perhaps wearing my oldest shoes with 550 miles on them and ordinary white crew socks detracted some from the effort as well.

It was a miserable experience. The cause was a complete lack of energy. I felt like a Caterpillar tractor trying to make time on the German

Autobahn.
In the end it mattered little. I was there strictly for the miles, and I did run the whole distance, knowing I would be resting and sleeping well the next two days in preparation for the weekend.

## I'm Only Sleeping

On both Wednesday and Thursday nights I slept well and longer than I usually get to during the week. Thursday and Friday were days of complete rest.

Friday I took the day off work, in order to string together a four-day weekend for myself, ending with Labor Day on Monday. Most of the day was spent performing errands. In the process I bought a new pair of shoes, a different kind than I have worn before. I've had thirteen consecutive pair of Brooks Addiction IIs, and I have one pair of Montrail Vitesse trail shoes. I just wanted to try something new, so got some supposedly equivalent shoes by Asics, the Gel Foundations. They sure are comfortable on my feet. I'm anxious to try them, but I'm not going to wear them on my 50 K training run tomorrow. A mistake like that could ruin me.

Tonight it will be early to bed, nine hours sleep, and later in the morning I'll head bravely over to the track to face one of the biggest running challenges of my life.

## Yesterday

## Sunday, September 5, 1999

Yessss!! I made it: Yesterday I ran 353 laps on tRtNE, 50,031 meters, without walking except hydration laps. It was an outstanding, strong run.

Preparation was the key to a good run. In addition to all the work I've done to build up to this level, I slept and ate well the last three nights. Saturday morning I got up feeling fresh and rested. I ate yogurt and a PowerBar, drank coffee, read email, and relaxed until shortly after 10:00 A.M. Usually on Saturday morning I don't have that luxury, but for this I rearranged my schedule.

The weather was spectacular for this time of year-still warm, but clear and fresh. It was a day to do things outside.

After a careful warmup, I approached the line that marks the start of clockwise laps, and recognized that I've never felt better and more ready to go at the start of a long run except at St. George, Utah, in October, 1997, my first marathon.

Wanting to take no chances, I started out slowly. I knew that no matter how carefully I conserved my energy, after fifty kilometers I would be completely exhausted.

According to my habit, I planned to walk, drink, and eat every forty laps. Those breaks are closer to a lap and a quarter each. As I come around the start curve, I stop running, walk the sixteen steps or so to the little alcove where I stash my gear, pick up the bottle, walk and guzzle a full lap, put the bottle back, and continue walking until the next curve, about twenty more steps.

That's exactly what I did, with minor variations, as noted below, after laps $40,80,120,160,200,240,280$, and 320 . Every other lap of the day was run.

It was quiet at the gym. I saw only two people I ever talk to all afternoon. The first, a man named Peter, who knew what I was planning, I encountered a minute before I started. The other is a widower I've known for 21 years. His son used to baby-sit for my two children when they were little. He has been cheering my running progress from the vantage point of a stationary bicycle for the last three years. I stopped and talked to him for thirty seconds on my 200th-lap break, just short of eighteen miles, when I still felt strong.

Because the run was so quiet and efficient, there is little to talk about except the mechanical details. I've learned that dividing long runs into forty-lap segments works well not only physically, but psychologically. It became like a series of nine consecutive 3.5-mile jogs, seemingly far less formidable than facing a whole fifty kilometers as a single chunk.

My running was slow, smooth, and in good form though at least 200 laps. In the course of things I consumed a quart and a half of Gatorade, at least a quart of water, one Hammer Gel, one GU, and two Cliff Shots. I had never tried either the Hammer Gel of Cliff Shot before. I liked the latter, particularly the cocoa peanut variety. In addition, I swallowed four

Succeed! electrolyte capsules, one before I started, and three during the run, and several Advil.

By 240 laps, a bit over 21 miles, I started to feel the strain. On that break I walked an extra half lap. I did the same at 280 laps.

Starting from lap 228 (twenty miles), I paid special attention to the way I was feeling, and to staying alert. Two weekends ago, when I ran the marathon, I entered a trancelike state, especially the last few miles. I barely knew where I was or what I was doing.

Afterward I concluded this was a bad thing. I'm not seeking Nirvana or oneness with some undefined ultimate reality when I run. I'm trying to accomplish a difficult physical task, and need to pay attention to what I'm doing or I might get hurt. So pay attention I did.

That little flash of insight was probably the most valuable lesson I learned from the experience: When running distance, don't just let it happen as though I have no control over it and the experience is overtaking me. Instead, pay attention to what is happening, and use the information gathered to improve performance.

Pass it on.
At 298 laps I passed the marathon mark. My marathon split was 4:50, much slower than I expected, especially given that my half marathon split was $2: 20$. Two weeks ago I ran the marathon in $4: 43$, also too slow. I wasn't walking; I just slowed way down.

Every step from then on was new territory for me. Last February I did one 29.4-mile training run in preparation for Crown King 50K, but it was mostly on difficult trails where I had to walk a great deal; it took me 7:24. Crown King itself took 8:07 because of the 6,000-foot elevation gain, most of it over the last 15 miles. Yesterday was the first time I tried to run a whole 50 K , minus the reasonable and customary hydration breaks.

At 320 laps I desperately needed the scheduled break. By then I was filled to the teeth with disgusting sour liquids and frosting-flavored sludge squeezed from the equivalent of toothpaste tubes. I neither wanted nor needed any more food or water, but I really did need the walking break. When I got to the rail I stretched my legs for fifteen seconds. The benefits were quasi-resurrectional. From then until the end I was fine.

My finish time was 5:49:10. It took me 59 minutes to finish the additional 4.84 miles after passing the marathon distance. But that time is a
full 2:18 faster than my time at Crown King, a testament to the difficulty of that course.

More meaningful than the time, perhaps, was the expenditure of effort as recorded by my heart rate monitor: an average of 135 BPM for the entire run, $79 \%$ of my MHR. It was recording that one mile into the run, and said the same at the end. My pace slowed substantially over time, but if my effort had slackened, my HRM would have given me away.

Physically I fared well. My feet are fine, with no blisters, except that today one already-black toe is glowering bulbously at me again.

Everything that had been preVaselined was fine. One unVaselined spot suffered badly. It's a place I'd rather not mention, other than to say that the idea of putting Vaseline there was even more revolting than the consequences of not doing so. That having been said, suffice it to add that in the end I may have resembled a baboon in one or more prominent features.

I'm working on finding a solution for that problem in the future.

## Not a Second Time

Take the distance I ran yesterday. Double it. Go run that 51 days in a row. That's what all four of the Sri Chinmoy 3100 runners accomplished earlier this summer.

Tomorrow is the beginning of the Sri Chinmoy 1300, which continues until September 24. At that level I'll remain content as an interested spectator.

After a day like yesterday most normal persons would have been content to sit on the couch and watch sports on TV. Not me. Real Life demanded that I be up by 6:30 to study. Then we went to a meeting all morning.

When I got home I headed out for a walk. Originally I thought I was due for five miles, but when I rechecked the schedule it said eight miles. Once I started, I said: Heck with it! and decided to do ten miles. My reasoning is: Tomorrow is a holiday and I can sleep in. Regardless of what I do today, once my body comes to its senses and realizes what I did to it yesterday, I'll probably find it a struggle to do ten miles on Wednesday, so an extra two today can be taken off of Wednesday's quota. This month

I can be more flexible with distance than I have been the previous two months, when I had to stick closely to my prescribed goals in order to keep the numbers up. As long as I can create a general taper, hitting somewhere close to the weekly target mileages, I'll be OK.

It's become hot here once again. The forecast is for it to hit 108 tomorrow. I made the mistake of taking a twenty-ounce hand bottle rather than my CamelBak, and ran out of lemonade at exactly the turnaround. I had to endure 1:15 worth of return trip without a drink. It was not fun, but I survived. My legs are tired, but I managed to ultrashuffle a mile or two of the return trip.

## I'm A Loser

## Tuesday, September 7, 1999

It seems that I've got competition from Harrison Ford. According to the latest Ladies' Home Journal, with his picture on the cover, "This 57-year-old self-described 'geezer' was named 'Sexiest Man Alive' by People magazine just last year."

Hmmmph. I guess there's always room for one more geezer in this world. I'm not sure about the other part. On the other hand, I'll bet Harrison Ford can't run for 24 hours. ${ }^{1}$ But why should he? He's already garnered the SMA title without that.

Other than that astonishing bit of trivia, there's not much to report today. Yesterday, a holiday, ${ }^{2}$ I slept in, worked around the house, did an hour or so of weight training later on, and avoided both running and walking.

One observation about my present state that pleases me is that I seem to be recovering quickly. Despite the long distances, I've experienced almost no soreness at all. However, eliminating muscle soreness is not all there is to recovery. There is also the matter of regaining enough energy to run properly again. I didn't have it Sunday, and I didn't have it yesterday.

Today I did five miles, mostly running, with some walking thrown in, and I felt strong. I followed a sequence of one brisk lap, three easy laps,

[^8]two hard laps, and one walking lap, until I completed the distance. I didn't feel like running the whole thing, but know I could have if I'd put my mind to it. The only ingredient missing was a sufficient degree of wanna.

Hmmm. I wonder if Harrison Ford has gotten his first senior citizen's discount yet?

## Sea of Time

## Wednesday, September 8, 1999

Purists like to point out that the third millennium won't begin until January 1, 2001. There was no year zero, so the first hundred years were numbered 1-100. The second hundred years, or century, began with 101, and so on, down to the present time.

The purists are absolutely right. In the long run the purists will probably be regarded as pedantic losers, having been overrun by simpler-thinking folk who have reconciled, for practical purposes, the notion that the first century lasted only 99 years. It makes life easier to think of history that way.

Besides, seeing all those nines change to zeros is way more exciting and worthy of celebration than watching a digits column increment by one. I still remember the day when the odometer on my first car rolled over to 100,000 miles. It was around 2:00 P.M. on Superbowl Sunday, January 28, 1978, on a backroad in Waldo, Maine. I guess it incremented to 100,001 a mile later. I don't remember. I was no longer paying attention.

I chose the name of this journal while riding the wave of popular tumult over the coming year. I may drown in that wave, but I'm standing by the title.

This discussion may not matter at all, because tomorrow is 9/9/99, a day it is theoretically possible for the computers of the world to come to a crashing halt.

## Slow Down

I've been waiting patiently since Saturday for my mitochondria to rebuild themselves. Until that happens, my performance, no matter how strongwilled, will be less than good. It appears that a few of them have returned. So today I went out and promptly beat them up again.

As usual on recent Wednesdays, first I powerwalked four miles outdoors. The high temperature today was 108 . The humidity was only 14 percent, and it didn't feel that hot to me. Perhaps I'm finally getting used to it. Either that or it's really getting to me. Afterward, I ran four miles at the gym. The first two laps I ran slowly, but then I laid into it, and finished with a second best time ever for the distance, at a 9:10 pace, but still 1:05 slower than my PR.

Whatever possessed me to run it that hard? And where did I put that protein powder?

## Come Together

## Thursday, September 9, 1999

Another pastime I enjoy is playing chess. I've been watching the proceedings of the game matching Garry Kasparov versus the Whole World with great interest as it now heads into what promises to be a challenging endgame, with a kick-to-the-finish pawn race.

My own endgame is lousy. When I studied the game, I never could get all the way to the part in the books that taught the reader how to wrap up a superior position, turning it into a win. That's why I usually lose. No matter, because as with running, this uniquely uncompetitive soul finds joy in the doing more than in the winning. Of course, in running I've never won anything and never will, unless I get an award someday for outliving the competition.

Training is like a game of strategy. The opening game is building a mileage base, the middle game is sharpening, and the endgame is the taper, the time when all the hard work comes together before putting it to the test. As with chess, therein lies my weakness. I usually blow it in the taper one way or another.

The issue of Runner's World that arrived yesterday has a detailed article on tapering with more suggestions than I know how to digest. By coincidence, the topic has also come up for discussion on the running lists. I'm awash in advice.

My problems are twofold. First there is deciding what the best options are and making the right choices. The suggestions offered by experts are many, varied, and sometimes in disagreement. Then there is the matter of doing the right thing.

The traditional approach says to do the last long run three weeks before the big race. I've learned from experience that this is too long for me, even though it takes time for my ransacked mitochondria to grow back. If I take three weeks I'll turn into a rotting pumpkin.

So I've been tinkering with my schedule for the remainder of this month. At this moment it says I'll run ten miles this Saturday, a half marathon the next week, which is two weeks before the Twin Cities Marathon, and eight miles one week and a day before. But it could change by the time I email this report.

Until this afternoon I was planning on running eighteen miles the Saturday after next. Then I read that it's good to run frequently, but shorter distances, while keeping up the intensity. Maybe I should try that this time. So I knocked the eighteen down to a half marathon. I'm trusting all the mileage I've already done to take care of the endurance issue.

How to eat, or in my case not to eat is also a big question. I've become fond of my recently-acquired ability to shovel in large quantities of fuel with impunity and still maintain my weight, albeit at too high a level. If I run less, I should eat less. I don't want to eat less. I like to eat. Hey, now that I'm thinking about it ...

Back with some pretzels. See what I mean? It's tough.
All things considered, then, making it all come together at the end is in some ways the hardest part of training.

## It Won't Be Long

I considered a relatively casual four-miler today, but instead opted for an intense two-miler. Two miles ( 2.03 miles, 23 laps on tRtNE) is not a distance that I have run often recently. Today was only the sixth time this
year. The only time I do it is when I want to kick out the jams with an all-out effort, or when I'm dead beat and don't think I can go any further.

This was one of those jam-kicking days. At least it was in my heart. My mitochondria didn't agree.

My first mistake was a failure to warm up adequately, though I tried. This resulted in some slow and uncomfortable opening laps. I almost gave up the idea of running hard. Eventually I got used to it. It wasn't the most pleasant of experiences, but I improved and hung on through twenty laps, but didn't have much of a kick left at the end.

I should be capable of running two miles consistently at a sub-9:00 pace, but have don so only a few times. With the slow start, today's run ranked only eighth out of 42 recorded runs at the distance.

Tomorrow is rest. My mitochondria are dancing with joy at the news.

## Flying

## Sunday, September 12, 1999

Theoretically, by running shorter distances and resting more than I have been, I am recovering, rebuilding broken down muscle, and becoming prepared to perform well at Twin Cities Marathon, now just 21 days away.

So be it. I hope it's true. I have to wonder whether the advice I read in Runner's World to run shorter but with higher intensity is at odds with the goal. Doesn't a short, intense run add up to essentially the same thing as a long, easy run in terms of muscle damage? I'll have to wait and see.

On Saturday I ran ten miles. This was my shortest long run since early June. It's become my habit, when pressing toward a marathon, to make a half marathon distance my short long run, the longest distance I run on recovery weeks.

In the morning I was out in the oppressive heat and unusually high humidity, visiting people from house-to-house for two and a half hours. It wasn't fun to wear a tie in that, and have rarely been so glad to get rid of it.

By the time I started my run on tRtNE it was after 1:00 P.M. When I arrived, it was my heartfelt desire to run this one hard. I rarely go out
with the premeditated intention of trying for a PR. Record performances spring into existence following the realization upon running a few initial warmup laps that I'm feeling better than usual. It's necessary to commit oneself to the goal early on, or else it won't happen.

Saturday's run was excellent, but it was not one of those PR days. Despite my good intentions, the first few laps didn't feel good at all, so I resigned myself to a mid-range effort. With effort and concentration, I maintained a decent pace for forty laps, the distance it usually takes me to get into a groove, and from then on it went well.

I decided to run hard until eighty, then sizzle the last three miles. Normally I break up a run mentally into segments. When I got to this point I tried something different: focusing on one lap at a time. Each lap I pushed as hard as I reasonably could, and then worried about how I would survive the next lap when I got to it.

I wouldn't recommend this technique. It worked for only a mile. Finally, I was obliged to take two laps at a pace I almost could have walked faster than before picking it up again. Somehow I mustered up enough oomph to kick the last lap.

The time was 1:37:12, nearly six minutes off my PR, but seventh on my list of 38 recorded runs at the distance. If it weren't for the rocky beginning, I would have done better.

Sometimes a more consoling indication of effort than time is average heart rate. I sustained an average of $85.3 \%$ of my MHR for the distance, with a peak of $94.1 \%$. Given the distance, I'm pleased with that.

The last time I ran faster ten-milers was under interesting circumstances. I set my PR seven days before Crown King 50K, and got my second best time seven days after Crown King. I'm not sure what that curious piece of data tells me.

Now my first week of reduced mileage and tapering is completed, and as I write this it is three weeks from race day. One point I need to focus on is this: Twin Cities is supposed to be a race for fun, not for maximum performance. We're going up to be tourists for a few days, and to visit my mother. It's Tucson two months later that I;m aiming for, where I hope to PR. And both marathons are warmups for Across the Years.

As anticipated, my biggest problem right now is with food. Not only did I eat too much of the wrong things in the morning yesterday, I ate too
much later. Last night we had guests for dinner, and feasted-on vegetarian lasagna, but in abundance-complete with wine, beer, and desert. Yummm! Urp. Bloat.

Today I feel like a festering cow pie. And in deference to tapering, I'm not walking or exercising at all today. This inactivity, I am assured, is good for me.

## Help!

## Tuesday, September 14, 1999

I hate tapers. It's not an addiction to running that makes me miserable. I'm perfectly content to take well-earned days off. The problem is that I can't adjust to a sustained reduction in activity. I'm jumpy, and I eat too much, which is counterproductive.

I never carry money. Money spoils in my pocket. If I go to work with a dollar in my pocket, by 10:00 A.M. the dollar has mysteriously turned into cookies sitting beside my keyboard. And we all know what cookies turn into.

Saturday I laid my hands on a five-dollar bill that found its way into my shoulder bag. Yesterday it had become four dollars and three Otis Spunkmeyer cookies. This morning it was three dollars and cookies. Now it's just the three dollars. See? Proof.

So usually I let my wife keep all the money. She insists that I do anyhow. I think I need help.

Monday I worked only with light weights for half an hour, and did no running. That was an error. I misread my training schedule-I was supposed to do two miles. I could have used it.

However, I did walk six laps. A few days ago I bought Dave McGovern's book The Complete Guide to Racewalking Technique and Training, not because I want to become a racewalker, but to help me improve my walking technique. Having read the first two chapters carefully, I wanted to analyze my present gait while watching myself in the mirror, beginning to apply what I learned.

This stroll wasn't hard or long enough to qualify as an aerobic workout for someone who has been doing fifty-mile weeks. Instead, I feel bloated and soft. I'm as solid as a tube of toothpaste.

## Twist and Shout

In addition, I've come to realize that I'm slightly injured. Don't worry, it's not the sort of thing that will prevent me from running. I've acquired some upper body kinks.

Three weeks ago I began some shoulder exercises and felt a sharp pain in my upper right deltoid, bringing my first rep to an abrupt exclamatory halt. Something got torn or pinched. Now I have to favor that side until it stops hurting.

On Sunday I woke up with a pain in my left shoulder, high up near and extending into my neck. Whether I slept on my arm wrong or did something to myself working out I don't know, but the pain was bad enough that I had to get up in the middle of the night and take three Advil in order to get to sleep.

It still ached considerably yesterday, but seems to be much better today. It's just one of those things associated with aging, I suppose. But the right shoulder pain has continued long enough to be annoying.

## Got To Get You Into My Life

## Wednesday, September 15, 1999

My Real Life schedule is momentarily ridiculous. Suddenly every moment for the next three days has become filled up. I have an important errand to take care of tonight after work. Tomorrow my wife and I are celebrating our 21st wedding anniversary, and I haven't had one second available even to get to a store to buy a card or a present for her. I was planning on skipping out of work early tomorrow.

Then my boss came to me this morning and asked if I could take a technical class tomorrow and Friday. This would get me out of work later than I normally leave. How am I supposed to fit everything in?

It turns out Suzy has had a similar burden. We've agreed that tomorrow night we'll just kick back with a bottle of wine and do something to celebrate on the weekend.

With clever manipulation, I should be able to work in short runs both tonight and tomorrow. Maybe.

## Helter Skelter

Upon arriving at the gym yesterday, I was in a frame of mind to try a hard five-miler. When I started running I knew it would not be my best run ever, but that it would be possible to push it a bit, which I was willing to settle for. (As if I had a choice.)

After only three laps Richard the podiatrist showed up, wanting to run about 25 minutes. He wanted to run it right alongside me. Richard is planning on running his first marathon ever, in Milwaukee, on October 10. As of today he has never yet run further than a half marathon in his whole life. Somehow he has it all worked out in his head how he is going to survive this experience, and come out of it with a 3:30-3:45 time.

I enjoy the company, and the challenge that arises when another runner joins me. Invariably I increase my pace at least a little to keep up with the runner who has slowed down for my sake. But sometimes these rabbits run me ragged.

You can tell Richard is in the health care profession. His manner of conversation is to ask endless questions, as though he were examining a patient. "How long are you running today? What pace are you planning on? How far have you gone? How are you feeling? Are your new shoes working out? When do you leave for Minnesota? How far did you run Saturday? Did you walk Sunday?" My answers grew shorter and shorter.

When I was no longer able to keep up my end of the conversation, Richard soliloquized. "This is a nice easy pace. We must be running about $8: 30$ to $8: 45$. I think this is the pace I'll try and run the first sixteen miles of my marathon at. If I can hold this pace, then I'll worry about the last ten miles when I can get there. This is nice and relaxing." In between, being a friendly conversationalist, I'm acknowledging his comments with, "Gak! . . . Urk! . . . Unnnh! . . . Wheeze!"

Richard finally asked, "How does this pace feel to you?" I replied, with intermittent gasps, "If I can sustain it, I'll set a five-mile PR by a couple of minutes!" I was in a state of serious discomfort, suffocating from major oxygen debt.

Regrettably, I couldn't hang on. At lap 31 (out of 57), I threw in the towel and had to walk, but only one. Richard hung with me. Then I ran it hard to the end. Richard dropped out at 35 laps. He was probably bored.

My final time was not as fast as I thought it would be, even accounting for the one walked lap. I've concluded that I must have failed to count one lap somewhere along the way, and so ran one extra.

I watched the wall clock and know the time I ran many laps in. There were only a few in my normal slow-mode, and the one walked lap, adding less than thirty seconds to the total. Playing with the numbers, I see that taking the final time as applying to one extra lap, my pace, even with the walked lap, would have ranked eighth rather than sixteenth out of 86 recorded five-milers. This sounds reasonable, given both how I felt and what I was seeing for lap times. My heart rate monitor said I averaged $87 \%$, also with the walk factored in.

I'm not going to change my record, because I can't prove that's what happened. But if I ran the slower time, I'd have to say that it's a bit disappointing. Therefore, I'm planning to pop off a sizzlingly hard three-miler next Tuesday, just to see where I'm really at on the speed and intensity scale.

## Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me and My Monkey

## Saturday, September 18, 1999

The problem: chafing! The solution: big, fancy underpants! ${ }^{3}$ Bye-bye monkey butt!

Pass it on.

[^9]
## Maybe I'm Amazed

Today I ran 15 miles, setting a PR for the distance by a margin of 2:57, my best of seven on record.

Ultrarunners say that the way they get through hard parts, when they feel like quitting, is to keep running until they don't feel so bad anymore. There seems to be a basis in real-world experience to that philosophy.

To me it's amazing, seemingly contrary to nature, when I start a long run raring to go, and things don't go well, but gradually, instead of wearing down and getting worse, I overcome it, and it keeps gets getting better and better until by the end I feel best of all and am running at 5 K pace and finish feeling fresh and alive. That happened today.

It was my last long run before Twin Cities, now fourteen days and ten hours away. My scheduled intent was to run only ten miles, but Real Life got crazy this week. With two rest days and no runs longer than ten miles since I ran 50K two weeks ago, I felt I needed extra distance, so went for a half marathon.

It often takes me exactly 3.5 miles to snap out of a funkily-started run. Today it took a whole ten kilometers. From then on I grooved along, and was glad to be running.

My pace was marginally satisfactory until 10.5 miles, when an unexplainable urge to run at 5 K pace suddenly possessed me. It didn't diminish until I flew past the half marathon distance in a time that was over four minutes ahead of where I thought I would be. By then I needed a walk lap, but three-fourths of one was sufficient to give me impetus to pick it up again and finish the remaining distance miles in a blaze.

A satisfying rush passed over me when I was done, in the knowledge that my geezerly soul is now as trained for Twin Cities as I know how to make it. In the last four months I have accomplished every single running goal I've put before myself.

So yay for me. Now for the bad news.

## Crying, Waiting, Hoping

It's finally sinking in that tapering is important. It's not a period of living as though one is not in training. It's not a time to eat hero sandwiches for
lunch, or sit and watch sports on TV all weekend with a tray loaded with chips and foamy cold drink handy. Such irresponsible behavior would amount to physical apostasy, a deliberate disowning of beliefs and practices that I value as truth itself.

Tapering is a time for calculated patience and caution, a time for premeditated control and precise moderation.

That's the theory, anyhow. Implementing it is another matter. That's why I feel like a load of bricks.

This week would have been impossible if it had been a normally heavy training week. As I reported in Tuesday's installment, I had a difficult schedule ahead. It happened, and left devastation in its wake.

On Wednesday afternoon my boss came and asked me to attend a twoday technical class all day the next two days. The short day I had planned for Thursday was not possible.

Wednesday afternoon I ran three miles. Suffice it to say that it was terrible. No matter. We had a temporarily altered schedule this week. We had a meeting to go to Wednesday night, and I had a talk to prepare for it. We didn't get home and to bed until late.

Thursday morning I arrived in the classroom of our world class on-site training center to find that coffee, donuts, and muffins had been supplied. I'd already consumed my usual morning breakfast: a piece of fruit, some yogurt, and a PowerBar. Sensible people would just turn away from the extra food. But I'm not always one of those sensible people. Instead I snarfed down a large cappucino muffin, figuring it should hold me for the day.

This reminds me of a Snoopy cartoon I saw many years ago. Snoopy is sitting in front of a calendar with the date January 1. He has a large bag beside him and is devouring a donut. He reasons, "The way I see it, you eat four dozen donuts on January 1 and nothing the rest of the year, and you lose weight."

## Bzzzt! Wrong!

At noon in came the pizza. This I somehow managed to avoid entirely. I fled to my cubicle to get some work done instead, and never even got to smell it. I felt sure I'd conquered a major obstacle and was now invincible.

Bzzzt! Wrong!

At 2:00 P.M., in came the tray of Otis Spunkmeyer cookies. I comforted myself in the rationalization that I took only two of them instead of the usual three that I buy from the cafeteria. Meanwhile, I fought all day long to keep my head from hitting the classroom desk from the boredom.

The detail that made this extravagance particularly difficult was that Thursday my wife and I celebrated our 21st anniversary. There was no time for even a token run after class. I went shopping to buy some books for Suzy instead before heading home. I spent the two dollars festering in my pocket on a card and charged the rest.

We were both much too busy to celebrate by going out this year. Suzy made us a big pot roast dinner with all the trimmings, and a yummy cake for desert. To my credit, I declined to open the bottle of wine. By bed time I was bloated and didn't sleep well that night.

Friday I played it a little smarter, anticipating we would be bemuffined once again. This time I ate no customary breakfast, and survived the morning on just a blueberry muffin. I had no lunch. In the afternoon I succumbed to three cookies that had my name on them and cried out to me from the basket, weeping. It could have been worse. Lots worse. Think about it: a whole basket of free Otis Spunkmeyer cookies sitting there unclaimed-at least two dozen of them. Once again it was all I could do to avoid falling asleep in class.

Sometimes I wish it was against my religion to eat cookies. We have a Hindu in our department at work who has been a total vegan all of his life, as far as I know. He has no problem with it. He wouldn't even dream of eating the foods he believes are bad.

Friday after work I ran a slow two miles and walked one mile. Afterward I did productive strength training for forty minutes.

Suzy went grocery shopping on Friday morning. When I stuck my head in the pantry looking for something healthful, what did my wondering eyes behold? Two giant Tupperware containers stuffed to the brim with the sort of cookies that cost $\$ 1.69$ a pound, the ones you scoop out by the handful.

The tribulation was not over and still is not. This evening we were invited to my brother's house for dinner. That wasn't too bad: a few chips, salad, spaghetti, and no desert.

Once again tomorrow afternoon I'm scheduled to give a late afternoon lecture away from our home base, and we've been promised by friends that later we will be taken out to dinner somewhere.

Next week should be free of disruptions from my normal routine. I'll admit that I don't handle either exceptions or food problems well. With a little discipline perhaps I'll purge my system a bit the following nine days, before heading off on vacation to Minneapolis.

## A Hard Day's Night

## Tuesday, September 21, 1999

Last Thursday I set a goal of running three miles as fast as possible today, in hopes of setting a PR for the time, or at least coming close to it.

I'm fully aware that after the first two years or so of diligent running no runner nonchalantly pops off PRs at will. Many variables must play together just right, including recent training, restedness, the running environment, and the runner's attitude at the start. Only a fool would declare his expectation of surpassing himself before he takes the first step. I've often noted that records are always set at the end of events, not at the beginning.

Nonetheless, I did want to do well today, even though my speed generally has not been up to what it has been the last several months. Therefore, I did what I could within reason to prepare for it. Two consecutive days without running followed by a three-miler is a luxury I don't often enjoy.

At the track I warmed up carefully, then walked four laps, running one slowly, walking another, and finally running one more slowly. Afterward I stood at the lap start for 45 seconds while waiting for the wall timer to come straight up on 00:00. It's one of those training clocks that has no hour hand.

I calculated that if I ran 45-second laps I would set a PR. If I averaged 46 seconds, I would miss it by three seconds.

It went well for one lap, but it was too fast: 41 seconds. The next lap was 42 seconds. That was my last comfortable lap. I had already entered the zone of pain.

It was an arduous, desperate, sloppy run, the kind you see in movies where some victimized innocent flees in frantic terror from an angry bad guy, with a look in his eyes like a horse being led from a burning barn.

I can't recall any time in the last five years when I've run five miles or less that I've been forced to stop and walk part way because of sheer oxygen debt. Not until today. I ran hard through two miles, hit the split marker on my watch, and walked three quarters of a lap, until my heart rate dropped to 120.

It was not until I got home that I realized that my two-mile split time was a PR for that distance by a margin of 33.78 seconds. Whoa!

But walk I did, nearly doubling the time of the next lap. The remaining eleven laps were downright unpleasant as I gruffly gasped and whoofed my way around the track with cavalier disregard for anyone running too close to the centerline, splattering sweat and drool and wafting odor toward them in the wake of the breeze I made as I flailed my way by.

Do breezes have wakes? No, but I like the sound of the phrase. The mixed metaphor matches the state of my mind at the time.

## You Can't Do That

My finishing time works out to an 8:50 pace. I missed a three-mile PR by 33 seconds, most of it lost on that walked lap. Still, it was my third best run at the distance of 76 on record, and the best of 1999. The surprise of having set a two-mile PR by such a vast margin makes it easier to accept third best for the total run.

Had it been a 5 K race (and 35 laps on tRtNE is only 129 feet short of 5 K ), the two-mile split would have been completely irrelevant. As I said earlier, PRs are set and races are won at the end, not in the middle.

As a person who does little speed work, I made a rookie pacing mistake: I went out way too fast. Every runner learns eventually, and invariably the hard way, that starting a run too hard puts one on the fast track to perdition. Perhaps if I had slowed down at the beginning and forced myself to keep closer to 45 -second laps I wouldn't have had to stop and may have made the PR. Perhaps. Pacing is critical.

Pass it on.

One statistic of the day stands out as anomalous: my heart rate for the session. My official submaximal heart rate, measured last October, is 171. Only once have I ever seen it go higher, when it popped briefly up to 173. Other than that, I have never seen it go above 163 while running, and only rarely above 159.

Yet today I somehow averaged 159 for the run ( $93 \%$ of MHR), and according to the monitor, I maxed out at 182, 106\% of my supposed MHR. I'm not too sure what to make of these numbers, other than I'm supposed to be dead. It would be interesting to submit to another test, now that a year has passed.

## I've Got A Feeling

Less than two minutes after I stopped running, I began to sneeze, hard and repeatedly, in bursts of six to eight loud, hard achoos. Before I started to run there was no hint of any such thing approaching. I recall well that I even checked my breathing and noted that my head was particularly clear.

This bizarre reaction is a recurring phenomenon with me. It started years ago when I ran my first 10K. Immediately after the race I burst into a sustained series of violent, splattering sneeze-fits that repeated themselves at short intervals over a period of at least an hour and a half before finally winding down into what became a runny nose and stuffy head for the remainder of the day. I had felt utterly perfect before the race, with no sign of pending malady.

It happened again at my next 10 K , and yet again at most all my first races. In those days I raced only 10 Ks , and then two or three half marathons. The sneezing has never come on following a marathon, when the pace is much slower. It seems to arise as some kind of protest to a maximal effort. Today was the first time it ever happened on an indoor run. The only common thread I can think of with all the occurrences is that in every case I ran 10 K or less as hard as I could.

It's now late evening, and I'm sitting before my computer at home surrounded by used Kleeneces. I've been dabbing my face all evening, while snotshots spontaneously escape in little rivulets from my nostrils and trickle down my lip.

## Hello Goodbye

## Friday, September 24, 1999

It's Friday and there is not much momentous to report; it's just time to check in with an update and be on my way again.

I've been obeying the rule that says to reduce mileage greatly during taper, but to increase intensity. Normally it's a poor idea to do speed work on successive days. But my runs have been short and my overall mileage is down to $40 \%$ of what it was only three weeks ago. So on Wednesday I topped Tuesday's staggering three-miler with a four-mile outdoor powerwalk and two miles at the gym at 8:25 pace.

It's rare for me to record a sub-9:00 pace-only 14 times ever, the longest a 10K. Until Tuesday I had not gone sub-9:00 since April 12. I've never done it two days in a row until Wednesday. Then yesterday I came through once again with another three-miler at a flat 9:00 pace. Just one or two seconds faster and I could have claimed I ran sub-9:00 three days in a row.

This series has been encouraging. It's been months since I've put together more than an occasional run in the 9:15-9:20 range or better. It suggests that what I have been hoping may be true, namely that a degree of speed would return once I gave myself opportunity to get a little rest. It portends the possibility of doing well at Twin Cities in nine days.

## I Kneed You

## Saturday, September 25, 1999

This morning I climbed out of the back of a van. Whack! I banged my knee hard into the edge of the door. Ooowwwch! It was one of those everyday pains that stung a few moments and then you forget about forever.

Not long afterward I noticed my left knee was throbbing, not badly, but insistently. I couldn't remember for sure if it was the same knee I clobbered, or if this was a different problem, perhaps something I brought on myself from having done three days of high-intensity running in a row.

I've been fortunate to avoid knee problems in my running so far. I'm not anxious to start at this juncture.

My schedule proposed an easy eight miles today. Instead of running it, not wanting to take any chances with my knees, I took two magazines and glasses to the gym, and worked a full ninety minutes on an elliptical trainer. I've tried these two or three times before, but have never worked on one longer than ten minutes.

Bally's posts signs saying not to use these machines longer than thirty minutes. However, it's not crowded on a Saturday afternoon, and there was always another trainer available. I badly needed this exact workout, so just this once I broke their rule. No one complained.

It was this rule that got me started running on Bally's track. I got tired of having to sign up for treadmills on a chart, doing something else until it was my appointed time, and then having to stand behind and finally chase off someone else who was using the machine, who was often someone who didn't really want to get off it. Then thirty minutes later I'd be the goat who had to make room for someone else. One day, when I knew I wanted to run longer than thirty minutes, I decided not to sign up for a treadmill and to run around the track instead. I've been doing it ever since.

I would consider buying an elliptical trainer for home use if I had the money and room in my house for one. They provide a low-impact workout, in a motion that's much closer to walking or running than the stairstep machines, which I loathe.

As reported before, I'm never bored when I run. Exercising on a stationary machine is another matter. Therefore, I brought with me some magazines I'd gotten behind on reading, so was able to get something useful done at the same time as exercising. Eventually the sweat ran in rivers down my bifocals, making it impossible to read any longer, and drenching my magazines, but it was fun while it lasted.

These devices play havoc with one's equilibrium. When I got off the trainer, having not stopped for rest, it took a good three minutes to get my land legs back, as I slowly staggered a lap around the track, trying, unsuccessfully at first, to walk like a normal person. I looked as though I'd just finished a twenty-miler without stopping.

When I walk I sometimes have a hard time keeping my heart rate high enough. I was pleased when I checked my monitor to note that I maintained an average of $76 \%$ of my MHR, and peaked at $86 \%$.

Just for the record, I logged this workout as the equivalent of an 8.5mile run at a 10:35 pace, a fair assessment.

## I'm Down

One unexpected problem developed: the pain in my right deltoid has gotten worse instead of better. I don't even notice it when I'm not exercising the muscle directly.

Most people who use the elliptical trainers grasp the hand bars for better balance. There's a natural tendency to lean a little on the bar, putting a little of weight on these muscles, though not much. The longer I pumped, the more that shoulder ached.

It's not a tired, sore muscle pain, but the sort of pain that comes from a tear or pinched nerve. I tried holding on with only my left hand and letting my right arm dangle, which helped, but it was difficult to avoid automatically returning my right hand to the bar. Finally I gave up trying.

