



Garden *of*
Remembrance

SELECTED WRITINGS

Theresa McCourt

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DATE 20th June, 1973

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For Ian

I wish to acknowledge Jim Merk for his help with this project. He kept at it tirelessly. I'm grateful for his willingness to share his archive of Theresa's *Sacramento Bee* articles. I'm grateful for his editing, for his creative input, for his attention to detail, and for his assistance with smoothing out my rough writing. But mostly, I'm grateful for his friendship and for the kindnesses he gave to Theresa in her last years.

—HOWARD

I have observed that a directed life is in general better, richer and healthier than an aimless one, and that it is better to go forwards with the stream of time than backwards against it.

—C. G. JUNG

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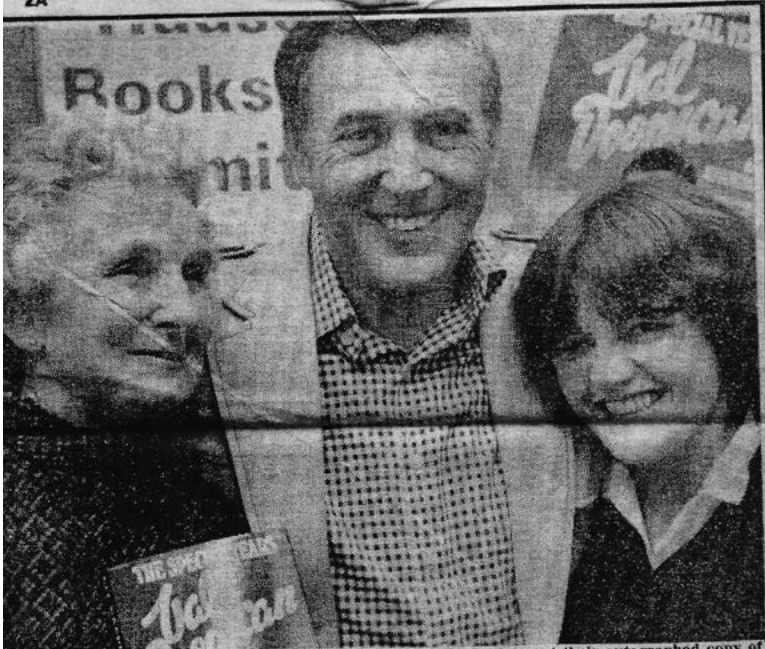
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Doreen Howell, of Northfield and Theresa McCourt, of Edgbaston, get their autographed copy of Val Doonican's book when he visited Hudson's book shop.

The Gaelic twinkle just says it all

Val Doonican of the
 rned pullovers,
 ng-chair and voice
 Gaelic coffee, left
 ingham with an
 iz wrist — after
 ng hundreds of
 graphs.
 ving had his picture
 a by dozens of
 ly women prepared
 no, dying to pay
 for his autobiogra-

phy, he autographed 240
 copies in exactly one
 hour at Hudson's Book-
 shop.
 "You don't mind crush
 and bustle like this if you
 were unrecognised for as
 long as I was," mur-
 mured Co. Waterford's
 favourite son.
 "The more the merrier.
 My fans are very gentle
 and undemanding people.

haven't you noticed? And
 hey! Don't forget to say
 I'm better looking in the
 flesh than on the box."
 First in the queue to
 meet Val was Mrs.
 Doreen Howell, of
 Northfield, who, last
 February at the Night
 Out, helped him with a
 rip-roaring number.
 "He's great," she said.
 Mrs. Jean Jones and

her husband, Alun,
 bought two copies to take
 home to Streetly.
 "One is for my mother,
 who was born near the
 Mountains of Mourne,"
 said Jean, "but I want my
 personal copy as well."
 *** The Special Years,
 by Val Doonican, is pub-
 lished by Elm Tree
 Books.

Note to the Reader

I don't know when it came to me, but I think I know why it came to me—the thought of collecting running columns that Theresa had written for the *Sacramento Bee* from 1990 to 1998. I wanted a gift for our son, Ian, and I wanted a gift for Theresa from me. Theresa had been diagnosed with a rare form of early-onset Alzheimer's, primary progressive aphasia, in June 2011, and by the time the idea of the collection came up, she had significantly slipped away, so I hoped that I could share with her some of my favorite articles of hers. And I wanted to digitize them and transform them into a manuscript.

