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# THE RUNAROUND

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE LITTLE ROCK ROADRUNNERS CLUB

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January 1989

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As the new year begins and we start a new training log with zero accumulated miles for January 1, 1989, we, as runners, sometimes fall in the trap of trying to exceed our total accumulated mileage of the previous year. Since our log on day one of the new year reflects an accumulated total of zero we must, as a respectable runner, try to reach the thousand mile total as soon as possible. Forgetting we ran over miles in 1988, the zero gives one the impression that we took some time off to rest and heal our injuries. Is there anyone who is reading this column at this very moment who has experienced the same misfortune of having got caught up in the numbers game. If we have to keep numbers in a log let's keep track of meaningful numbers such as:

- The number of times we have helped a new runner.
- The number of times we have worked a race.
- The number of times we have paced a runner to achieve his/her goal.
- The number of times we have organized a fun run.
- The number of times we have supported our club by attending meetings.
- The number of times we have contributed articles to our newsletter.

It is time for each of us to evaluate how we can contribute to our club and running community. Let's not just be takers.

## The Runabout Calendar

The fun runs for January are recorded on the LRRC VOICE MEMO. Dial 377-1653 and listen to the recorded message describing the fun runs for the week.

### FUN RUNS AND RACES - JANUARY

7, SAT. ARK winter series, Alltell in Riverdale, 7:30 A.M., 10K or 20K. Call 834-4355.

8, SUN. John Herbst, Wal-Mart on West Markham, 7:00 A.M., Mileage flexible. Call 227-0463.

14, SAT. ARK winter Series, Alltell in Riverdale, 7:30 A.M., 10K or 20K. Call 834-4355.

15, SUN. Dale Green, Andy's, 7:00 A.M., Mileage flexible. Call 224-7196.

21, SAT. ARK winter Series, Leisure Arts parking lot north of intersection I-430 and Maumelle BLVD, 7:30 A.M., 10K or 20K. Call 834-4355.

22, SUN. Andy's, 7:00 A.M. Call 455-4916.

28, SAT. ARK winter series, Leisure Arts parking lot north of intersection I-430 and Maumelle Blvd, 7:30 AM, 10K or 20K. Call 834-4355.

Roadrunner Half Marathon and 5K in Texarkana, YWCA, 8:00 A.M., Fee - \$8.50 until 1/14 and \$10 afterward. Call (214) 793-6769.

29, SUN. Nancy Gray, Andy's Loop, 7:00 A.M. Call 663-7962.

### **FUN RUNS AND RACES - FEBRUARY**

4, SAT. ARK Winter Series, Maumelle State Park, 7:30 A.M., 10K or 20K. Call 834-4355.

11, SAT. ARK winter series, Maumelle State Park, 7:30 A.M., 10K or 20K. Call 834-4355.

Great Duck Race 10K in Stuttgart, Planters and Merchants Bank, 9:00 A.M. Call 673-7516.

### **SO, WHAT D'YOU KNOW?**

I know that I cannot run a lie. There is something deeply incompatible between the thumping of my feet, the pounding of my heart and the sincere if foolish evasions of my lips, evasions which pass undetected in living rooms and offices of every social category, every intellectual caliber. I've lied my way past college presidents, slum neighborhood police patrols, childhood girlfriends' debutante party receiving lines; but I cannot park at Andy's and get any further than Chips before the truth breaks out in a gentle rash all over my life. If I were looking for an excuse for my running addiction--and I'm not, believe me, I'm not--I do think I could hang it on the terrible honesty of the running condition. For I have a weakness for the truth almost as compelling as my passion for green apples. Some folks crave affection and find themselves hounded out of the house onto the singles trail looking for it in the wee hours of the night; other folks lust after bags of gold and find themselves driven back into the market place begging for more of it away past quitting time; and a few folks long for danger and find themselves wedged

in front of a slot machine or mutual window worshipping its curse from high noon until high noon. You might think truth a simple master compared to these others... you might, unless you also are a runner and hence know the unchartered territory that truth leads into.