This pain caused me some concern. It in no way affected my work on the trainer. However, I had been planning on doing some weight training and following it with 500 yards in the pool. By the time I got off the trainer, I could no longer lift my right arm up to shoulder level without pain. I went to a station where I could gently hang from that arm in order to stretch it out a bit. But it was impossible to move my right arm in the circular motion necessary for swimming.

I didn't try. I'll do no more strength training until I get back from Minnesota. My muscles are in adequate condition under all the fat that covers them up, so I'm not worried about my strength conditioning.

## Eight Days a Week

It's now eight days until Twin Cities. More precisely, it's seven days and twelve hours until start time. Eight days, seven days, whatever-it's a week away. I'm still too fat, but otherwise ready. It's almost time to start gathering things together to pack. We leave early Wednesday.

## Act Naturally

## Tuesday, September 28, 1999

Sunday was to be a day of rest. Technically it was. In reality, we attended a picnic for some friends of ours who are moving out of state. It was attended mostly by young people. An uncompetitive and low-key but vigorous game of volleyball was on the agenda.

What was I to do? Sit on the sidelines with the other old folks admiring the youthful energy of the participants? No way! These kids all know I'm a marathoner.

Naturally, I wanted to make a respectable showing, playing as though this was something I could do every day of my life, which I probably could. And so I did. What I lack in skill, experience, and quickness as a volleyball player I more than compensated for in endurance. I broke a sweat (it was in the upper nineties), made a few creditable plays, and was disappointed when it was time to quit after only 45 minutes. I hadn't played in years.

My only concern was that I might twist something. I'll never again be able to play a sport that requires fast moves, turns, jumps, dives, lunges, or physical contact. I never could. My prowess lies strictly in transporting my body from one location to another utilizing a gentle cyclical motion, expending enough energy to maintain a heart rate of near eighty percent of my maximum for periods of four or five hours at a time.

During the game I did take one colorful dive where I landed hard in the sand on both knees. I seem to have survived this fairly well. It's now over 36 hours since we quit playing. The main aftereffect has been that this morning my back is sore, and I had to get out of bed carefully. That's my problem area, and I need to watch that I don't exacerbate it.

## Things We Said Today

Monday-six days before the race. I planned on running five miles. It didn't quite happen.

When I arrived at the gym I had no enthusiasm for a hard continuous run. Instead, I began a pattern of walking six laps and running twelve
laps that lasted until lap 39. That's when I saw running buddy Richard the podiatrist standing by the edge of the track, about to start.

Normally I would wave and run on by. But I was walking at the time, so I stopped. We wound up talking for ten minutes, so this was as far as I got. When I got home I logged it as a 3.43-mile combination run-walk at a net pace of 12:10.

Richard's first marathon is on October 9. I had to check out how he was doing. Richard is younger than me by sixteen years, faster (sub-7:00 pace for 5 K ), taller (by about two inches), slimmer (by about twenty pounds), and stronger than I am. He has always wanted to run a marathon-just one. When Richard's brother-in-law invited him to join him in Milwaukee, he began a crash training course, starting from a base of fifteen to twenty miles a week of 7:00 MPM training.

Until a few weeks ago he had never run more than a half marathon in his life. On Saturday he ran nineteen miles at 8:15 pace and just about died.

I've known Richard for about two of years, and am quite sure he will finish his marathon, likely under his goal of 4:00, a time that I can only dream about. But it's likely he's going to hit it hard, may go out too fast, and will probably be miserable most of the second half. He's already planning on it. Yesterday he swore that this would be the only marathon he will ever run.

In contrast, I'm expecting to cruise along, enjoying the whole experience, while looking forward to my next several.

## You Won't See Me

I'll stop at the gym on the way home tonight and one way or another will cover four miles and stretch for a while, partly to loosen the knots in my back.

When I get home I won't have time to compose another journal installment. We need to eat, pack, and partly disassemble my office and the bathroom adjacent to it, because while we are gone we're having friends in (licensed professional construction contractors) to do some remodeling.

We need to hit the hay early enough to make a 6:55 A.M. plane tomorrow without feeling sleep deprived.

So it's off we go to the land of many lakes. I'll be computerless during the trip, so the next installment of RTtM won't appear until at least Thursday, October 7.

## Chapter 7

## Twin Cities and Beyond

## Magical Mystery Tour

## Friday, October 8, 1999

Whenever I do a big race, one that's been on my special list of must-dos and that involves traveling, we make a vacation out of it. That way my non-running wife, who loves to travel and be a tourist, has a reason to get enthused about the trip.

For 25 years one of my three younger brothers has lived in Minneapolis and nearby Northfield, where my mother now lives in an assisted care facility. Too often, when we go up to a visit, some quirk of circumstances prevents us to getting together either completely or for anything more than a very brief visit. He is a musician (a cellist, composer, and conductor), and just two days before we arrived in Minneapolis, he left on an extended tour, as cellist and associate conductor with the touring company of the show Miss Saigon. Once again we would be entirely unable to get together, even though his residence is near the downtown area, and a short distance of the hotel we were staying at.

It's a dangerous thing for a runner to try to be a tourist before a race. An inviting potential for overdoing things presents itself-putting too much strain on the legs, eating too much of the wrong foods, and not getting enough sleep. On the other hand, waiting until the race is over brings with it the problem of being too pooped to party.

We've tried it both ways, and have decided: Now that I'm experienced and fit enough to recover adequately from a race by the next day to walk around and function normally, next time we will try to schedule things so we rock first and roll later. But at Twin Cities we worked it the other way around.

We arrived in Minneapolis in mid-afternoon of Wednesday, September 29, got checked into our hotel in the downtown area, found a mall with restaurants, picked one and ate reasonably, then called it a night. Meanwhile we checked the weather, which was threatening to get ugly and continue ugly through the weekend.

Thursday we were pleasantly surprised by perfect fall weather: windy but cloudless, with a high of 62 . The peak of foliage season was ahead of schedule. We found ourselves smack in the middle of it.

We spent from 11:30 A.M. until 4:30 P.M. on our feet, walking the splendid paths and trails of the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. It's reasonable to estimate that I put at least 6.5 light and pleasant miles on my legs that day. On the way back to the hotel we drove around the beautiful lakes in western Minneapolis. Three of them are passed in the marathon.

## Rain

Friday was another story. The weather turned cold and rainy overnight, with a high of 42 , and it rained much of the day. The forecast for Sunday as of that morning was for a low of 26 and a high of 42-not good news. We heard later that on this day there was a blizzard with four inches of snow in Northfield, where my mother lives.

We spent several hours Friday at the splendid Minneapolis Institute of Art. Sometimes I wonder about the strain on the legs that walking around a museum causes. Is it exercise or isn't it? If it's not, then why do the legs of someone who can run all day long get so tired from only three hours of slowly roving around and standing before artifact after artifact?

The rest of Friday was spent off my feet, first trying to see how tangled up we could get in the traffic and rain and maze of one-way streets in downtown Minneapolis. In the evening we visited a dinner theater in Chanhassen, where the food was roughly the quality of the average

Denny's, but the show, Cole Porter's Can-Can, though dated, was fun and well done.

## The Night Before

All of Saturday was devoted to preparing for the race.
The first job was to check out of the Quality Inn and move a few blocks to the posh but expensive Hyatt Regency, the official race hotel. Once the car was parked, at an additional cost of $\$ 17.50$ for valet service, we didn't have to worry about it until I picked it up Sunday afternoon after the race. On Sunday morning Suzy would have little difficulty getting us checked out and stashing our luggage before bravely catching a city bus over to the finish at the state capitol.

The race expo was a two-day affair. We didn't go on Friday, though I would have enjoyed hearing the Dick Beardsley clinic, where I assume he would have retold for the zillionth time the famous story of how he was narrowly beaten at Boston Marathon in 1982 by Alberto Salazar in one of the most exciting marathons in history, one of the few times where the prestige that came from losing was almost as great as the glory of winning.

We did catch the last third of the seminar by Craig Young, and all of the highly motivational talk by the amazing Ruth Wysocki, never a marathoner herself, but a setter of several world track records, who seems to be getting better and better with age.

Her enthusiastic presentation pumped me up for the job ahead. One story she told in particular struck me to the heart. She'd been hearing a lot of people moaning in fear of the weather conditions. She said that most of those people had already lost, and would probably not make their personal goals or run their best, because they had allowed themselves to be defeated by external circumstances.

Her point was to look beyond such things, recognizing that everyone there would be facing the same conditions. She illustrated it with a story from her own personal experiences when she ran one of the best races of her life, beating the great Mary Decker Slaney, despite every possible circumstance being against it. She had to ask herself how badly she wanted the win. On that occasion she wanted it badly enough to go out and get
it. The attitude is not unfamiliar-it's the old Nike "Just do it!" formula dressed in inspirational verbiage. It's simple, but it can work.

Pass it on.
Earlier in the day I ran into Dead Runner John Evans from Manitoba, who wore his DRS T-shirt to the expo. At the conclusion of Wysocki's talk I met another Dead Runner, Minnesotan Bob Metzger. John had told Bob I would be in the seminar room, so Bob took the trouble to look me up, which I appreciated. We had talked about trying to get together before the race, but it hadn't worked out.

While on the expo floor I sampled bunches of new energy foods, most of them awful. I spent more than usual, too: bought some Bodyglide and a lightweight Speedo windbreaker, both of which I used the next day, and a long sleeve TCM T-shirt with an image of the course map on it.

I can't walk away from a place to shop without Suzy finding a way to spend some money, too. This time it was a coat and $\$ 50$ worth of emu oil.

Don't ask. Besides, she pays the bills. Last time it was $\$ 13$ worth of glasses cleaner. I used the emu oil the next day, too.

The Creamette Pasta Party was the best pre-race dinner I've ever been to. They had traditional Italian, southwest, and vegetarian offerings, all of it good, and a serving line for kids, the only one with meatballs, and Häagen-Dazs ice cream. Guests ate off ceramic hotel plates and flatware and used cloth napkins at big round tables with tablecloths. The banquet hall abounded with Gemütlichkeit.

Sometimes I think pastafests are from the Devil. They provide an all-too-convenient opportunity for weak-willed foodaholics like me to throw off all restraint and go for the gusto, thereby obliterating any possibility of having a good race the next day. I ate a bit more than I should have, but could have easily packed in a lot more if I hadn't been determined to avoid disaster.

We headed back to our room by 5:30 P.M. All that remained was to go through the race packet, lay out my stuff for morning, set three alarms, put in a wakeup call to the front desk for 5:00 A.M. (yes, I'm paranoid), and pack as much as I could so Suzy wouldn't have to do it in the morning.

I slept nine hours a night each of the previous three nights, and had slept soundly. It didn't matter much how well I would sleep the night before this race, though of course I hoped for the best.

I was ready. All last-minute preparations were accomplished easily, with time to read and check the weather reports once again before turning off the lights at 9:00 P.M. sharp.

My sweat socks were hung by the TV with care, And all was in order, as far as I was aware.
Then I settled down for a short autumn rest, While visions of PowerBars danced in my head.

## Golden Slumbers

## Monday, October 11, 1999

I slept! Not the full eight hours, but most of it. At 4:57 A.M., five seconds after my foot hit the floor, my wakeup call came through. "Good morning, Mr. Newton. It's 39 degrees. Have a nice day!"

It's 39 degrees!? Hot dog!! I looked outside. Still dark and hard to tell-apparently overcast, but it was dry with no sign of imminent rain. Hope springs eternal.

I have my race morning preparation ritual down to a priestly art. There is much to remember-too much, so I write it down on a list the night before every race.

Go to the potty. Start drinking. Shave, shower, and go to the potty again. Put on big fancy underpants and red Coolmax running shorts. Slather feet, nipples, and other tender areas in Bodyglide. Ooze feet into Ultimax Ironman Triathlon running socks with padding. Put Emu oil on knees, calves, and quads. Drink a sixteen-ounce bottle of strawberry-apple juice. Take one Succeed! capsule, one Pepcid A/C, three Advil, and eat an "everything" bagel. Drink more. Go to the potty again; try extra hard to ease nature, in hopes of warding off an Eric attack. ${ }^{1}$ Put on my blue long sleeve Coolmax shirt, my red outer long sleeve Coolmax shirt over it, and my Dead Runners Society singlet with front and back numbers

[^10]secured, ${ }^{2}$ Put on Asics Gel Foundation shoes with ChampionChip properly attached, running hat, Oakley Pro M Frame sunglasses with light tinted lenses up on the brim, and Timex Ironman Triathlon 100 watch, with timer zeroed out. Clip plastic badge carrier to inner shirt collar, containing driver's license, $\$ 6$, and a signed legal document I've carried everywhere for over half my life that instructs medical personnel not to give me blood as medicine even if I'm found dying, matching instructions I've written on the back of my bib, and legal documents I keep in a safe. Don long warmup pants and windbreaker. Put gloves and gear bag in pocket. Wake up Suzy and kiss her in case I never see her again.

## Roll Over Beethoven

Even taking my time, I was in the elevator and down to the hotel lobby by 6:00 A.M. They had just opened up the coffee shop, so I bought some. I must have coffee in the morning. Runners were beginning to file through to get on the early shuttle buses. I was in no rush.

There's a cocktail lounge to the side of the front lobby with a lovely Yamaha grand piano in it. I'm addicted to pianos. Pianos and coffee. Pianos and coffee and running.

If I see a piano, I have to play it. If I walk into your living room for the first time ever and there is a piano there, I will say, "Oh, what a lovely home!" whether it is or not, and will then begin to play your piano without asking your permission. You've been warned.

I looked around to see if anyone was around who might complain, but there was no one. At this hour of the day I needed to produce a morning raga. Ravel and Beethoven wouldn't have fit the occasion. I sat my coffee on the bench beside me and improvised melodically, harmonizing polytonally. The sweet and sour tensions seemed just right for the hour. No one booed or asked me to cut it out.

I finished my coffee sitting on another bench. There were buses outside labeled ELITES. Before long a group of runners walked through, mostly

[^11]beautiful, sleek African men dressed in Fila gear. I said to the man sitting near me, "There go the winners." Later, at the award ceremonies, I was proven to be right, when I recognized the man who got third place.

## Ticket to Ride

At 6:30 A.M. I went outside to the buses. It had gotten light enough to see well. The temperature was still chilly, but more than tolerable. I knew the day was gonna be all right. I would run without my new windbreaker.

On the bus to the Metrodome, less than a mile away, I sat with a man from New Jersey who had run only the New York City Marathon before, but had done it several times. He was in awe of how orderly everything was at Twin Cities, and regaled me with horror stories of standing in line for hours on end to pick up numbers, eat pasta, get on buses, and use the portajohns. When I returned to Phoenix, I marked NYCM at the lowest priority on my list of races I'd like to do.

We passed by Schmitt Music, a large music store with a fragment of piano music painted as a mural, taking up an entire side of the building. I'm unusually good at recognizing music from print, and can often identify even relatively obscure things from just two or three measures. ${ }^{3}$ The music in this mural is hideously complex, and therefore impressive to look at. I had less than ten seconds of view time to try and identify it. "Look! The Scarbo movement from Ravel's Gaspard de la Nuit!" I exclaimed to my traveling companion. It's one of the most transcendentally difficult pieces ever written for the piano. My busmate was duly nonplussed. We talked about music the remainder of the trip. Score one for the Geezer.

Mercifully, the Metrodome, including its many bathrooms, is open for use of TCM runners. This made shedding my outer clothing and packing it in the gear bag much easier.

By 7:45 A.M. I was warmed up enough to stand around outside, and began to get antsy, making stupid jokes with the people around me. By the race start I was standing four feet from the fellow who was carrying the $4: 30$ pace group standard. Though I had not considered joining a pace

[^12]

Figure 7.1: What I thought I saw of Gaspard de la Nuit on the wall of Schmitt Music
group, I decided to stay as close to other 4:30 runners as I could. Once the race started, I never saw the guy with the pole again.

## The Long and Winding Road

There is hardly a straight stretch in the whole Twin Cities Marathon course. The urban scenery changes constantly.

The course is utterly beautiful. It deserves the reputation it claims as the most beautiful urban marathon. I'm sure Minneapolis and St. Paul are no different from any other cities in having run-down and dangerous areas. But the TCM course designers adroitly managed to avoid sending us through any of them.

First it winds through the downtown area, past a theater where my cellist younger brother had been playing Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat barely two weeks before, past three of the gorgeous western lakes: Lake of the Isles, Lake Calhoun, and Lake Harriet, and from there
through some south neighborhoods, past Lake Nokomis, and north on River Road on the west side of the Mississippi River. At nineteen miles we crossed the river at the Franklin Street bridge, came down the east side of the river to Summit Avenue, the straightest stretch of the course, and the location of many sumptuous homes, including the governor's mansion. The race finishes on a northeasterly downhill a mile long, ending in front of the state capitol building in St. Paul.

The first half, except for one steep hill at mile two, is mostly gentle downhill until shortly after the river crossing at mile nineteen. There, where you least want to see it, it heads relentlessly uphill, and stays that way until just after mile 23. Then it goes from easily downhill to steeply downhill, and finally to screamingly downhill at the end. The approach to the state capitol is impressive.

TCM had complete ownership of the roads during the race. There was no problem with traffic except at one intersection. The police were holding back cars that wanted to cross. A smiling policeman waved me through, assuring me it was OK to keep running, and that they weren't asking any runners to stop for traffic. Suddenly someone darted across in his sports utility vehicle, causing me to pull up short, while the policeman who had guaranteed me safe passage shouted after him with fruitless comments regarding the driver's parentage.

But the policeman had his genealogy wrong. Those of us in the know are aware that aliens from the planet Mo'ron have infiltrated our society and have surrounded us. The "man" in the SUV was one of them.

The back end of the course was progressively reopened to traffic at an alleged rate of 13:00 per mile. Happily, I was nowhere near close enough to tell how it went.

## Run for Your Life

The starting temperature was about forty degrees Fahrenheit, and was no more than fifty at the end. At the beginning it threatened to rain, but it never did. Less than two miles from the end the sun peeked out briefly.

There were allegedly 7600 runners signed up for TCM. The people around me weren't even sure when it started, except we thought we heard
a cheer ahead of us. From my spot in the herd it took me over five minutes to get to the starting line. It was so crowded I couldn't run a single step until my foot hit the chip-sensing mat.

Because this was a chip race, my first ever, there was no panic to get to the starting line. I love the chips, and hope they become standard equipment at all races that can afford to provide them.

My basic goal was to finish in 4:30, but if things went well, I would try for a PR. One needs to commit to an all out effort early in a race, on the basis of initial signs. If it happens, it's an occasion for celebration. Otherwise it means a death march in the second half.

I had an excellent first half, as I gleefully passed hordes of people with 40-44 back tags, something that rarely happens with me. Every mile from four to nine was in the 9:23 to 9:49 range, and no mile before ten was slower than 10:05 except the mile from two to three. That's where the first big hill was, but I managed it with aplomb.


Figure 7.2: Looking dumb and happy at ten miles

My watch half marathon split time was 2:10:46. I felt wonderful, smelled the possibility of a PR, and decided to go for it, even though I knew the up-
hill was coming later. I'd studied the course map and elevation guide, and had been warned by Bob Metzger: "It's pretty much uphill from where you will see us until mile 25 or so. It's steepest from 19-21, but then slightly and deceptively uphill for most of the next four along Summit. Be prepared." I tried to run it as though there was no hill. Silly me.

The next several miles the going got tougher, and I slowed some, but I was still OK.

The long hill began as advertised. It's not a killer, but it's long, steady, and located where you least want to see it. I remained strong until between 20 and 21 miles, though I was tiring rapidly. Then my reserves gave out.

The road from 21 to 22 seemed interminable. Some guy shouted, "The mile 22 marker is just ahead." The big, stupid liar! It was at least a half mile further. The stretch from 22 to 23 was worse.

Then the downhill began. I wanted desperately to walk, but I couldn't let the downhill pass. Sadly, I had nothing left to give it. By mile 20 I knew there would be no PR, but still hoped for $4: 30$. Then saw it fade to $4: 35$, but couldn't hang onto that either.


Figure 7.3: About 300 yards from the end. This is where the race begins for me. Notice that at least I'm not last place!

There is hardly anything both as exciting and beautiful and yet as terrible as the final half mile of a marathon. The crowds, bent on witnessing repeated acts of self-immolation, are cheering the hardest when it's no longer fun, and you could care less whether you run another step. The excitement of being one of the people running inside the barricades while those outside are urging you on should be gratifying, but you're in no mood to enjoy it. I barely remember the last few blocks other than to say I know it was beautiful and there were hordes of people. At least, that's what everyone said.

My finishing chip time was 4:41:50, right in the middle of the range of my marathon finishes. I'll discuss the numbers later.

## With a Little Help from My Friends

Running a marathon would be less fun without all the sights, sounds, and particularly the people we encounter. At TCM there were many things to
keep me entertained. A few highlights:

- Near mile five I saw a sign that said Carpe Viam, the Dead Runners Society motto. I waved and hollered to the person standing by it as I ran by, pointing to my back, but got only a blank stare in response. Later, by means of the list, I connected with the signholder Jeff Marker, who lives just a few minutes from Lake of the Isles.
- Soon afterward I met up with DRS lurker Diane Elvidge from Bloomington, MN, who had her running partner take our picture together, while we ran backwards to face the camera. Diane ultimately finished a few minutes behind me.
- A little later I was startled by a woman with a large video camera, when she shouted, "Go Lynn from Phoenix!" I could not identify her at the time, but learned later it was Minneapolis Dead Runner Karin Storlein, whom I'd met in Tucson last year. Karin is a videographer and was making a documentary about an older female runner who was in the race. We have exchanged email many times.
- The crowd support at TCM was the best I've ever experienced. There were many great personalized signs. One man had a sign that read, "I didn't make this sign, but my daughter said I should hold it." I saw him twice.
- I ran for at least ten miles within a few yards of a guy with FIRST MARATHON on the front and LAST MARATHON on the back of his T-shirt. It was a popular favorite among spectators.
- There was a couple wearing newlyweds T-shirts. At 1:05 into the race, I heard the woman say, "The honeymoon ends in three and a half hours."
- Music: One spectator roared on the tuba. Later he was identified to me as Alan Page, a Football Hall of Fame defensive player, formerly with the Minnesota Vikings, who is currently a judge on the Minnesota Supreme Court. (I trust he's a better judge and football player than tubist.) I saw the same not-too-good but commendably enthusiastic saxophone player at least four times on the course. There was
one pair of drummers with complete drum sets, and numerous people beating cadences on pots and pans. There was also one full band, from the American Legion.
- Shortly after the halfway mark I caught up with a man sporting a $75-79$ back tag. It took me a while to catch him. He was running beautifully. He obviously was ahead of me until then. I chatted with him for a while, and told him about Al Clark, who completed his 21st Whiskey Row Marathon this year at age 85.
This runner told me that just two weeks ago he did a marathon in what would be a world record running time-on inline skates! $\mathrm{He}^{\prime} \mathrm{d}$ decided that from now on he is going to stick to skating, because he gets done sooner that way. The TCM Web site reports only one finisher in his age group, and his half marathon split time matches closely with mine. Assuming the finisher is the same man I talked to, he is age 76, and finished in 5:17:57. What a guy!
- The last Dead Runner I encountered on the course was Bob Metzger, who manned the ALARC aid station, and was handing out water as I came by. I stopped and talked less than thirty seconds. I was in a bit of a rush, so couldn't linger.

Sadly, I found no Penguins at this race, though I knew some would be there, and I looked for their trademark pink hats.

## All Things Must Pass

At TCM I had one big problem: a major Eric attack. Readers with delicate sensibilities might want to skip this subheading.

Persons who are not subscribers to the Dead Runners Society or Penguin Brigade will not know what I mean by Eric in this context. Suffice it to say here that it's a euphemism for a common vulgarity whose meaning will become apparent in the next paragraph. How this term came to be used so freely, including by persons who would never use the word it is a substitute for, is a matter of Dead Runners Society ancient history, understood only by DRS cognoscenti who have been around a few years.

People are squeamish when it comes to discussing a basic fact of life that every human being has to deal with every day: Every now and then we have to move our bowels, and we have limited control over when our bodies tell us it's time to do so. How to deal with this problem in a timely manner in connection with an activity that involves eating a big meal the night before; eating some more in the morning and possibly drinking coffee as well; then subjecting the body to hours of strenuous moving, shaking, and pounding, during which interruptions are an inconvenience at best and at times a disaster; is a question I have yet to see addressed adequately in any running literature I have read.

The endless lines at the portable toilets before a race, with people getting in line multiple times, bear testimony that most runners are familiar with the problem and try their best to avoid the possibility of having to make a forced stop during a race, thereby extending their finishing time.

It's sometimes possible to hold out for the potties until the end, but can be dreadfully uncomfortable. And sometimes one just can't wait any longer.

I've now run at least three races where this was a problem. TCM was the first time I was forced to make an emergency stop, like it or not, even though I tried several times to prepare before the race. My body just wasn't ready to deliver yet.

By 14 miles I knew I would not be toughing it out, but would have to sacrifice my possible PR at least for a potty stop time out. I wasn't desperate yet, so looked for a place that didn't have a line.

By the time I resolved I'd stop at the next one regardless of the line, I found one without a line at mile 17. The reason there was no line was because it was disgusting beyond belief. I'll spare you the description. I was able to use it safely by sitting on the extreme edge. By this time I had little choice. As I ran out I warned the next runner who was waiting, who screamed and decided she should wait for another booth.

My split time for this mile was 12:55, a little more than two minutes longer than the miles that surrounded it. At least I felt much better when I was done, and could concentrate on the race. The opportunity to rest a few minutes didn't hurt, either.

One other technical problem I experienced was a slight case of nausea. It wasn't extreme, but sufficient to make me stop ingesting both sports
drink and electrolyte caps by mile eighteen. I couldn't tell which one was out of balance. I took only water until the end, undoubtedly not enough, and I skipped some stops. I ate no food of any kind the whole race. Maybe I should have.

## The End

Because this was a chip race, there were no traditional chutes to run through. There were assistants in abundance to snag the chips off shoes. After that I claimed my thermal blanket, finisher's medal, and finisher's T-shirt. The volunteers seemed weary of passing out congratulations. Nonetheless, I was grateful to accept them.


Figure 7.4: On the finisher's stand, capitol building in the background, Jessie Ventura nowhere in sight

Finally, I posed for my finisher's photograph. The volunteer who held my blanket and water bottle had to help me step up on the platform. This
picture, with the capitol building directly in back of me, turned out the best of the three I got.

By the time I got there, the only food left in the restricted runners area was chunks of not-moist-enough molasses raisin bread, stacks of hundreds of cartons of flavored cottage cheese, a new product that no one wanted, and a few yogurts. I could have eaten three yogurts, but got the next to last one. However, they were out of spoons, so I couldn't eat it. I carried the yogurt around in my pocket until I could unload it later that afternoon. They had more bottled water than they knew what to do with.

Finally, I retrieved my gear bag and put on my long pants and jacket. I wished that I had packed a towel and a clean shirt, because I was ultrafunky. That's something to remember for next time.

They had a family and friends meeting area where they could wait by a sign labeled according to the initial letter of your last name. Somehow they had one sign labeled M-O and another labeled L-N, so Suzy wound up running back and forth between them every two or three minutes. It was no problem for me, though-I found her immediately. She brought my heavier coat, but even with that on over everything I was still too cold.

## I Don't Want to Spoil the Party

The cold weather, combined with my sweat-saturated condition, made me uncomfortable. I was not in much of a mood to party, though I tried my best. After all, I paid a great deal of money to have this experience.

The post-race chow line led into a large tent where there were tables and chairs-a good feature I'd never experienced at previous races. Unfortunately, the only food being offered, available in any quantity you wanted, was not-hot-enough pizza, and donuts. These are foods I normally avoid in training. It seemed like mighty strange fare following a physical fitness event. I wasn't in the mood for either one at the time. I did wolf some down, but didn't enjoy it. I would have loved a bowl of hot pea soup. We didn't get a decent meal that day until after 8:00 P.M.

We hobbled to the awards area in front of the capitol steps. The presentations had just started, with little fanfare. Less than 200 people stood to watch the ceremony, while the greater number remained in the finishing
and food areas, or had left. It's safe to assume that many present were award winners with their friends and family. I usually attend the awards in order to say I took in everything I could.

Few mainstream participants, the ones who pay entry fees, seem to care much who wins big marathons. They read about it later in Runner's World or on the Internet. This is true even though TCM was declared a championship race. It was both the USATF 1999 national marathon championship for women, and the USATF championship for masters men and women. I certainly couldn't tell you the names of the winners, and I was there to see them get their awards.

The male winner was some skinny Kenyan. Of the top ten male winners, eight were Kenyans, one was Ethiopian, and one was a Russian masters runner. Hooray for them. Then came everybody else. All the top ten declare their residence to be various places in the US, so I guess they are qualified to win national championship prizes. I'm not sure of the constituency of the women's winners, but they seemed to be mostly Americans. The winner was a Korean-American from Florida.

I've observed that at the big marathons I've been to there are two races: the one the elites run, and the one the rest of us run. The division could almost be described as segregated. I hesitated before using that word because I don't want to give the wrong impression; I certainly don't mean it in a racial sense.

But the Kenyans, as wonderful as they are, seem remote to me, and I suspect to many other ordinary marathoners as well. We love to read about and admire their fabulous exploits, but how many of us even know who any of these folks are, understand their goals and motivations, or have experienced their way of life or training methods? Therefore, I can certainly understand why the majority of people in attendance might be more inclined to sit around, eat, and party with friends and family, than to stand and watch a stream of foreign visitors no one ever heard of walk up and collect trophies and checks. ( $\$ 20,000$ for the winners.)

I was too cold to endure it for long. It was 1:30, so we went over and got in line for a shuttle bus back to the hotel. We had to wait a half hour in the chilly wind for one to show up, but enjoyed conversation with runners in the interim.

We were the last ones on the next bus. Some people had to sit three abreast, because it was a bus rule that no one could stand. Three small
ladies squashed together in order to let me have a whole space for myself next to one of their husbands, a kind gesture I genuinely appreciated. It was a short trip back-only fifteen minutes over the highway. How could that be, when it took so long to get there?

At the hotel we got our baggage out of storage. I changed clothes in the men's room. After that I felt much better, though I was still unable to shower. Then we took off to visit my mother in Northfield, forty minutes drive away. Thus ended another gratifying marathon experience, number seven for me, counting a 50 K .

But there is still a little more to relate. Let's do the numbers.

## You Know My Name (Look Up the Number)

My numbers look like this:

| Chip time: | $4: 41: 50$ |
| :--- | ---: |
| Clock time: | $4: 47: 14$ |
| Difference: | $5: 24$ |
| Pace per mile: | $10: 57.5$ |
| Watch halfway: | $2: 10: 46$ |
| Clock halfway: | $2: 16: 10$ |
| Overall place: | $4774 / 5981(79.8 \%)$ |
| Male 55-59 group: | $145 / 189(76.7 \%)$ |
| All males: | $3246 / 3818(85.0 \%)$ |

- This was faster than St. George, my first marathon, two years ago, and Grandma's, a major bonk, and Whiskey Row, which is an anomaly because of the steep hills.
- It was faster by a mere 0:01:30 than my indoor marathon training run on August 21.
- It was slower than both Tucson Marathons, including last year's when I nearly got blown off the road by a headwind.
- I finish almost always near the eightieth percentile both overall and in my age group, despite all my training. My TCM performance is consistent with that trend.

Those are the objective facts.
Speaking subjectively: though I'm not totally pleased with my performance, I'm always happy every time I complete a marathon, and have loved every one. I can hardly wait until the next one, in Tucson in December. At that race, if I prepare as I intend to, and the conditions cooperate, I will definitely be gunning for a PR. I'm sure I don't have many left in me.

## When I Get Home

## Wednesday, October 13, 1999

We arrived home from Minnesota, following vacation, Twin Cities Marathon, and more vacation, to find that the redecorating work that was to take place during our absence did not get finished. My computer table and little network had been pulled out from the wall in order to make room to move slabs of marble through a door. Everything was disconnected, the wires were in a tangled jumble, plastic sheeting covered most things in the room, and a thick layer of grime had settled on everything, whether covered or not. It took four days to get my computers back online, and two more to get my TCM installments written and delivered to the Net.

Meanwhile, I haven't posted a word concerning what I've done since the marathon. This edition brings things up to date.

October 4: A day of rest and visiting with my mother, who now lives in a nursing home in Northfield, MN. I was sore and had great difficulty standing up and getting in and out of cars all day. It was the most debilitated I've gotten following a run since the day following my first marathon.

How mysterious. My training included more and longer long runs than the average slogger attempts, followed by long walks. I had ceased being sore following long runs, though I certainly sometimes feel tired and lack spring in my legs. Why, after all that, was I now suddenly laid to waste?

October 5: Suzy and I enjoyed a leisurely walk of 4.6 miles at an overall 18:46 pace through the Cowling Arboretum on the campus of Carleton College. The fall colors in Northfield were utterly spectacular, the best I've seen since I lived in Maine. However, "the Arb," as it's called by
locals, generally did not manifest the colors. I theorize that the reason for this must be because being thickly wooded most of the trees in the arboretum are not as exposed to sunlight as are the trees that line streets and neighborhoods. It was a beautiful, cloudless day, with temperatures in the lower sixties.

October 6: Another rest day, mostly because it was a travel day. We spent the morning with my mother, then caught an earlier flight out than we had booked. We arrived home to mass confusion just before 8:00 P.M., three hours earlier than we had expected.

October 7: It was back to work and to the Road that Never Ends. To my surprise, I ran four miles at a 10:03 pace, and felt fine.

October 8: Friday is usually a rest day, but because I'm busy recovering from the disruptions that traveling and a race bring about, I ran again. This time it was three miles at a 9:43 pace on tRtNE-even better than the day before.

October 9: Most of my long runs are on Saturdays. Only six days off a marathon, and with no preceding rest day, I didn't expect to do well, so I planned for only ten miles. My anticipation proved to be correct. It was a slow and tedious run at 10:20 pace. I'm continuing to work at learning how to run when I'm tired. Despite the slowness of the pace, my average heart rate was 137, $81 \%$ of MHR. On slow days, the heart rate statistic is a particularly good indicator of effort. It shows I was not sloughing off, just tired and still recovering.

Because the marathon was on Sunday, the first day of my training week, this run brought my week's total mileage up to 48 miles.

At the gym I encountered Boston Bill. He tried for his qualifier at St. George Marathon the day before I ran TCM. I interrupted my run at 10K so we could compare war stories. I'd already heard his, having looked up his time on the Net, and run into his wife two days before.

Bill missed his Boston qualifying time by 32 seconds. Bummer for him. It got hot in St. George on race day; some reports said it was as high as ninety degrees. However, it just means that Bill will be in Tucson in December. He should be able to make up that 32 seconds in cooler temperatures and on an easier course than St. George. The unfortunate thing for him, as I see it, is that he now has to run an extra marathon this year that he didn't plan on, which will increase his risk of injury. He has also said that he doesn't like the Tucson race.

On Saturday afternoon our home was finally restored to normal, so I could begin reconstructing and cleaning up my office. I got most of it done, but we had to go to an evening wedding. I returned afterward and finally got back online by 10:15 P.M. When I'm without my computers I'm like a person with asthma who can't get enough air. It's a feeling of desperation. I'm addicted to computers. To pianos, coffee, running, and computers. And cookies. And a few other things, too, now that I think of it.

October 10: It was time to get back to my Sunday outdoor walks, except I decided I would run much more of this one than I did during the dead of summer. I headed out the door with no water and no sunscreen, determined to cover in 2:00 the same course that I normally walk in 2:30 and declare to be ten miles.

Not taking water was a mistake. It got much hotter than I anticipated: over 100 degrees. My tongue was sticking to the roof of my mouth by the turnaround point, but I made the trek in 2:00:12, right on schedule. Afterward I had to clean the pool, wash the car, and help get the house ready for dinner guests.

October 11: Blue Monday, and I was tired. We're expecting out-oftown guests for a four-day weekend, during which I will be unable to run as usual, though we'll do some hiking. It's my plan to front load the week with miles, concluding with a half marathon early Friday morning, before going to the airport to pick them up.

I felt no obligation to force myself to perform. I'd scheduled five miles. Three token run-walk miles at the gym at 11:59 pace was three more miles than I wanted to cover. This was followed by an evening of vegetating in front of Monday Night Football, watching one of the most boring games of the century between two teams I care absolutely nothing about.

October 12: I'm hoping to make up the two miles I blew off Monday by adding one mile today and one Thursday. It wasn't pleasant, though. I extended the five miles I'd intended to a 10 K , but at a horrendous pace, and felt akin to miserable the whole way. The overall pace was 10:44, and my time the ninth worst of 86 recorded runs at the distance. Once again, an average heart rate of 138 suggests that the degree of effort was up to par, but my body wasn't.

I've wondered whether there has been any scientific work done to create indices between distance and time run as compared to average heart
rate. For instance, if I run five miles at a 10:00 pace, with an average heart rate of 140 , and the next day run the same route in the same time but my average heart rate is 136, I would call that an improvement in efficiency, because it required less effort to produce the same result, but a drop in performance, because if I had run so that my HR averaged 140 that day, I would have run it faster, for an improvement in performance. And how do I compare a run of three miles at 9:30 pace with an average heart rate of 148 to the five miles at 10:00?