I think the idea came to me after reading her column “The Hill of Life” for the umpteenth time, maybe after reading it to Theresa as we sat on the couch, and I marveled at her poetic rendering of runners doing hill training. The article was published on February 7, 1996, as “Rescue Run Brings Pain and Pleasure,” but we always called it “The Hill of Life.” Anyone who knew Theresa could hear her voice in the piece, and it dawned on me that I wanted to collect others like it, that I needed to collect them—those articles that went beyond sharing race results, describing the newest equipment, announcing the next race...articles in which she ponders and celebrates the struggles we face and shares her insights with us.

The *Sacramento Bee* told me that they didn't have an archive of her work or anyone to help me track down her articles, that I should peruse the microfiche files at the main branch of the Sacramento Public Library. This was 2015 or 2016, and the *Bee* was a shell of its former self, with almost no sports reporters. Then, by chance, I bumped into Tony Bijack, a longtime friend of T's and a writer for the *Sacramento Bee*. Poor fellow! I could sense his trepidation during our meeting. I could see the apprehension on his face as I asked him for his help in locating e-copies of T's writing. He still wrote for the *Bee* and had countless deadlines, I'm sure, but that didn't stop me from invading his world or from asking for his help. We said our awkward goodbyes, and I thought for sure that that was it, that I had embarrassed myself and that Tony was thankful to be moving on...but months later, in June 2016, a series of emails arrived from Tony, with five or six running columns each. The running spirits had been watching, listening, and Tony had located a few files.... Bless you, Tony Bijack, for your gift!

Somewhere in this chaotic beginning, Jim Merk, one of T's dear Sacramento State graduate school buddies, mentioned that he had many of T's published writings, not just her running columns, but features that she'd written for the *Bee* and other publications, including features that she'd written about the California International Marathon and the Western States 100-miler and features covering local running legends. And so a collaboration began, at an urging really by Jim that I'll be ever grateful for, to produce *Garden of Remembrance*.

It's been HARD! The process of collecting and sorting articles, reading hundreds of pieces, some many times, and selecting those that best capture her voice and spirit has been a challenging one. It has been difficult having these intense visits with her and then experiencing, after each visit, a feeling of loss and fatigue that left me slow to reenter that world. The result has been that the time between sessions increased. Sometimes, the process appeared to have no end.

Early on, Jim suggested that I consider expanding the manuscript to include other types of her writing, such as her poetry and some essays. As the research continued, I discovered poems, letters, and journal entries that I wanted to share. I hope for you, the reader, that they help to illuminate not only Theresa but all of us.

It's in one of these letter fragments that Theresa tells an old friend that she's in Wilmslow to attend her mum's funeral. She's sitting in a park, recalling the times that they spent together there, in "the Garden of Remembrance." The phrase seemed an appropriate title for this book—a nod to her love of gardening and a succinct description of what she left us in her writing.

I'll finish with a fond memory that I have. Theresa and I had a lot of fun during our time together. A lot of it revolved around running. Once, at a Tuesday night workout with our running club, the Buffalo Chips, as we were jogging back to our cars, one of us began to pick up the pace. The last 100 yards became a sprint. Theresa was laughing the entire time. She beat me, of course. She always did, and it didn't matter to me. Her laughter was contagious. She loved running. She loved running fast.

Howard Price

“RUNNING” COLUMNS



“RUNNING” COLUMNS

For nearly eight years, Theresa wrote the “Running” column in the *Sacramento Bee*. For the first three years, it appeared every second Wednesday. Later, it appeared every third Wednesday under the banner “The Great Outdoors.” Her column debuted on October 3, 1990. Her first article is presented below. Her farewell article, also included below, appeared on June 17, 1998. This selection of articles shows Theresa increasingly drawn away from simply presenting facts and tips related to running, training, and racing and focusing more of her attention on explorations of larger questions about what makes a good life, as well as the challenges and pleasures—and the necessity—of pushing ourselves physically and mentally. To the extent possible, the date of publication is identified, and the columns are presented in the order in which they were published.

1990

No Need to Go It Alone

Born in a Bar, This Running Club Is Low on Pressure

If the loneliness of the long-distance runner has lost its romantic appeal, Buffalo Chips Running Club of Sacramento, with nearly 700 members, offers a refuge from the running blues.

Formed in 1974 by 10 runners who enjoyed discussing their hobby in a local bar called the Buffalo Club, the Chips have grown into the largest and oldest running club in the city.