I've asked myself the obvious question... what's this connection between running and telling the truth. Does it have anything to do with the level of exertion? The faster I go, the more honest I get? Or, maybe, its related to distance... and truth breaks out at, say, 10 or 11 miles... you know, the point at which your average runner would just as soon quit if she were only a block or so from home or if no one she knew were looking and a bus was stopped politely waiting for her about 50 feet ahead. But, no, I've run along at a slower than walking pace for a mere 2 or 3 miles and the truth oozes out of me the same as it does when I struggle to do 20 miles in 4 hours. The run can be hard or easy, short or long, but it cannot be false.

If I weren't finding my middle-middle age so liberating, I might be tempted to wish I could experience child birth just one more time to see if truth and running have anything to do with ultimate purpose. I do know their connection has nothing in common with danger, for I was recently in quite a bit of that nasty stuff and there was no clarity down in its pit. In fact it took me several weeks to run back to the particular truth of that experience after I escaped its immediate menace.

Here, then, might lie a clue to the mysterious bond between running and truth. Swirling, sodden air currents, thick and unrelenting in their milky curdles, coiled around me as I fought my way from the edge of that dark hole back to normalcy. Naturally I ran all the way! Running is such a handy addiction: person never knows when the monkey on her back will prove once again to be the silver skates upon her feet. Sure enough, just past Chips the curdles began to dissolve and every morning more of that milky madness thinned out into just plain winter morning air.

The whole way back I ran with friends, other Little Rock Road Runners. No one was afraid of my truth, no one averted their eyes, covered their ears, or bit their lips. They all just ran steadily, carefully, honestly next to me, all that long way back from the danger. How good it is to run together!

The winter morning air still feels like autumn and has not yet begun to send us scurrying for cover as soon as our hearts stop pounding and our feet stop thumping. And so we walk around a while when we are back to the parking lot.

Soon we drift inside, calling over our shoulders to each other with that special, timeless grace, the gift from childhood that running together gives us. I know that running and truth--and my own, very lucky self-- are all in safe keeping here in Little Rock with the Little Rock Road Runners, that spiritual bunch of truth-tellers munching their biscuits in the corner booth. How about joining us sometime?

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The following article was submitted for December's Newsletter but was not included due to a clerical overload.

## **RUNNING AFTER THE HOLY GRAIL - MILES LeTREK**

Rich windows that exclude the light,

And passages that lead to nothing. - Thomas Gray

Hark! What light through yon window shines? - Shakesbeer

Previously in this column, I have alluded to what appears to be a loss of direction in the running community. It's not that the state of running art has stopped advancing; the technology is improving in many ways, as is obvious when we examine a new pair of running shoes or a new carbohydrate supplement that has better this, that, or the other thing than anything which has come before. The problem is that these improvements don't really seem to be getting us anywhere. And I believe the reason for this is that the running community no longer agrees about where running is supposed to be going in the first place.

Ever since 1936, when Jesse Owens awakened our national pride with his performance at the Olympic Games in Germany, the history of running has seen a continuous technological advance, most of it evolutionary in nature (qualitative improvements), some of it revolutionary (breakthroughs in the discovery of new training techniques and diets). All of these developments were aimed at reducing the time required to complete a race.

Then, in 1972, when Frank Shorter won the gold medal in the marathon in that year's Olympics, an interesting thing happened. Running began to be in vogue. It was becoming quite fashionable to be seen plodding through your own neighborhood or at a local high school track cranking out the miles. And with Ken Cooper's and Jim Fixx's publication of their aerobics and running books, running became popularized, romanticized, and promoted with an energy not seen since the American response to Pearl Harbor. By the time the running boom was in full swing, in the late 70's, running had taken on the trappings of a religion (i.e. George Sheehan's writings). People bought running shoes not to run in, but just to be seen in as if paying homage to a pagan god. And currently the shoe companies are tripping all over themselves trying to ace out each other with the latest "look". My friends, this represents no less than the ultimate prostitution of our sport.