I'm not a statistician. Perhaps there are too many variables at work to make such correlations.

## I Am the Walrus

And now for the bad news. When I got on my super-duper won't-tell-a-lie digital scale the morning we left for Minnesota, it told me I weighed 185.6 pounds. Aaaaarrrgh! That's a dead even tie for my all time highest since I took up running.

While we were gone I somehow ate rather reasonably, or so I thought. We didn't indulge much in the way of between-meal snacks, and I didn't eat the sorts of things that runners approaching a marathon oughtn't.

Yesterday morning I got on the Tanita again for the first time since that day. Horrors! It registered 187.6-two more pounds added. I've got to put the brakes on and reverse the trend.

This got me thinking. ${ }^{4}$ I'm now headed into phase two of my big project, training for Tucson Marathon, now only 53 days away. I believe the following is all true:

- I will show up in Tucson, and barring injury, sickness, or unforeseen occurrence, will complete that marathon, whether in a PR or otherwise.
- I'm exceptionally disciplined when it comes to doing my runs. I will do the training I've scheduled without goofing off.

[^13]- I know that I can't run any more, any harder, or much more intelligently than I already do. I've got some fifty-mile weeks ahead of me yet.
- I know that there is one single thing I could do that would improve my running more than any other single factor: lose some weight!
- I know that eating is as important an element of training as the running and weight lifting.
- In 53 days it shouldn't be unreasonable for me to lose 15 pounds, if I start immediately and pursue it conscientiously.
- I've set out on such a course many times before, but have never succeeded.

So the big question for me is: Can I do it? Will I do it? To paraphrase Ruth Wysocki commented in her seminar at Twin Cities: How badly do I want it? The answer to that question is the biggest training challenge that lies before me.

Strange, huh? Some people take up running to lose weight. I have to lose weight in order to improve my running. What a sport.

## Tell Me Why

## Wednesday, October 13, 1999 Again

This afternoon I went back to my Wednesday afternoon routine of dropping my daughter at her piano lesson, heading out for a one-hour runwalk, picking up Cyra-Lea, and going to the gym for an additional 10 K except this week it didn't quite happen that way.

The temperature was still unseasonably high, near 100 degrees, but dry and not too bad. I opted to do more running than walking, and had an unstressful session, covering the four miles at a 13:44 pace.

Often these outdoor sessions, rather than tiring me out, serve as an invigorating prelude to a good indoor run. The ten minutes or so of rest in between, then walking into a comfortable, air conditioned building, and the pleasant contrast to pounding the asphalt, all contribute.

When I hit the track I immediately fell into rhythm, and soon I was whizzing along. During the second mile I noted that my movement was unusually easy, something I could sustain for a long time.

At lap 23 I passed two miles with nothing but the highest expectations for the remaining 4.2 miles. Then in the space of two laps the wheels fell off my chariot.

At lap 24 I suddenly felt a little dizzy and queasy. My legs were wobbly as my knees went weak. Suddenly a malevolent troll jumped on my back and began whispering into my ear that I ought to quit, and that I shouldn't want to be doing this any more today.

Every runner has these experiences on a regular basis-a moment where you tell yourself you'd rather just pack it in and forget it. Most runners with experience learn how to manage the temptation deftly, and continue until the urge passes.

When my foot hit the 25-lap mark I suddenly pulled up, walked one more, and quit. But why? In a period of less than two minutes I went from having a great run to abject surrender.

Will power and self-control are important elements in distance running, which is in large measure a sport of mental discipline. When a casual runner without a program or personal goals bags a run for no good reason, it's no surprise. But when someone who has been training carefully for several years spontaneously self-destructs on the track with no foregleam of what is coming, it's a minor disaster.

The experience can be compared to an athlete getting injured-like New York Jets quarterback Vinnie Testeverde on opening day of the NFL season this year, on the verge of a great season. On one play his Achilles snapped, and in one second his hopes for the season, and maybe the rest of his career were dashed.

Realistically, nothing nearly so serious happened to me today. The primary difference, of course, is that I'm not injured. I can look forward to going back tomorrow and just doing it.

I'm inclined to write off today's episode as a lapse in control. I'm tired and I need more rest than I've gotten. It's only ten days after a marathon. I've run or walked the last seven consecutive days. My usual schedule is out of sync and is soon to be horsed up royally by the arrival of weekend visitors. The anticipation has induced me to push myself. So if I accept the
assurance that in a few days everything will be back to normal, I'll come out of it just fine.

At the same time, I don't want to let problems of this type pass by without analysis, as though they never happened, because that opens the door for a repeat episode.

## Tomorrow Never Knows

## Saturday, October 16, 1999

It's easy to make big claims one day, but much harder to follow through on them the next. Wednesday's lapse was more of a wakeup call than I originally permitted myself to admit. I needed a break. So I accepted the inevitability of a short week.

On Thursday, instead of plunging back into high mileage, I took a day off, and thought little about running. We had to prepare for the arrival of our guests, I had an anomalous evening off, and I needed to go home and tend to chores.

Yesterday, Friday, I took a vacation day. I dropped my daughter at school shortly after 6:00 A.M. as usual, and got to the gym before 6:30. I started running at 6:45, and completed a half marathon.

I'm not a morning runner. I love early mornings, but I like drinking coffee, and studying or working on a computer during the early hours. It usually takes a good two hours of being up before I'm physically loose enough to start engaging in strenuous exercise.

In addition, yesterday I was still sluggish from whatever brought me down two days before. However, I was able to keep going without any problem. I just didn't go fast. Instead, I set a personal worst for the time by a margin of $4: 33$ ! It took over an hour of running before I could breathe without laboring. After that I was fine, except I moved at an overall turtlesque 10:42 pace, 1:15 a mile slower than what I'm capable of on a good day.

Later we picked up our guests at the airport, and went to see an exhibit of Monet's paintings from his late Giverny period at the Phoenix Art Museum. Great stuff, though my tired legs bothered me a bit moving
through the gallery at museum pace. I seemed to be the only one in attendance who constantly rocked back and forth and did calf and quadricep stretches while standing in front of peaceful paintings of water lilies and foot bridges, listening to the prerecorded discussions.

Afterward we went to a local Mexican restaurant. Do I need to tell you what happened there? It wasn't a pretty sight.

## Drive My Car

Today, Saturday, one of the prettiest days of this year, was a long day of little physical activity. We hopped in the car and took an all-day driving trip to beautiful Jerome and Sedona, and through Oak Creek Canyon, giving our friends the usual first-timers overall blitz tour. Just viewing the highlights by car, without stopping to get out and see much, kept us in the car most of the time from 9:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. I guess it goes down as another day of rest. Tomorrow is likely to qualify as another, though I anticipate we'll get in a few hours of strenuous hiking on Monday morning.

Next week is going to be another short week mileagewise. I already know I won't make my goal of fifty miles, but I will get in my long run of twenty miles next Saturday, which should put me back on track until Tucson.

Sorry if this report is boring. I'm going through a difficult period right now.

## Nothin' Shakin'

## Wednesday, October 20, 1999

For the last few days it's seemed as though my training program has fallen into a death spiral. The cumulative effects of tiredness, vacation, disrupted routines, and poor eating habits have led me into a rare phase of reduced motivation. Encouragingly, I had a run yesterday that was back on track, and may be a sign of better things to come.

The visit of our out-of-town guests, a young married couple, lasted until late Monday night. Under such circumstances it's difficult to follow
a consistent training program, unless your guests happen to be runners. They aren't.

On Sunday we spent over four hours on one of the most beautiful days of the year walking around Out of Africa, a popular animal park here in the Phoenix area. This activity, though delightful, is no more strenuous than walking through a museum.

When we came home, I left my guests to rest up, while I headed out the door for a pitifully slow four-miler on the streets at a 10:37 pace. That evening we went to a low-key recital by the young Chinese pianist XiangDong Kong-more sitting and contemplatively appreciating.

Monday, a spectacularly beautiful morning, looked more promising. We planned on going for a two-hour hike, either up Camelback Mountain, or on the Christian Trail, a.k.a. T100, in the Phoenix Mountain Preserve, and I had figured on a good romp, given that our guests are less than half my age. Our wives opted out, deciding instead to stay home and visit.

Just a couple of guys hammering up a mountain trail sounded like a mighty appealing prospect. The trail up Camelback is steep, requiring hands to climb in a few places, and rocky all the way. It takes me a good fifty minutes to get to the top, the highest precipice in Phoenix, from where one is treated to superlative views of the entire valley area.

Unfortunately, my buddy has back problems. After five minutes he had to stop for a rest. In all we got approximately one fifth of the way to the top, barely half a mile up, where my comrade sprawled himself on a rock to rest his back. We decided we'd better scratch the trip, and headed slowly back down. I suggested we try the flatter T100 trail, but he said he tends to have even more trouble on the flatter surfaces than on hills. We toured the trailheads on either end by automobile instead.

The rest of the day we just hung around the house, hacking on computers. Later I introduced my jazz-loving young friend to the joys of Keith Jarrett and Bela Fleck, artists with whom he was not yet familiar, and played some tapes of my own old stuff. Music listening is a decidedly inert activity. It's also an antisocial one, because thoughtful listening precludes conversation.

In the evening Suzy made a big lasagna dinner and invited our son Aaron over, who is a year younger than our guests. Sitting and eating is an even more inert activity, though good conversation and laughter is
good for both the heart and soul. At 10:00 P.M. we dropped our friends on the redeye flight back to Ohio. On the way home from the airport I meditated on how I can get back on track.

Yesterday, Tuesday, I was back to work, and despite the bloat that generally follows traveling and entertaining guests, I felt good, and looked forward to a proper run in the evening.

At my 2:00 P.M. staff meeting someone brought in a box of Krispy Kreme donuts. Gak! I've never had one and have been hearing for years that these are some sort of donut-lover's gourmet treat. I've been waiting ever since for the opportunity to try one. I would have resisted the offer if the box had not said Krispy Kreme on it. ${ }^{5}$

Now I've tried one. It tasted exactly like every other glazed chocolate cake donut I've ever eaten (just great!), and now, according to USDA charts, I'm 133 empty calories in surplus for the insight gained.

Remarkably, of the twelve people in the room, only three accepted the offer of donuts. How do they do that? Some people can resist eating for the mere reason that the are not hungry. They see something delicious put right in front of them, think to themselves, "I ate just recently, I'm not hungry now, and those are bad for me," and decline without a second thought. Regrettably, I am not one of them. Even if I had at first, the donuts would have quietly whispered my name throughout the meeting, and their mere presence would have occupied my thoughts to the point of distraction.

At the gym yesterday afternoon I took off for a five-mile run. It was not exceptional, but I ran it at 9:44 pace, 55th of 87 recorded runs at the distance. Surprisingly, my heart rate averaged $85 \%$ of my MHR, which is way high for that pace. This tells me my fitness must be down somewhat. Not good.

Tonight I am supposed to run (or run-walk) ten miles. We shall see about that.

[^14]
## I'll Be Back

## Friday, October 22, 1999

It never ceases to amaze me how frequently my daily performance bears little resemblance to my desire to run before I start. On Wednesday I didn't have to take my daughter to her piano lesson as usual. I had scheduled ten miles, but was so tired I nearly fell asleep at work and then again on the road. When I pulled into the parking lot at the gym I closed my eyes. Before I knew it fifteen minutes had passed.

I was in no mood to run at all, much less a whole ten miles. That is, not until I took the first step. But because I wanted only to get the miles in without severely stressing myself, I followed a routine where I walked twelve laps, followed by running twelve laps, until 114 laps were done.

During the walking stretches I worked hard on my racewalking form for a lap or two at a time. I'm no expert, but I discovered to my shock that I can racewalk almost as fast as I do a slow run-in the range of 51-54 seconds a lap, as compared with 47-51 seconds a lap running. However, racewalking is tiring, and I can't keep it up for long.

When I was done I discovered that three times I have run the whole ten miles slower than I ran-walked it on Wednesday. My time was only eleven minutes longer than my average run at the distance. Overall it was a comfortable and enjoyable way to get in my workout.

On Thursday I was tired once again, but ran five miles at what felt like a hard effort. My heart rate was slightly slower than on my five-miler Tuesday, but the pace was fifteen seconds a mile faster. Nonetheless, considering that I'm capable of another thirty seconds a mile faster at that distance, and that I was gasping for mercy at the finish, I know my performance is down considerably.

While warming up Thursday I encountered Bill Perkins. He had just gotten wind of the fact, through a local runner, that I have been referring to him as Boston Bill in this journal, and thinks it's amusing. He looked up the URL to confirm it. I explained to him that I don't refer to people from outside the mail lists in this journal by their full names without their permission, but warned him to be careful what he says to me, or it might wind up spread all over the world. He was still smiling.

It's Friday, and a day of rest for me. Tomorrow will be twenty miles, my longest run since Twin Cities Marathon, as I struggle to regain the momentum I lost following that race. Meanwhile, many matters from Real Life weigh heavily on my mind.

## Ooh! My Soul

## Sunday, October 24, 1999

When I wrote Friday's report I underestimated the gravity of the malady brewing within me. I had two important computer jobs to accomplish this weekend. One progressed well Friday night, but while working on it I felt myself descend into a physical abyss of misery, as my chest gradually felt heavier and I started coughing more and more often. At least my nose and sinuses were relatively snot free, so I could breathe.

At 9:36 P.M. I snuggled into bed and killed the lights. That's where my languishing body remained for nearly eleven hours. I had planned on making door-to-door visits all morning. By the middle of the night I determined that I would be going nowhere this morning except to my office in the back of the house to get some more work done.

I'm no fool. My body tells me reliably when I can run and when I can't. I've rarely been wrong. My daughter greatly wanted to go to the gym for a hard workout Saturday. I told her that I would decide when she got in at noon whether I'd be willing to take her over.

By that time I felt up to exercising, but not to breathing hard. The twenty-miler was out of the question. It had been written off by the time I went to bed Friday night. It was the first time in memory that I've been forced to cancel an important long run because of outright illness.

However, I did first two miles in thirty minutes of walking on a treadmill at 3.8 MPH and a 6 percent incline, followed by another thirty minutes on an elliptical trainer at medium intensity. I tried catching up on some back issues of Runner's World. That worked for a while. Eventually the sweat poured down my face and glasses in rivers, until I could no longer read. Even though I never got to a state of breathing hard, I felt refreshingly purged when I was done.

Cyra-Lea had run close to an hour and wanted to do another 45 minutes of weights, so I also did strength training for that period. This, too, was beneficial, since I hadn't so much as lifted a dumbbell since October 9, six days after Twin Cities.

While I was working I watched a guy doing leg exercises on a machine with twenty 45-pound weights distributed across two bars, and another 100 pounds on a third, for a total of 1000 pounds, plus whatever the weight of the unloaded machine was. I couldn't believe it. I stood and watched as he did six good repetitions of that load. He was taking a good eight minutes or more between sets as he gradually worked up to that weight. I'm surprised he didn't split a gut.

Late Saturday afternoon was spent getting pumped up to go see Turandot performed by the Arizona Opera. The pumping up was necessary because of how I felt. I knew I'd have problems with periodic gagging during the performance. I hate it when that happens. Somehow I managed to avoid being too conspicuous. We arrived home and got to bed much too late.

News on running lists informed me that the Fox television network was broadcasting the Chicago Marathon starting at 7:30 A.M. Central Daylight Time. The word was out that a great race was brewing. Last night I slept terribly, having been awakened three times by coughing fits bad enough to make me get up and sit in the living room for a half hour each time. The alarm went off at 5:25. I dragged myself in again and turned on the TV to begin looking for the race, assuming that the Fox telecast would be national. How naïve.

Apparently someone from the planet $\mathrm{Mo}^{\prime}$ ron is responsible for Fox programming at that hour in Phoenix. Apparently this "person" had concluded that people in Phoenix would much rather watch infomercials about potato slicers at that hour on a Sunday morning, than what turned out to be one of the greatest marathons in history, according to the reports put out on the Internet. There was no sign of Chicago Marathon anywhere to be found on my TV. Boooo!

Back to bed I went, where I slept fitfully until 8:30 and finally awoke to another coughing fit and a splitting headache.

Today I've got to spend all late afternoon and evening across town, wearing a suit, because I have another public lecture to deliver. I've de-
clared it a hopeless rest day-hopeless because whenever I have to wear a suit I don't ever get to rest.

When I scratched my twenty-miler yesterday, I did it in hopes that I can run it next week, and then do 22 the week following, so all I'll lose is some of the mileage from the half marathon that I would have run next week as a recovery work. I ran a 22 -mile and 24 -mile sequence of long runs the last week of July and first week of August, and handled it with ease, so I should be able to do it again, unless my conditioning has taken a worse nosedive than I thought.

This is all assuming that I recover from whatever has been ailing me reasonably quickly.

## All I've Got To Do

## Wednesday, October 27, 1999

The last few days, between illness and Real Life, I've barely thought about this journal, though I have thought about running.

I'm better now, and starting to get caught up with some obligations that kept me busier than I like to be. And I'm the sort of fellow who likes to be busy.

On Monday, following an unusual Sunday of abstinence from exercise, I arrived at the track anxious to run a strong five miles. My body didn't agree with that goal just yet.

Surely, I reasoned, given a day's rest, and feeling glad to be well again, I could sustain a pace of six laps in five minutes (a 9:27 pace), by simply trying hard. In August of 1998 I imposed a challenge on myself: Run 31 days, five miles or more every single day, and ten miles on Saturdays, and no day slower than a 10:00 pace. I made this goal, with an overall pace of 9:38 for the month.

The first twelve laps at $6 / 5$ were fine. After that it was all uncomfortable. At 36 laps I gave up and ran it out in defeat, with a final modest 9:49 pace, but an average heart rate of $86.5 \% \mathrm{MHR}$, hard enough to be laboring. It even qualifies as a tempo run on that basis. What a pitiful joke.

Immediately on completion, I began a sneezing fit, something that usually happens only following unusually hard outdoor runs. By evening I'd filled a wastebasket with soggy, used Kleeneces.

I'd hoped to remain home and vegetate in front of the Monday Night Football game, while working in some other necessary matters during commercials and halftime. At 6:00 P.M. I got a call from a friend that resulted in my having to get up and go out to a meeting at 8:30 P.M.-one of those where I have to be clean and wear a tie. Groan. My presence proved to be superfluous.

Yesterday (Tuesday) was better. I followed the same routine, and ran my five miles only nine seconds slower than Monday, but it felt much easier the whole way than the day before. I forgot to wear my heart monitor. Because I had enough left at the end to pick up the pace greatly the last four laps, I know I wasn't into any extreme zone; or if I was, I was managing the pain reasonably well.

It's now Wednesday afternoon, and in a few minutes I'll be headed out to see if I can handle a ten-miler.

## We Can Work It Out <br> Thursday, October 28, 1999

For too long various concerns from Real Life have been weighing heavily on my mind, diverting my attention from running to more important matters. These distractions may even have contributed to my getting sick. The last week or so the gauge on my supply of blinding insights, anecdotes, and wry expressions has been pointing to empty. I entered a holding pattern, doing my daily runs the best I could, reporting the numbers and what I felt about them, and waiting for inspiration to return.

Writing this journal has given me an enhanced appreciation for writers such as movie reviewer Roger Ebert. I don't know how some columnists can produce such a steady, voluminous flow of consistently high-quality output. Of late, the cleverest thing I can think of to write is the literary equivalent of "Duhhh."

Yesterday was another ten-milefest, broken in my customary Wednesday way into two segments, a four-mile outdoor walk followed by a 10 K on tRtNE.

The weather has been superlative. It was eighty degrees when I walked, a little above normal for this time of year, but decent by any standard. I powerwalked thirty minutes out, resisting the urge to run, shuffled some back, and when I reached the uphill, I ran it. That hill takes six to eight minutes by itself. I continued trotting lightly down the hill after reaching the crest. My total for the round trip was 54:01.

When I got to the gym, I determined that no matter what I would run slowly enough to enjoy it. That was slow, all right-my 10K time was 1:04:37, for a 10:20 average, but I was never uncomfortable. I wore no heart monitor because I didn't want to see that it was pumping ten beats per minute above sleeping.

Friday is scheduled as a rest day. I've made a decision: I'm not going to run tonight either. I'm feeling fine-like I could go out and tear into a ten-miler right now. My strategy was not induced by some crisis, conflict, lack of motivation, or illness. Instead, I looked at my training record, see that I have a twenty-miler coming up on Saturday, know that I did all right from Monday through Wednesday, recognize that I've had a funkier than average past two weeks, and theorized that for once two consecutive days
off would likely do more to put the icing on my cake of recovery (what a stupid metaphor) than doing another five miles.

## Two of Us

## Sunday, October 31, 1999

It seemed I was due for a good long run. I finally got one, though not without some suffering.

The perfect weather tempted me to run my twenty miles outdoors. I resisted this urge, because although temperatures in the lower eighties with low humidity are great for being out and about, it's too warm for productive long distance training. Besides, I'd already enjoyed the outdoors for two hours in the morning.

To have a first class long run, I need to prepare just right. This time I couldn't locate the two packets of Clif Shot that have been lying in the pantry for six weeks, and that I saw as recently as yesterday. I would have to depend entirely on two bottles of Gatorade for nutrition. In retrospect, I could have used the Clif Shot.

By the time I began my run, after depositing my gear in my favorite spot, it was 12:15 P.M. I had 228 laps of joy ahead of me.

Before long, Mike from Eritrea showed up. He was sporting a knee support, recovering from a soccer injury. It was his second day back to running, and he was hoping to go between six and eight miles. Just before my mile two he joined me.

Mike can run double my pace when he chooses to do so. Yesterday he was kind enough to run strictly at my pace, without pushing me at all, yet keeping me steady as a metronome. When it works out that way, and whenever a running companion knows enough to just shut up and run after the usual exchange of pleasantries and catching up on what's happened since last time we met, I enjoy the pleasure of running stride for stride with someone else. Most of the time I'm strictly a loner.

Nice people like Mike are a pleasure to be with and to work out with. Mike is a genuine encouragement. He's about age forty himself, and lavishly complimentary and encouraging to me and other fellow runners,
often mentioning how much he admires me for the running discipline I show, and for being a marathoner at my age. In his case it's not a condescending indulgence. He's never run more than ten miles himself, but he trains conscientiously, and has two sons who run cross country at the high school my daughter attends.

Mike and I took drink breaks at different times, then synced up again. He continued with me until I reached 8.5 miles. It had been a respectable run so far, and I felt good.

My running continued strong until just before mile seventeen, when my energy reserves took a serious nosedive. I'd obviously hit the proverbial wall bigtime. It was then that I thought about my AWOL Clif Shots.

At 200 laps ( 17.6 miles) I took my final drink and walk break. That helped for a little while. But the last fifteen laps were dreadful, and the last ten were an outright death march of the type I rarely experience.

I can't remember ever feeling so tired at the end of a long run. When I finished I didn't cool down by walking four laps as usual, but staggered a few steps, leaned against a table for a moment, then headed for the nearest mat, twelve feet away, and sprawled on it for three or four minutes. If I'd just finished a race they probably would have insisted that I go to the medical tent. I had begun to feel tinges of nausea creeping up on me.

It always amazes me how quickly we recover from these things. That short break was all I needed to be functional once again. When I got up I moved a little slowly, but was fine for the rest of the day.

I threw a mat down on the aerobics floor, and did some stretching for fifteen minutes before going home. I'd hoped to do some light weights and then cool off and clean up with a few laps in the pool, but I'd had enough.

Two hours later Suzy and I went out for dinner. I used my need for protein as an excuse to consume all the wrong things: deep-fried cheese, large quantities of red animal flesh, and a beaker of golden liquid with intoxicating properties that make the heart of mortal man rejoice. We came home and I did some studying, stayed up too late, and fell into bed at 11:30 P.M., exhausted. I predicted to Suzy as I got into bed that I would be asleep in ten seconds. It didn't take much longer than that.

## Good Day Sunshine

This morning (Sunday) I had to be up by 6:30 P.M. to study, after which we were gone to a meeting from 8:30 A.M. until 1:30 P.M. I'm feeling the effects of yesterday, to be sure, but I'm entirely functional.

At 2:45 P.M. I headed out for my first Sunday afternoon ten-mile walk since October 10, taking the usual route. At 89 degrees, it was unseasonably warm, fine for walking, but it would have been a killer run, as tired as I was.

Heading out I was sure I was well behind my usual pace, but I hit the customary turnaround landmark in 1:15:17, only seventeen seconds behind pace. My simple goal was to make up that seventeen seconds and finish with a negative split, and finish under 2:30. I accomplished that and more, arriving home in 2:24:32, for an average unrushed walking pace of 14:27.

## Dig It

Once again it's the end of the month: time to do the numbers and assess my status.

At 169 miles, October's total mileage is dramatically short of what I had projected, but I'm not upset about it. This month's original goal of 209 miles was unrealistic, given the marathon on the third of the month.

I'm not sure how I derived the original goal. I don't just pull a number out of a hat. Usually I plan the month carefully and add up the numbers. Obviously, I wasn't thinking carefully at the end of September. So the shortfall can be attributed more to poor planning than to sagging performance.

My weight peaked at a new high since I took up running. This is disappointing and frustrating, but I might have turned a corner on that, and may have lost between two and four pounds since that peak. I haven't been weighing in recently. Tomorrow I'll begin doing that again more regularly.

One influence that has helped has been that my wife has gone on Weight Watchers this month, for probably the eightieth time. I don't do diets myself, even so-called "sensible" ones, but one advantage to me of Suzy's
newly rediscovered zeal is that she hasn't been buying junk food-chips and candy and cookies and cheese-which I in turn eat.

Four and a half months have passed since I started this journal. Today I'm exactly five weeks away from Tucson Marathon, which I had targeted for a PR.

Realistically, I know I'm not where I need to be right now for that to happen. I'll do my best. If everything falls together and I have one of the ten best days of my life, I might get it. If not, then my future opportunities to make good on my goal of getting one more marathon PR before settling back to run them mainly for fun may be limited to just a few, and my alltime PR may forever remain at 4:25:45, when I had been so sure at one time that I have a 4:15 in me.

One more month of hard work lies ahead before digging in for Across the Years.

## Chapter 8

## The Delicate Middle

## What Goes On

## Tuesday, November 2, 1999

Before starting my five-mile run at the track Tuesday night, I had a conversation with Boston Bill, who had already finished running. He, like me, is in a holding pattern, trying to maintain and maybe gain fitness between marathons two months apart. He needs to lop 31 seconds off his St. George time to qualify for Boston, and I need to lop at least twenty pounds off in order to leave the ground consistently with each step.

It seems that Bill is holding his own. I'm holding my own, too-my own large bag of chocolate chip cookies, which I'm eating one at a time. Bill and I have different training methods.

In addition to weight control, my problem has been one of pursuing the dual goals of running a marathon two months after a previous one, while attempting to build up for a 24 -hour run a mere 26 days later. One objective of this Big Experiment is to find an answer to the question: Are these goals at cross purposes with one another? I humbly recognize that the answer may be Yes! But until the results are in I'll refrain from drawing a conclusion. While there is time there is hope.

Aiming for a PR in a marathon two months following a previous one is not an impossibility. My existing PR of 4:25:45 was set in Tucson on December 7, 1997, barely two months after my first marathon in St. George.

I topped my first time by either 16:36 or 19:24, depending on whether you accept clock time or watch time. It was also an extraordinary day: cold, with steady rain, whereas temperatures in cloudless St. George reached the eighties.

As I'm now getting down to the nitty gritty of planning how much and when I will be running from now until the end of the year, I've come face to face with the realization that practically speaking, there will be no time whatever for me to do what would undoubtedly help me the most at Across the Years, namely a couple of looooooonnnng runs. Ideally, I'd like to put in an eight-hour day and a ten-hour day on the road in preparation, with enough recovery time separating them and the race to restore myself. But it's a simple fact of Real Life that I'll have absolutely no time for such folly. Other than the indoor 50K I ran in September, I haven't put any more than a standard marathon distance or time on my legs in any single run since Crown King 50K last March.

Following Tucson, I'll recover for a week, then will have around two weeks to make the best of whatever time is left, before settling in for the Big Taper. Come what may, that's all I'll have opportunity to do.

## I'll Be On My Way

Following that sobering confession with Boston Bill, I hit the track and proceeded to rip off the best five-miler I've run since September 14, my second fastest since last June.

It's likely I could have done even better. I started off slowly, but warmed up quickly and found myself running comfortably. I continued to increase the intensity gradually, while watching the clock closely enough most of the time to be cognizant of my lap times. For at least half a mile I sustained close to a 9:00 pace, fast for me. The total time was not impressive because of the slow start, but I was pleased with my overall effort. Significantly, I maintained an average of $88 \%$ of my maximum heart rate, and maxed out at $95 \%$.

## I'll Cry Instead

## Friday, November 5, 1999

There's nothing like a little tragedy to help one put his life in perspective. On Wednesday evening we received a telephone call delivering shocking, numblingly sad news regarding a circumstance that will dramatically impact the life of everyone in my family for some time into the future, and that will leave a hole in my heart. It is not something I can discuss in a public forum. No one has died, but we have spent the past two days in a state that is not unlike mourning.

An activity like running can be compared in some respects to buying insurance. Running is alleged to give us extra physical and psychological strength, energy, mental discipline, and a measure of ability to handle difficult life situations better. We hope that the occasion never arises when we are challenged to deplete our reserves, but if it happens, we're glad it's there. At a time like this I truly value the good health I have fought hard to establish. Now it's time to regroup and move ahead. And to make some more insurance payments.

## Fixing a Hole

On Wednesday morning, a day that began like any other day, for the first time since May, I put on an ordinary pair of long pants of the type I wear to work during cooler weather. I couldn't button the top button without tugging at them a little. My love handles have grown.

Over the previous few days I'd been planning my strategy for the rest of this year. I solicited offlist advice from some experienced acquaintances and came up with a plan that may work out optimally.

I've concluded that I don't need to be running any more fifty-mile weeks for the rest of the year. This week will total close to that-near 47 miles, but will be the last of it. I'll be dropping out chunks of midweek activity, while maintaining the long runs on the weekend. I love running long, and seem to be better at it and enjoy it more than laborious evening after-work jaunts. In addition, I'll continue to go as far as possible on days following long runs, to prepare for the experience of running tired that I'll
encounter during my 24-hour race. I've scheduled fifteen miles the day following Tucson Marathon, but little the rest of that week.

I began the plan by sacrificing 2.25 miles of my usual Wednesday fourmile walk plus 10 K track run, cutting it to four plus four. As frequently proves to be true on Wednesdays, I started the run not wanting to do it at all, but got warmed up quickly, and before long began to push it. I finished that segment at a reasonable 9:46 pace.

On Wednesday night I slept no more than ten minutes the whole night. The one time I did slip off into sleep I had a bad dream. Cyra-Lea and I were trapped in our house while a titanic rainstorm headed our way. It was starting to rain heavily through a hole in the roof as we took refuge under a table. The panic woke me up again.

Remarkably, I functioned adequately at work Thursday. But when I got to the track I was too distracted to think much about running. I ran-walked 32 laps, 2.8 miles, then quit without stopping to stretch, and headed out the door and to home to get on with an evening of important things to do.

On a positive note, I did receive some interesting news on Thursday by way of Paul Bonnett-Castillo, the race director of Across the Years. A representative of Yiannis Kouros contacted Paul Wednesday night, saying that Kouros has expressed interest in coming to ATY, with the objective of setting the world 6-day record. Yiannis Kouros is the undisputed Michael Jordan of ultrarunning, universally regarded as the greatest long-range ultrarunner in history. ${ }^{1}$

As I understand it, numerous details need to be worked out to make this possible, but I truly hope Kouros makes it. I can't imagine a better venue for him to pursue his goal in. Kouros already holds world marks at almost every ultra distance up to 1300 miles. He set the 6-day record three consecutive times, the last in 1988, but had it taken from him by France's Jean-Gilles Boussiquet in 1992. Kouros is now age 43, and is still capable of regaining the record.

In September Kouros set an official US all comers record when he ran 167.44 miles in the USA national championship 24-hour race. That works out to an 8:36 pace for 24 hours straight! I've run no more than a half dozen single miles at that rate. Kouros' presence would be likely to attract

[^15]media attention, and would probably serve to rocket ATY into deserved prominence as one of the most significant fixed-time events in the US.

## In My Life

## Saturday, November 6, 1999

It was inevitable that some readers would respond offlist to yesterday's post with kind expressions of sympathy and inquiry. I'm grateful for each one. The reason I offered as much information as I did was not a ploy to call for sympathy.

Before writing anything at all about the situation, I reflected long and hard, because the matter is genuinely private, not something I can discuss publicly. Other persons are involved; their privacy must be respected.

From the beginning it's been my intent to mold this journal into something more than just a series of email messages. When it's done I'll prune it, spiffy it up, and save it for posterity as a testament describing how I set myself a difficult challenge and then pursued it. RTtM will be completed even if I fail to reach all my goals.

Naturally, this journal is shamelessly about me. It's certainly egotistical for me to think that there is anything at all so interesting about me that others would want to read a whole serialized book on the subject. Regardless, I want the record for myself, and I'm happy to share it with others who want to read it.

I'll never claim that RTtM is a masterpiece. So far it isn't, and I doubt that anything I add later will make it so. However-and this is my main point here-at least it's honest.

My efforts and achievements in connection with running are inconsequential by most any standard, but they are a part of the fabric of my whole life. Therefore RTtM is not just about running, though I've tried to emphasize that subject. It's really about the running thread, which is just one facet of My Whole Life. Running and My Whole Life are inseparable.

It would have been possible for me to continue grinding out journal installments as though everything was copasetic, pretending our family has not recently undergone a life-changing experience, and I'm sure I could have convinced everyone-that is, everyone except myself.

As it is, I've already masked a great deal of extraneous detail from My Whole Life out of the journal in order to focus on running. I've said little concerning my religion, my family, my work as a software engineer, my lifelong involvement with music, my participation in the open source computer software movement, my other writing projects, literature, art, chess, or any of the other things for which I have a passion. I've stuck almost entirely to the theme of running.

But this story would ring false to me if I were to continue sharing my running experiences with others as if nothing has happened and there is no additional stress I haven't already mentioned to deal with. And so as a workaround, I chose simply to make an allusion to it, and then to let it be.

For reference, I'll label the event a generic Real Bad Thing, something that will make Real Life more complicated for a while, but that I know will ultimately work out for the best in a year or two.

Yesterday I compared running to insurance. I should hasten to add my belief that working aggressively on one's spirituality is a far more effective form of insurance than mere physical fitness. But once again, because this journal is about running, I won't veer any further than that off the main subject.

It's time to move forward; that's largely what running is about.

## Revolution

Yesterday (Friday) was a rest day. When I got home I was so tired I couldn't resist taking a nap for a whole hour. This confused my metabolism. The dinner of baked potato and two kinds of squash, normally an excellent meal, landed like a lump of mush in my stomach and didn't know quite what to do for a while. "Was this supposed to be breakfast, or what? Did I miss something here?" I felt groggy the rest of the night, but slept well despite it. The extra hour yesterday probably did me some good today.

We were out this morning as usual, and didn't get back until nearly noon. It was 1:00 P.M. before I could start my long run.

A joke among ultrarunners goes: You know you're an ultrarunner if your friends all say you're in better shape than you think you are, and you
really are in better shape than you think you are. Recently I've been whining about being in a bit of a slump. If that's true, then how have I sustained a weekly average of 41 miles the five weeks since my last marathon, fighting a chest cold for part of the time, and how could I nonchalantly decide to run 20 miles last Saturday, 22 miles today, and insert a ten-mile walk and an eight-mile run-walk combination in between them in addition to some shorter runs?

But that's exactly what I've done. To top it off, I PRed my 22-mile time today by a margin of $3: 33$, and I feel just great tonight. Too fat, but fit.

Before I left the house I explained to Suzy how it's difficult for me, and I suppose for every runner, to face a long training run when my heart is not in it. Even persons in very sound mental and spiritual health become briefly depressed under the crushing weight of adversities that life in this system of things can inflict upon us. But then they push through them and bounce back, stronger than ever. It would have been easy to make excuses for myself today and bag the whole plan. But I never do that with a long run for any reason short of illness or obligations of a higher priority. So I went.

Except for not drinking much beforehand, I remembered all the right things in preparation. I was ready to dig in to an afternoon of work: 250 laps on tRtNE.

Almost immediately both my shins began to ache and cramp. Usually it's only the right one. I haven't had shin cramps since September. The pain was uncomfortable, but not bad enough to stop for. I knew from experience that it normally takes almost exactly forty laps to shake it out. At thirty laps I clearly sensed a waning of the tension, and at forty, the first drink break, it was gone.

As usual, I divided the run into forty-lap segments. The second was much easier than the first. The third was-dare I say it-effortless. I'd entered a zone. My breathing was easy, my form was good, there was strength in my legs, and I felt as if I was floating above the track. The fifth segment was still strong, but I was glad for the break when it came at 200 laps. I had fifty laps to go, 4.4 miles. Would I stay strong to the end?