Just as running attracts people of all ages, so too does the club. There's George Billingsley, a 63-year-old member who recently finished a 116-day run across the United States with 73-year-old Paul Reese, one of the club founders.

"The club is fantastic for runners of all types—young and old ones, fast and slow ones," Billingsley said. "You can get a lot more from the club than you would running alone."

And then there's 12-year-old Jennifer Siragusa, the youngest active member of the club. For her, the Chips offer a safe place to run with her two other running friends, 13-year-old Sarah Pope and 14-year-old Dawn Cabitac. "I like the other people too," she said.

Maybe most importantly, the club offers people a place to train—with or without pressure—whether they run a 30-minute or 50-minute 10K.

"The club is based on individual differences, and it's this quality that creates such a positive atmosphere," said David Ragsdale, the 52-year-old former Chips president. "The emphasis is not on how fast you are. People aren't always comparing their racing times."

In fact, Ragsdale left a more elite Sacramento club in 1980 because he claims the atmosphere became too negative.

"My son Mark and I were both members, and we found that the runners compared times too much," he said. "I didn't want my son to be exposed to that kind of attitude."

The club's programs show its emphasis on diversity. The 5 percent improvement program is one. If a runner improves a racing time by

5 percent, no matter what the time, he or she is eligible to receive a free club singlet. The club also offers a youth program and has held running camps for teenagers in the Tahoe area.

On the other hand, the Chips have their fair share of the local and national running elite, including:

- Mark Nenow, American record-holder at the 10K, who occasionally takes part in the club's Tuesday workouts.
- Christine Iwahashi, one of the top marathoners in Northern California, who recently won a marathon in the Bordeaux region of France.
- Rae Clark, the American record-holder at 100 miles.
- Tom Johnson, the 1990 winner of the Western States Endurance Run.

The largest club workout is on Tuesdays, meeting behind Steve's Pizza on Howe Avenue at 5:30 p.m. Here you can expect a herd of more than 100 members of all ages, ranging from low-mileage to elite runners.

Dividing into eight groups, members vary the length and pace of workouts according to level of interest and ability. One of the groups runs steady at 10 minutes per mile, while the fastest group runs repeat miles at a 4:40 pace. The gathering even includes a group for walkers.

A smaller crew meets for Thursday speed work, leaving from The Graduate restaurant on University Avenue at 5:45 p.m. Members also carpool to the hills for longer runs on Saturdays or Sundays.

For a \$15 annual fee, other benefits of the club include a quarterly newsletter and a roster listing addresses, phone numbers and ages of members. Using the rosters, members call each other to set up more informal workouts.

“When I had to move away from the area at one point in my life, I really missed the club,” said Byron Lea, the 34-year-old club president. “It provides a focal point for the running community.”

And the club has parties, including an annual Christmas bash, all expenses paid. So, if your motivation is low and you're dreading the winter season, check out this diverse club. You're bound to find someone who meets your running needs.

This article appeared on October 3, 1990.

Pregnant Women May Still Run but Need Guidelines

To run or not to run? For many dedicated female runners who become pregnant, this question is not easy to answer.

Myths abound regarding the dangers of running through pregnancy, but the consensus seems to be that it can be done without danger to the fetus if a pregnant woman:

- Is a dedicated runner beforehand.
- Receives the consent of her doctor.
- Runs at a moderate aerobic, not anaerobic, level.
- Listens to and acts upon her body signals.

One danger if a woman does not take these precautions could be to deprive the fetus of oxygen. That could happen if blood is diverted from the uterus to the exercising muscles. The fetus could also be damaged if its temperature is raised to dangerous levels.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has issued guidelines establishing what a moderate level of exercise is, but as Mary Ashuckian, an exercise physiologist and director of Sutter Pregmagym, said, these standards may not apply to all pregnant women.

For instance, one of the standards is that the woman's heart rate should not exceed 140 beats per minute.

"For some women, 140 beats may be too high while for others it may be too low," Ashuckian said. "It really depends on your level of conditioning before you become pregnant and what kind of pregnancy you're having."

In the last three years, several local runners have dealt with the run-or-not-run quandary. Some of the women took a conservative approach, choosing not to run or to run for only a few months, while others virtually ran to the hospital.

Such was the case with 35-year-old Joyce Mikal-Flynn, who ran an average of 3 miles a day until the day before she was scheduled to go in for Caesarean section.