What I am proposing is that we put forth a new purpose in running, that is to visualize in our mind's eye the concept of our own perfect run, and that any run we take henceforth simply be an effort to reproduce this perfect run however we may see it. Part of the formalized definition of the perfect run would be to picture it as a certain realism which we are constantly trying to come as close to as possible, much the same as a high fidelity recording attempt to reproduce the original performance of a symphony orchestra. Perfection is considered to be worth pursuing even if it is unattainable, like the Holy Grail so fervently sought by the legendary King Arthur. The ability to reproduce the perfect run is a measure of fidelity - the yardstick by which a runner should gauge the success of his efforts and set the goals for future runs. It is the individual's perception of his perfect run, his ideal experience, that is significant. This is the only criterion by which the fidelity of a given run can be assessed.

What known clues do we have which will help us to investigate the definition of our perfect run? They may be found in experiences like a second wind, a rush of endorphins, or simply hitting a

comfortable stride and staying in that good groove for an extended period. While many of us have not benefited from all of these phenomena, they may be considered qualified guideposts in the search for our ideal run. The key to this discovery I feel is to avoid our usual tendency to ascribe our own physical attributes to a good run experience. We condition our muscle fibers in order to enhance our running ability; we have a nervous system which tells the muscles when to flex and when to relax, and thus move us forward. But this connection is relatively simple - a robot can be programmed to run. We must take our visualization to a higher strata below which these anthropomorphic representations confine us. We must ask what is the nexus between the brain's composition and the mind's activity, and how does it relate to the lower order physical connection? When we have these answers, the definition of our perfect run will be at hand. To what lengths should we go in our pursuit of perfection? In thinking once that the answer was perhaps, In coming to feel more at one with nature, I have even contemplated running Hooper's loop in the nude, wearing only shoes and carrying a water bottle shaped like a fig leaf (a large fig leaf, of course). The only problem areas would be the short segment on Highway 10 and of course the one mile stretch along Denny Road. I hear the sound of a vaguely muffled Chevy pickup approaching. They pass. "Hey Bubba, did you see that guy? I cudda sworn he wus nekked! At this point Bubba would probably be doing more high order visualizing than I, and in deference to Max, I abandoned the idea. Alas, nude trail running would affect our sensory awareness. The answer must lie within.

Reverting to a less ethereal subject brings us to a discussion of the word "jogging". To some runners it has such wimpish connotations that when a civilian asks "Have you been jogging?", it makes their skin crawl. But maybe there's nothing really wrong with the word. Let's take it from some famous runners who have taken time to give their reaction:

"It's a turn off to me, but the general public uses it interchangeably with 'running' so we shouldn't be offended by it, else we may be taking ourselves too seriously."  
- Y.T.

"I am totally unfamiliar with the term to the max!"  
- High velocity valley Girl

"It's what we do when we go to get oatmeal cookies at Ozark Mountain Smokehouse." -  
Robert Jacuzzi

A definitive response if I ever heard one.

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## **THE AUTUMNAL EQUINOX: EFFECTS AND OBSERVATIONS - MILES LeTREK**

In tractus carborundum veritas - Turbo LeTrek

Racing season again. The fall version. In my league, mercifully, there are no standings, for I am only marginally improved. I am my only competition. In the heavy air of August evenings,

maintaining enough endurance to keep running seems all but hopeless. The reward comes gift wrapped in the cool air of autumn mornings. It's early October, and a shower is blowing in. My feet fall with the unhindered velocity of the rain. There is no telling about the merit of measured training runs, those which should make me ready for the, first race of the season. Each 40+ year old male comes to the starting line with dreams of bounding magic in his shoes, and I envision myself sprinting past faster runners as the finish line draws near, barely able to keep my feet on the ground.