I've learned from repeated experience what it's like to hit the wall. My energy reserves become depleted so suddenly that I can go from strong to staggering in the space of a few steps. At dinner tonight I told Suzy it's
like watching the last of the water run out of a bathtub. Schluurrrp! and it's gone.

At 200 laps I had enough energy left to be optimistic. I picked up the pace substantially. This time I heard the gurgling at exactly 220 laps. My heart rate went up as I struggled, but my pace went down.

If I'd stuck to the routine, I could have taken one more walk break at 240 laps, but I decided to run it out. How tough could it be to do just ten more laps after 240? Tough enough to cause me to make mental calculations every quarter lap, but I made it.

When I looked at my watch I was surprised to see the time appeared to be fast. It was not until I checked my records at home that I realized I'd PRed by 3:33. I have only four runs on record at the distance. The worst time is exactly thirteen minutes slower, and was run in July of this year. It appears I'm out of my slump.

For my next trick: I'll try for twelve miles tomorrow, and will attempt to run as much of it as possible. Runs during the week will be lighter than usual.

## The Hippy Hippy Shake

## Sunday, November 7, 1999

I didn't have time to run the whole twelve miles I'd scheduled today, but I could have gone longer.

My mind-set and technique were much different on this run than most others. This afternoon time caught up with me, and I had only a slice of time in which to accomplish my run. The total available was around 2:10, which, on fresh legs, is enough to cover the twelve miles I had hoped for.

However, being sore and tired from yesterday, I approached it as I may in later hours of my 24-hour run, when my mind and spirit might be more willing to move than my body. Rather than going for a predetermined distance, I was aiming for a cutoff time: 4:50 P.M. At that time I had to leave immediately to go meet my daughter. However many laps I could cover in that time would constitute my run. I didn't realize until I started how different the run would be mentally.

Normally, to be substantially different from a run for a given distance, a timed run should last a span that would be difficult to cover. For instance, if I gave myself only thirty minutes to run, it would be little different than trying to run for three and a half miles, and the results would be harder to measure. I can measure time over a set course of any odd distance in hundreths of a second, but without measuring tools that I don't have available, I can't measure the distance run in a precise time unless I do it on a treadmill, which introduces other problems.

So when running a timed run, a long one that presents a challenge is more interesting. In the future, if I do much more of this sort of thing, I'll set a time like 6 hours on a track.

As I've said, I had no such slot available today. It didn't matter, because I was tired enough that 2:10 was plenty.

I began by walking the first four laps, then running one, walking one, running two, walking one, and so forth, until I got to fifty laps. From then on I ran nine and walked each lap divisible by ten. My form was not the best. Over the first 45 minutes I experimented with form until I found a motion that worked and that kept me moving forward at a reasonable speed, even though my shuffling pace had to be around 11:00 per mile. I took a potty break at around eighty laps, during which I stopped my watch.

In the end I staggered and hippety-hopped around the track 122 times in a period of 2:04:06, for a total coverage of 10.74 miles. Although I'd had enough, I definitely felt as though I could have sustained this routine for another five miles at least.

In the evening after dinner I was sufficiently worn out to fall asleep in front of the TV. Monday I'll do weight training only.

## Bad Boy

## Wednesday, November 10, 1999

I've decided to make this a light week, like a week of tapering. Next week will be more hard work, before starting my real two-week taper until Tucson. I'm wondering whether my body will benefit from the surprise, or get confused by the false alarm. I'm banking on it working for my benefit.

On Monday I did only 45 minutes of weight training followed by an evening of restful slothfulness in front of the football game.

I'm still fighting the urge to eat everything that crosses my line of sight just because it's there. I'll start off well each morning by eating a yogurt and a PowerBar, and maybe a banana. So far so good. I never eat lunch unless somehow a fistful of cookies accidentally finds its way to my cubicle. I'll get through the afternoon without any pangs, but when I get home from the gym I'm hungry. I'll eat a reasonable and nutritious dinner. Then maybe a pretzel. And ... fourslicesofcheeseandanothertwopretzelsandsomecandyoutofthebowlonthediningroomtableandapuddingandmaybeajello, butsinceIeatthemrealfastandnobodynoticestheydon'tcount!

And so forth, as Kurt Vonnegut is fond of saying.
Tuesday was good. My body suffered much less than usual from such a hard weekend. I got to the track and ran three miles at a 9:59 pace with no problems. I declared my slump to be officially over. I'm back!

Today, Wednesday, I thought about doing seven miles. However, I was up at 4:30 A.M. in order to get to work early, and will have to do so one more time tomorrow. Before I can sleep tonight, I have an hour or more of important research to accomplish. Rather than exhaust myself I opted for a light night.

When Cyra-Lea and I got to the gym we both started on a three-miler at the same time. She ran and I walked, except I alternately walked a fast lap and then racewalked a lap. Within a few laps I realized that I was catching up to Cyra-Lea, who was only running. This became a goal. I not only caught her, I nearly lapped her by the time I was done. My overall pace was 13:03. This went into my files as a walking PR, the first one I have recorded.

It's amusing that I can racewalk a lap almost as fast as I run when I'm tired at the end of a long run. However, because the motion is much different from running, racewalking uses different muscles, and it uses a great deal of energy. I can't keep it up for more than two laps at a time without my shins starting to cramp.

## Too Much Monkey Business

## Saturday, November 13, 1999

Recently I've written far too much about my frustration with weight control. I'm going to stop whining and either take charge of my own life and admit responsibility for what I do, or else just shut up. From now on only good news will be reported on that front.

Writing this journal has put my training on display. In exposing myself to public notice I've provided myself with extra incentive to follow through on what I've proclaimed I will do. What sort of person likes to stand up and tell thousands of people that he is going to accomplish $\mathrm{X}, \mathrm{Y}$, and $Z$, and then humiliate himself by failing to do any of it?

So far this year I've been surprisingly successful overall, as success begets more success. It's been a fabulous year. Contrarily, I've gotten into a warp on weight. Thursday night it seemed to me almost as though I'd given up and thrown in the towel on that issue. I haven't; I've just barely started.

It's too late in the year to do enough to have an impact on Tucson or Across the Years, or to report on by the time this journal is completed. At least I can get a good start on it.

So now it's on to new beginnings, and refocusing on my primary objectives.

This is another week with a rearranged schedule. On Thursday I was forced by circumstances to skip my run entirely. I foresaw several days in advance that it was coming.

An hour from now I will be going out to volunteer at a race for the first time ever: the Just Another Mad Dog $25 \mathrm{~K} / 50 \mathrm{~K} / 50 \mathrm{M}$ race, run on a $3.8-$ mile sidewalk loop in a local park. Historically, around fifty runners show up. I'm expecting to learn a few new things today. Because it's a long race, already in progress as I write, I'll probably be there until late afternoon.

Therefore, last night after work I did my "short" long run for this week, a half marathon. Friday afternoon is a lousy time to pop off a run that long, but I was sufficiently rested that it shouldn't have been too arduous. The first five laps were comfortable. After that it was like pushing a grocery cart full of cement bags across the Sahara for a while.

My shins cramped up early, as frequently happens. This time they didn't loosen up until 55 laps, because I had pre-ingested Advil less than five minutes before I started. When I run on Saturdays I'll take Advil while I'm still at home, giving me as much as a half hour before I start running for it to begin to take effect.

Many non-runners believe that running is sheer misery at the beginning, and then gets steadily and irreversibly worse each step of the way. For an untrained person, that's an accurate description. Therefore, it still amazes me, even after over five years of consistent training, that I can continue to run mile after mile on a day when it's no fun at all, and despite it, sometime down the road it will get easier.

Friday I felt so much better after the halfway point that I had enough left to push it hard the last twenty laps without letup. My time was 2:17:53my second worst time of fifteen recorded. It probably would have been a PW if I hadn't run close to a 9:30 pace the last two miles.

How can a person run in misery for over ten miles and then start to feel good? It's a mystery to me. But I've always been better at managing the longer distances.

My pace range is narrow at that distance. For me a 2:05 is incredible, and $2: 15$ is awful. Most of my half marathon training runs range between 2:10-2:13.

Two weeks ago I predicted that no PR will be forthcoming in Tucson for me this year. The right kind of numbers in my training runs just aren't there, and I'm out of time to get any better. Maybe with a perfect day I can still pull a 4:30 out of it.

I'm not upset. I'd like to run just one more good marathon sometime, fast enough to set a significant all-time PR, before settling back to run them mostly for fun. Two years ago at this time I was confident that I had a 4:15 in me. But maybe not.

On November 10 I said that this week would be like a taper week. That was sort of true, except that by putting my long run on Friday instead of Saturday, my total mileage for the last seven consecutive days adds up to 52 miles. I won't run at all today. Tomorrow I'm hoping for another half marathon, but I'll have a cramped schedule again, and don't know yet what time will allow.

And now it's off to Mad Dog.

## A Day in the Life

## Monday, November 15, 1999

My first opportunity to serve as a volunteer at a race was interesting and enjoyable, largely because of two factors: First because it was a tiny event, and second because it was an ultrarace.

Just Another Mad Dog $25 \mathrm{~K} / 50 \mathrm{~K} / 50 \mathrm{M}$ is run on a 3.8 -mile loop on a concrete sidewalk through a park in Scottsdale, Arizona. Runners shared the course with bicyclists, dog-walkers, rollerbladers, strollers, and everyone else who decided to come to the park for a pleasant Saturday morning.

The race started at 6:00 A.M., but I didn't have to show up until 9:00 A.M., since I was willing to help out with the later stages. The 25 K started two hours after the other two races. When I got there no one had yet finished any race.

I can't say that I did a whole lot, but I filled in wherever I was needed. Being a newbie, at first I felt a bit like a left-handed catcher's mitt: probably quite useful in a different universe. But before long I learned the overall operation, including how they track laps and times in this sort of race.

My primary job was to welcome finishers and collect the bib tags and keep them in order. In a race this size there is no finishing chute, just a piece of duct tape laid across the sidewalk marking the finish line. Later on I helped the race director get the times listed for publication. There was no on-site computer assistance available.

The course was laid out in a barbell shape. Runners passed the aid station in the middle, where the start and finish were, twice each lap, once in each direction. I also helped some with the aid station. I learned that 25 K runners could be cheered on, but with the 50 K and 50 -mile runners it increasingly became a matter of personalized care giving. I was impressed with how totally each runner was attended to, being waited on hand and foot each time they passed

Of all days for it to happen, we had record high temperatures in Phoenix Saturday. The high was 92 . Some runners were clearly suffering out on the course. They would come in with their skin dry, not sweating, an indication that they were getting dehydrated.

They would stop to drink and eat, get water poured on them, and get whatever other assistance they needed, whether ibuprofen, Vaseline, sunscreen, massage, or just some encouraging words, before being cheered on their way. By the end of the day I knew all the 50-milers by name. There were 2225 K finishers, ten 50 K finishers, and ten 50 -mile finishers.

The winner of the 50 -mile race was Scott St. John, a local elite runner who was aiming to break 6 hours. He didn't. His finishing time was exactly 6:00:00, for a 7:12 pace. He missed his goal by no more than two steps. The second place finisher didn't finish for another hour and seventeen minutes.

One 50K runner was Michael G. Allen, a delightfully enthusiastic 64-year-old man who had been on the 1964 US cycling team. Another finisher was 69. Both finished in fine time and in excellent spirits.

The fifth place 50-mile finisher, 48-year-old Dan Brenden, and his wife, both have permanent ear-to-ear smiles engraved on their radiant faces. Dan's wife has only one leg and uses crutches rather than a prosthetic limb. She served as his personal handler. When Dan came to the end, his wife met him fifty yards from the end, where he scooped her up in his arms and ran with her at a surprisingly strong pace from there to the finish. The race director's wife was waiting with a camera to get a picture of it. They were both laughing as he crossed. It was a special moment.

Three runners came in between 9:19 and 9:43. After that there was only one more runner still on the course. There had been no cutoff advertised, and this lady, who was hell-bent on finishing her first 50-miler ever, still had 3 laps of 13 to go. Everything had already been torn down and packed away, but the race director kindly and heroically settled down with a book and waited it out, leaving the aid station up and the clock running, until she finished in 13:14. I had left by 9:30, so only learned her finishing time from the results that arrived by email later.

## Sunday Brings Another Day

This Sunday was much like last Sunday. I couldn't get to the gym until nearly 2:00 P.M., and had to be out of there by $4: 15$ to get ready to go out to dinner and a concert.

Therefore, I did another timed run. I would complete the next whole lap after the clock clicked over at two hours. As I did last week, I began by walking one, running one, walking one, running two, and so forth, until twenty laps, and from then on walked only the laps with numbers evenly divisible by ten.

This made for a comfortable run, even though I was still a bit tired from Friday's half marathon. At the end I had covered 125 laps, 11.01 miles in 2:00:32, at a net 10:57 pace. This sort of routine has its benefits as a recovery or training run, but it does slow a person down. I'm definitely not personally either a practitioner or an advocate of the Galloway periodic walking plan.

Sunday night I dreamed I was running early in a marathon and suddenly realized that everyone else was wearing ChampionChips, but I never even knew it was a chip race and wasn't wearing one. Why are so many of our memorable dreams about personal embarrassment, danger, or failure?

## This Boy

## Tuesday, November 16, 1999

The greatest advantage of a mail list for runners is the opportunity its subscribers have to exchange ideas and experiences related to running and training. Having done this for several years, I've come to one conclusion: There are many ways to do it. What works for someone else doesn't necessarily work for me.

Conversely, what works for this boy is unlikely to work for many other runners. For instance, few runners at any level have the patience that I do to cope with circling for hours on an indoor track. I regard it as a strength. Others might call it a sickness.

Today a reader responded to yesterday's post, wondering why I neither practice nor advocate the Galloway plan, incorporating periodic walking breaks in my run. The answer is not simple.

A cascade of unripe thoughts follows. An answer may lie somewhere among them.

- I've never wanted to try Gallowalking. By the time it became a craze I'd already established some training habits.

At the time I was working on increasing mileage. For at least the first year and a half of my running I refused to interrupt my training runs with walking, as I gradually built up both physical and mental endurance.
This continued through the time of my first 10 K and half marathon races, and until less than three months before my first marathon. In July of 1997 I ran twenty miles one Saturday afternoon without stopping for anything, including water. My records tell me I was also twelve pounds lighter on that day than I am today.

- Since then I've taken regular hydration breaks whenever I run fifteen miles or more. My routine, described repeatedly in previous segments of this journal, is to stop running on laps evenly divisible by forty, pick up a jug of Gatorade, and guzzle as much as I can get down while walking one lap.
In later stages I may take Advil or a Succeed! capsule, requiring that I squat down to the floor for a moment to pick up the pillbox. The stretching does wonders.
The frequency of these interruptions roughly simulates the break one gets walking through water stations during a marathon.
Does that qualify as Gallowalking? I don't think so. For one thing, I probably wouldn't do it if I didn't need to drink. For another, the breaks are roughly thirty minutes apart, not one minute out of ten, or one out of five, as some beginners do.
- On rare occasions I walk when I have to because I'm dead tired and need a break. This is not Gallowalking either, because it's unplanned. It's merely an unvarnished case of giving in because I'm pooped.
- I'll walk plenty when I'm doing ultra training because some of the trail I normally train on is not runnable. I've walked more this year than I ever did before. My paces have also slowed down radically, and I have the data to prove it.
- The theory of Gallowalking claims that a walking break refreshes and gives one energy to run faster, and that the time lost is made up for later. I won't deny that many people believe it is true for them,
and maybe it is. But it clearly is not so in my case. I like to walk, but whenever I do, my times are always slower than when I run the whole way.
- Sunday was a good case in point. The last half I ran hard for a long run on tired legs-probably near 10:00 pace. But walking one in ten laps made my overall pace nearly 11:00. That would be pitiful, even for me, if viewed as a "running" pace.
- The primary advantage of Gallowalking, as I see it, is that it enables a person to get further than he may be able to without it. It's extremely difficult to run a long, long way. It's not nearly so difficult to walk the same distance. It just takes longer. In a marathon, for runners whose only choices are either to walk some of it or not finish, Gallowalking is a viable technique.

My strength is endurance. My weakness is speed. I want to cover ground faster, not slower. For me that means I need to keep running whenever I can. Therefore I don't Gallowalk.

## Don't Pass Me By

On Monday, after over an hour of weight training, I slugged out in front of Monday Night Football. Some practicing athletes would label this a Real Bad Habit. I prefer to call it a Tradition. I'll never forget watching MNF on December 8, 1980, when Howard Cosell (of all people) interrupted the game with the news that John Lennon had been shot dead. Viewing the game was a firmly entrenched routine by that time. I haven't stopped watching regularly since, for fear I might miss something important.

This week I'm preparing for a 24 -mile run on Saturday, and a backup long run Sunday, my final thrust before the taper into Tucson. Therefore, my runs during the week will be short, namely two miles today, and three tomorrow.

When I got to the gym Boston Bill was burning up the track, doing some serious speedwork. He looked fantastic as he blazed by in a blur. Surely he'll get his Boston qualifier in Tucson, with several minutes to spare. With better weather, a faster course, harder training, and only 31
seconds to shave off his last marathon, he's got it in the bag. The only thing I have in a bag is some taco chips.

Whoops, I wasn't going to talk about that anymore. But I wish I had the same confidence in myself. I'd need to shave fifty minutes off my PR to go to Boston.

After three warmup walking laps, I launched into my two-mile run ( 2.03 miles on tRtNE) with the hope of trying to hit a sub-9:00 pace. I should have warmed up with three or four running laps and recovery first. It took only two laps until I was gasping and in a world of suffering.

It wasn't pleasant, and it was far from a PR, but I finished in 18:21, for a net 9:03 pace. The time ranked seventh of 46 recorded for the distance. I've run it as fast as 8:26 per mile. Now, if I could just try it without this concrete sack strapped to my middle ...

## Marking Time <br> Sunday, November 21, 1999

I've been quiet for a few days. Many stresses from work and Real Life, including fallout from the tragedy I related on November 5, have preoccupied me. But I'm happy to report that apparently my decision to go lightly during midweeks and hammer the weekend long runs has been working.

Wednesday I went for an ordinary midweek run rather than a tenmiler. After leaving Cyra-Lea at her piano lesson, I went to the post office, then returned and snoozed in her teacher's waiting room the rest of the hour. Afterward we headed to the gym where I did three miles at 9:36 pace. I still think I'm working far too hard to achieve this rate of speed.

On Thursday I powerwalked a mere half mile, but at a sub-12:00 pace. Until I learn the technique better, my personal version of powerwalking means alternating a lap of ordinary fast walking with a lap of racewalking, which I seem to have the technical ability to do, but still with little endurance.

Following that warmup I put in a short but highly effective 35 minutes on the weights. On Friday I rested completely.

## How Do You Do It

Saturday I returned to action. After being out and about for three hours in the morning, I returned and immediately began my long run preparations. The only preparation I forgot was applying lubricant to my tender parts, which turned raw by late afternoon.

Bally's was unusually deserted all afternoon. Over a period of four or five hours the entire occupancy turns over several times. Some people stay a half hour, most stay an hour, a few hard core people stay two hours or more, and then there are the nuts like me. Actually, there is only one nut like me that goes there with any regularity.

All afternoon there was only one person I ever talk to in the place, a fellow I had time only to wave and say Hi to as he was on his way out.

I did make one new acquaintance, a young woman (about thirty) named Linda. As I've explained previously, I don't make a regular habit of walking up and talking to women I've never met. This particular lady I have been seeing regularly for the last several months. She's extraordinarily fit, one of those who spends over two hours in the weight room doing exercises that are beyond my ability, using heavy weight. She shows an unusual amount of muscle bulk for a woman, but is compact, with little body fat.

In addition, she's an excellent runner, and has put in up to eight miles or so on various Saturdays, lapping me often. We'd waved and acknowledged each other several times before, so it wasn't like she was being hit on by a complete stranger. But we'd never both been standing still at the same time so as to have the opportunity to talk. Saturday we arrived at the gym at the same time.

I've wanted to ask her if she trains for races. When I approached, she greeted me with, "Hello, marathon man!" She'd gotten that part figured out right. She'd run a half marathon last year, and decided to keep up her running. Good for her. We chatted only two or three minutes, and then it was time for both of us to get to work. She was still there over two hours later.

Saturday the schedule called for 24.04 miles, 273 laps on tRtNE . I didn't know how it would go, but with two days of non-running, eight hours of sleep the night before, and a good attitude, I was optimistic.

The first lap felt wonderful. Assuming I didn't ruin things by going out too fast, I would be fine. I still experienced a little bit of shin pain the first forty laps, but not as bad as it has been in the past.

I came well-armed with liquids and goos. I had three quarts of Gatorade and four Clif Shots, in addition to my pill box stocked with Succeed! and Advil. I drank a whole pint of Gatorade every 40 laps, consumed a Clif Shot every 40 starting at 80, and took another electrolyte tab at 80 and 160, and more Advil at 120.

The run gradually got better. Where does this ability come from, and how do I do it? I have absolutely no idea. Laps 120-160 (10.6 to 14.1 miles) I ran like a freight train-smooth, consistent, and relentless, every step identical to the last, breathing easy, my pace still up at its maximum level for the day, the time and the laps flying by evenly. I hated to stop at 160, but knew better than to skip it. I was on target for a PR at the distance.

By 180 I sensed the gas running out of the tank. Schluurrrp! At 185, alarms started to go off, and by 190 I had entered deep bite-me mode. The next 83 laps were run on raw determination, at an enforced slower pace.

Sheryl Crow returned to the gym's speaker system after an absence of months. This time she preached repeatedly her naïvely simple home-spun philosophy: "If it makes you happy, it can't be that baaa-a-aa-ad." Wellthere was a thought to ponder. I was in no condition to argue the point rationally.

The worst segment was from 200-240 laps. During that period I started to experience mild nausea. I wonder if I'm taking too much electrolyte. I've got to check that out.

Another possibility: during a long period of vigorous exercise, the alimentary canal becomes like the Alaskan pipeline, dumping large quantities of fluids and foods into it that must be processed immediately and much more quickly than normally. A body has to get used to that sort of stress.

Eventually I finished, as I inevitably had to, in 4:29:27-not the distance PR I had expected, but the second slowest of 5 on record. After fifteen minutes of recovery and stretching, I headed home to an early dinner, following which Suzy and I went to see the Arizona Opera Company's performance of Mozart's Le Nozze di Figaro, my final feat of endurance for
the day. ${ }^{2}$
I didn't get to bed until nearly 1:00 A.M., but was up at 6:30 A.M. to get some important studying done before going out for the morning, not returning until 1:45 P.M. Then it was straight back to Bally's for another dose of endurance training. Just what I needed! I haven't been running nearly enough lately.

It's sometimes difficult to convey sarcasm in writing. Please note that I'm writing this from the perspective of having already finished what I'll now describe.

Today is two weeks until Tucson Marathon. For the sake of preparation for Across the Years, I wanted to heap another half marathon on top of yesterday's 24 miles. You say I'm unreasonable? Very well, then, I'm unreasonable, to paraphrase Bertrand Russell. But I did it.

Naturally, I didn't expect to set the track on fire today. I wanted only to cover the distance, even if I was forced to walk much of the way. But I wanted to run as much of it as possible.

I started out walking one lap out of five, and at thirty laps, I walked one out of ten until eighty. From then until the end (149 laps), I sometimes walked the first of five or the first of ten, striving to keep ahead of an overall sixty-second per lap pace. I normally run them close to fifty seconds per lap.

This resulted in a 2:28:29 half marathon, a 12:05 pace, and a PW by over 8 minutes, if I were counting it as a run rather than a run-walk. (I won't.) Nearest I can figure, I walked twenty of those laps, and the ones I ran were slow, around 54-55 seconds on average.

Although Sunday's slog was slow, it gave me a new sort of PR: a twoday cumulative distance of 37.16 miles. I've never tried to track that statistic, but I'm quite sure that's my best by far, and was worth noting. That spectacular surge, marked the time to begin my official taper into Tucson.

Today's performance is a typical demonstration of why I don't Gallowalk. The technique served a useful purpose for today, when I was hobbling along on exhausted legs, but I would never do it on any kind of regular basis, and certainly not in a race the distance of a marathon or less.

[^16]How am I ever going to run for 24 hours? Only forty days remain to figure out the answer to that question.

## I'll Follow The Sun

## Thursday, November 25, 1999

We don't observe holidays that most people in our part of the world do. Today is just a paid day off work for me, a chance to sleep in, and to get some things done that have needed doing, such as upgrading my Macintosh clone.

It's also one of the most spectacularly beautiful days that Arizona has to offer. At 2:30 P.M. the temperature is 65 degrees, the humidity is 11 percent, and it's yet another perfectly cloudless day.

On both Monday and Tuesday I rested completely, skipping even strength training.

On Wednesday I ran only two miles, but hard. The last time I did only two miles, one a week ago, I started out too fast and without adequate warmup, throwing myself into instant oxygen debt, and bringing grief and woe on myself. Wednesday I walked some laps, then trotted lightly one, walked one, trotted another one, then walked one more as a warmup before starting out for real.

The result was a more comfortable run overall, but slightly slower than last week, for a 9:07 pace. Rats. I should be capable of running sub-9:00 consistently at that distance, but I can't. My heart rate averaged $89 \%$ of my maximum. The effort is there, but the speed is not. It must be that anvil I carry in my shorts. I'm also sure I was still recovering from the weekend, though I was not sore at all.

The gym is open today. Suzy and Cyra-Lea went this morning, but I opted instead for a noon trip to the nearby high school to run 10K on the track. I owned the place except for a football player who was practicing bursts of backwards running, but left a few minutes after I got there, and a couple of shot-putters who were there for half an hour in the middle of my run.

I had no desire to push hard. It's easy to track a 2:30 per lap pace, so that's what I aimed for. I stayed consistently between right on pace to five
seconds ahead and finished with four seconds to spare at 1:02:26, a 10:03 pace. It was fun the whole way, and I was sorry to be done because it was so pretty out, and refreshing to run in the beautiful sunshine for a change. But I knew better than to try and extend it.

## The Beat Goes On

## Sunday, November 28, 1999

The Big T is upon me. Tucson? No: Tapering for Tucson. Taking it easy when I have some time off work is not something I do often.

Friday afternoon Cyra-Lea and I headed for the gym. She's been doing three miles faithfully nearly every time she goes. Until recently, she was a runner with little resolve. She's run several 5 Ks and 10 Ks , but has always procrastinated over training for them. At least two out of three times she'd start out on a run and throw in the towel at a mile and a half or two miles. She's done two or three 10 Ks having never run more than five miles in preparation. Lately she's shown more personal commitment to her own training program, and has been faithful to it. Since she has the desire to be a health care professional, I'm glad to see her doing this more rigorously without any prompting from me.

I was going to do two track miles, but instead snagged an open elliptical trainer. After twenty minutes of cranking, I was dripping and my knees were woozy. I did ten minutes forwards, with no hands on the support bars, and ten minutes backwards. The balance is a little trickier, but I found that merely resting my pinkies on the handles, without putting weight on them, was sufficient to keep me steady.

For the sake of my records I entered this as the equivalent of a twomile run at 10:00 pace, which I followed with thirty minutes of light but effective weight training.

I've read that a person shouldn't do weight training the last ten days of a taper. I'm ignoring that advice, but not with cavalier disregard for my well-being. All I'm doing is keeping things tight, like a piano tuner who comes on stage during the intermission at a piano recital to touch up any problem areas in an otherwise well-tuned instrument. I'm not killing myself with exhausting heavy lifting sessions. I never do.

It's now Sunday afternoon and Cyra-Lea and I just returned from another workout. Today I did eight miles. It will be my longest run until Tucson Marathon a week from today. Tuesday I'll do three and Wednesday between three and five depending on how I feel, and that will be all.

When I started today I didn't care at all about my pace. As the laps clicked by, I felt like running, and at the same time could feel the strain of the extra weight I've been carrying. It ticked me off.

When I reached four miles, my watch said 41 minutes flat. Not good enough. I should be able to ease along at a consistent sub-10:00 pace at that distance. It made me madder. Instantly I jammed it into high gear and put the pedal to the metal, even though I'm tapering for a marathon a week away, and still am letting my legs recover from the long distance I covered last weekend. I'm tired of lumbering along like a buffalo.

My body obeyed. The laps gradually got faster, going from 52 seconds down to 46 each. My breathing got noisy as I hoofed and whoofed, exhaling hard every four steps, but with control.

With twenty laps to go a pretty girl stretching in a corner smiled at me. I ran harder.

Three laps later, some tall hairy guy with tatoos and big muscles, who'd been doing some bouncy goofy running when I got there, walked nonchalantly from a corner on the track toward me, as though the world needed to step around whatever particular space on the planet he happened to be occupying at the moment, even if that was walking the wrong direction down the fast lane of a six-lane highway. I pretended to nearly blow him over with the breeze of my passing as I whizzed on by just inches from him, as though he wasn't there, and would have been roadkill, trampled into the track if he'd been in my way. A half dozen laps later he acknowledged I was there and looking good with a smile as I went by.

I finished with a negative split by a margin of $3: 23$. My overall pace was 9:42, not great, but not bad considering the first four miles was run at 10:07. I felt good when I finished, and after ten minutes of stretching I headed home satisfied.

I'm continuing to keep a column in my log counting the cumulative mileage for each previous seven days. This number gives me some indication of what to expect in freshness, and seems to be more meaningful on a daily basis than weekly totals.

Months ago it was consistently in the upper forties and lower fifties. At the time I was following a regimented routine. Therefore, if a ten-miler on one Wednesday dropped off the end of the list, it would be replaced with a new ten-miler the next, leaving the overall total much the same.

Recently, with my emphasis on some weird mileage combinations, the sequence has looked a little more unusual. For instance, the first week of the month the sequence went: 45.70, 43.50, 46.32, 47.91, 48.65, 46.71, 41.74. The last 10 days it's been $18.36,42.90,45.01,43.95,41.39,40.25,46.43,48.43$, 24.39, 19.90. I'm just now finally starting to sense the effects of tapering. By next Sunday the numbers should fall into the downright slothful range.

## Anticipation

## Tuesday, November 30, 1999

It's the last day of the month, four days until Tucson Marathon, and two days before I'll be meeting many people who have been reading this journal with regularity. It seems an appropriate moment for a status report.

Monday I wrestled with the weights for forty minutes, working a little harder than I originally intended, but carefully avoiding any leg work at all. My hamstrings still tingled from the blast I gave them Sunday afternoon.

Today I scheduled three miles, but found an open elliptical trainer, so hopped on it for twenty minutes of forward motion, and ten minutes backwards. What a sloshy feeling it is, getting off that device! It's like having to learn to walk again for the first three minutes. The session went into my record as the equivalent of three miles at 10:00.

Tomorrow I plan on walking five miles, my last exertion until Tucson.
One figure I have calculated faithfully every month since I started taking records is the percent of days that I work out. The desire to keep this figure high helps motivate me to do weight training on days that I don't run. The average for the year has been right at $75 \%$. In 1998, when I ran less mileage, it was $86 \%$.

November's total mileage was 147, well below my average of 161 a month for the year. The year's total is up to 1775 miles, exactly 50 miles
short of 1998's total. Given that I expect to add 26.2 to that on Sunday, and perhaps seventy more miles on the last day of the year, plus training runs the rest of the month, I'll top last year's figure by quite a margin. However, the target of 2000 miles by the last day before the year 2000 is out of reach.

Originally I had planned on twenty miles more this month, about the distance of one good long run. I sacrificed that mileage deliberately by letting up during the week and hammering the long runs on the weekend. This strategy seems to have worked well. I feel as ready for Tucson as an old, fat guy can be. Though I don't anticipate a PR, there's no reason I shouldn't have a good run.

## Chapter 9

## Dead in Tucson

## All Together Now <br> Thursday, December 2, 1999

The world is big enough that statistically, no matter how narrow your interests, it's possible to find an organized group of people who share them. Somewhere in this world there's a club-with a Web site, newsletter, and conventions-for retired left-handed postmen who use Amiga computers, collect African stamps, and sing karaoke.

And so it is that today I find myself on the eve of attending a convention for sandbagging, writing, distance-running denizens of the Internetnearly ninety of them. What an arcane level of specialization my life has come to!

## Glad All Over

When asked why they do it, mountain climbers sometimes answer: "Because it's there." That's the same reason I eat food.

Oops, I wasn't going to get into that subject any more. Sorry.
"Because it's there" is the primary reason I'll be running the marathon in Tucson. After experiencing bad weather at that race two years in a row, I had no inclination to repeat the experience again this year. But about
the time I started to recover from last time, plans were being made from within CrAZeD, the Arizona outpost of Dead Runners Society, to throw our seventh World Conference in Tucson, with the Tucson Marathon as the centerpiece running event.

Then a call went out for volunteers to help support this insanity. Though I've never been to a previous conference, am not a joiner by nature, nor a particularly social person, when the request arrived for someone to put up a conference Web site, I figured, "Hey, I can do that!" The decision put a major twist in my plans for 1999.

So tomorrow we're headed to the conference and the race. To call it a race in my case is an exaggeration. I've never won anything, and never will. For me the goal is to get through the experience the best way I can.

However, I've worked hard and profitably this year. I'm "in shape" in a manner of speaking.

Being "in shape" often refers to one's literal body outline, the dent one leaves when making angels in the snow. (Something I hardly ever do any more.) My silhouette makes healthy young boys and pretty young women laugh. Well OK, I admit I do have a bit of blubber around my waist, and I am carrying more weight than I should, but it's not extreme.

Physical conditioning is only superficially related to body shape. It's true that people, young ones especially, want to be able to stand before a mirror and see chiseled lines, or lovely curves. Most persons, regardless of age and marital status would like to think of themselves as attractive to the opposite sex. The days of that vain possibility are long gone for me.

More importantly, my conditioning is internal. Last night at the gym, a personal trainer in his early twenties told me, "I sure hope I'm in as good a shape as you are when I'm your age." And this morning even my seventeen-year-old daughter told me lavishly that I look fantastic for my age. Both intended their words to be complimentary, even though the qualifiers in their verbiage smack of the same flavor as telling someone from a minority that he's a credit to his race.

I've learned to accept my compliments from wherever I can get them. I said thanks both times.

Last night I did the last bit of exercising I'll be doing until I hit the road Sunday morning. At the gym I walked five miles. Within four laps I began to push it hard, and before long my motion turned to racewalking.

My endurance for this is getting better. I can keep it up consistently for eleven out of twelve laps. I finished the trek at an 11:56 pace, the first time I've ever walked that far that fast.

As a result, I've begun noting walking paces and PRs in my log files, with yesterday's effort marking my first officially recorded walk at that distance. Someday I'd like someone who is an experienced racewalker to tell me if the technique I'm using is race legal, or if I'm just running funny.

So now I have three days of well-earned rest and rumination ahead of me. Above all, I intend to get some decent sleep! You probably think that's so I can refurbish my muscles and store up energy for the big run to come. Bzzzt! Wrong! I'm just a hedonist who likes to remove all restraints from around my expanding waist, and lie naked and motionless in a soft, warm place, for hours on end.

## On the Road Again

## Wednesday, December 8, 1999

The longer I wait between RTtM posts, the harder it is get started with an update. This is all the more true when the reason for the gap is because I've been off to a running conference and a marathon.

Friday we picked up Cyra-Lea from school at 11:15 A.M. and headed south on I-10 through the scraggly desert toward Tucson to attend the Dead Runners Society World Conference \#7. The weather was anomalous and had me worried. In addition to the unusual cold, strong winds had whipped up enormous clouds of dust so thick it was like driving through fog. Only outlines and prominent features of the desert scenery were visible. I wanted our incoming guests to see the best of what Arizona has to offer this time of year.

We checked into the hotel by 1:15 P.M., the same one we stayed at the past two Tucson Marathons. The rest of the afternoon we spent in the hospitality suite, greeting conference attendees as they arrived, and watching a videotape of the Chicago Marathon, where the world record was set, and where the first two women finished one step apart.

Friday evening we all headed for a Mexican restaurant across the street. They sat us in a large outdoor room, but we parked ourselves under an
efficient heater. The place quickly filled to capacity with runners, many of whom had never met face to face, but who behaved like old friends.

As the noise level increased, the management of the restaurant must have wondered how it was that this convention group seemed to know each other so well, and how such a high level of Gemütlichkeit could be achieved when fueled by the relatively small quantity of alcohol that a group of trained athletes typically consumes.

Saturday morning the sky was clear, revealing the beautiful mountains surrounding Tucson. By afternoon the temperature rose to seventy degrees. We spent the day doing things that would not deplete my energy. It began with a trip to the marathon expo.

It was immediately apparent upon arriving at the new headquarters hotel that there have been some radical upgrades to the Tucson Marathon. Judging from the size of the crowds, I estimated there had been a tremendous jump in the number of participants. This proved to be true. Last year's results showed 1030 persons finishing the full marathon. This year there were 1525 finishers, an increase of $32.5 \%$.

We were delighted to see that, although still small, the expo was much improved. The biggest change was being moved from an outdoor tent to two rooms of a small western-style hall attached to the Sheraton headquarters resort hotel. We encountered many Dead Runners there picking up their packets.