A nurse practitioner in a family practice and confessed "compulsive runner," Mikal-Flynn became a runner after her second daughter, now 8 years old, was born. She insists her third pregnancy was her happiest because she could run.

“I gained the least amount of weight—22 pounds—and I recovered much faster than I did for the other two, which were also by C-section,” she said. “And Kennan (now two years old) is very healthy.”

Heike Mansoor, an elite runner, jogged a daily average of five miles until the last two weeks of her pregnancy.

“I switched to a turbo trainer in the last two weeks because running had become too uncomfortable,” the 28-year-old said. “To run down hills, I almost had to assume the snowplow position.”

Other pregnant runners were more conservative.

Cathie Simonsen, who ran an average of eight miles a day before her pregnancy, took up swimming and low-impact aerobics when she learned she was pregnant.

“I read lots of articles on exercise and pregnancy and saw a lot of arguments on both sides,” the 33-year-old said. “I decided to take a prudent approach and not run while I was pregnant.”

Deidre Wilson, 33, a self-described long-distance recreational runner, did not run beyond her sixth month.

“I felt that a healthy pregnancy was more important than sticking to a rigid training schedule,” she said. “You can always run in the future.”

Finding a bathroom as often as she needed during her runs was another reason for stopping after six months, Wilson said. “I was having to go every mile on a three-mile run.”

Eileen Claugus Taylor, 35, one of Northern California’s most elite runners, stopped jogging after seven months.

“I didn’t want to try to stay in shape the way many competitive runners try to,” she said. “I kept a concern for the baby by listening to all my body cues.”

Women are urged to consult their doctors before deciding to run while pregnant.

This article appeared on October 17, 1990.

Older Women Competitors Are Training Harder, Winning

In 1971, *Runner's World* magazine published a book called *Running after 40*. It profiles 21 male and just two female runners. One of the women was Marcie Trent, 53, at the time the oldest woman to run a marathon.

Here was how Trent described her rigorous training:

"I run at least four miles at between a 7- and 10-minute pace, non-stop when possible. Longer runs in the summer (6–7 miles) once a week; this is conditioning for marathons."

Give credit to the ground-breaking roles of Trent and others like her, but women's masters running is very different today. Masters women are not only training harder for races, but they also are winning against younger competitors. Witness this year's Sacramento Zoo Zoom 10K, held Oct. 15 in William Land Park. The first three women finishers were over 40.

The women's winner, Shirley Matson, will be 50 in November. She clocked 36 minutes, 7 seconds. Many of the top local runners in the women's open division aspire to such a performance.

"We enjoyed beating the young girls," the 103-pound Matson said with a laugh.

In 1984, Matson qualified for the first women's Olympic Trials for the marathon with a time of 2:50:3. Only seven masters women qualified for the trials, including Sister Marian Irvine, who was 54 at the time.

Irvine started running at age 48. Before then, she smoked two packs of cigarettes a day. Legend has it that, in the early days, she sneaked out of the convent for her runs wearing a skirt because she wasn't allowed to wear shorts and wasn't sure she was even allowed to run.

Matson's start was a lot less dramatic. She simply began running in her late 30s to get fit. She ran her first race, without speed work, in 1977.

"It was a 5K. I went out like a jack rabbit and found myself in the lead," she said. "Only one other woman passed me, and I tried to hang on to her but couldn't keep up." The race was an all-women's race with more than 200 entrants. Her time was 19:30.

Now Matson is an American age-group record-holder in several distances, and she is delighted to be turning 50 next month.

“It’s been fun to see if I can set records in the new age group,” she said.

Joan Coleman, 46, also an American record-holder, placed second at the Zoo Zoom in 36:32. She is just as delighted about Matson’s birthday. “I’ll be sending her a birthday card,” she said.

Matson’s most significant breakthrough occurred in 1984 at the Peachtree 10K. At that time, Cindy Dalrymple was the reigning masters woman and had gone virtually undefeated. Until Matson’s coach called her the night before, Matson hoped only to place second to Dalrymple.

“He told me that I could defeat Cindy,” Matson said. “My times proved I could, but I had to overcome my mental resistance.”

That night, Matson lay in bed and visualized the whole race. She planned to remain behind Cindy until the five-mile point and then close the gap between them from mile five to six. With two-tenths to go, she imagined herself passing Cindy and kicking it in.

The race went exactly according to plan. Matson ran a 35:59. Dalrymple was four seconds back.