The sound of the starter's gun seems yet to hang in the air as the first mile split comes, sooner than I know it should. The need to focus on some object is becoming increasingly apparent, if I am to finish this race in a reasonable fashion. La femme alert! Suddenly, I become aware of a nicely rounded bottom a short distance ahead, and surge to close the gap. Her taunt, yet rippling hamstrings blend almost imperceptibly into the convexity of her buttocks, subtly smoothed by the sensual play of spandex over her skin. I become transfixed. I pull alongside her and listen until I can catch the rhythm of her breath, then force my own breathing down to that same measure. As I watch this body in motion, the weirdness of science overcomes me: I think of atoms and molecules, skin and veins, muscle and bones. I try to comprehend her for an instant as a compilation of parts. But that fails. I cannot enlarge the realm of my final understanding; I behold her as something no smaller or more finite or reducible than my observations will permit.

It's halfway through the race; the fear of overcommitment shoots through me like a laser, as I spy a fellow runner who I know has paid his summer dues. He seems newly aware of his powers, and of the fact that people regard the manner in which you do things as a sign of character. I watch the way his eyes lift as he emerges from the course's first turn. It is not enough to say that he is merely imitating the world class runners on TV, because what is significant is that he noticed in the first place. He is concerned about style. I would be more delighted by this were I not wary that this pretends his finish time will be several ticks faster than mine. Indeed, this is the result, but one which I have not experienced in vain. There are other races yet to come.

Soon after the finish, my breathing returns to normal. Caught up in the ritual of post-race male bonding, I find myself in the midst of that Trinity of speed: Hayes, Henry, and Hoffman. I stand at the Godhead of masters running and know not what to say; yet these men are generous enough to accept my presence among themselves. The finish of any race culminates in a gathering of eagles. Here there exists an effervescence, an atmosphere with accomplishment as its agent of cause, consummation of summer's sweat and training. Here there exists the underlying motive - unspoken, but mutually understood - that we are not aging as quickly as we otherwise might. And it is all because of this. An extension of youth, an elongation of lifeline, an improvement in being. And it is all because of this.

Runners who have treasured these feeling will welcome every future race with eager anticipation. Those who are not already acquainted with racing have an enviable experience before them. This is not to say that every recreational runner who begins to enter races is going to win trophies - that should not be the point. That the same group of runners, week in and week

out, win all the prizes, in all the local races is a boringly familiar refrain. But only the awards belong to the fleet; the race belongs to everyone who reaches the finish. To do well in a race rewards the spirit; the value of this is incalculable.

But wait! Why am I spilling my guts in this newsletter every month? This society rewards the acquisitive, not the creative. This society doesn't produce anything anymore. This is an advanced, post industrial, service oriented economy. In this great nation, we make our money by selling pizzas to each other. It has been said that people with small minds talk about other people, ordinary people talk about material objects, and great people talk about ideas. A great person needs to step forward and take over this space so I can use the extra time to go make some bucks, before the value of the dollar is zero, this country is sold down the tubes, and we're all just runnin' to survive.

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**A GOOD WAY TO START THE NEW YEAR - MARGARET DAVIS**

I remember numerous New Year's Days of the past waking up groggy and not feeling well at all -- hungover from too much food and drink, too many cigarettes and not enough sleep. The "fun" of the night before never seemed worth the pain of the next day. But every year I would repeat the mistakes of the last.

This past year was different. I didn't exactly plan it that way. It just happened. The process of change started a year ago when I began a weight loss program. After the weight loss, to my amazement, I found I wasn't "fixed". The same doubts and fears remained in a thinner package. Dealing with these basic negative character traits was much more difficult than the weight loss, and it is a process which will continue for the rest of my life. I spent the last six months learning to trust my instincts and believe in myself. I started listening to my body, which apparently has a lot to say after almost 40 years of neglect. I also made the most wonderful discovery -- running.