The merchandise available was typical expo fare, but notably better than the previous two years. This year they offered fancy race T-shirts in addition to the standard short-sleeve advertising-laden shirt they give runners as part of their entry fee. I wear long sleeve race T-shirts to work, preferably without advertising, especially if they have the word MARATHON in big letters on them. Yes, I'm that vain. I bought an attractive black one. It has the required word prominently displayed in two-inch letters. I'm wearing it now.

I also bought a large pair of RaceReady shorts with pockets, and wore them in the race Sunday. Cyra-Lea bought some Nike shorts and sunglasses, which likewise proved to be useful Sunday.

From there we headed to the track at the University of Arizona, where an all comers track meet was in progress. Many Dead Runners signed up for events, and many more were there to cheer. It was fun watching
some of DRS's most formidable but no longer young runners get smoked by runners who are barely twenty years old. But I doubt any of those young'ns went out and braved the marathon the next day. Endurance sport is the domain of older athletes.

Forty-four-year-old Dead Runner Jim Adams competed in the 200 meters, 1000 meters, $4 \times 400$ meters relay, and 800 meters on the medley relay track events Saturday, then ran sub-3:00 in the marathon on Sunday. This achievement boggles my mind.

We left the track meet early to go sightseeing in beautiful Sabino Canyon. This was not a day for hiking and exploring. There was time only to take the relaxing 45-minute round trip tram ride with geriatrics, kiddies, and other tourists.

When we left Sabino it was time to head for Larocca's Italian restaurant, where Dead Runners were gathering for festivities. I resisted the urge to overdo. A salad, bread, and serving of vegetarian lasagna was exactly the right amount of food for a pre-marathon dinner. I'm sure my self-restraint contributed to a lack of potty-oriented problems Sunday, of the type I suffered from during Twin Cities Marathon, and also last year at Tucson.

During dinner two representatives of the DOA marathon relay team approached our table in hopes of recruiting a replacement member. CyraLea excitedly volunteered to run the 3.8 -mile short leg. Fortunately, she had running shoes and a shirt, and had just bought a new pair of shorts at the expo.

Cyra-Lea's training averages one or two slow three-mile runs a week. She was delighted to be asked to participate by a crew of such esteemed runners, especially given that the DOA team came in at 3:50. She had a better race than I did.

On marathon eve I have a routine I always follow. First I go through all the stuff in the race packet, looking for instructions and important information. Next I lay out all my gear in an array on a table I refer to as my altar, which cracks up Cyra-Lea. Then I make a careful checklist to follow in the morning. After that, it's do nothing much until I can justify going to bed.

This marathon eve there were revelries taking place right over our head, as the Dead Runners partied, ate, sang, joked, and visited into the


Figure 9.1: DOA Dead Runners relay team
night. I stopped up twice to check things out, and to say hello to some people I had missed before, but didn't stay long.

Finally, I settled into bed at 8:20 P.M., tossed and turned for a while, but then slept well until 3:00 A.M. I finally got up at 4:15 A.M., moments before the alarm and wakeup call.

## Every Little Thing

It's important to me to remember all the details of preparation on race morning. If I were to forget my orthotics or sunglasses, or fail to put BodyGlide somewhere that I should have, it would distract me. As far as I remember, I performed the ceremony flawlessly this time.

The morning was cold, clear, and dry. By afternoon it had become the sort of day I had most hoped for-the most gloriously perfect setting imaginable for outdoor activities, one of the best weather days Arizona has to offer. Hooray!

The hotel had the breakfast room open and ready for runners by 5:00 A.M. I was the second person in, but was followed quickly by many others. In addition to DRS members, I ran into Boston Bill from Phoenix, there to get his qualifier. I expected to see him, but didn't know he would be staying at the same hotel.

I limited my intake to a glass of orange juice, a single cup of coffee, and a cup of yogurt. In the past I've experimented with different combinations on race morning, with varying success. Less seems to work better for me.

## Riding on A Bus

At breakfast I hitched a ride to the buses with two Dead Runners, saving myself a five-dollar van fee. We were early getting out, but the traffic was already a problem. We had to walk at least ten minutes from the car to the buses. I hopped on the first one available, thereby losing track of the folks I was with.

Normally, on a race shuttle bus I make a point of introducing myself to the person next to me. This trip the fellow I was with just grunted in response. It turns out he didn't speak much English. Therefore, the ride to the start provided me with an opportunity to take a short nap. Because of the traffic jam, it seemed way too long. I yearned for the company of some Dead Runners.

When we arrived it was getting light enough to see easily. I headed straight for the still uncrowded potties, and happily was able to care of necessary business then and there, adequately enough that I didn't have to worry about it again until after the race.

The new start is on a narrow dirt road in the middle of nowhere. I heard someone say we were in a state park. Things were disorganized. They had no sound system running yet. A balloon arch marked the start, an improvement over past years, when the location of the starting line existed only in the mind of the starter. But it was not apparent at first which direction we would be running. There were cases of water bottles by the side of the road, but most runners were probably unaware of it. They did have one giant floodlight. By that hour it was no longer necessary for seeing, but did add to the festive atmosphere.

I happened to be standing six feet from the race director when she said in a loud voice for the benefit of all standing nearby that there had been a major foopah: The truck and crew had not yet arrived to pick up gear bags, and there were no extra bags available. She suggested people try to share bags, and pile them in a designated spot by the side of the road.

They would pick everything up when they could, and the RD promised they'd get it all straightened out and everyone would eventually get their stuff back.

It worked out. At the end I had to search a while for my bag, but I found it. There weren't many left by that time. It was an honor system pickup, not one monitored by attendants. I used a large dark green garbage bag of my own, rather than the dinky baggie they supplied us, and the magic marker number I wrote on it could barely be seen.

The sun came up over the trees. Immediately the cold started to vanish. I opted not to strip down to my singlet, and was glad for it later.

Amidst the chaos I located numerous Dead Runners to engage in prerace chit-chat with. Before long a small deer with an ear tag wandered out of the woods less than ten feet from me, unafraid and close enough that anyone who was inclined could have patted it on the nose.

Because the incoming traffic was bottlenecked, there was a ten-minute delay getting the race started. We heard no audible start signal where we were standing, but those at the front suddenly surged forward, so everyone followed the wave. It took between thirty and forty seconds to get to the start, and we were off.

## I Just Don't Understand

To set a PR at this race would have meant finishing sub-4:25:45. A month ago I knew this was unlikely to happen, but thought perhaps $4: 30$ was doable if the day was right. I'd arrived at the start trained, rested, comfortably pottied, and ready to run.

THE HOPE: To run between 4:30-4:35. Maybe I could defy the odds, kick out the jams, and still get that PR. The current one came two years ago on the same course, on a day when I had no thought of doing so.

THE REALITY: Instead of a PR, on a day when I was ready to run, and the conditions were perfect, I finished with a personal WORST according to my watch time. ${ }^{1}$

[^17]The first part of the race went exceptionally well. I was on a $4: 19$ pace through ten miles, and still on 4:22 pace at the half.


Figure 9.2: Still feeling pretty good at about mile 11

In 1997, at fourteen miles, a runner asked how I was doing, what my goal was, and if he could run with me. I replied that I was either having the best run of my life or was destined to go down in flames. All I had to do was hang in here. On that occasion, that's exactly what I did. This time it was not to be.

It was to be expected that I would slow down gradually. I always do. I'm embarrassed to show my splits below, but the record is instructive.

| MILE: | TIME: | TOTAL: |
| :--- | ---: | ---: |
| 01: | $10: 18.88$ | $10: 18.88$ |
| 02: | $9: 13.62$ | $19: 32.50$ |
| 03: | $9: 57.91$ | $29: 30.41$ |
| 04: | $9: 23.46$ | $38: 53.87$ |
| 05: | $9: 36.13$ | $48: 30.00$ |
| 06: | $9: 58.50$ | $58: 28.50$ |
| 07: | $9: 54.74$ | $1: 08: 23$ |
| 08: | $9: 59.51$ | $1: 18: 22$ |
| 09: | $10: 28.93$ | $1: 28: 51$ |
| 10: | $9: 56.75$ | $1: 38: 48$ |
| 11: | $10: 37.20$ | $1: 49: 25$ |
| $12:$ | $10: 05.99$ | $1: 59: 31$ |
| $13:$ | $10: 30.13$ | $2: 10: 01$ |
| $14:$ | $10: 27.41$ | $2: 20: 29$ |
| $15:$ | $11: 00.71$ | $2: 31: 29$ |
| 16: | $11: 11.89$ | $2: 42: 41$ |
| 17: | $11: 22.24$ | $2: 54: 04$ |
| $18:$ | $11: 21.00$ | $3: 05: 25$ |
| $19:$ | $12: 05.22$ | $3: 17: 30$ |
| $20:$ | $12: 23.25$ | $3: 29: 53$ |
| $21:$ | $12: 29.75$ | $3: 42: 23$ |
| $22:$ | $12: 16.00$ | $3: 54: 39$ |
| $23:$ | $12: 56.00$ | $4: 07: 35$ |
| $24:$ | $13: 30: 60$ | $4: 21: 05$ |
| $25:$ | $14: 17.76$ | $4: 35: 23$ |
| $26.2:$ | $16: 46.56$ | $4: 52: 10$ |

Clearly, around fifteen miles my pace slipped dramatically and irrevocably. I knew I had slowed considerably, but was still feeling enthusiastic, and hopeful of matching last year's time of 4:35, run in an intense headwind.

One goal I had Sunday was no matter what, I would at least keep running and not surrender to the urge to walk. I knew from previous experience that once I give in to unscheduled walks, I never pull out of it.

It was a noble idea, but at exactly the 22-mile marker I broke that promise. My legs were done. The last three miles I made running motions with my legs and arms, but I was thrashing. By the end I was unable
even to leave the ground with each step. As I recently learned, on a day when I'm fresh, I can powerwalk faster than any of last six mile splits.

Less than a half mile from the end a spectator on the side of the road was wearing a T-shirt that said: "Your village called. Their idiot is missing." How I wished for a cell phone!


Figure 9.3: Just about to turn the corner before the final 200 yards. Note the steady uphill just completed. Also note my massive stride length. (About my shoe size.)

As noted in the chart, my final wretched watch time was 4:52:10. Gross. Still, I had a great time and look forward to trying again.

## Because

In retrospect, several factors may have contributed the demise of my performance in this race.

Boston Bill (who easily made his qualifier) theorized that I lacked sufficient fuel. Saturday night I ate less than usual, and Sunday I had a small breakfast. They had no XLR8 on the course until mile eight, which surprised and disappointed me, because I was counting on having it available. Thereafter I had two cups of XLR8 at almost every water stop, but it seemed to be a weakly diluted mixture. Later I had one Clif Shot that I carried with me, and whatever toothpaste-tube goo they handed us around


Figure 9.4: Around the corner, with the end about fifty yards ahead
mile nineteen, by which time it was too late to do much good. I carried a PowerBar in my pocket, but the idea of eating it was revolting.

Personally, I don't agree that lack of fuel was the biggest enemy. I'm basing this conjecture on the nature of the tiredness I felt. Every runner has felt the debilitating sort of lethargicly drunken tiredness that hits on a hot day, when your whole body becomes limp and heavy, your head hangs down, and even walking is unpleasant. Evil chemicals surge about, and voices in your head attempt to make you think you'd rather die than continue doing what you're doing.

My experience Sunday wasn't like that.
I continued to feel both mentally and physically good. I was willing to run, but my quadriceps flat out quit on me. Dead. Gone. I was like a car without shock absorbers.

If I couldn't even get airborne with each step, nothing short of a faster turnover would get me where I was going sooner than walking. This scenario doesn't sound to me like a lack of energy, just a matter of depleted muscle. Nutritionists may tell me there is no difference.


Figure 9.5: Gasp!

Judging from my splits, it would be logical to assume that I went out too fast. Perhaps so. Doing so is hard to resist with such downhills, which are more inviting the first part of the race than the last. Two years ago I passed the halfway point six minutes ahead of this year's time, and hung on to finish well. It was natural to hope that history might repeat itself.

Ironically, while standing in the porta-potty line, the guy behind me, who at around age forty looked trim and fit, said this was his first marathon, and asked me if I had any advice. He must have mistaken me for Bill Rodgers, which is understandable, since we're about the same age. Without hesitating I admonished him: "Don't go out too fast!!" Sheesh. Physician heal thyself. Meanwhile, the dude I was handing out the free advice to looked like he was good for a 3:30.

The third factor was the hills themselves. One indisputable disadvantage of my eccentric geezerly training routine on an indoor track is that I get almost no hill training of any type. It's natural for guys like me to think Pollyannishly that I'll squeak by on the uphills (huff, puff), and the downhills will take care of themselves, because after all, they're downhills, and easy. Bzzzt! Wrong! A half mile downhill may be easy, and roaringly good fun, but twenty-plus miles is not. So before future road races I need to do more hill work.

Finally, the most obvious thing I can do for myself to improve my running speed is to lose some weight. I'm ten to twelve pounds heavier now than when I ran Tucson two years ago. Despite much more rigorous training this past year, my overall paces have been consistently slower. What am I supposed to expect when I run with a bowling ball in my shorts?

Remarkably, I'm sure that if I had chosen to run the half marathon I would have had a good race at the least, and may even have PRed. But that's not what I did.

Fortunately I'm not the sort of fellow who sits and mopes about less-than-best athletic performances. All year my ultimate target event for the year has been the Across the Years 24 -hour race, now only 23 days away. Therefore, even though I did get a PW rather than a PR in Tucson, I still had an enjoyable, hard, long training run on a beautiful day that was well worth the effort, and can now claim one more marathon on my running resumé.

We didn't stick around for race food or to see the awards, but headed immediately for the car, which Suzy had parked a half mile up the road,
and from there to the DRS conference picnic five miles up Oracle Road at Catalina State Park. What a beautiful spot! Not a soul other than Dead Runners was anywhere to be seen. This provided opportunity to talk further to some I had missed, and to trade war stories.

Regrettably, we had an impossibly tight schedule, so had to leave by 2:30 in order to be back in Phoenix, cleaned up, and ready to go to a Steinway artists piano recital that night. We made it, but not with much time to spare. The performance by Alan Gampel was wonderful, which I badly needed in order to stay awake.

## I Should Have Known Better

## Friday, December 10, 1999

It's now been five days since I returned from Tucson. On Monday morning I confronted the task of recovering from the marathon, and then preparing for Across the Years, in the span of 25 days.

From my vantage point on the bright side of Quadricepial Perdition I thought that, because I've been trying to build up my ability to run on tired legs, on Monday I would do fifteen miles, even if I had to walk most of it. Then I was to do twenty easy miles tomorrow. Yes, I knew it would be difficult.

Difficult!!?? Ha!! What was I thinking!? By Sunday afternoon I needed my daughter's help getting out of the car. As part of her nursing training she has learned how to lift invalides twice her size out of a chair.

On Monday I could barely walk from my car to my office and from there to the bathroom, let alone dream of running even a single lap at the gym. I took the day off in toto and spent the evening watching large, padded men jump on each other, while drinking some of the beer I hauled home in the cooler I loaned to the DRS conference.

If I had followed through on this week's original plan, I would have accumulated a seven-day total of 64 miles, including that blow-out marathon. I've never run more than 52.5 miles in an official Sunday to Saturday week.

In my ache-state I besought wise ones in the ultrarunning community for counsel on how to optimize my readiness for Across the Years, given
the little time that was left. A variety of responses were returned, with suggestions at opposite ends of the spectrum.

One runner thinks I should just rest from now until then. Another suggested I set up a table on a track with all the gear I'll need during the race, and should try to go at least seven hours, starting at 11:00 P.M., to see how I will handle the sleep deprivation.

Almost all the experienced ultrarunners assured me that there's little I can do presently to improve my fitness by three weeks from now. I should trust the training I did for Tucson and through the rest of the year. The amount of exertion that people recommended varied, but almost no one suggested that I do much running. Instead, the thrust was that I concentrate mostly on walking for the rest of the year, and do a little light jogging to supplement it, but no speed work.

No training plan should be chiseled in marble. Sticking to a plan is a good thing, but the purpose of a plan is to produce the best results. If it's obvious that something is not going to work, then we adjust. No big whoop. So then, mostly walking it will be for the rest of the month, year, decade, century, and pseudo-millennium.

On Tuesday I showed up at the gym, where I spent ten token minutes on a stationary bike while trading tales with Boston Bill. He easily made his qualifier, and enjoyed the luxury of slowing down and running in slowly the last 10 K , following which he helped out by working the finishing chute for an hour. The bike was followed by twenty minutes of light weight lifting. Finally, I walked around the track a few times, stretched thoroughly (oooouuuchh!!), and went home.

By Wednesday morning the pain had stopped, but my legs were still tired. Cyra-Lea and I went to the gym, I spent fifteen minutes on the stationary bike, walked a half mile, did token sets of weights and quit.

Thursday I did three miles, but I counted it as walking. Of the 35 laps, I normalwalked a few laps, powerwalked some more, racewalked a few more, and even ran four of them slowly, for a net pace of 13:04. That was all the workout I needed.

Today is Friday and I'm slothing out again. Tomorrow it will be back to work with three hours of combined running and walking, however far that takes me.

## Give Me Some Truth

## Saturday, December 11, 1999

This morning I talked about running with a non-running but healthy friend fourteen years my junior who would like to take up running. His questions indicated that he's bought into the full gamut of misconceptions that beginning runners often need to undo before they can progress.
"How do you run so far? I get out of breath just running a block." Obviously, he's going out too fast. If I couldn't breathe, I couldn't run at all, not more than a few steps. So I run slow enough to allow myself the luxury of oxygen. So do we all, unless we are short distance sprinters.

Every runner with more than a week's experience knows that if you hit the pavement on the first step in bat-out-of-a-warm-place mode, you'll quickly find yourself unable to breathe enough. That's why the record for the 400 -meter sprint is more than double the record for the 200-meter sprint. ${ }^{2}$ The farther you go the more you have to slow down.
"What do you do about aching joints and injuries? Every time I start running my knees or my ankles give out." I had to confess that except for a bit of a bout with Achilles tendonitis, which is now under control, I've never experienced an injury. People do get injured, but it's often from pushing their limits too hard, or doing something stupid, often in ignorance, such as trying to increase both speed and mileage at the same time. Runners who train intelligently are often able to minimize their down time, if not eliminate it altogether.
"Don't you get bored running for so long?" Boredom is a feeling someone gets when he isn't enjoying what he is doing. When I run, I do so by choice, because it's something I want to do. When I am doing what I want

[^18]to do, how could I possibly be bored? How would I feel if I were doing something else instead?
"What kind of shoes should I get? I suppose I should just sink some money into a pair of good Nikes?" Spoken like another potential Just For Feet sucker. I gave him his first lesson in choosing shoes. When he parted he was determined to head off to Runners Den to purchase a pair and get started. Another neophyte launched on the road to purity.

In two weeks he'll be able to outrun me.

## Sea of Holes

Plans are falling in place for Across the Years. I've been busy filling in holes: defining important jobs that need doing, making schedules, lists of things to do and get, and records that must to be kept, and have potentially assigned crew members to care for them.

By happy coincidence, a younger brother has recently bought a brand new house barely ten minutes from the race site. He'll be in Mexico for the holiday weekend, but we are invited to make use of his house if my wife and daughter need to sleep, which will be the case. We will probably sleep there the night before the race, saving me the drive from an hour away. This will make it convenient to set up my personal aid station (a supply tent) the night before.

It's starting to get exciting.
Today was my first opportunity to test my battered legs since last Sunday's debacle. This weekend will be my only opportunity to cover any long distance, while deep-tapering into ATY, if I'm going to do any at all.

Today I ran for time rather than distance, because I had no idea starting out what pace I'd be able to sustain. I didn't want to set a mileage goal and then find I had to stay out four hours and completely exhaust myself to make it.

I started a few minutes after 1:00 P.M., feeling certain that I would be good for three hours. It was a good call. I was tired at the end, but by no means spent. I didn't overdo it. The gym rats who see me there every weekend must have wondered if there was something wrong with me because I was running so wimpily.

When I left the house I told my family that I was going to walk for three hours. The first six laps I walked normally. Then I ran six very slowly. I was stiff and tired, but not so much so that I couldn't do it. After that I walked another six, and ran two to get to twenty laps. From then until the end I walked only when the counter showed a number divisible by five. On two occasions I ran nine in a row, and once I ran fourteen. At the end (2:59:55) I had covered 165 laps, 14.53 miles at a leisurely 12:22 overall pace. Stretching before I went home produced some exquisitely delicious pain, a sign that I badly needed the stretching.

## Pain in My Heart

## Sunday, December 12, 1999

Now I'm really tired. From tomorrow until December 31 I'm going to coast. Next Saturday I'll do ten miles, but I may walk them all.

Following yesterday's run-walk, I piled on ten more miles today, with about ten percent more walking, and fifty percent more misery. It was not a fun experience.

We were obliged to attend a pot luck meal at 1:00 P.M. today. I restrained myself admirably, limiting my entire intake to three radishes, two modest pieces of reasonably healthy vegetarian lasagna, and a piece of garlic toast. Nonetheless, it was more than I wanted at that time. After exchanging token pleasantries, I escaped and headed straight to the gym.

I gulped some Pepcid A/C and three Advil before I started, but it was too late. The antacid works well as preventive medicine, but should be taken before it is needed.

For the first five miles, my stomach caught fire and caused me to cry out in anguish an average of once every five laps. After that it simmered down and stopped bothering me. It was torture while it lasted.

It's apparent that my legs are still by no means recovered from last week. Walking felt fine, but every step that I ran sent a jolt through me. As I ran I couldn't avoid slouching over, and must have looked like I was eighty years old. I was never so glad to be done with a session as I was today.

I had a half hour to spend before leaving to pick up Cyra-Lea, who was busy performing Ravel and Dvořák at a piano recital where no parents were invited. The time was spent doing a comprehensive round of single set weight exercises, followed by stretching, which was even more painful today than yesterday.

The mother of all tapers has now officially begun.

## Not Guilty

## Wednesday, December 15, 1999

It's Wednesday and I'm feeling good.
Yesterday I arrived at Bally's at the same time as Boston Bill. It was my intent to walk three miles, with no running at all. Bill decided to walk with me the whole way.

It sounds funny to say so, but this regular Boston qualifier, who is at least two inches taller than me, eight years younger, twenty pounds lighter, and has legs that extend to his armpits, slowed me down. My overall pace turned out to be 16:52. I've recently discovered that if I powerwalk, without slipping into a much more strenuous racewalk motion, I can keep up a pace between 13:00 and 13:30 without straining myself.

The restraint undoubtedly did me good. It felt refreshing to do some old-fashioned low-stress strolling for a change, while chatting about running and life in general, without feeling like a guilty sluggard about it. I'll do it again tonight and only two more miles of the same tomorrow. My mitochondria are slapping high fives and dancing to the song YMCA over the break I'm giving them.

## Across the Universe

At this juncture the best thing I can do to prepare myself for the longest single trek I've ever made on foot is to tap the knowledge base of wise and experienced ones and plan, plan, plan. The physical training part is over.

The best source I know of for solid gold advice on the special problems of ultrarunners is the Ultra email list. Like every other unmoderated email
list, it propagates a percentage of noise, off-topic trivia, and unnecessary vulgarity. But the list is inhabited by a disproportional number of runners who are both vastly experienced as ultrarunners and also scientists, medical field professionals, engineers, college professors, and otherwise knowledgeable and articulate people. Often, when I venture forth to ask a question on the list, I'm likely to get an answer with this sort of flavor:

On page 974 of my latest book on that subject, Arcane Science Glibly Obfuscated, I challenge the venerably erudite Professor Hi Falutin von Rumptydump, Ph.D.'s classic monograph on genetics, which says: "Blah blah blah ..."

At the same time I get genuinely warm and friendly encouragement from runners whose experience has been far on the opposite end of the spectrum from my own.

And so these days my running thoughts are preoccupied with the logistics of accomplishing a 24-hour endurance run, because it will not happen all by itself. These are some things I've had to consider.

- Acquiring gear: What must I have on-site, what do I have in my possession, and what do I need to borrow or buy? I'll borrow a tent to use as a center of operations.
I'll need to buy some tights to avoid freezing my patootie during the cold desert night just a few days following the shortest day of the year. I'd better do that soon.
I haven't checked into rain gear. People in Arizona don't think about rain often. If it rains that night, which is possible, because December is the rainy season, I'll turn to a block of ice. It's not unusual for it to get down to the mid-twenties this time of year in outlying areas such as where I'll be running.
- Support: Suzy and Cyra-Lea will be there, of course, but not the full 24 hours. We haven't determined the details of this yet.
Several months ago my son Aaron expressed interest in being present to witness this feat. Whether it's for the purpose of admiring his Dad or to see whether I will go down in flames is difficult to tell.

Since the time we agreed to this, circumstances have arisen that will make this arrangement awkward to fulfill. Nonetheless, because I need him, he's agreed to be my primary handler during the nighttime shift, to be available to help me with whatever physical tasks I might have to deal with after Suzy and Cyra-Lea have to call it quits for the night.

We will use my younger brother's new home near the race site as an outpost. Suzy and Cyra-Lea will need to get at least some sleep during the night. When Aaron needs sleep he can crash in the tent. It may be possible to flop out inside the school. We haven't verified this.
Cyra-Lea will be my official secretary, scribbling down notes, ideas, and recollections as I dictate whenever I pass by.

- Visual documentation: I still haven't arranged to make a visual record. We have a good Nikon, but my video camera is broken, and I wish I had a digital camera. We'd like to get shots from the 6-day race.
- Blisters: Eeeewww! I'm told I'd better be prepared to know how to deal with them. I've never had blisters, and am squeamish just thinking about this. Maybe I should let my nursing student daughter research this for me. She's the sort of person who finds endoscopy fascinating. Nothing grosses her out.
- Schedules: I'm planning on both scheduling and recording what and how I eat and drink, calculating calories, and my intake of nonfood substances such as electrolyte capsules and NSAIDs (Advil) so these are used optimally rather than carelessly guzzled. I'm told I'll need between 300 and 450 calories an hour. Over a 24-hour period that amounts to several normal days worth of food.
- Strategy: Last but not least, I've predetermined a strategy for running. I'll walk at least the first mile, and thereafter will likely walk one lap in five for as long as I can keep it up. I fully expect that sometime, possibly through most of the night, I'll be doing almost entirely walking.
It's my hope to stay on the course and not sleep or rest more than a few minutes at a time the whole race. Tents tend to devour race
participants. I'm afraid that if I lie down or stop for long I won't want to start again.

So far 51 persons signed up for all three Across the Years races. The event is getting close to full. The race director says they can manage as many as sixty people on the track the final day.

Finally, as if I don't have enough balls in the air right now, today we will be going off to buy a car-the first brand new automobile I've ever owned.

## Mother Nature's Son

## Saturday, December 18, 1999

Because I vary my training and maintain meticulous training records, I provide myself many opportunities to set PRs. Some road racers note only their racing $5 \mathrm{~K}, 10 \mathrm{~K}$, half marathon, marathon, and 50 K times. I track also training times at every mile distance from two miles to 24 , as measured on the track at Bally's, several standard outdoor routes that I run and have measured with a surveyor's wheel, and also walking paces, weekly, monthly, and yearly total mileage, and various oddball statistics.

So far in 1999 I've set sixteen PRs, as compared with 25 in 1998. My most recent was on November 21, when I recorded a two-day cumulative mileage of 37.16 miles. This is certain to be my last PR of the year, with one notable exception: those that I will record for longest distance traveled in a single run, and longest time for a single run, when I go 24 hours on December 31.

Both those records will be added to this year's totals even though they won't be completed until January 1, 2000. The reason for that is because that's how I want to do it. This is likely to be my best year ever, and I regard the climax of that activity to be an integral part of it, even if I finish it a few hours into the new year.

Nothing short of bubonic plague or natural disaster can keep me from completing my journey into the new millennium. Unfortunately, BP is a distinct possibility, with all the people hacking their lungs out around me
lately. So I'm being careful, getting rest, and eating healthy food, albeit chased by cookies sometimes-low-fat cookies, I'm told.

I'll have to be prepared for any eventuality. What sort of fool spends a winter holiday running in ovals around a high school track all night long, while the threat of international power failures, plane crashes, computer outages, and mass suicides hovers in the background? Whatever kind of fool I am—that kind. It means being ready for cold, rain, and possibly even snow, and being willing to put up with it.

Today we went to Runners Den, our excellent local running store, where I checked off one unresolved bullet item. We went primarily to buy CyraLea some new running shoes. As long as we were there I purchased a pair of Asics running tights to wear through the night. I'm certain to need them. I hope they're sufficient. They're certainly comfortable.

I've volunteered to help out three afternoons and evenings during the 6-day race, probably as a lap counter. In addition, a few weeks ago the race director recruited me to work as a publicist for the race, which I consider an honor. Regrettably, I've been unable to do much to date other than submit a yet to be published blurb to Runner's World, and to fail twice to talk potential video documenters into showing up. I'm working on cultivating interest in the story on the part of the publisher of another runners' periodical, but nothing has been decided yet.

This sort of coverage is all after the fact. What we need now is the sort of publicity that might inspire sponsors to help bankroll some foreign ultrarunners who have shown interest in being there, but who need financial assistance. But that sort of interest has so far not been forthcoming.

Earlier I mentioned the possibility that Yiannis Kouros would show up for the 6-day race. It is now definite that Kouros will not come. I had hoped to use that to advantage in attracting interest. Kouros' participation would have virtually guaranteed media coverage. That issue is now water under the bridge. The race will go on just fine without him.

The move to become more personally involved in the race is only partially a gesture of magnanimity. It's at least as much an act of enlightened self-interest.

It's true that I'm genuinely fascinated by this noble running event, and want to be closely associated with it and to view it up close. Being on site I should have opportunity to pick up some last-minute insight into how
experienced extended ultradistance runners cope with problems such as nighttime running, sleep deprivation, eating, nausea, working with crews, and extremely slow pacing.

By the night before my own race I'll know everyone already on the track, will scope out a spot to set up my tent, and by the time I arrive to run on Friday morning, I will have greatly increased my personal comfort zone, instead of feeling like a clueless Dork from Ork, having no idea what's going on.

Aaaaaahhhh!! What have I done??? Ahem. I am not afraid.

## Any Time at All

Until today I had done almost no running at all since last Sunday.
On Wednesday, during Cyra-Lea's piano lesson, I walked four miles, resisting the urge to run, except for two minutes, to assure I would end with a negative split for the substantially more uphill return trip. Then we went home and my wife and I went out and bought a new car. I'll be poor for the rest of my life. Aaaaaahhhh!! What have I done??? Ahem. I am not afraid.

Thursday evening I had important Real Life matters to attend to, including two presentations to prepare, so had time only to walk two miles, which I did starting from my front door. It was a chilly but beautiful late afternoon, and I wished I could have walked another hour. On Friday I rested.

After a busy morning visiting people from door-to-door, I hit the track for what would be my last serious effort at running until ATY. ${ }^{3}$

Today I cared not one whit about my time or pace. All I wanted was to cover ten miles, mostly running, but with some walking interspersed. The idea was to get used to the rhythm I expect to use at ATY, where I plan to establish a pattern from the beginning of running four laps and walking one, holding that for as long as possible.

[^19]Since my PR at ten miles (114 laps, 10.04 miles) is $1: 31$, I felt a little silly at the gym moving as slowly as I did, past people who have seen me week after week. I felt like shouting out, as I ran past the big dudes with backwards hats and tatoos in the free weights area, "Hey, boys! I can do way better than this! Really!"

It occurred to me that I wasn't even breathing hard. I was mostly getting a little bit sweaty, rather than accomplishing any great measure of aerobic training. Despite it, I maintained my pokey pace. Starting at fifty laps, I skipped walking the laps whose numbers ended in five. At 101 laps I ran it in to the end, and when I got to 108, I suddenly greatly increased the pace, running the last half mile at what felt like a 9:15 rate, for an overall net pace of 11:45.

This week I logged a total of 29.26 miles. Three times this year I ran further than that in a single day. My daily seven-day accumulation figures are dropping rapidly. Next week I'll cover a total of no more than seventeen miles, at least half of which will be walked. By the time I step up to the starting line at ATY, my seven-day accumulation should be nine miles, I'll have entered deep sloth mode, and I should be raring to go. That's assuming I haven't forgotten by that time how to run, and meanwhile taken up another hobby, such as lying all night on the hood of a car and listening for signs of extra-terrestrial life on a radio telescope.

## Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds

## Tuesday, December 21, 1999

Today on the Ultra List there was a heavily trafficked thread wherein contributors enthusiastically related their favorite hallucinations induced by sleep deprivation while running races that extend to twelve hours and more, usually into the nighttime hours.

Hallucinations!? Oh my. What have I gotten into? Now I find out about this, only ten days (and nine good night's sleep) before I attempt to run for 24 hours? No one warned me about this part of it. Endorphin highs are one thing, but hallucinations are quite another.

I've read about runners seeing phantom running companions, vans coming to give runners rides, snakes and vicious animals on the road,
newspaper writing on legs that would not wash off in the shower, dinosaurs, vultures and witches devouring a fallen runner, brass bands marching across a glacier, and an impaled Christ affixed to the tall trees in a forest.

Mind you, I'm a product of the wicked sixties, and used to drink deeply of the cup of the sort of life that was common among young people in those days. One might think I would be chomping at the bit to hit the road on hearing of such excitement, in gleeful anticipation of states of altered consciousness.

Not so. I've changed my view substantially on the desirability and benefits of hallucinations. They're greatly overrated. Now I prefer the visions my head presents after a good night's rest.

Like many young fools who will pay for their folly later, I used to try to get by on five hours of sleep or less regularly. A news blurb in a recent Awake! magazine reported that Americans are sleeping as much as an hour and a half less per night than they did at the turn of the century because people have come to regard sleep as a commodity they could short change. It's been considered a mark of hard work and upward mobility to get little sleep. But sleep deprivation can bring repercussions, from depression to heart problems to death.

I no longer believe that getting too little sleep on a regular basis is cool, hip, or wise, and not just because I'm older now and need more than in my youth. Now that I run, I get seven hours almost every weeknight, and eight whenever I can, particularly on weekends, when I do my long runs.

Two days ago someone wrote to ask: How many brain cells have to die before you sign up for a 24 -hour race? I replied: 11,423,419. Roughly the number that get taken out when a bullet passes from ear to ear.

Courage! I am not afraid. One night of testing one's endurance does not make one a demented lunatic.

Perhaps I'm already suffering. My records tell me that Sunday I did three miles of walking at a 12:38 pace, which means that I racewalked a good portion of it. But I don't remember it. I do recall that Cyra-Lea was there, too, and that she finished her three miles first.

Yesterday (Monday), I didn't plan to exercise my legs at all. However, they've installed three brand new elliptical trainers at the gym, a new kind with hand bars that move back and forth like ski poles. These machines
give an unusually smooth ride. I got on one and churned it for ten minutes, six forward and four backward. The readout told me I had "traveled" a distance of 0.96 miles, so I gave myself credit for it. After that I did a round of heavier-than-usual weight sets for forty minutes and went home.

Today I walked another two miles at 13:08 pace. It was not until I got home that I remembered I was supposed to run these miles. They probably would have been easier if I had. My shins are feeling the fatigue. Now I find myself worrying that I might tire myself out in the last few days with walking that is too vigorous. Tomorrow I'll run a little and walk a little, but will do the exercises sequentially and will record them separately.

## That'll Be The Day

Wednesday, December 22, 1999
I'm on vacation until January 4.
Today, as I drove home among drooling holiday-crazed drivers unable to distinguish between highway traffic and the roller derby, I mused over the Y2K myth.

The team where I work is bunkering in for Y 2 K like they're expecting Armageddon. I could tell them on good authority that Armageddon will not come then, but they'd be unlikely to listen. During the rollover period, defined as from close of business December 30 until we return to work January 4, none of our 2000 employees will be allowed on the premises other than security and special "Y2K crisis" task force stuckees, doubtless sporting armbands bearing controversial symbols.

We are not supposed to dial in to check email during this period. We are not supposed to open or forward non-business information through the email. Fat chance. Motorola is my only ISP, as is true of many others.

We are supposed to turn off and unplug all electrical devices in our workspace. Ha! My "desktop" is a borg, a networked collection of four Unix server systems which, if any one goes down, will cripple our entire department's subnet and wreak havoc throughout the campus. Far more chaos is likely to be caused by bringing down our company's entire Net
than by leaving it up with our shields raised high. I left a sign hanging on my desktop system that said, "Don't even think about touching this computer!" We shall see whether it gets respected.

The instructions emailed to all employees conclude: "Enjoy your holiday!"

When the Y2K turnover comes and goes and nothing important happens, some suits will proclaim with relief and ponderously furrowed brows, while gratefully accepting the credit, "Better to be safe than sorry!" "Better to err on the side of caution!" Clever, brave fellows. I'd like to see some of those guys about selling them some elephant stampede insurance.

## And Your Bird Can Sing

There are only so many ways to describe an ordinary three-mile run. I'm starving for variations, so I need to pump these reports up with fluffery.

I've been doing nothing but resting and runs mixed with walks since Tucson Marathon. Today I ran three miles and walked two miles on tRtNE. At least this time I didn't mix them, but ran the three miles all at once, at a net 9:38 pace, the first time I've moved faster than 11:45 since Tucson. This ranked 34th of 89 recorded runs at that distance, in the 38th percentilenot bad given the circumstances.