“What made this an important event for me,” Matson said, “was that I had really used visualization for the first time, and I had done it so thoroughly that it was as if I had already run the race. In the actual race, I was just going through the motions.”

Matson’s advice to women over 40 who want to start running is to invest in a good pair of shoes and to start moderately. Her final words, though, are typically to the point.

“Just do it,” she said. “What are you waiting for?”

Running notes—The Sacramento Marathon, held Oct. 7, was a disappointing event for at least one runner because of some confusion about the accuracy of the course.

Race organizers advertised the course as accurate. But, according to Bev Marx, 37, who hoped to qualify for the women’s Olympic Trials, the race director told her as she was about 12.4 miles into the marathon that the course was inaccurate. Marx stopped at the half-marathon point.

Ron Sturgeon, the race director, said he ran alongside Marx at 12.4 miles and told her he had received word over his radio from a course monitor that the course may be inaccurate. However, he also said, “I checked with course monitors after the race, and they informed me that the course was, in fact, accurate.”

But for Marx, the damage has been done.

“My next chance to qualify will be at the California International Marathon,” she said. “But the weather can be unreliable for that race, and I’m worried that I may be past my training peak by then.”

This article appeared on October 31, 1990.

This Ultrarunner Gets the Most Out of His Day

When 38-year-old Rae Clark was a child, he would pretend he had one wish for one day. He would ask himself what he could do with that wish to make his day the best possible.

On Sept. 30 this year, Clark made the most of his day. He filled it, from beginning to end, with running. Circling a track, he covered 165 miles and 427 yards to break the American record for running the most miles in 24 hours.

“There wasn’t a lot to throw the mind off,” the Camino ultrarunner said. “It was hard without hills, trails, and mountain streams. But doing it on the track is the only way to ensure that the distance is ratified.”

Clark broke the official record by more than nine miles and the unofficial record by more than two. A crew, including his wife’s father and mother, stayed with him all day and all night, supplying fuel and counting lap after lap.

The 155-pound runner set the record while participating in Megan’s Run in Oregon. In addition to being the TAC/USA 24-hour championship, the event was a fundraiser for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Through pledges, Clark raised \$1,300 for research into the cause of SIDS.

Raising funds for the community benefits Clark, too, he said.

“It gives you a lot of power to do something worthwhile.”

But Clark also believes in power from other sources. Around his neck, he wears a necklace of American Indian beads. “They give me special mental energy,” he said. He has worn the necklace for 17 years.

And in his life, he has his wife, Jan Levet, whom he married in October. He attributes their shared love of running as another power source in his life. Levet is an accomplished ultrarunner, too, setting several course records and twice completing the Western States 100-Mile

Endurance Run.

A former collegiate gymnast, Clark began running in 1975 to regain fitness. In 1980, he began running ultras, including the Western States, where he placed sixth in a time of 20 hours, 47 minutes. Since then, Clark has run the Western States eight times, always winning the prestigious silver belt buckle for completing the race in less than 24 hours.

While Clark is an outgoing man and states his thoughts with conviction, he seems frustrated when he tries to convey all that ultrarunning means to him.

“It’s a unique way of seeing this country,” he said, pausing and casting a look of dissatisfaction with his own words. “You get to experience it internally.”

Clark prefers to run long distances along mountain trails, where most ultras are staged, and it is clear one would best get to know him on those trails. Sitting in a chair, the man seems captive and restricted.

For Clark, there is only one wish, one day, and sitting in a chair is not how he would use it.

This article appeared on November 14, 1990.



1991

Running Brings 4 Together

It's a Social Thing for Good Ol' Friends

In her younger days, 50-year-old Joyce Karver used to chat with her women friends over coffee and cigarettes. These days, she said, she chats with them over a 12-mile run. Meet Karver's friends: Peggy Ewing, 63, Marian McKone, 60, and Leona Nenow, 55.

Karver and Ewing had been running together for more than 10 years while McKone and Nenow joined the duo later. While each of the women have won their age divisions in many local races, including marathons, they run together because they enjoy their friendship—six days a week.

"I get up at 6:45 a.m. even on foggy Saturday mornings excited to meet my friends," Karver said. "Knowing I'm going to meet the girls gets me out of bed."

But these women do not have to say they're friends. Their blend of dry wit and affection proves it. Witness their description of Karver. With much laughter, they tease that she has one speed even when she does speedwork. Karver returns the laughter easily and without offense.