Frankly, it was difficult. The two-mile walk that followed was nothing more than a leisurely stroll at 16:10 pace.

It's now eight days and thirteen hours until the start of AC(sic)TY and counting, on this evening when the full moon is allegedly brighter than it has been in 130 years, and appears to my eye to be so.

## Money (That's What I Want)

## Friday, December 24, 1999

Thursday morning, my first day of winter break, I was sitting and quietly reading email, while chewing on a PowerBar, when I lost a filling and
broke a chunk off my left central lower incisor, swallowing it in the process. It didn't hurt, but made my face uglier than usual, and I had visions of turning my tongue to shreds by Monday.

Within a minute I had my dentist's office on the phone. He and his staff were off for the holiday until late next week, but his Hindu partner and staff were sitting around the office like the boys at the firehouse, waiting for a disaster, and were ready to pack it in by 10:00 A.M. Thirty minutes later their disaster arrived.
"You'll need a crown," the extraordinarily amicable young dentist told me in short order. Oh, joy. He began work immediately, and I was out of there in an hour. In three weeks the crown will be back from the lab. Meanwhile, the temporary looks fine, and the man did excellent, efficient work. I've had a lot of dental work in my life, and am qualified to comment on that.

Take $\$ 950$ out of your wallet. (OK, you may have to put it in there first.) Place it in a large water-filled bowl. Press the handle marked "flush." Watch the bills swirl around and disappear forever. Was that fun? That's exactly how much satisfaction you'll get out of suddenly breaking a tooth on a PowerBar and having to get a new crown for it.

By 11:00 A.M. my brother Dwight showed up with his tent for me to borrow and use as a supply depot at Across the Years. Dwight's tent is roomy and not difficult to set up. If I had not been a spectator at the race last year, I would not have known that pitching tents is what people do. The football field was a forest of campsites for runners and their crews. I've not been camping since I was a Boy Scout (around 1955), so I have to borrow the gear.

When Dwight left, I walked two leisurely miles starting from the house. I didn't even wear a watch, and recorded it as being done at a 17:00 pace. The weather has been spectacular, and promises to hold out in the temperature range of 44 to 71 Fahrenheit and mostly sunny through next Wednesday.

In the evening I checked the Runner's World Daily Web site and found, to my delight, that the blurb I sent to RW's executive editor Amby Burfoot, advertising ATY, has been published. They chopped it down to the bare bones, and unfortunately did not include a link to the race's Web site, but at least we got a whole paragraph of exposure in the single best venue
for publicizing running events. Because this week and next RWD will be putting up only one page a week, this message will be there all week, and has been up since Monday. Good news.

This morning race director Paul Bonnett-Castillo called to verify my schedule. It seems he's greatly lacking in lap counters. I can't imagine why more people wouldn't want to sit by the side of a high school track all night long, counting the number of times a bunch of crazies pass by.

In addition, I learned that there will be an article on the race in Sunday's Tribune. More good news. Things are shaping up.

## Send in the Clowns

My original plan for tomorrow was to do five miles, my last running before the race. I changed my mind, and decided to do it today instead, so as to put one more rest day between me and the Big One.

The gym was expectedly crowded for a Friday afternoon, with many people having the day off and making preparations to overindulge later on.

The pattern I followed was: walk one mile, run two miles, walk one mile, run one mile. I recorded split times, but fouled up in pressing the button once, so the first three miles are all in one lump, and I'm unable to break it out into running and walking times. The fourth (walking) mile was completed in 14:39, and the final mile in 9:42. The total effort measured 58:09, an overall 11:35 average. I can't wait to get back to real running in 2000.

While I was walking the first mile I saw three men take the track and begin running all abreast: two geezers and a guy in his mid-thirties. On a two-lane track where the inside lane is supposed to be for walkers and slower runners, this is a bad practice. They were obviously duffers out for a pre-holiday workout, and didn't manifest a malevolent look.

They passed me at exactly the moment I was to start running, so I had to crowd around them to get by again. As a result, I ran a little faster than I should have getting started, and was in oxygen debt by the third lap, but eventually recovered.

A mile later the Musketeers came barreling around on their final lap. One of the geezers almost knocked me against the wall as he ran by. He immediately turned around and humbly apologized, which I quickly acknowledged, with no harm done. But then he pulled up short and started walking, because he was done, whereupon I almost trampled him into the track. What a clown show. New guys.

The music at the track is usually bland mainstream pop fare, uncontroversial pap inoffensive to anyone except persons with a cultivated taste in music. The program was a little different today. Instead, in the typical spirit of the season, I was entreated by a song admonishing me that 'I'd better watch out, I'd better not cry, I'd better not shout, and he was telling me why!' Hmmph. I am not afraid of these threats! I don't fear fat bearded men in red suits. Well-there was one I saw once riding a motorcycle on the Squaw Peak Parkway I was a little afraid of, but he was wearing a gun in a holster, which is legal in Arizona. Him I passed by cautiously.

That song was followed with another telling me what a treat a sleigh ride would be in the seventy-degree cloudless desert. Izzat so? How would it be for the hapless animals pressed into the service of dragging that sled across barren rocks and sand, through cacti and tumbleweed?

This music is considered appropriate religious music by some persons in our area. Perhaps you can tell that our family does not practice the default religion of these parts. I'm looking forward to a day of peace and quiet while I tune my piano tomorrow.

## Christmas Time (Is Here Again)

## Saturday, December 25, 1999

Conveniently for me, the Beatles recorded a song by the title of the subheading above, as a special holiday release in 1967. I've used the titles of over 100 songs recorded by the Beatles as subheading titles in RTtM since late September.

This is a holiday running journal entry with no holiday content. Most people in this part of the world are busy observing long-held traditions on this day. There are some who do so whose personal beliefs don't even accept the presumed premise for these goings on, and whose hearts are
not in it. Our family has chosen to follow a way of life that excludes these practices. The last time I personally observed Christmas was in 1969.

This is also a running journal entry with no running to report. Not running is exactly what my training plan calls for now, so that's what I did today.

In former days I would have had to force myself to get out the door to perform physical activity on a beautiful, peaceful day such as we enjoyed in Phoenix today. In contrast, today I had a difficult time restraining myself from taking off on a ten-mile run, the way I really wanted to spend the afternoon. But I knew that if I gave in, it would have ensured that I would still be trashed come next Friday.

One personal tradition I do observe nearly every Christmas is to tune my piano. I've done so ten times since 1987, when I first started recording the dates.

I'm no expert tuner. I learned to tune pianos with the aid of a Hale Sight-O-Tuner in January 1985, when I bought my brand new Steinway Model K. The first two years I tuned it six times a year, in order to train the instrument to hold a tuning longer. Now I need to do it only twice a year. Every other spring I hire a local world class Steinway technician to undo my accumulated mistakes.

Piano tuning should count as a workout for me. It may not appear so to observers, but the work is hard on the back-on my back. Because I don't trust my ear, I'm necessarily extra meticulous, such that it takes me three full hours to complete the job. When I'm done, I need to ask Cyra-Lea to crawl up and down on my back.

The Steinway pro who comes spends barely an hour and fifteen minutes giving me what he calls his "best concert tuning." He used to coown the Steinway dealership in town, and tuned regularly for the Phoenix Symphony concerts. He's now semi-retired, athletic (a golfer-in his case it counts for something), and has had to do back exercises periodically to cope with the physical demands of tuning and piano repair.

This afternoon we had a pre-race planning session. My family smirked at me. Maybe they think the accumulation of checklists and schedules I presented them with are a bit on the side of overkill. Hmmph. We'll see how they feel about it when they have to carry my depleted carcass to the car next Saturday morning.

After recording a day of rest in my log, I calculated that my seven-day accumulated total distance is 18.20 miles. That's a decrease from yesterday's 28.24, as last Saturday's ten-miler dropped off the end, with nothing to replace it.

When I consider my mileage in this way, it highlights the magnitude of the importance of doing a long run on the weekend. Bagging even one can have a substantial impact on training.

I'm completely done with running until the race. My schedule calls for two miles of walking Monday and Tuesday, and no weight training at all. I should respond to the starting signal like a jack-in-the-box.

Tomorrow, a little more than twelve hours from now, is the start of the 6-day race. In the afternoon I'll drive out to survey the situation and help out as a lap counter. I'm planning on taking a notebook.

Enrollment in the 6-day race is full, with nineteen runners registered. This level of participation is amazing, and beyond what was expected.

I have no idea if there are plans to continue next year with another 6day race, to welcome in the other new millennium. But it has occurred to me that there's one notable kink in the plan. I'm inclined to question the viability of future 6-day races when the start date is necessarily the day after the world's biggest holiday, making the holiday itself a day of travel and race preparation for everyone involved. Apparently that disadvantage didn't discourage those who want to run from joining in this year. Nor would it stop me, if I were inclined to take part in the spectacle myself. But I belong to a very small minority.

Meanwhile, for me it's five days, 13.5 hours, and counting.

## Chapter 10

## Getting Close

## Do You Want To Know A Secret

## Monday, December 27, 1999

Yesterday at 9:00 A.M., the 6-day Across the Years footrace began. The official obese dubification of the aggregate is: The 17th Annual 6-Day, 48-Hour, 24-Hour Run, Walk, Nap, and Eat Across the Years, Decades, Centuries, and Millennia Races. Regardless of what the majority believe concerning when the new millennium starts, the runners are in motion as I write.

I've seen a vision of the future. By 2050, human fitness standards will have changed. Everyone, including women, will run even winter trail marathons barefoot and bare-chested. The athletic shoe industry will collapse, with the survivors hanging on by diversifying into buying up Starbucks franchises.

In 2050 runners will wear only shorts made out of a yet-to-be-invented miracle fiber that regenerates life to the wearer, one that transmits hydration, electrolytes, and energy to the body by osmosis. It will be necessary to replenish the fabric simply by wading every fifty miles or so through a tub of Skippy peanut butter. Most people will learn to love this requirement.

The men's world record for the marathon will stand at 1:29:55, and the women's record at 1:28:20. The women will achieve superior performance
because of their efforts to run from the men chasing them. And no one will much care any longer when the new millennium began.

## If You've Got Trouble

The ATY race site is Arizona Boys Ranch, in Queen Creek, Arizona. It's a 58 -minute drive from my house, in light traffic. I arrived yesterday just before 1:30 P.M., four and a half hours into the race. It was cool and windy when I arrived.

I located race director Paul Bonnett-Castillo immediately, who quickly informed me that he had spent all morning resolving disaster after disaster. Despite it, things were progressing well.

Eighteen runners showed up to run, including Paul, who at that time had walked around the track twice. By the time I left for the day he got around it once more, en route to fixing another problem.

My job was to serve as a lap counter. In previous years they used paper charts, pencils, stopwatches and calculators. The old method was tedious, but worked well enough.

With the move to computers, the task has been complicated somewhat. When I arrived, a table with an awning over it had been constructed by the track. Two ancient Macintosh SE computers were running, with operators performing identical functions. A third Mac with a missing Enter keycap stood by on another table.

The computers are attached to printers. As each runner came by, the number would be called out, and the operators would enter them and press return. The record would be written immediately to the hard disk, and a line that shows the runner's name, bib number, lap, placement, accrued mileage and other statistics, was sent at the same time to the printer, so there would be an ongoing hard copy record of the race. Several runners are aiming for various records. This data needs to be correct.

Both of the two main computers and printers were being run off a car battery. I never got the full story on why this was necessary. Volunteers were visibly worried by the evidence that the computers were drawing more power than the battery was putting out, and that an eventual power
failure seemed inevitable. They were working on a plan to move the computer equipment sometime during the night, when fewer runners would be out.

At 2:00 P.M., following a brief training session, I took my place at one of the Macs and began entering and calling out runners' race numbers as they passed by. Less than an hour later the power failure came. I shouted to Paul, who was ten feet away. His son Charlie immediately started entering data on the standby computer, which was run off an ordinary power outlet, with the data records set to zero, but the clock in sync.

The time to move the computers was right then. In moments everything got unplugged. We carried it over the fence and up to the top of the bleacher steps to the press box booth. Within fifteen minutes everything worked again. On a signal from the track, we started recording laps, and simultaneously Charlie stopped. Charlie printed a standings report, ran up to the booth, and between recording the continuous unbroken flow of completed laps as they happened, deftly added in the laps completed for each runner while he had been recording them. Once again things were copasetic. Crisis resolved.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to sitting in the booth. It's warmer in there, being out of the wind. After a while they brought up a space heater. This helped a little, but not enough, because we needed to keep the windows wide open. But we had a good view of the runners on the track from there, with no interference from non-runners walking by, which was an occasional problem at track level. It was harder to read their numbers from there, but fortunately I have good distance vision. And before long, we learned runners' numbers by appearance. The only problem was when they changed clothes, which happened as it got colder.

The primary disadvantage of the booth was the loss of intimacy with the runners, which I regretted. On the track the computer operators were talking directly with the runners, calling them by name and cheering them on. From the booth, it was necessary to have someone at track level to communicate with the computer operators. At first this was done entirely by shouting the numbers loudly so we could hear them upstairs. This system removed us by one step. All we did was punch in the numbers and check the data. It wasn't as much fun. In retrospect, however, it was a much better method.

A half hour before we finished our shift, someone showed up with a set
of walkie-talkies. One was left in front of us, running off of wall current, one was taken to the caller on the track, and two backups sat in rechargers. This was a vast improvement, and continued for the rest of the six days.

Lap counting requires tenacity. There is utterly no margin for error. I remained glued to the computer keypad for six hours without even a potty break. My partner and I had to check each other's screens constantly to be sure the number of laps recorded for each runner was the same. On three occasions there were errors, one of which did not get spotted for over an hour. These had to be resolved by tracing back through the printed output looking for an explanation, and then one or the other corrected. All this has to happen while continuing to record laps, sometimes in bursts of four or five people traveling in a pack crossing within a few seconds.

The scene at the race is as amazing as I had remembered from last year. The football field is covered with tents serving as support centers for runners and their crews. Some people seem to be unattended, but the majority have at least one helper there. The six Brazilians are grouped together. Some came with family members. Most seem to speak little or no English, so they have formed a little enclave of their own.

Some human interest notes from Sunday's session follow.

- When I left, Brazilian Antonio Edmilson de Freitas had accumulated a whopping 63.13 miles in eleven hours, to put him in the lead by seven miles. He was looking exceptionally strong, and was whooping and hollering like Speedy Gonzales as he started each lap, laughing, smiling and having a wonderful time.
- Martina Hausmann from Germany is moving steadily, hoping to break the German women's record.
- Californian Bill Dickey is injured, but is participating while walking slowly around the track with a cane. When I left he had accumulated over ten miles.

The weather forecast calls for increasing high temperatures up to 74 degrees on Friday. Come what may, I'm going to have fun on December 31.

## Free As a Bird

## Tuesday, December 28, 1999

This spectacularly beautiful morning, after studying and caring for necessary business at home, I walked for two miles, my almost-last exercise until Friday. My seven-day accumulation has dwindled to 16.13 miles, a mere token effort.

It's been decades since I've felt as emotionally pumped up by the way I feel physically. As a benchmark I often compare one day in New York City in 1974, one of the best days of my life. It was a superlatively gorgeous spring day. When I headed from home to the subway, on my way to work, an overwhelming urge blanketed me, driving me to keep walking. Although it was ten miles to work, I walked the whole way. As I walked south on Broadway, I jumped and leapt about, punching my fists into the air, probably looking like a madman to passersby. I felt completely in lockstep with the world around me. At that exact moment life had never felt so good.

This morning's walk was not that good, but was in the same range. I wanted nothing more than to take off running. I wanted to fly. My head filled with visions of a 100-mile day Friday. This feeling must be repressed-a 100-mile day isn't going to happen. But I have a better feeling regarding my readiness for this race than any other I've ever done.

Suzy and Cyra-Lea joined me in Queen Creek this afternoon. On the way out we left our new car at the dealer for some minor tweaking, and picked up a loaner. The borrowed car, now sitting ostentatiously in my driveway, is a year 2000 Cadillac Deville with 900 miles on it. We rode to Arizona Boys Ranch in style, arriving in the parking lot at 2:02 P.M., two minutes late. Being late annoyed me, because I'm a meticulously on-time person, and I had promised to be there.

Suzy and I immediately sat down at the computers, replacing the weary volunteers who had been there for many, many hours. Meanwhile, CyraLea got the best job in the whole place. She took over the walkie-talkie and began to call the numbers of passing runners. She stuck at it, with only one short bathroom break, not missing a single number, until we left shortly after 8:00 P.M. Runners stopped by before we left to say she was the best caller they'd had. They were being nice, but it was probably true. Who
wouldn't rather be greeted each lap by a cute, friendly, cheerful teenage girl than by an old grouch like me? As I used to sing to her when she was little (to the tune of the old Sara Lee bakery ad)

Everybody doesn't like something, But nobody doesn't like Cyra-Lea!

It was frantic in the booth all afternoon. We kept encountering discrepancies in the count. These need to be resolved immediately and corrected, while continuing to record numbers, without ever missing a single one. When there's a problem, it's helpful to have a third person handy who knows what to look for by poring over the hard copy. That wasn't always possible. Paul says that on Friday, when the number of runners will be greatly increased, he will have a third person working behind the computer operators as a backup, recording numbers by hand.

Another problem was that the walkie-talkies would lose their charge quickly. On two occasions this happened while Cyra-Lea was trying to call out numbers, and the transmission was breaking up without her knowledge, while we frantically tried to figure out who was passing by. Someone would have to run a freshly recharged radio down to her, while she communicated with a loud voice, shouting the numbers up. She never missed a beat, but we in the booth were falling all over each other at times.

On one occasion, due to some unexplained botch-up, there were four lap-count discrepancies that appeared all at once, and then the walkietalkie went out again. In the midst of this chaos one of the cell phones rang: It was some guy wanting to know if we wanted Canadian bacon on our pizzas, which would cost seven dollars extra. We had no idea pizza had been ordered. "Forget the bacon! Just deliver the pizzas!" Suzy barked into the phone, and hung up. A half hour later runners were circling the track with paper plates, wolfing down fresh baconless pizza. Eventually some was sent up to us, too.

As I reported Friday, there was an article on the race in the Tribune on Sunday. I still haven't seen this myself, but there is a copy of it on a table down by the track.

From the booth Suzy and I saw Paul holding up a newspaper against his chest. Several runners had stopped and were crowded around him looking at it. He was showing them another newspaper article, this one
on the front page of the sports section of today's paper, complete with a photograph of Paul, his son James, and 61-year-old runner Don Winkley, who received most of the focus of the article. Don gave up a heavy smoking habit, took up running, and has since run across the country a couple of times. It was an excellent article that gave balanced coverage to the rest of the race, and accurately reported all matters. It's a keeper. I got a photocopy for my files.

The best coverage was yet to come. Amid the liveliest, deepest commotion, a roving reporter from Channel 15 News, the local ABC affiliate, showed up with a videocamera. He stayed for over an hour, interviewed numerous people, wandered around freely, and shot footage liberally, including of us working in the booth. He told us the piece would be on at 10:00 P.M.

Paul assigned me the responsibility of seeing that it got taped. Tonight at home we turned on the TV, started the VCR, and waited for the story. We weren't disappointed.

They allotted only two minutes to it, but did an amazing job. The video footage was superbly edited, and the story had good introductory and concluding copy. Cyra-Lea was the subject of the second taped shot. Following a runner passing by, they cut to her calling out the numbers, then to an interview with Paul. That was followed by several little one-sentence quotes from runners. At the end the anchorperson said, "Forrest Gump would be proud!" Indeed he would. Miraculous things are taking place in Queen Creek this week.

Someone arrived early to take over my position on the lap-counting computer. I moved to Paul's Windows machine and prepared the 3:00 P.M. report to be sent across the Internet, now nearly five hours late. This was tedious work. The Macs are not connected to the PC, so I had to type all the data in by hand from a hard copy off the printer, using typically braindead PC software. Apparently there are anxious fans in Brazil and Germany waiting on pins and needles for every update.

Meanwhile, Paul, who set himself a goal of 100 miles for the six days, but had so far covered only fourteen, decided to do some running. Paul is not merely a good ultrarunner. He's blazingly fast. He ripped into a series of eight or ten laps at a pace between 1:15 and 1:30 per lap (between 5:00 and 6:00 per mile). Nothing like a little speedwork in the middle of a 6-day race, eh?

Just before 8:00 P.M. I went down to keep Cyra-Lea company the last few minutes, but it was so beautiful out that I took off my jacket and treated myself to one lap around the track, a fitting cap to my training, and a small taste of what was to come.

## All You Need Is Love

## Thursday, December 30, 1999

Human beings are planners. In the beginning the fulfillment of our dreams seems far away. Eventually the time passes, and the thing planned for becomes reality. My time, the plan that I made a full year ago and have thought about every day since, is finally upon me.

It was with good purpose that I took this week off work. The time has allowed me the mornings to care for numerous personal matters. I'm a veteran list maker. I have so many lists that I wrote some software to organize all my lists and notebooks into a common format and interface. All week I've been striking things off lists, catching up on Real Life.

Yesterday morning was quiet at home. I had to get up early to take an older lady friend who has been sick and needs help to get her car fixed. It gave me a jump start on the morning.

Cyra-Lea, too, is an admirably organized, disciplined, and hard-working person, a trait she inherits more from her mother than from me. She has spent her winter vacation buried in the book Peak Fitness for Women by eight-time Ironman Triathlon world champion Paula Newby-Fraser, a gift I brought her from visiting the US Olympic Training center in Chulla Vista, California, in September, 1998. It's taken her until now to get around to it, but she's only two chapters from the end. As a nursing student with an outrageous aptitude for understanding and remembering scientific information, I'm sure she's taken the sheer volume of physical data to heart. She's probably memorized it and will spend the next three weeks reciting it back to me.

I'm happy that her interest in fitness is on the increase. Parents are supposed to do things with their children, sharing their lives with them. Not a few parents think this means coming down to the level of the kids-going outside and playing ball, and doing the stuff kids like, including sometimes mindless things that kids do because they're kids and don't know there are better things to do. While some of this is good, I've always encouraged parents to teach their children constantly. Personally, I've played kid's games with my children few times in their lives. Instead, I've preferred to teach them to love the things I've come to appreciate myself. As I've said to them both, parents can share with their children only what
they have to give.
In my case, what I've had to give to my children is a love for spirituality, music, the arts, reading, education, and the skills to be self-sufficient. In recent years I've tried to be an example in matters of physical fitness. We can't make our children take up a program of regular training, especially if they haven't done it as a matter of habit since their earliest years. But seeing Dad's enthusiasm for and the benefits received from running has certainly rubbed off to some degree. I regret that I didn't discover that area of my life earlier. This was something that my own parents did not have to share with me, so I had to learn about it in adulthood.

Aaron is now 26 and has lived on his own for several years, so hasn't been mentioned much in this journal. At one time, before he could afford to own a car, he was a cyclist who competed in biathlons, sometimes obtaining age group hardware. I can't claim to have had much of a role in bringing this about, but I'm glad to see it, and hope that he pursues it more in the future, now that he's attained greater affluence and consequent softness.

In the last two months Cyra-Lea, who is five feet tall, but was carrying more than her optimum weight, has lost nine pounds merely by doing sensible things, and has been hitting her workouts with renewed enthusiasm. Perhaps running the marathon relay in Tucson and working around incredible runners as she did Tuesday, has primed her enthusiasm. I'm hoping she'll learn to give physical health a high priority while she's still young, something neither her mother nor I did until much too late in life.

## The Word

By 12:30 P.M. yesterday (Wednesday) I was off to the races again. That morning the early starting 24-hour runners began, twelve of them, added to the eighteen 6-day runners, all of whom are still hanging in there.

As of this morning, lead 6-day runner Antonio de Freitas had 281 miles. Yesterday he was much quieter than he'd been the first and third days. German Martina Hausmann is still second overall by a margin of 47 miles, and still hoping to set a German record, but since early in the race she has appeared to be in a great deal of discomfort. One early-starting 24hour runner, 57 -year-old Saben Snow, had 64 miles by twelve hours, and
yesterday was running constantly and at an amazing clip. At this writing I do not yet have the final results for the early starting 24-hour runners.

My job Wednesday, except for one break to prepare the Internet report, was to be the numbers caller, the delicious job that Cyra-Lea held down all Tuesday afternoon. This was immeasurably more fun than being up in the booth, because it gave me a chance to interact directly with the runners.

I had watched at least two lackluster volunteers just rattling off the numbers, looking incredibly bored, failing to appreciate the golden opportunity they had. I determined that I would make an extraordinary effort to perform my job, enunciating each number loud and clear, making eye contact with each runner, wearing the biggest smile I could muster, and cheering them on whenever I could. Apparently my efforts were both successful and appreciated. As time passed, the runners all smiled back at me when they came around, and we had little conversation threads going.

Another volunteer showed up at 3:00 P.M., a man who will be running the 24 -hour race Friday. One of the first things he said as he surveyed the scene was: "I can't believe how many of these people are smiling!" He touched on a point that I had observed myself.

Likely some non-runners, when told of the existence of an event like ATY, a supreme test of endurance, picture scenes of misery, with delirious people collapsing in exhaustion and physical peril on the track, having to be carted off on stretchers to be given medical attention. The reality is runners doing what they do best, running, talking, joking, laughing, and enjoying each other's company, in this case, for a really long time. At a long track run, an intimate sense of community quickly springs up among runners, volunteers, and crew people alike, as all immerse themselves into the common experience at hand.

The truth is that last year there was one serious near-disaster, but it was an anomaly. The subject was Stephanie Ehret, the overall winner of the 24 -hour race. She became seriously ill after completing her race with 129 miles, and vomited up her stomach lining. She spent two days in an intensive care unit.

Stephanie's case was unusual, and sufficiently worthy of analysis that she wrote an article about her experience that will be published in the magazine Marathon $\mathcal{E}$ Beyond in the spring of 2000. She will be at ATY again Friday, hoping to do well once again.

Another misconception non-runners may have about extreme endurance sport is that it is participated in primarily by wild and crazy thrill-seeking young people, most of them no older than college age, with a few veterans reaching age thirty, except for a few lunatics on the fringes like me.

This notion, too, is diametrically opposed to the reality. Ultrarunning is not a form of so-called extreme sports. Great endurance takes knowledge, skill, intelligence, and patience, in addition to good training, as well as maturity and experience that only years of life can develop. First-time observers might be shocked to see that there is hardly a participant without some amount of gray hair.

Of the eighteen persons participating in the 6-day race, both the average and median age is 50 . The range is 26 to 69 , with one participant in his twenties, four in their thirties, four in their forties, two in their fifties, and seven in their sixties. The two women are 39 and 53.

The distribution is similar for the 48 -hour and 24 -hour runners, with the one outstanding exception of thirteen-year-old James Bonnett-Castillo, the race director's son, whose voice hasn't even changed yet. James won the 24-hour "men's" event last year at age twelve with 101.40 miles. He's participating again this year, and is intent on bettering his record. James spent all day yesterday playing soccer with his brothers on the field behind me, and an hour or so Tuesday running around the track like a lightning bolt.

Eating at the race was a bit of a problem for me yesterday. On Wednesday, more than any other pre-race day, I should have monitored my intake more carefully. I wound up eating at least sixteen cookies, the creme-filled variety, a Top Ramen soup, and one cheese crisp, brought to me unasked for.

I arrived home to find my wife bought a whole box of discount sugar cookies, and a big cake with gobs of sugary, gooey frosting. I resisted the cake, but not the cookies. I also had some leftover pasta and a baked potato. At least I've been drinking more than usual the last two days. This morning I woke up with the sugar-shocked equivalent of a hangover. At least I can claim to be fully carbohydrate loaded, even if it's the wrong kind of carbs.

And now I've reached the time when, following the sending of this report, I'll begin packing up my stuff and preparing to head out. We'll go
to the race to set up the tent, and then to my brother's house nearby, where we'll spend the night.

The year 1999 has been exceptionally good for me in most respects. As I run tomorrow, I'll be reaping the rewards of much hard work, and celebrating my own joy over the state of my life.

The year 1999 has also presented some problems, frustrations, and disappointments, the worst of which I've refrained from discussing in this journal, because they aren't matters for public discussion. So as I run tomorrow, I'll be running not only through time and distance, and in recognition of the good things that have happened; I'll also be running through the anger, the disappointment, and the frustration, looking to put it far behind me as I move on to the next phase of my life.

Yesterday the weather forecast for Friday predicted temperatures from 44-77 and mostly sunny. This morning it has been revised to $44-70$ and partly cloudy. Personally I would have preferred the warmer temperatures, but a little cooler is perfect for running.

## Something

I can't conclude this segment without acknowledging that I just heard the news of a knife attack on George Harrison and his wife Olivia. At one time the music of the Beatles meant more to me than it does to most people. ${ }^{1}$ And so as I run tomorrow, I will be running in hopes that George and Olivia experience a rapid recovery and are able to put the trauma behind them quickly and to get on with their lives.

## P.S. I Love You

The company I work for is digging in for the Y2K turnover. At end of business today, things will be shutting down tightly. It's possible, even likely, that my connectivity to the Internet, which I get exclusively through

[^20]either work or the ISDN line at home that my company supplies me, will be inactive, perhaps until as late as January 4.

Accordingly, this may be the last installment of RTtM I will be able to send out until that time. I'm sorry that I'll have to leave readers hanging in suspense over how it all goes. But when I return, the report, along with concluding analysis and the final words to this journal, will doubtless appear in a series of posts over several days, not all at once.

One of the perks of being a professional musician is that at the end of your day's work, your customers applaud, cheer, and sometimes even stand on their seats and scream their approval. What a rush this is when it happens! It hardly ever happens to software engineers.

Like engineers, people who write (notice how carefully I avoided calling myself a "writer") do their work in relative anonymity and isolation, and sometimes have little way of knowing whether their output is being received positively.

Therefore, I want to thank all the people who have taken the trouble to email me over the past several months, and especially the last two or three days, to say kind things about RTtM, and to wish me success in the race tomorrow. Whatever happens, I know I have already succeeded.

Permit me to share with you in conclusion this, one of my favorite quotes:

All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in [the grave], the place to which you are going.-Ecclesiastes 9:10

## Chapter 11

## Across the Years

## From Me To You

Wednesday, January 5, 2000
It's the morning of Monday, January 3. Everything from here to the end of this journal is being written from the standpoint of having already completed all of it. To me there is no more mystery and anticipation over what will happen. It will take a few words to tell all that has transpired since Thursday, and finally, to tag on some analysis and concluding thoughts, bringing this adventure to an end.

## Getting Ready to Rock and Roll

We left home in early Thursday afternoon and stopped first at my brother Dean's house to leave some things we would need only for the night. Then we headed to Arizona Boys Ranch.

It may not have been clear from previous postings that there were early start times for both 24 -hour and 48 -hour runners. Quite a few persons ran the alternate times. However, the early start runs were considered noncompetitive. These runners didn't receive any awards for participation other than enthusiastic acknowledgment of a job well-done. In all three ATY races, the official run was the one scheduled to end at 9:00 A.M. on January 1, 2000.

When we arrived at 2:45 P.M., a new crop of runners was on the track, the competitive 48 -hour runners. After saying hello to a few people, I dropped my tent and other gear in an open area. By coincidence I found myself next to friends of Coach George Parrott ${ }^{1}$ that he had clued me to watch for, Japanese runner Tats Muramatsu and his wife Meiko. I introduced myself. Tats was lamenting that it was too warm for running well. The temperature was in the mid-seventies.

According to George, Tats is probably the best nonprofessional ultrarunner in Japan. A list of races he has run is impressive, both in difficulty and number. He has run a 2:48 marathon, and his wife 3:08. They are both active as guides for blind Japanese runners, and they travel all over the world to races.

I also briefly met Stephanie Ehret, last year's 24-hour overall winner, her husband Peter Bakwin, with whom I'd communicated by email several times the week before, and Stephanie's parents. Her father Richard was there to compete in his first ultra, and had set the goal to run his age in miles: 67.

Cyra-Lea and I erected the tent in twenty minutes, encountering no difficulties, thanks to my brother Dwight's thorough tutorial. Suzy documented the experience with photographs. Having literally pounded stakes into the ground, I felt as though I had truly arrived.

I left the matter of organizing the tent to my family; I had no intention of spending much time in it myself. Meanwhile, I walked up to the booth to prepare and send the 3:00 P.M. report to the Internet for Paul.

For a while we sat and watched, enjoying the environment. At 4:30 we left in order to get to Dean's in time to watch the 5:00 P.M. news. Earlier that day a TV crew from Channel 12 News (NBC) had been out, apparently determined not to be outdone by Channel 15. Most stories that evening dealt with upcoming year 2000 Celebrations. Our story was not on at 5:00 P.M.

Dean made us a delicious pasta dinner. On Thursday I exercised commendable restraint all day long in what I ate. It was too late to eat anything

[^21]that would enhance my performance the next day. My only hope was not to stuff myself.

By the time dinner and talk was over, it was pushing 7:30. Cyra-Lea, Suzy, and Dean settled down to an old movie while I puttered around, trying to plan my routine for the next morning. We didn't have quite the same sort of space available that I'm accustomed to in a hotel room, so I needed to adjust. The consolation was that I would take everything with me in the morning. There was no chance that I would irrecoverably forget some detail.

Following the advice of a 6-day runner, I did some extended daughterassisted stretching before dinner, and afterward took a long, hot shower and stretched a little more.

At 8:06 P.M. I curled up beneath the covers on the trundle bed in my brother's guest room, hoping to get at least ten hours sleep. Everyone else watched What About Bob?

NBC did have our story on at 10:00 P.M. Cyra-Lea taped it. I saw it in the morning. My opinion was that it was not as good as ABC's, but CyraLea, who spent two years taking classes in TV news journalism, and has worked on her school paper since she was a freshman, thought it was better. What do I know? You know you're getting older when your children can throw technical jargon around, and you have no idea what it means. ${ }^{2}$

## Day Tripper

The day finally arrived for me to make my debut as a 24-hour ultrarunner. I slept well on Dean's trundle bed until 2:00 A.M., got up for a potty visit and to take two Advil tablets to relax my legs, then fell back to sleep until 6:30. Success! I woke up Suzy and had her and Cyra-Lea get in and out of the bathroom first.

At 6:55 I got out of bed and looked out the window. It was still nearly dark out, but there was enough light to see that it was thickly cloudy and threatening rain. Oh no.

[^22]It didn't take long to shower and dress for the race. Suzy made coffee, which I like, need, and drank, but I ate no food.

When we left Dean's, it was not uncomfortably cold out, despite the threat of rain. We arrived at the track just after 8:00 A.M. The excitement in the air was tangible. I dumped my bags in the tent, and asked my family to set up the card table, pull stuff out of bags, and arrange things in any orderly way that seemed suitable to them.

Meanwhile, I went off to check in. Paul was tending the registration desk. I was given number 8! Whee, I was an elite! The race numbers ranged from 99 (Paul's) downward, with the 6-day runners having the larger numbers. Paul's thirteen-year-old son James was appropriately assigned number 13. Stephanie Ehret, last year's overall winner, got number 2. No one was given number 1 .

The first piece of bad news for the day was that Paul was asking local runners to postpone picking up our prepaid hooded sweatshirts. He ran out and would have to get more made. I had ordered two. Unfortunately, I genuinely could have used the sweatshirt then and there. But I had other garments I could wear to keep warm. I'll probably get the sweatshirts when the daily temperature is reaching 110 degrees. ${ }^{3}$

Usually my legs don't suffer from the cold. Still, I wore inexpensive lined Wilson warm-up pants Friday morning that I picked up at a K-Mart in Minnesota when I went to visit my mother a year ago and forgot to bring running pants. These pants are not made of high-tech fabric. They have a cotton lining that absorbs and holds sweat. I started the race still wearing these. On top I optimistically wore a singlet, with two jackets over it. On my head I put my superlative running hat and my ever-present Oakleys, which I wore all day and all night. During the day I used the dark lenses, and at night I switched to the lighter ones. They do an excellent job of helping to keep wind and sweat out of the eyes.

At 8:42 A.M. I bolted for the indoor potty, in hopes of dumping a large amount of excess ballast. Instead, I made rabbit pellets, better than nothing. I emerged just in time for Paul's pre-race pep talk to the assembled 24-hour runners, explaining the layout, the rules, and the services available. We were reminded that there were people on the course who were

[^23]trying to set records, and that after five days some of the 6-day runners might behave a little territorially. As it worked out, even with the runners from all three races present, the track was never unduly crowded, and everyone got along famously.

At precisely 8:57 rain began to fall. Rats! It had not rained in over two months in Phoenix. Couldn't it wait one more day? Was this a harbinger of things to come?

## Shout

The countdown to the last few seconds came. Go! Everyone let out a great cheer, including 6-day and 48 -hour runners who were approaching the line. Because 9:00 A.M. was an odd-numbered hour, it was also time for the other racers to change direction. In less than two seconds I was across the line. My long journey had at last begun!

On a certified 400-meter track, four laps is 5249.34 feet, just 30.66 feet short of a mile. For practical counting purposes, it's four laps to a mile. My strategy was simple. I would walk the entire first mile, and then would follow a routine of running one mile and walking one lap for as long as I could.

It took self-discipline to resist running the first four laps! By 9:14 A.M., first Stephanie and then James had lapped me twice. By 9:30 A.M., the sun broke through the clouds briefly, and the rain, which had never turned into anything heavier than a light drizzle at the beginning, stopped.

It didn't take long to decide to shed the Wilson pants. I called for crew help to pull them off me, then ran until mid-evening with only shorts on my legs.

## I've Just Seen a Face

Soon after the start Dean showed up. It was not at all certain whether he would make it at all. He had work to care for, and was supposed to go to Mexico with our cousin for the weekend, but hadn't heard from them in two weeks. I was glad to have another family member present for a while.

I had not been running more than a lap or two when Boston Bill (Perkins) arrived to run with me for a while. He joined me on the next lap. Bill had already run the ten-mile route at the weekly Saturday morning Mummy Mountain Arizona Road Racers club training run.

Bill is a good-humored fellow. He's also loud. (In the nice sense!) As we ran lap after lap, he regaled me and everyone within fifty yards with a continuous stream of running wisecracks.

Bill provided a valuable service to me. He hung with me until I reached forty laps, nearly ten miles. The pace we ran proved to be exactly right for me. My one and only concern was to avoid pushing too hard. No matter what I did to conserve energy, it was inevitable that by the end I would be completely exhausted. My objective was to find a pace that moved me along steadily, and that I could sustain for a long time. The pace I ran with Bill was just a hair quicker than I might have settled on if I had been starting solo, but this was a good thing, because it gave me confidence. When Bill left, a lap or two after we completed my fortieth, it was 11:00 A.M. I felt invincible. This was to be my day.

A few minutes later, I encountered a walker on the track wearing a Dead Runners Society T-shirt, someone I had never seen before.
"Yo! Dead Runner?" "Yes." "Who are you?" It was local ultrarunner Bob Davidson, who no longer subscribes to DRS, but is part of the CrAZeD spinoff list for Arizona Dead Runners. Bob is one of the first runners I contacted after joining the lists.

Until 1998 Bob had a running streak of nearly fifteen years without missing a day. Presently Bob is running little. He was at the race to provide company for his brother Tom, who was in the 24 -hour race. Bob became the last person to sign up for the race, as his brother talked him into taking a number at around noon. Bob didn't run, but continued walking for another fourteen miles, in addition to the five he had already walked, before packing it in and heading home.

It was good to see him make that effort. Bob was at one time one of the mainstays of ultrarunning in Arizona. We certainly hope that he will return to running regularly again soon.

## If I Needed Someone

No first-timer should even consider running a race of this type entirely without personal assistance. There were volunteers serving the aid stations, and runners in the race develop a spirit of camaraderie, helping one another. But most people also benefit from a personal crew.

My family came through big time for me in that respect. There were two aid stations, one on the inside with drinks and food to snatch off the table and eat on the run, and another across from it with microwaves and real food. Suzy worked the latter from early in the race until she and CyraLea left at 1:00 A.M. While working, she kept a close eye on me, making up soups and other prepared foods.

In mid-afternoon I sat down in my trackside chair for a few minutes to accomplish several maintenance tasks: eating and drinking, taking electrolyte and Advil, writing a couple of thoughts in my notebook, and dumping green track gravel chips out of my shoes. I did not yet know that these chips would later prove to be my nemesis.

It was perhaps 2:00 P.M., much later than I should have remembered it, when Suzy urged me to rub on some sunscreen. I hadn't done so because it had been mostly cloudy all day, and I was trying to get away without using it. The temperature had risen to 77 degrees, according to the trackside gauge that reported it in tenths of a degree. I clearly needed sunscreen. Yuk.
"Sure, I'll be glad to rub grease all over my body! Could I possibly be any more disgusting after running the last five hours? I'm not nearly funky enough the way I am." So on it went, as the aid station attendant across the track cracked up at my sarcasm.

It was theoretically necessary for me somehow to gag down between 300 and 450 calories an hour. I was able to sustain that level of input only until evening. After a while all food, whether a delicious piping hot stew or a piece of hard candy, looked loathsome. I ate as much as I could, but inevitably my intake level necessarily tapered.

During training runs I discovered that after three or four hours, I couldn't look sideways at Gatorade, or anything that gets squeezed out of a tube. I learned from the Ultra List that many runners have a problem with this, and that for many, plain water provides the most effective hydration. This
race I never touched a drop of Gatorade, but drank gallons of water, more than I realized I was capable of. It was always needed and welcome-I never reached a point where I thought I didn't want to drink, which is unusual for me. In daily life I drink far less water than I ought to because I don't like water much.

Consuming electrolytes was never a problem. A week before the race I made up a schedule that I printed in a large type font. It included directions on when to give me Succeed! electrolyte capsules and Advil. Providing advance instructions on this and having someone else monitor it was a wise idea. Electrolyte and ibuprofen are not candy; too much or too little can get a runner in big trouble. During the race I didn't remember these things often myself, so was grateful to have someone hand them to me periodically. At the same time, I could ask for more when I wanted it, or decline it when I didn't need it, both of which happened.

I benefited enormously from the company of an additional pacer that I didn't expect-Cyra-Lea! She ran with me in two segments of two miles and two segments of three miles, a total of ten miles, spaced between late morning and mid-evening. She didn't count the walking laps. This feat was particularly significant in that Cyra-Lea had never run more than 10K in a single day in her life. She proved to be a capable and welcome pacer.

While doing guard duty, seated in my collapsible chair by the side of the track, Cyra-Lea worked on finishing Paula Newby-Fraser's book on fitness. She finished the book sometime in the late afternoon. I'm impressed that she plowed with enthusiasm all the way through what is a highly technical book on physical training, and loved it so much. For the rest of the day, when she joined me, she snowed me with subtle tips on nutrition during tapering, doing intervals, and cross-training.

Cyra-Lea's other job was to act as secretary. Frequently, while running, things occur to me that I would like to write about, from whole subjects to simple thoughts and turns of phrase. There's no opportunity to write it all down while running, and much is forgotten. To solve the problem for this jaunt, I provided Cyra-Lea with a notebook, pens, and instructions to write down anything I told her to whenever I flew by.

I did get a few useful notes that way, but the method didn't work as well as I had hoped. Often Cyra-Lea was off doing some other task or was otherwise unavailable, while the notebook sat on the grass next to the empty chair.

Most of the day Aaron remained largely invisible, watching things quietly from a distance, and also getting a lot of sleep. He's normally a very sociable and likeable fellow, but he had slept very badly the night before, and needed quiet time on his one that day. He must have slept in the tent by himself a good eight hours altogether during the daytime.

Late at night, after Suzy and Cyra-Lea left for Dean's, Aaron sat watch over me. During the latest hours there was little for him to do except be available if I needed something. He placed the chair next to the tent, to cut down the wind, and sat in it with his sleeping bag thrown over him, probably dozing off from time to time, but was up and in action in a heartbeat whenever I needed him, which was just occasionally, to get electrolyte, some food, and to help me with my shoes. I don't know that $I$ could have done his job.

## Don't Ever Change

Life on the track was good. Although I carried my metal lap counter, I paid little attention to my accumulation. My primary concern was to maintain the routine I started after the first mile, running four laps, and walking one, with no exceptions and no variations. In this way the mileage kept piling up.

At 2:30 P.M. I passed the marathon distance, and at 3:47 P.M., I reached $50 \mathrm{~K} .{ }^{4}$ Every step beyond that was all new territory for me-I had never gone further than 50 K on my feet in a single day in my whole life. By how much would I surpass that number? I still had no clue, but I was moving relentlessly, and not showing any signs of tiredness.

## My Goals

- When I first decided to participate in ATY, I felt that surely I could knock off fifty miles, if I trained well during the year.

[^24]- Other runners who recognize that I'm actually just another slow, fat, talentless geezer, not an ultrarunning hero, assured me that I was capable of handling even more than fifty miles. With guarded optimism I put 63 miles (the next whole mile beyond 100K) as the goal on my registration and renewed my resolve in training.
- Still other runners assured me that given a good day, I could probably look forward to even more mileage. I started to hope secretly for seventy miles, and dreamed of the glory of making 72 or 74 in the same spirit that guys like me dream of winning Boston or others dream about throwing the winning touchdown in the Superbowl-a fantasy that ain't ever gonna happen.

Nevertheless, here I was, past 50 K 6:57 into the race and not experiencing a hint of tiredness. Never once during the 24 hours did I entertain the thought of quitting and accepting whatever mileage I had accrued by then. All I had to do was to keep going.

Ultrarunners refer to this principle as RFP: Relentless Forward Progress. It's the old tortoise and hare principle. It's how guys like me pass the skinnyfast ectomorphs while they're busy napping. It works.

## Here, There and Everywhere

I'm the sort of person who probably could have endured this run even if I had been the only runner on the track. Fortunately, this was not necessary. As I reflect on all that happened during the day, I recall many scenes and short exchanges. It's impossible now to remember exactly where in the stream of time they all took place.

Throughout the six days there was the fresh presence of Ruth Ann, who recently graduated from college. She has been helping every year at this race since she was in grade school. It was Ruth Ann who saw me walk up as a visitor last year and asked me what I was looking for. When I explained I'd just recently heard about the race and was curious to see what was going on, she invited me onto the track for a closer look. It was then that I first met Paul in person, and it was then that the seed was planted in my head that in 1999 I would be at this race, either as a volunteer or as a runner, or both.

Ruth Ann did everything at all hours of the night: counting and calling laps, working the aid stations, and bunches of miscellaneous tasks. She even took quite a few laps herself, including with the Brazilian 6-day leaders, while wearing a nearly ankle-length dress.

I'm guessing it was Ruth Ann who was responsible for putting up a series of daily Bible quotations on posterboards by the starting line. Two that I remember are

Boys will both tire out and grow weary, and young men themselves will without fail stumble, but those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out.-Isaiah 40:30,31

Do YOU not know that the runners in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that YOU may attain it. Moreover, every man taking part in a contest exercises selfcontrol in all things. Now they, of course, do it that they may get a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. Therefore, the way I am running is not uncertainly; the way I am directing my blows is so as not to be striking the air ... 1 Corinthians 9:24-26

These verses in their original context aren't primarily about literal running; rather, they use running as a metaphor to illustrate higher truths. But they're often quoted by runners for inspiration.

At the 1:00 P.M. direction change a new tradition sprang to life, initiated by the cheerfully ebullient Brazilians. As the snake of runners wound around the cone and doubled back on itself, each runner slapped highfives with all the others coming the opposite direction. The feeling of community grew. This little ritual happened again every two hours the rest of the race, except at 3:00 A.M., when apparently the mood for celebration had waned, most runners were in deep bite-me mode, and life was quiet on the track.

A former Olympian from Arizona was in the race: 64-year-old Michael G. Allen. He had been a cyclist in the 1964 Olympics. Michael also ran the Mad Dog 50K race that I assisted at in late November. He's an indomitably
cheerful man, and a pleasure to be near. He maintained a smile from ear to ear from the beginning to the end.

Michael's running form is unusual. He's a little bent over, perhaps from arthritis, and swings his arms in a highly unusual free-swinging motion, probably to compensate for his off-center balance. Yet from the shoulders down he's perfectly centered, and runs with rock solid smoothness and almost no vertical motion. It seemed that every time I blinked he was passing me by, always with a friendly greeting and encouragement. After he reached fifty miles, he apparently got off the track and slept for a while, and then returned in the early morning hours. In this way he finally beat me, but by a mere two laps! You'll have to read on to know how far that was.

As I observed Michael and other good runners, such as the ultimate 6day winner Antonio Edmilson de Freitas, I saw that efficiency, not speed, is the primary key to doing well at this sport. I tried to imitate what I saw.

The track was not without speedsters. At times some runners tore by so fast you could see their red shift. ${ }^{5}$ You would never know they were engaged in a supreme test of endurance. The Brazilians crept up from behind on quiet cat feet, requiring that I be alerted to step to the outside to let them through, as per race protocol and common courtesy.

It was a pleasure to be passed repeatedly by beautiful Stephanie Ehret with her long pony tail swinging rhythmically every time she blazed past. On one of those occasions, late at night, she passed a bunch of us on the northeast backstretch in such a heat it seemed as though she was doing speedwork. I let out an audible, "Wow!" Two or three of the runners around me acknowledged the impressiveness of this sight. It was only later that I learned Stephanie fell behind early in the race due to some nasty stomach problems, but that she recovered, and went on to pass all the runners who were ahead of her. In the end she became the overall 24-hour winner, with 116.82 miles.

Stephanie's husband, Peter Bakwin, is a formidable ultrarunner in his own right, and ran with her on occasion. In mid-afternoon he began running laps in the opposite direction from the racers at a phenomenal speed. Estimating this was like solving a word problem in high school algebra: If runner $R$ starts running on a track of length $L$ at speed $S$, and another

[^25]runner $Q$ goes the opposite direction at speed O , and they meet again in T seconds, how fast is runner R going? The answer from the vantage point of runner $Q$ (me) seemed to be in the 5:15-per-mile range, but Peter claims that he would be grateful for the ability to do a single mile in 6:00. Furthermore, he kept it up for forty minutes.

Peter also helped crew his father-in-law, who was ultimately successful in making his goal and one more mile to boot, for a total of 68 miles. All together, they make an impressive running family.

A delightful presence on the track was 6-day runner Andy Lovy from Chicago. Andy is 64 , a psychiatrist and sports medicine physician, and bears a striking resemblance to Burl Ives. He's run the multi-day races at ATY several times. His strategy is to run hard the first day, then to set up a portable massage table, and offer counseling, encouragement, a few good laughs, and outright medical service to any runner on the track who needs it, endearing himself to everyone he comes close to. As I passed him once, I suggested he should be handing out business cards. It was Andy who advised me to shower and stretch the night before the race. While doing this, Andy still finished the race in twelfth place, with a total of 227.67 miles.

Martina Hausmann from Germany is one mighty determined woman. She ran crewless, hoping to set a German record, but fell short by about thirty miles. The warmth of the Arizona afternoons, although pleasant for normal activity, proved to be too depleting for her. At times she was a mere ten miles behind the overall leader. She finished only eleven miles behind, with 428.75 miles, for second place overall. The other woman in the 6-day race, Cassandra Johnson, finished thirteenth overall with 226.68 miles.

## Young Blood

As long as I'm citing outstanding people, I should mention once again James Bonnett-Castillo, who is only thirteen. His reputation has already spread widely in the ultrarunning community.

Ultra-endurance sport is typically the realm of older, experienced athletes. It's obvious from knowing James' parents that the boy has inherited
incredible genes. Even given his natural gifts, it's difficult to comprehend where he gets the drive and ability to run as skillfully as he does, consistently outperforming all but the best adult runners. This year James finished third overall in the 24 -hour race, bettering his distance from last year by five miles, with a total of 106.13 miles. His father made him sleep for at least two hours during the night. He may well have had the potential to go even farther. Every time I asked him how he was doing, he replied cheerfully, as if it was no big deal; he was just having fun.

James was quoted in The Tribune as saying: "After a while, you kind of get tired and everyghing, but you just eat and drink and keep talking with people. That helps to keep you awake." The kid is so nonchalant about it, like it's no big deal that he can do what he does.

Last week I had the pleasure of being around James quite a bit, because most of the family was present at the track almost all the time. It's worth noting my opinion that James is as sweet, unpretentious, and modest a kid as you will ever meet.

## Good Night

The desert gets cold at night. The extra moisture in the air from the rain made the cold penetrate, even though the temperature did not dip unusually low. To me, temperature and humidity are additive properties on a discomfometer. Humidity is evil.

It dipped to only 48 in the early evening, and then later hovered for most of the rest of the night around 52, downright tolerable for someone not wearing wet clothing. Despite this, I had barely enough clothing to be comfortable.

After reaching 50K I walked for twenty minutes, then continued my run-four, walk-one routine for a while. It was not long before I started to throw in other variations: three-and-one, three-and-two, two-and-one, and so forth, but at least I was still running.

## There's a Place

At 12:24 into the race (9:24 P.M.) I reached fifty miles. This provided me with another occasion to sit down for just a few minutes, caring for necessary matters. When I started running again I found I was freezing in my sopping wet clothes.

I lasted only one lap. A change of clothing was long overdue. I picked up my chair and retreated into the tent, which I found to be surprisingly cozy, being enclosed and out of the breeze. While I was in there I changed everything I could. The most refreshing change was getting out of the funky singlet that had done me little good, and putting on a clean, dry, long sleeve CoolMax shirt. Over that I put my Marmot jacket, over that the hooded Speedo jacket I bought at the Twin Cities Marathon expo, which I had been wearing since morning, and over them all a heavy, coarsefabriced, Indian-made hooded wool pullover I bought for a mere sixteen dollars in the gift shop at Zion State Park the day before the St. George Marathon, and which I've barely used. It has a front hand-warming pouch. Suzy pinned my race bib to the front. That clothing remained on my body until I arrived home in the morning.

On the bottom I put on fresh Champion Cool Liners, the enormously comfortable pair of tights I bought two weeks ago, clean socks, and my second pair of Asics Gel Foundation shoes. I traded my wet running gloves for ordinary cold weather gloves, and stepped back outside the tent, ready to face the night. Thank goodness I knew to bring a tent.

## I Forgot to Remember to Forget

Thus far in the account of this day I've neglected to mention the obvious fact that the day of the race provided the occasion for one of the most anticipated moments in recent history, the rollover to the year 2000.

As expected by me, and by most informed people, but not by some goofballs bunkered away in bomb shelters with machine guns and fiftyyear caches of food and supplies, hardly anything noteworthy happened anywhere in the world when the clocks turned over. It was just another Earth day in the history of the universe.

A friend of mine, an expert on computer security, was on a talk radio show recently. He was asked his opinion on what would happen when Y2K rolled around. He speculated that somewhere or other there would be local outages. Some drunken alien from the planet Mo'ron would slam into a power pole around midnight, taking out the electricity for a whole neighborhood, causing the residents to think this was the Big One.

On Friday night in Columbus, where my friend lives, this is precisely what happened. A few minutes before midnight a drunk driver took out a power pole and brought down a neighborhood. The "disaster" was quickly attributed to Y2K.

Meanwhile, quite a different scene took place on the track in Queen Creek.

It's important to point out at this juncture that, as with other holidays that most people take for granted, my family and I don't observe New Year's Eve or Day as anything special other than a time off from work or school. Yet we knew that some sort of holiday hoopla was inevitable at the race, so we looked for ways to sidestep it gracefully without appearing to be sticks-in-the-mud or unsociable.

Sometime after 9:00 P.M. Cyra-Lea was reassigned to the hot seat as the numbers caller. Suzy continued to hang in at the aid station. By this time Aaron was awake and around, but I'm not sure what he was doing other than standing quietly by. I saw him very little, except that he would pop out on schedule to give me things he knew I needed.

The scene became amusingly interesting after 10:00 P.M. Paul's wife Mima showed up with boxes of party accouterments: hats, noisemakers, and bottles of champagne, yada, yada. This was not a scene typical of the middle of an ultradistance race, unless it's being thrown by the Hash House Harriers. ${ }^{6}$ But Across the Years is far from a typical distance race.

A number of musical instruments materialized, including one mandolin and three clarinets, rudimentarily but zealously performed upon in brief parades around the track. It made me wish I had thought to bring my soprano recorder.

The Brazilians know songs. They're apparently more accustomed as a people to breaking out in song than we self-conscious North Americans

[^26]are. On at least three occasions throughout the day, and on others earlier in the week, the Brazilians were heard singing together, sometimes while sitting in their tent village, and sometimes while running around the track.

As runners passed by the start area, they were offered hats and horns. Some of them wore the hats around the track for hours afterward. (I politely declined.)

The enthusiasm grew as midnight grew closer. The object was for everyone to stop for one lap and do the sorts of things that people who do those sorts of things do when our accurate race clock turned overshouting huzzah, blowing squawky horns, leaping to and fro, throwing paper in the air, drinking champagne (which some runners did) or sparkling cider, singing songs with words no one understands, kissing whoever is nearby-and so forth.

The main logistical problem they had to deal with was not driving the numbers caller and the people banging on the computers crazy with everyone crossing at once.

Most people had stopped to wait by 11:57 P.M. Meanwhile, I took off around the track for another lap, as Cyra-Lea called my number. I had just enough time to get around once more, and crossed the line at 11:59:58 P.M. It was my 232nd lap, bringing my total to 57.66 miles.

I passed quietly by the smooching, dancing, leaping, cavorting revelers on the inside lane of the track, and snuck off for another lap. In the middle of the field they had set up fireworks, mainly firecrackers and similar bang-bang-pop-type devices, as contrasted with the glitzy rocket and flame variety. I hadn't realized this was coming until I heard them going off.

The tortoise pressed on with his RFP, having only nine hours to go to do what needed to be done.

## Long, Long, Long

By 1:00 A.M. things quieted down, as runners settled in for the last eighthour grind. Suzy and Cyra-Lea headed to my brother's to spend the night.

To my own amazement, I continued a sporadic run-walk routine until I reached 100 K , which I passed at 1:27 A.M., and then seventy miles, at

4:31 A.M. When I reached seventy miles, I had succeeded in achieving my dream goal. Anything more that I could endure was pure gravy, and I was in no way inclined to quit. I calculated that I had enough time left that even if I walked the rest of the way quite slowly, I was still likely to crack eighty miles. All I had to do was keep going. The ecstasy that flooded my heart was indescribable.

As the night grew colder I bundled up. Because I was no longer moving as quickly, there was the danger that I would get cold. I was wearing four layers on top, two with hoods, which I pulled over my hat. The Speedo hood has a tie-string on it. I pulled it tightly enough that it pressed the brim of my hat down low. As I walked, with my gloved hands in the pouch of my pullover, still clenching my lap counter, I could see only a few feet ahead of me, unless I deliberately lifted my head. This I did only to check where on the track I was, and to make contact with the number caller at the start line.

Wearing sunglasses increased my isolation from things around me. Often I forgot I was wearing them. Once I looked into the sky and was amazed to see how remarkably orange the moon was, and how brightly Mars was shining. Then I remembered that I was wearing my Oakleys with orangish-amber tinted blades. Was this a case of having hallucinations I'd read about recently? I don't think so.

In this state I entered a zone of concentration, mentally removed from much of what was taking place around me, pressing slowly, but constantly forward, catching up with and passing by some who were sleeping. I knew I would be walking this way for several hours, and that it would remain dark until nearly 7:00 A.M. It seemed that I was moving at a respectable rate. I didn't realize until I worked the numbers later that for the last four and a half hours I averaged a snailish 23:32 a mile. I could have gone faster in a baby's walker.

On two occasions during the night I took short rests. I wanted to sit for just a little while, but not for long. I no longer remember when the first break was, but believe it was after 100K. I walked over to the tent and sat in my chair. I didn't need anything, but wanted only to sit down for ten minutes. I closed my eyes briefly, but didn't sleep. Then I got up and headed off again.

The second time I knew it would be easy to fall asleep. It must have been around 4:00 A.M. I told Aaron to watch me, and if I fell asleep, to
wake me in ten minutes. I did drift off, but only for a minute or two. When Aaron woke me I said I was ready to go again, but in the space of one breath, I fell back asleep. Aaron must have let me stay that way for no more than fifteen seconds, thinking I was just catching my breath or trying to get started, when he tapped me again. "I fell asleep again!" We both laughed that I had floated off so quickly. Once I got on my feet I was ready to go again.

In retrospect, I was surprised to find that sleep deprivation, one of my greatest worries before the race, proved to be one of the least of my problems. As long as I was walking, which I was not at all too physically tired to do, there was no way I would be falling asleep.

One reason I dreaded the rest stops was because I got cold just sitting. I didn't want to go into the tent and do another whole clothing change. Doubtless I would have felt better, and perhaps performed better, but it would have taken another fifteen minutes, and I didn't want to lose the time.

## March of the Meanies

It was not until late at night that my biggest problem of the race began to manifest itself. I interrupted my progress at least twice to dump green gravel chips from the track out of my shoes. The slower I walked, the more I dragged my feet, kicking up bits of stuff that found its way into my shoes. I didn't think much of this at first. I just stopped to dump it out whenever it got too annoying.

I ran for a period in my second pair of shoes, then performed the ritual gravelectomy. To my surprise, when I headed back out it still felt like there were more rocks that I missed. When I stopped again I found that some of them had embedded themselves in the insoles and in the fabric of my socks, and I had to scratch them out with my fingernails.

Deep into the night this got to me again, so I stopped once more and finally switched to my third set of shoes, my Montrail Vitesses. These are really trail shoes, not road or track shoes. They're normally quite comfortable, but when I put them on and started running again, I found that they felt tight. And it still felt like there was gravel in them, even though these were fresh shoes.

What I was experiencing was swollen feet, and the beginnings of what would become large blisters on the bottoms of both feet. Ouch!

## Don't Bother Me

Back on the track I went. This would be the most critical span of the race. I'd already achieved wonderful things, but it was now time to endure the blackest night, never stopping for anything, even if all I did was walk. By then I paid little attention to what anyone else was doing.

The reason I'm not svelte like most runners is that in everyday life I tend to eat much and often, and even to overeat. But my physical organism is not accustomed to consuming mass quantities like a Conehead. I ate and drank all I could during the first part of the race. Finally, I knew that if I tried to eat any more, I would lose it. Still, I needed calories.

That's when I switched from drinking water to Coca-Cola. Being normally not much much of a cola drinker, I was surprised at how good this tasted. A bowl of soup or stew might have done me much better long term, but drinking the Coke was like mainlining sugar, which my body quickly made use of, and the fluid fulfilled my hydration needs as well. Most importantly, it didn't make me nauseous.

The Coke they were serving had gotten a bit flat, which I considered an advantage. The aid station attendants may have even shaken it up deliberately in order to help defizz it. I would slurp it right down and move on, until one lap I picked up a cup with icy, fully carbonated contents. It hit my stomach like an explosion in a sparkler factory, stopping me in my tracks, and causing me to lose my breath and bend over double. That was the last time I drank Coke. By then it was pushing 6:00 A.M., and I didn't drink much more water after that, either.

## Here Comes the Sun

By 6:00 A.M. activity on the track began to pick up, as the runners in all races sensed the excitement of the impending end. Runners who had been sleeping awoke and began to circulate, and some who had been walking
casually began to run again, some of them quickly. A few 6-day runners who had been seen only periodically during the last day came out for a final surge to the finish.

Sunrise is late this time of year. Officially, it came to Queen Creek at 7:31 A.M. on the first day of the new year. It was at least 6:45 A.M. before there were signs of daylight. During the night the cloud cover broke. There would be a sunrise. It came according to God's own schedule, rather than the one most people apparently wished for. When it arrived it was beautiful. Runners with cameras stopped to take photographs. With the sun came the return of warmth, the burble of activity, and anticipation for the climax to come.

## Good Morning Good Morning

With an hour and a half remaining until the end of the race it was completely light out. Support crews on the football field were breaking down tents and packing up supplies. Pickings at the aid stations became slimmer. It was apparent that things were drawing to a close.

Contenders in close battles began to seal their final placement, and persons aiming for PRs were spurred on to push for a few extra laps. Chatter on the track was loud, happy, and animated. The running family had drawn close.

## Don't Let Me Down

Several times during the race my lap counter was out of sync with the official results. The number I had was always less than the official count. Usually the discrepancy was only one lap, but on one occasion in the 35mile range, it seemed that the numbers were incrementing slowly. When I asked for a lap count, my counter was eight short! I don't know how it happened, but it was welcome news.

For the last several hours I was confident that I would make eighty miles. An hour from the end I suddenly started to worry-I had been walking more slowly than I realized.

Furthermore, I wasn't sure precisely how many laps I needed, and again I didn't know whether my lap counter was correct. I believed that 322 laps would put me past 80 miles. (And I was correct: 80.03 miles.) Just to make sure, I would go for one extra. However, at 8:05 A.M., I was at 310 laps, so needed thirteen more, and I was walking just over 4:00 a lap when I came alive and began to concentrate.

By this time my feet were on fire. I knew that I was rapidly rubbing the skin right off the bottom of both feet. Every step was painful, particularly for my left foot. Despite this, I felt I needed to try to run some again. It had been over three hours since I had run any, and I wasn't looking forward to the shock of changing my manner of conveyance.

My first effort was ludicrous. I must have looked like a wounded animal. After a few thrashing steps I gave up and walked the lap instead, while cogitating over a plan to accomplish this feat. I thought I had the eighty miles in the bag, but I now wanted it very badly, and would be greatly disappointed if I missed it. Somehow I had to run again.

On the next lap I began a forced shuffle. In a few steps I started to get used to it. My feet were in pain, but I could bear it. I made a whole lap in 3:03, then walked the next one in 4:06. The minute saved was worth the effort. If only I could do a few more like that.

## I Saw Her Standing There

Earlier I asked Aaron to begin packing things up and taking down the tent by 8:00 A.M., so that by the time the race was over, everything would be all set to go. Suzy and Cyra-Lea were due back then, but were late in arriving. I was happy to see that Dean, too, showed up again for the ending, and stayed through the awards ceremony.

I had just completed a lap when I saw Suzy walking on the track, headed toward me. "Did you stay out there all night?" "Yes!" "All right!!" What she didn't realize was that I didn't have time to stop and chit-chat, to tell her how I'd done, what the night had been like, and that I was at that moment in a great deal of pain and in a bit of a rush. It wasn't the nicest good morning a wife ever got.

Cyra-Lea immediately caught on that I was in dire need of company,
and jumped right in. She stayed with me to the end. As we ran that lap, I explained my blisters, my predicament, and the goal I was shooting for.

## I Will

Somehow we succeeded in running every other lap those last few. My counter read 323 laps with just over seven minutes left. So I said to CyraLea, "Let's do one more!" and off we went.

By this time most people had done their last lap, so there was a great cheering squad at the end, consisting of everybody present who was not a runner still on the track.

We circled the track one last time, walking it. Then, finally, for me it was over, amidst great jubilation and hullabaloo. My lap counter said 324. There was still time to do one more, if I ran it, but I didn't. I did not yet know that once again my count was short, or for sure whether I made eighty miles. But I now wish I had kept running and done that one last lap, even though it would not have affected my place in the standings.

Volunteers held up a yellow finishing tape for each runner, but I didn't see it. I came in on the inside lane, and because there was still time for me to run one more lap, they evidently assumed that I was headed off for another. Consequently, I was probably the only runner who didn't get to break the tape.

For months before the race I wondered exactly how they end a race such as this. I didn't realize until Monday before the race that your total is the number of full laps that you run. I had imagined that a big horn went off and everyone stopped dead in his tracks and some official with a measuring wheel ran around the track telling each runner how much more to add to the last lap in feet. Duhhh. Silly me. ${ }^{7}$

The race was not quite over yet. A few more people finished final laps after me. Most impressive of them all was Paul Bonnett-Castillo, who is both an extraordinary ultrarunner and a speedster with a running style that is beautiful to watch.

[^27]With less than five minutes to go, Paul decided to do first one, and then another. With 1:12 left on the clock he came tearing across the line, leaving a trail of smoke and flames behind, and headed off for one more at sprint speed. Watching him scream down the backstretch was like seeing Achilles in action. He veered around the last turn and headed for the tape in a white heat. Our noble race director finished his last lap of a 6-day race in 1:10, at 8:59:58 A.M., the last official finisher, amidst a roar of excited cheering. In addition to being on the track and handling almost every major task in connection with the race single-handedly, he had accumulated 94.95 miles of running-not a bad training week for a busy guy.

With that finish, Across the Years for 1999-2000 was officially over.

## I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Cry

At the end of the race I was wide awake, and got only a little drowsy on the car ride home. (Suzy drove.) I took a shower, got in bed shortly after noon, slept deeply until 4:15, then got up feeling refreshed and wide awake. We went out for dinner. I was up until 11:30 Saturday night, and slept less than seven hours that night. As far as my sleep patterns are concerned, it was as if nothing unusual ever happened. Having had the experience, I'll never dread sleep deprivation in a 24 -hour race again. Getting over ten hours sleep the night before certainly had to help.

Twenty minutes after the conclusion of the race Paul conducted an awards ceremony on the track. As a high school history teacher, his presentation skills are excellent. I admire multi-talented people.

I called for my collapsible chair, which I plunked myself down on a few feet from where I had stopped running, tired and jubilant, but unwilling to move any further, and waited for the commencement exercises to begin.

For the first time in the history of the race, awards were available for all participants. The number was small enough that each runner was honored individually, with announcements of total mileage, appropriate background commentary, applause, handshakes, and hugs. Runners were introduced in order of increasing mileage, starting with the 24-hour race.

The hardware passed out is the nicest I've seen in any race. The male and female winners got trophies that are sculptures, and all other participants got a neat little trophette: a brass tripod four inches tall, with a stem
and a round glass cylinder sitting on its edge in a brass cradle. The glass is 1.25 inches across the diameter, and 0.5 inches thick, and has a gold and silver image of the sun with a face on the front, and one with the moon on the back. It's by far the most attractive participant's hardware I've ever brought home from a race, and I'll treasure it always. The winners' trophies, progressively bigger for the 24-hour, 48-hour, and 6-day victors, are by the same artist, and have a similar theme.

At awards time I still didn't know my final mileage. The runner announced before me, Lynda Hendricks-Dana, had 323 laps, for 80.28 miles. This confirmed that I had made my goal. When my turn came, Paul mentioned the part that I'd had in promoting and volunteering for the race, ${ }^{8}$ and the story of how I showed up last year and liked what I saw so much that I got involved to the point of writing this book about preparing for and running the race. I was unable to stand up out of my chair to go over and retrieve my own award, barely ten feet away. Cyra-Lea got it for me. Consequently, just as I was the only person not to go through the yellow tape, I was the only one who didn't stand up, shake hands, and get my picture taken getting a hug from Mima. I couldn't stand because of the blisters!

However, Paul forgot to announce my mileage! It wasn't until I grabbed a printout of the final standings on the way out that I finally learned what it was.

Once again I had short-changed my lap counter. The final figure:

## 328 laps for a total of $\mathbf{8 1 . 5 2}$ miles!

Even as I write this now, four days later, I find it hard to believe. And already I'm thinking: I can do better! Wait until next year.

My placement was tenth out of 26 official competitive runners, the 38th percentile. However, the last four were apparently not serious competitors, having completed between one and 62 laps each. As posted on the ARR Web site, where both the competitive and early starting noncompetitive runners are merged without distinction, my place standing is twelfth out of 38, the 31st percentile. The next runner ahead of me was the blithe-spirited former Olympian Michael Allen. He finished only two laps more than me. He did it despite taking a nap in the middle.

[^28]If I had been confident of my lap count and stopped at 323, I would have tied Lynda Hendricks-Dana. And if I had been aware of how close I was to Michael, I probably could have started hustling a half hour earlier and squeezed out three more laps to kick my placement up one notch.

As I explained to Cyra-Lea the day before: I would do the best I could. If some runner beat me by one lap, then all it means is that runner ran a little bit better than me. It doesn't matter to me, because I'm not a competitive person, and I will still feel satisfied in knowing that I did the best I could.

But in retrospect I now wish I'd hustled just a little more!

## If I Fell

Following the last hurrah, everyone packed to head home. My gear had already been put in the car for me by Aaron and Dean. What wonderful support I got from my family!

It was then that I realized how severely my feet had been damaged. Since I'd stopped for a while, the numbness from all the pounding wore off. I had to lean on Cyra-Lea in order to walk at all. The pain was excruciating. I could walk only on the outside edges of my feet. My left foot was worse than the right.

Somehow we got to the car. Suzy was at the wheel. We drove over to Dean's car, chatted a minute, I thanked Aaron, we said our goodbyes, and finally, we took off for home. Little was said on the one-hour drive home, as I sat quietly, never quite falling asleep.

At home I quickly found that taking a shower was an awful ordeal. When I peeled my shoes and socks off, I discovered that a deep patch of skin nearly two inches square had been torn off the bottom of my left foot, right behind the ball of my foot. The situation was similar on my right foot, but the skin had not swollen into a big goo-filled blister or torn. Still, it was horribly tender.

I stayed in the shower only long enough to clean off adequately get in to bed, not to take a hot soak. I tried to wash myself while balancing mainly on the outside edge of my right foot, while leaning on the shower wall. My tired legs didn't care for this much. Eventually I found myself
contorted into a position that put a heavy strain on my back. It's a miracle I didn't fall over and go crashing through the glass doors.

With the assistance of a hand-carved walking stick I purchased years ago but rarely use, I limped my way down the hall and to the bedroom. I pulled the covers comfortably up around my nose a few minutes after noon.

You might think that I would sleep until the next morning. Bzzzt! Wrong! I slept the sleep of the dead until 4:15 P.M. That was all I needed for the rest of the day.

## A Taste of Honey

The primary reason I didn't try to sleep longer, in addition to waking up naturally and wanting to be up, was because there was to be a self-hosted (pay your own) post-race dinner at Marilyn's Mexican restaurant. Conveniently, the restaurant is less than two miles from my home. If the dinner had required another 48-mile drive each way I doubt we would have made it. The Bonnett-Castillo family lives in my neighborhood; Mima works at the restaurant. Regrettably, she had to work there that night, so could join us only as a server, rather than taking the place she rightfully deserved.

The big logistical problem was for me to navigate. By coincidence, a good friend of ours broke her foot a week or two ago, and has been at home in a wheelchair. She has a pair of crutches she was not using. How regrettable for her, but convenient for me. We drove to her house and borrowed them.

Crutches are useful for a person with one disabled foot. They are not as handy to someone with two bad feet. I was a pitiful sight attempting to get out of the car and into the restaurant, where I was greeted at the door by none other than Mima.
"I know it's hard to believe that I'm here to join a group of distance runners," I quipped, causing her to think at first that I didn't recognize her. Half a dozen people had already arrived. I hobbled around to the other side of the long table and sat down.

Much to my surprise, over forty people showed up for that dinner, including all the Brazilians. I had expected most everyone would have
packed up and headed for home. The food was good and the conversation, which naturally centered upon running, was even better.

After paying our part of the bill and saying our farewells, we headed home, where I sat and worked on the computer, physically tired but unsleepy, until 11:30 P.M. Saturday night I slept deeply once again, but less than seven hours. In the morning I felt completely refreshed. I've been getting normal chunks of good sleep every night and have had no need for extra naps ever since. My muscles barely ached.

On Sunday we went to our customary meeting, but I arranged for a substitute to fill in on conducting the one-hour meeting that I normally lead, because it was still difficult for me to stand on my feet.

By Monday the third I felt human. Yesterday, Tuesday, I went to the gym and used a stationary bike for fifteen minutes, then did a little light upper body work, walked four times slowly around the track, and went home. Today, Wednesday, January 5, 2000, my feet are still swollen a full size or more larger than usual. I sat at my desk at work with my shoes off all day. The blisters are an annoyance, and will continue to be for up to two weeks, but at least I can walk almost normally, albeit slowly.

Presently I'm in full-bore recovery mode. My mind is still dominated by thoughts of what all took place this past week and its impact on me, and with trying to decide what my next trick will be. Analyzing my status and planning ahead for the rest of 2000 is the challenge that now lies before me.

## Chapter 12

## All Said and Done

Just the Facts<br>Saturday, January 8, 2000

In 1999 I trained harder and more consistently than at any previous time in my life. ${ }^{1}$ I'm obliged to ask myself whether I'm any better off for it. To answer that question I need to examine some data.

Following are some factoids concerning my training year.

- In 1999 I exercised on foot a total of 1956.91 miles (plus or minus a few tenths of an inch). That's an increase from 1998 of 131.91 miles. It represents an average of 5.36 miles a day spread over 365 days.
- In 1999 I recorded walking mileage along with running mileage. In 1998 I did little walking at all. In 1999 I did quite a bit.
- Because of mixing running and walking, my overall pace for the year was 11:11 per mile. In 1998 it was 9:57. This figure doubtless has little meaning. I know that I've slowed down, but I can't legitimately use this statistic to prove it.
- In 1999 I did a total of 47 runs or walks between 10 and 18 miles. In addition, I did 19 runs from 20 miles to 50 K , an average of one every 19.2 days. That number counts

[^29]- three marathon races;
- one 50 K race up the side of a mountain;
- one 26.24-mile indoor training run;
- one 29.40-mile outdoor trail run;
- one 31.09-mile indoor training run;
- one 81.52-mile 24 -hour race.
- In 1999 my minimum and maximum body weight was 172.8 and 187.6 pounds. I barely weighed myself during all of December. This morning (January 7) I dared to get on the scale. It read 190.8. Oink!
- In 1998 my weight range was 171.2-184.4 pounds. The last month during which my high weight was not measured over 180 pounds was August, 1998. That month I streaked the month, running 5.02 miles every single day (not an average), and 10.04 miles every Saturday. The month had five Saturdays. My average pace for the month was $9: 38$. Does this suggest that shorter, more frequent, more intense workouts may be a more effective means of weight control than ultrarunning? Perhaps.

Judging solely by the way I felt, I was in my best condition of the year in August, when I ran 216 miles, with three weeks over 51 miles, and the fourth over 50 miles. My long runs that month were 24, 18, 26.2, and 13.1 miles. This was followed on September 4 by an indoor 50K training run. Then I began tapering for Twin Cities Marathon. By the time of the race my body had become a bowl of pudding. I haven't felt as good since as I did in early September

It's likely that my present condition is as good as my geezerly body will ever let me get, though I still entertain ideas of losing more weight, and of continuing to run more marathons and ultras.

I'm no longer one of those guys who sits in front of the TV with a bag of chips and says, "Man, I've gotta get in shape!" Instead I sit in front of the TV with a bag of cookies and say, "Man, I am in shape!" But only when I'm not too busy running, writing, or dealing with Real Life.

True, I have three handfuls of blubber around my middle. But the rest of it is reasonably well distributed. There's enough fat covering that I
don't look like a muscleman. The muscle must be under there somewhere, because I've been lifting weights consistently since I took up running. I'm too old and not vain enough to be training for looks. I'm not planning on prancing around at any bodybuilding shows in a men's bikini anytime soon.

I trust you're relieved to hear that.

## Them Dry Bones

Yesterday I performed a post-race damage assessment audit of my body parts from the ground up, to determine how I'm faring in the wake of last week's run.

- Feet: The blister on my left foot is healing more quickly than expected. I can now walk normally, and today I barely notice anything was wrong. The blister on my right foot broke two days ago, but the skin didn't tear as it did on the left foot. It now looks and feels normal. There are additional wear spots on both feet. My toenails survived well. Both feet are still swollen slightly. I've been wearing my biggest and softest running shoes without the orthotics I normally wear.
- Leg muscles: I was no more sore the day after Across the Years than I am following an ordinary long run. By Monday the soreness was largely gone. I attribute this to both the flat surface and the large percentage of walking I did during the race. After Tucson Marathon, an inferior performance, my quadriceps were destroyed. I limped and ached badly for several days.
- Knees: On Sunday or Monday I had a bit of pain on the inside of my left knee. This is unusual for me. It disappeared overnight. There was no problem with my right knee.
- Hips: For one afternoon, I felt a slight kink in my right hip when I walked, but it was barely noticeable. It's gone now.
- Back: My back is prone to be sensitive. I'm cautious about lifting, bending, and straining my back muscles. The only problem I had
was taking a shower after the race, when I couldn't support myself properly with my feet, resulting in posture that required me to use my back. I nearly cramped up and fell down. It wasn't fun. My back is now as fine as it gets.
- Shoulders: Late at night during ATY, when I sat down for a few minutes, I had my shoulders massaged for a few minutes. My upper body was in a knot, possibly from slouching or tensing my shoulders against the cold while walking. I've had no further problems.
- Bones: There are some sore spots in my feet, particularly the pad over the ball of my right foot. It's going away quickly.
- Skin: My lips were a bit parched and in need of chapstick on Saturday, but not as badly as following Tucson Marathon. The rest of me seems to have fared well. There were no signs of sunburn or chafing, thanks to BodyGlide and my big, fancy Champion Cool Liner underpants.
- Immune system: One runner warned me to protect my immune system following the race. It was a good suggestion that I hadn't thought of. For the first few days following the race I experienced no signs of illness. Yesterday I woke up with a snuffly nose and felt terribly run-down all day. The feeling is still with me today. It's time to hit the echinacea!

In summary, considering the enormous stress I subjected myself to last week, I seem to have borne it well, and am recovering quickly. Today my seven-day mileage accumulation, usually a useful statistic, dropped from 81.52 to 0.00 , because I haven't run since the race. I've been riding the stationary bike and lifting light weights. Tomorrow I'll try to walk a few miles, but won't run until next week.

## Footnotes

These are some points of interest I didn't mention in the body of my ATY race report or elsewhere in this journal.

There's a large 24-hour race in Olander, Ohio, each September that is frequently declared to be a 24-hour national championship, as it was in 1999. I compared my ATY distance with the finishers in that race. If I had run the same distance in that race, which had 43 100-mile finishers, I still would have placed 64th of 158 runners, in the fortieth percentile, among competition that included the likes of Yiannis Kouros, and the best fixeddistance ultrarunners in the US.

Now I want to go run that race! The trouble is, the race in 2000 is on the same day as our wedding anniversary.

Nope, I shouldn't even think about it. Not this year.
Remember Richard the podiatrist? He was last mentioned on September 28. The last time I saw him was the day before we headed off to Twin Cities. He was working hard to get ready for a marathon in Milwaukee a week after mine. It appeared he was starting to skid, from trying to complete the training in too short a time, and was saying he'd run this one, but would never do it again.

When a person says that before his first marathon, it's probably true. It suggests that he is no longer much interested in running his first, either, but doesn't want to waste the training or lose face.

Richard struck me as being headed for a crash. My guess is that he probably finished under 4:00 and has hardly run since. I was hoping to find out before bringing this journal to a conclusion. Richard used to be a regular at the gym. He hasn't been there in over three months, at least not when I've been there. Formulate your own theories on why.

This discussion leads me to sharing a thought I've been kicking around for a long time, concerning post-marathon depression.

Often beginning runners report that after running their first marathon, they experience post-marathon depression, or that they stop running, sometimes entirely. When that happens it may be because they have been running for the wrong reasons. ${ }^{2}$

If running is about completing a marathon, then once that goal has been reached, there's no reason to do it any longer, and not running leaves a void. No wonder runners who think that way get depressed. But to runners for whom running is about living a healthy life style, the races

[^30]become mere mile markers in the greater race of life, as they move through one and on to the next.

Some runners are able to make a "success" of distance running. This doesn't necessarily mean that they are fast or that they win hardware in races. Some don't race at all.

Rather, it means that they continue to run and train regularly, day in and day out, all year long. Running becomes an integral part of their way of life to such a degree that it's hard to view those persons without noticing that running is a part of what they are, even if it isn't the primary thing in their life. (And should it be? It should not!) I like to think that I've arrived at that state of balance myself.

Success at distance running is made possible by hard training, sustained over a period of years. Newbies who excitedly announce: "I'm gonna runa merrython!" before they can run a mile usually fall out early, or they become one-shot wonders.

Pass it on.

## Just a Rumour

It was inevitable that I would eventually see Richard the podiatrist again between the original posting of RTtM and its completion in book form, and learn the true story of how he fared during and after his marathon. One day during the last week in January I encountered Richard at Bally's, when we had a chance to stand and trade war stories.

Except for anticipating his time, my estimation of how he would do was completely wrong! He ran the race with his brother-in-law and a friend, and finished in 3:54. He adjusted his pace down for his companions, which undoubtedly did him great good at the end of the race. The brother-in-law, who has run several marathons, had some difficulty around fifteen miles, and dropped back, but urged Richard and his friend to continue. They were reluctant, but surged ahead. By mile eighteen, the friend, too, was starting to hurt, and needed to walk for a while, but again exhorted Richard to go for his best performance, since he was still proclaiming it would be his only marathon. Richard pressed on alone.

As Richard told it, he felt wonderful the whole way. The last three miles he realized that he had only one gear left; he could go only the pace
he was running, and had no ability left to kick to the finish, but he was in no great distress. Richard finished with a second half split time only twenty seconds longer than the first half. As I see it, that means his pacing was as close to perfect as it can get.

When I talked to him, over three and a half months after the race, he talked about it with excitement and jubilation. Obviously, I was dead wrong in my prediction that Richard would handle the running and aftermath of his marathon with difficulty, and that I greatly underestimated the guy. Nevertheless, as much as he enjoyed it, and as satisfied as he is with his success, he remains staunchly convinced that he will never run another marathon.

The only reason I hadn't seen Richard in all the intervening time was because he had been living a different routine, running from home, and taking his workouts a little more easily. He has a wife and four children, and wants to be at home with them more after work.

There were two ways I could have dealt with this influx of information. One was to go back and change the original text to conform to the reality. But doing so would have tempted me to present a revisionist version of my view at the time, which would have been contrary to the progressively revelatory spirit of this journal.

It's fun to make such discoveries. Every new experience lends more evidence to support my belief that no two people operate exactly the same way. As Internet runners like to add to their advice-filled posts: YMMV. ${ }^{3}$

## Answers to Questions

At the beginning of this journal I asked two questions. It's time to answer them.

1. Were my target goals at cross purposes with one another? Was it reasonable for a geezer to hope to do well at Twin Cities, then set a PR at Tucson two months later, and then in less than a month participate in and survive a 24 -hour race?
[^31]That looks like two questions, but it's really one. The second part is an elaboration of the first.
My honest answer to this question is Yes! these goals do conflict with one another.

In attempting to do both my first two ultras and at least one "good" marathon, I probably cheated myself on the marathon. During most of the year I hammered out long, slow distances, with walking included. Without speed and intensity work, how could I rightly have expected to set a marathon PR, while carrying a body that has been gradually puffing up like a toad? Now I know better.
Does this mean it was not worth doing all three races, or that I didn't enjoy myself? By no means!
It's true that in some details I failed to reach a few of my goals. But I love running marathons, and expect to run many more in the future. Surely I benefited myself from trying my hardest. No one can justly accuse me of not giving it my best shot.
2. Was running a 24-hour race an unrealistic goal for a geezer like me who had never run one, and had completed only one previous ultramarathon?
For me there can be only one answer to this question: an unqualified No! I need only cite my performance as proof. If it had been unrealistic I would have fallen flat on my face. That didn't quite happen.
The answer for someone else might be different. It depends on how badly one wants to run 24 hours, the reasons he wants to do it, and what he's willing to put forth to accomplish it. Each one must answer the question for himself. As for me-I wouldn't hesitate to do it again, and believe that I will not only do so, but will surpass my first performance.

## Some Lessons Learned

My bullseye at ATY supplies evidence to support the theory of specific training. I run most of the time on an indoor track and am quite used to it. Whenever I've gotten out on the road in a race, with hills and other
relatively new variables, I often don't do as well as I expect or would like to. Then last week I went to a track and found that I could run around it all day long, like a hamster in a wheel. There should be no great mystery about why, should there?

It's best to specialize one's training in order to target a particular performance. Not all running is the same. If you'll be running far, train far. If you'll be racing down hills, train down hills. If you'll be racing on trails, train on trails. If you'll be racing around and around on a track, then train by running around and around on a track.

Any coach would have told me that, as do the how-to books on running. I've read it all before. But I don't have a coach, and books don't yell at me, so I had to learn by experience.

Pass it on.

## Let It Be

After two less than spectacular marathons I'm glad there is a happy ending to this venture.

In non-running circles observers variously regard marathoners as everything from heroic to fruitcakes, and those who run ultramarathons as from another planet. I used to think that way myself.

Most people are capable of far more than they ever dreamed. They just don't know it yet.

There's a traditional wisdom and approach that accompanies marathoning. We read it in every issue of Runner's World. It dictates that we train so many days a week within a certain range of paces, to rest a certain amount, to taper before races within some accepted range, and of course, to allow some amount of time for recovery after the marathon.

A year ago I started reading the Ultra List and learned that the training of many people who run ultras doesn't fit the traditional pattern. They run not one ultra a year or two, but sometimes dozens. Some have run hundreds of marathons and even more ultras.

During periods they aren't participating in race events, it's not uncommon to see them doing thirty-mile runs every weekend, or long runs back
to back on consecutive weekend days, with relatively little running during the week. Yet they don't get run down or destroyed. They are as healthy as the marathoners or more so. The ultrarunners I've known also tend to be better informed about physiology, biomechanics, and the science of running than other runners. ${ }^{4}$

In July I began reading about people who participate in extreme endurance contests, such as the Sri Chinmoy 3100 mile race: 5600 laps on a sidewalk around a high school in Queens, NY, for 51 days, during a record-breaking heat wave, each participant averaging 100K a day. Four out of five starters finished. They are remarkably healthy, too. Reportedly, all are vegetarians. And all have done this sort of thing before, and will be back for more.

The conclusion I draw from this is similar to the one King David made thousands of years ago.

I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made.-Psalm 139:14

We do not really yet know the full limits of the human organism. It will not be my body that will prove to be the guinea pig demonstrating what the ultimate limits are. You won't be reading about me out on the sands of the Sahara in the Marathon de Sables, or climbing up the Tibetan side of Everest without oxygen. I'm content with the knowledge that at an age when many people think it's time to settle back and enjoy the good life, I took up a challenging physical pursuit for which I thought I had utterly no capacity, and in a mere five years reached goals that some observers regard as impressive and out of reach.

A primary point I've tried to make in this journal is that such feats are not as difficult as we initially perceive them to be. Perhaps it's true that not everyone can do it. On the other hand, if I can do it, then certainly many more who think they can't, but would like to, really could, if they would only attack their goals methodically, and progressively, one at a time.

[^32]Finally, if my example provides inspiration for readers, or if the information related in this journal in the form of experiences, reasonings, notes on encountering and overcoming obstacles, training techniques, and all the rest, is somehow useful to others, then the adventure has been all the more worthwhile.

And so I've come to the end of a great personal adventure, and also to the end of this journal. But it's not the end of my explorations in the world of running. I prefer to view it as a new beginning, a renewal of the quest that had its seeds sown on a warm day in June, 1994, the day I headed out the door in a new pair of running shoes and found that I could run less than a block. That day is barely a memory today, but in retrospect marks a significant crossroads, a milestone worth noting, in the same way that people remember the dates they graduate from school, move to new homes, and form new relationships.

Similarly, the completion of training leading to two marathons and a 24 -hour race, along with the writing of RTtM, is not an end to my running, but a gateway into an as yet unknown future. Years from now, when this project is just a memory, documented by the existence of this book, I hope to look back on the period just passed with the same fondness as that day in June, 1994-not as a time that I completed something, but as a time when I began something new and rewarding, some new exploration that will continue to yield benefits and satisfaction for all the remaining years of my life.

Today is so quickly encased in history. So soon it is yesterday, the day before yesterday, one day last week, last year. Still on and on it flies, winging quietly into the last decade,
the last century, the last millennium, forever captive in the embrace of the eternal past.
-Carolyne Butler

## Some Running Terms

This appendix is a list of terms used by me that are known by most runners and denizens of the Internet running lists. Some of them I may have dropped into RTtM without much thought, believing that readers would know what they mean.

ATY Across the Years, referred to by the race director as ACTY, and sometimes by me as AC(sic)TY.
bite-me zone A condition late in a race or training run induced by physical stress where one's mood is sufficiently high-strung that he might easily be provoked to do something out of character. The expression is similar in spirit to Clint Eastwood's "Go ahead—make my day." As it applies to running it may be chemically induced.
There are some sophisticated things going on in our bodies at these times. I don't know anyone who cliams to have a clue as to what, why it happens, or what it means.

Boston Among runners, 'Boston," without qualification, means the Boston Marathon, as in: "I picked up that jacket at Boston."

BPM Beats Per Minute, the measurement of one's heart rate.
carpe viam A Latin expression meaning "seize the road," the motto of Dead Runners Society.

Clif Shot See GU. This brand is among the better-tasting sort, to my own taste buds.

DNF Did Not Finish. In ultrarunning, this is sometimes Did Nothing Foolish, or Did Nothing Fatal.

## DNS Did Not Start.

Eric A euphemism for a naughty word substituted for a normal bodily excretion, but readily accepted by some who would never use the customary naughty word themselves. This usage is not practiced outside the running lists, where it had its origins, but is widely understood within that culture. Its origin is understood only by those who were around the lists at the time of its creation.

Gallowalking The technique of walking at certain fixed intervals, such as one minute in ten, during long runs and marathons. Although many runners undoubtedly did it before him, it has been developed and widely advocated by the well-known runner and coach Jeff Galloway.
goomies A running email list word for food after races, supplied by the race-usually bagels, fruit, yogurt, cookies, and plenty of liquids.

GU Brand name for a frosting-like high-carbohydrate performance gel, eaten by being squeezed out of a little packet while on the run. It is pronounced goo. As one of the original products of its kind, it's sometimes used generically, like Kleenex. This sort of food is eaten purely for survival, not as a snack.

## Hammer Gel More GU.

hamstering Running around and around a track for hours, days, or longer.
hardware Medals, trophies, and similar physical awards given at races to overall winners and age group winners.

Hash House Harriers Drinkers with a running problem. There are many informal hasher clubs, where runners get together for highly unconventional runs, often accompanied by a measure of rowdy behavior.

## HR Heart Rate.

HRM Heart Rate Monitor.
jogger A runner who never participates in races. See runner for a distinction between the two terms.
long run For me, any run of ten miles or longer. I go up to 50 K in training. Most distance runners run one long run a week, and supplement their training with shorter and faster runs three to five days, with remaining days being devoted to cross-training and rest. Few runners train seven days a week, though there are some. See streaker.

LSD Long, Slow Distance.
MHR Maximum Heart Rate. Most people cite either an estimate from a chart or a rule of calculation, or else a figure that actually represents a submaximum heart rate, measured by taking a test on a treadmill. The latter measurement is what I refer to. My own MHR, measured in this way, is 171 BPM.
A truly accurate maximum heart rate is obtained as a by-product of a measurement of an athlete's $\dot{\mathrm{V}}_{2}$ max, which is really a measurement of his ability to consume oxygen. $\dot{\mathrm{V}}{ }_{2}$ max is measured in a lab, with expensive equipment, and technicians standing by with a defibrillator nearby, in case the participant keels over from a heart attack.
negative split A time for the second half of a race that is faster than the first half. Doing so takes planning and self-control at the beginning, and guts at the end.

Power Gel Still more GU.
PR Personal Record, often used as a verb: "I PRed the race."
PW Personal Worst.
RD Race Director.
Real Life All the other things a runner does in addition to running. I thought I had invented this term the way it is used in this book, including the use of capital letters (maybe I did), but it has been picked up and freely used by others on the running lists.

RFM Relentless Forward Motion. The tortoise and hare principle by which slower runners eventually overtake faster ones.
run-walk A pedestrian training session that includes a large percentage of both running and walking.
runner Someone who runs. Duh. The debate over what constitutes the difference between a runner and a jogger rages on endlessly. There is a wide-spread perception that joggers are less proficient, slower, and less "serious" about running than "real runners." Most people who train regularly and participate in races prefer to be called runners, regardless of their pace.

RW Runner's World magazine.
split time The time taken during any training session at any meaningful point during the whole session, such as halfway, at individual miles, and at round distances such as 5 K and 10 K .
streaker A runner who runs seven days a week and never misses, not just usually, but ever. There are runners who have gone on for many years without a day off. The longest known streak is held by Bob Ray, of Maryland, who has run every day since April 4, 1967. A local runner, Craig Davison, has run every day since November 11, 1978. To date he has finished 123 marathons, 76 of them sub-3:00, often winning or at least getting age group hardware. One of his goals is to run 100 sub-3:00 marathons.
tRtNE The Road that Never Ends: the track at Bally's gym.
sandbag To lie deceptively in such a way as to underplay one's abilities: "Oh, my toes hurt, and I'm so fat I can barely stand up. I'll probably run a 6:00 marathon," when one really weighs 140 pounds and is capable of a 2:45.

## Training Log

Below is a copy of my complete training log for 1999 for the months of June through December. An explanation of how to read it is in order.

- Each month begins with what looks like a calendar, with either YY or NN overwriting the dates. A YY marks a day that I exercised in some way, including crosstraining and easy days; an NN marks a rest day, whether planned or imposed by circumstances.
- To the right of each week, in square brackets, is the total number of miles I ran and walked for the week, measured from Sunday through Saturday. At the end of each month the month's mileage is totaled.
- Below the calendar is a line showing the percent of days that I exercised for the month. For instance, for June it indicates that I exercised 26 of 30 days, or $86.7 \%$ of the days in the month.
- Below that a line for each day is shown, numbered from 01 through 31, with each number followed by a colon. There is a blank line between each Saturday and Sunday in order to block off the weeks.
- Some days are shown twice. In such cases it indicates that I have two sessions to report. Usually I split distance run and distance walked in this way, when all the running and all the walking is done in single blocks, and not interspersed.
- Immediately following the date there is sometimes a letter or two that represents a key. The most common symbols are
$-B=$ Bad (hard, difficult, tedious) workout
- $\mathrm{E}=$ Easy, barely qualifies as a workout
- $\mathrm{Q}=$ Quality workout
- R = Road (streets, near home)
- RW = Run-Walk (high percentage of each)
- W = Walk
- Following the key is miles run and/or walked, to two decimal places.
- Following the distance is the time in H:MM:SS.DD format.
- Following the time is the average pace.
- Beginning in July, I added the next column, which totals the distance for the last seven consecutive days, including the current day.
- Following the seven-day distance is my lowest weight of the day, if it was measured.
- The rest of the line is more free form, with fields separated by semicolons.
- If the field starts with a number (always between 11 and 15), it is the number of the pair of shoes that I used.
- A mark like hr=142/155 indicates that I used my heart rate monitor, and that it showed an average reading of 142 BPM for the session, and 155 BPM maximum.
- A mark like w45 means that I did strength training (usually with weights) for 45 minutes.
- REST means I rested that day.
- Occasional miscellaneous comments are included, such as PRs.


| July 1999 |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | YY NN | YY [47.10] |  |  |
| YY YY | YY | YY YY NN | YY [40.57] |  |  |
| NN NN | YY | YY YY NN | YY [42.62] |  |  |
| YY YY | YY | YY NN YY | YY [48.85] |  |  |
| YY YY | YY | YY YY NN | YY [51.57] | ] [month=206 | 6.06] PR (+25.34mi) |
| Jul99: $24 / 31=77.4 \%$ |  |  |  |  |  |
| 01:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 01: IB | 5.02 | 0:50:04.60 | 09:58.54 | 44.89180 .6 | 11; $\mathrm{hr}=136 / 158$ |
| 02: |  |  |  | 44.19 | REST |
| 03:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 03: Q | 16.03 | 2:44:22.00 | 10:15.28 | 47.10179 .0 | 11; $\mathrm{hr}=138 / 155$ |
| 04: | 3.08 | 0:33:08.40 | 10:45.08 | 47.10181 .2 | 11; $\mathrm{hr}=126 / 135$ |
| 05:W | 1.94 | 0:28:00.00 | 14:27.10 |  |  |
| 05:RW | 8.10 | 1:38:11.00 | 12:07.08 | 51.42183 .2 | 11; hr=120/143; w60 |
| 06:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 06: | 6.25 | 1:08:15.00 | 10:54.90 | 52.12 | 11; hr=133/157 |
| 07:W | 4.00 | 1:00:00.00 | 15:00.00 |  | 11 |
| 07: | 6.25 | 1:02:53.00 | 10:03.41 | 52.77 | 11 |
| 08: Q | 6.25 | 1:00:09.00 | 09:37.18 | 53.30 | 11 |
| 09: |  |  |  | 53.30 | REST |
| 10 : RW | 4.00 | 1:02:42.00 | 15:40.50 | 40.57 | 11; week=40.57 |
| 11: |  |  |  | 37.49 | REST |
| 12: |  |  |  | 27.45 | REST |
| 13: B | 6.25 | 1:02:20.00 | 09:58.13 | 26.75 | 11; hr=142/155 |
| 14: Q | 10.04 | 1:47:52.00 | 10:44.64 | 26.54 | 13; $\mathrm{hr}=132 / 151$ |
| 15: RW | 6.25 | 1:14:28.00 | 11:54.56 | 26.54 | 13 |
| 16: |  |  |  | 26.54 | REST |
| 17: Q | 20.08 | $3: 40: 33.00$ | 10:59.03 | 42.62179 .6 | 13; $\mathrm{hr}=134 / 143$; week=42.62 |
| 18: RW | 10.00 | 2:17:20.00 | 13:44.00 | 52.62179 .0 | 13 |
| 19:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 19: | 4.05 | 0:38:46.42 | 09:34.26 | 57.37 | 13; w30 |
| 20:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 20: | 6.25 | 1:01:03.60 | 09:45.91 | 58.07179 .8 | 13; $\mathrm{hr}=145 / 157$ |
| 21:W | 4.00 | 1:00:00.00 | 15:00.00 |  |  |
| 21: Q | 6.25 | 1:00:02.00 | 09:36.06 | 58.28 | 13 |
| 22: |  |  |  | 52.03 | REST |
| 23:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 23: | 3.08 | 0:28:51.50 | 09:21.74 | 55.81 | 13; hr=142/159; w35 |
| 24: | 13.12 | 2:13:26.00 | 10:10.11 | 48.85 | 13; $\mathrm{hr}=135 / 144$ |
| 25:W | 10.00 | 2:27:30.00 | 14:45.00 | 48.85 | 13 |
| 26:W | 2.03 | 0:26:32.52 | 13:06.21 | 46.13 | 10; w30 |
| 27: B | 4.05 | 0:45:06.10 | 11:07.99 | 43.23 | 13; $\mathrm{hr}=126 / 155$ |
| 28:W | 0.70 |  |  |  |  |
| 28: | 10.04 | 1:42:46.00 | 10:14.16 | 43.72179 .4 | 13; hr=135/155 |
| 29:W | 2.03 | 0:28:12.25 | 13:55.44 | 45.75 | 13; w40 |
| 30: |  |  |  |  | REST |
| 31:W 0.70 |  |  |  |  |  |
| $31:$ Q | 22.02 | 4:05:19.00 | 11:08.53 | 51.57179 .6 | 11; $\mathrm{hr}=132 / 144$; week=51.57 |






| December 1999 |  |  |  |  |  |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | YY NN NN | NN [16.6 |  |  |
| YY NN | $N$ YY | YY YY NN | YY [43.8 |  |  |
| YY YY | Y YY | YY YY NN | YY [29.2 |  |  |
| YY YY | Y YY | YY YY YY | NN [18.20] |  |  |
| NN YY | Y YY | YY NN YY |  | [month=181 | . 831 |
| Dec23: $22 / 31=71.0 \%$ |  |  |  |  |  |
| 01:W | 5.02 | 0:59:55.47 | 11:56.25 | 25.36 | 13 |
| 02: |  |  |  | 18.65 | REST |
| 03: |  |  |  | 16.65 | REST |
| 04 : |  |  |  | 16.65 | REST |
| 05: B | 26.22 | $4: 52: 10.00$ | 11:08.61 | 34.24184 .0 | 13; Tucson Marathon |
| 06 : |  |  |  | 31.24 | REST |
| 07: E |  |  |  | 31.24 | w25 |
| 08: E |  |  |  | 26.22 | w45 |
| 09:W | 3.08 | 0:40:16.99 | 13:04.13 | 29.30 |  |
| 10: |  |  |  | 29.30 | REST |
| 11: RW | 14.53 | 2:59:55.00 | 12:22.88 | 43.83184 .0 | 13 |
| 12: RW | 10.04 | $2: 07: 36.00$ | 12:42.57 | 27.65 | 13 |
| 13: |  |  |  |  | w60 |
| 14:W | 3.08 | 0:52:00.00 | 16:52.20 | 30.73 | 15 |
| 15:W | 4.00 | 0:59:55.00 | 14:58.75 |  | 15 |
| 16:W | 2.10 | 0:32:17.30 | 15:22.52 | 32.83 | 15 |
| 17: |  |  |  |  | REST |
| 18: RW | 10.04 | 1:58:06.00 | 11:45.79 | 29.26 | 15 |
| 19:W | 3.08 | 0:38:56.49 | 12:38.01 | 22.30 | 15; w40 |
| 20: L | 0.96 | 0:10:00.00 | 10:25.00 | 23.26 | 15; w40 |
| 21:W | 2.03 | 0:26:37.00 | 13:08.42 | 22.21 | 15 |
| 22: | 3.08 | 0:29:42.03 | 09:38.13 | 23.32 | 15; w20 |
| 22:W | 2.03 | 0:32:45.72 | 16:10.45 |  |  |
| 23: E | 2.00 | 0:34:00.00 | 17:00.00 | 23.22 | 14 |
| 24 :RW | 5.02 | 0:58:09.34 | 11:35.10 | 28.24 | 15 |
| 25: |  |  |  | 18.20 | REST |
| 26: |  |  |  | 15.21 | REST |
| 27:W | 2.00 | 0:30:00.00 | 15:00.00 | 16.16 | 13 |
| 28:W | 2.00 | 0:30:00.00 | 15:00.00 | 16.13 | 13 |
| 29: |  |  |  | 11.02 | REST |
| 30: |  |  |  | 9.02 | REST |
| 31: Q | 81.52 | 24:00:00.00 | 17:02.24 | 85.52182 .6 | 13;14;15; ATY! |
|  |  |  |  |  | PR ( +50.45 m , +15h52m |


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ In short-it does not.
    ${ }^{2}$ Seize the road.

[^1]:    ${ }^{3}$ Relentless Forward Progress.

[^2]:    ${ }^{1}$ If you look at it from far away.

[^3]:    ${ }^{1}$ That's seven words that start with "re-" in one sentence. Is that a re-cord?

[^4]:    ${ }^{2}$ More detail is in the first heading, Fleety, of the first chapter.

[^5]:    ${ }^{3}$ Yes, you read that right. Yes, people really do these things.

[^6]:    ${ }^{1}$ Less than one week after she returned, a large portion of Turkey was turned into a new sort of toxic waste dump, when one of the biggest earthquakes in the region's history struck, killing thousands, and leveling countless homes and other structures.

[^7]:    ${ }^{2}$ Is this a good thing?

[^8]:    ${ }^{1}$ I'm not so sure I can, either.
    ${ }^{2}$ For some people.

[^9]:    ${ }^{3}$ In this case, Champion Cool Liners.

[^10]:    ${ }^{1}$ See the section All Things Must Pass, later in this chapter.

[^11]:    ${ }^{2}$ Geezers and geezeretts over forty, a.k.a. masters runners, are required to wear age division tags on their backs. I don't know why it's needed, but I greatly like this feature of TCM. The tags serve to tell you a little something about all the folks who are passing you.

[^12]:    ${ }^{3}$ I do this by sound, not by sight. I'm able to look at a piece of music and hear it reasonably well in my head.

[^13]:    ${ }^{4}$ Something I should try more often.

[^14]:    ${ }^{5}$ Yeah, sure.

[^15]:    ${ }^{1}$ As one ultrarunner responded the first time I used that comparison, "Great, but who's Michael Jordan?"

[^16]:    ${ }^{2}$ It's one of the greatest operas, but lasts nearly three hours.

[^17]:    ${ }^{1}$ I don't count my time of 5:16:56 at Whiskey Row Marathon last May as a personal worst because the course is all steep hills, and widely regarded by runners as a 26.2-mile ultramarathon.

[^18]:    ${ }^{2}$ At this writing, 43.18 seconds versus 19.32 seconds, respectively, both held by Michael Johnson. Interestingly, the record for 100 meters is 9.79 seconds, held by Maurice Greene, more than half the time for 200 meters. One runner theorized that this is because both Johnson and Greene needed a few seconds to get up to top speed, but in the 200, Johnson had more time to run his fastest, so his average speed, and therefore his total speed, was faster. However, the principle stated above holds true for any other distance you can name. If Michael Johnson had continued on to run the marathon at the same pace he ran his fastest 100 meters, the world record for the marathon would be 1:08:51. Today the real record is 2:05:42, set by Khalid Khannouchi.

[^19]:    ${ }^{3}$ The race director abbreviates it ACTY, because, as he says, "That's how my mind works, and I'm the race director." Ever since I've been referring to it in mail to him as AC(sic)TY.

[^20]:    ${ }^{1}$ For the curious, a memoir I wrote on this, entitled The Beatles and Me (about me, not the Beatles, none of whom I have ever met), is on my Web site. The URL is [http://www.eecs.umich.edu/~lnewton/music/beatmem.html](http://www.eecs.umich.edu/~lnewton/music/beatmem.html).

[^21]:    ${ }^{1}$ George is a popular, well-informed subscriber to the running lists, a teacher of psychology at a university in Sacremento, a spearhead of the Sacramento-based Buffalo Chips running club, is highly respected for his vast knowledge of running and the training advice he gives, and is a capable runner himself.

[^22]:    ${ }^{2}$ She does that with medical terminology, too. I can't watch $E R$ without her around to explain it. Last week when we sat down to watch the show together, she cautioned me as it was starting, "Please don't ask any questions during the show! I'll explain everything that's going on to you during the commercial." Hmmm.

[^23]:    ${ }^{3}$ It's now March 15, the date of my final editing pass through this section, and the latest word is that we may not get them at all.

[^24]:    ${ }^{4}$ Despite the slow pace, this was still an hour and twenty minutes faster than I ran Crown King 50K last March.

[^25]:    ${ }^{5}$ That's a little astrophysics joke I've wanted to use for years.

[^26]:    ${ }^{6}$ Hashers describe themselves as drinkers with a running problem.

[^27]:    ${ }^{7}$ It turns out this notion is not as naïve as I thought. After posting the original version of this section to the Ultra List, one reader who has officiated at many fixed-time events assured me that this is exactly how some races are brought to a close. The exact technique used varies from race to race.

[^28]:    ${ }^{8}$ Rather small!

[^29]:    ${ }^{1} 1998$ wasn't bad, either!

[^30]:    ${ }^{2}$ Some runners would argue that whatever motivates a person to run is a good reason.

[^31]:    ${ }^{3}$ Your Mileage May Vary.

[^32]:    ${ }^{4}$ In fairness, I should add that well-trained elite athletes at any distance generally understand these matters. But almost any normal, healthy person can run shorter distances. Local 5 Ks and 10 Ks are signed up for by tens of thousands of people, some of whom train hardly at all. It takes training to excel at any distance. But the longer the distance, the more specialized knowledge is required, just to go the distance, and to avoid injuries, stay healthy, and maintain the ability to run.