This teasing produces a story about the 1989 New York Marathon. Ewing, McKone and Karver all ran the race while Nenow, still undecided about running marathons, watched. The women finished within minutes of each other although Karver came last.

But it wasn't Karver's one-speeded approach to running that led her to tail the others. She finished behind them because she was too busy picking up coins along the course.

"Joyce picked up 26 cents during the run," Nenow said, "and it wasn't just a quarter and a penny. It was lots of pennies and nickels, which she even ran back for."

The women don't brag about themselves, but they do boast seriously of the accomplishments of the others. They say McKone is the most durable. She began running more than 23 years ago. Nenow is the fastest. She pulls the rest of the group along. Ewing is the most diverse.

She plays golf, tennis, and even finds time to cross country ski. And Karver is the most sociable. She knows everyone on the bike trail.

They even share a communal memory. Ewing gets vague when she tries to remember how many years she has been running. “10 years, I think,” she says. But, the rest of the group knows better and says she has been for 11. “Oh, have I?” she asks them with a mild look.

These women are not superstars. They are ordinary people who have a multitude of responsibilities as most ordinary people do. They are wives and mothers, and two are grandmothers.

And even their friendship, although it is precious, is not so rare. It’s the same bond other women have developed, sharing the events of their lives while giving each other understanding. But, for these Sacramento women, it’s not a bond borne of the frustrations of drudgery but from choice and good times and the freedom of running.

This article appeared on February 6, 1991.

Spreading the Word

Newsletter Combines Science Journal with Popular Magazine

In 1985, Owen Anderson was looking for a scientific way to improve his running. Out of his search, he started *Running Research News*. Now, with subscriptions at a healthy 2,500, he does not have time to run anymore.

The newsletter summarizes the latest scientific research on training, nutrition and sports medicine. The good news is you do not have to be a scientist to understand it.

“I wanted a running publication that would tread the middle ground,” Anderson said, “halfway between a popular running magazine and a scientific journal.”

The newsletter, based in Lansing, Mich., meets this standard. Anderson, who has a science background, translates scientific jargon into a layperson’s terms. And the newsletter carries no advertising. That means readers can trust that articles on running products are objective.

In 1987, for example, Anderson summarized several studies evaluating whether Exceed Fluid Replacement and Energy Drink met the claims of its advertisers. He concluded that the drink did heighten endurance during exercise lasting longer than an hour. But, he found conflicting evidence as to whether it emptied from the stomach as fast as water.

For a future issue, Anderson has contracted with a shoe consultant in Texas to test running shoes. The consultant, who once worked for a shoe company, has his own home lab and will test the shoes for qualities such as their ability to absorb shock and to protect knees and ankles. Anderson said he does not care which shoes come out on top.

And *Running Research News* is not just for fast runners.

“The newsletter is for people who run marathons in more than four hours as well as for elite runners. It’s for anyone who wants some reliable principles to apply to their own training regardless of how fast they are,” he said.

Here is a small sample of article headings: “Appropriate Training Distance for a First Marathon”; “Training Partners: Help or Hindrance?”; “Decline in Aerobic Power with Age: Inevitable?”; and “Measuring the Elite Runners: Brits Extol Extra Workouts.”

Even though the newsletter’s audience is broad, it certainly has several elite athletes, including Pete Pfitzinger, a two-time Olympic marathoner. And more running coaches are subscribing, including Jack Warner, Cornell’s cross-country coach.

The information is fresh. Anderson interviews exercise physiology experts, such as Dave Costill and Jack Daniels, and scours the latest issues of more than 100 scientific journals. He also attends many conferences where scientific results are presented for the first time. He recently returned from a symposium on running in Antwerp, Belgium. In June, he will head to Budapest, Hungary, for the latest in Eastern European research.

While the newsletter is fundamentally earnest, it is also marked by a free-roving, cornball kind of humor that is missing in the glossier running magazines. A recent heading attests to this: “What’s Aspercreme Doing in a Joint Like This?”

The newsletter’s major attribute is in trying to answer basic questions most runners grapple with: “How Many Days Can a Runner Rest?”;

“Intervals: How Fast and How Long?”; “Muscle Stretching: What Are Its Benefits?”; “Weight Training: Can It Benefit Your Long-Distance Running?”; and “The Week Following a Marathon: Should You Rest or Run?”

This article appeared on May 1, 1991.

When Done Correctly, Lifting Weights Might Be Helpful

For more than eight years, I have followed a light weight-training program three times a week, going on faith that somehow cross-training benefited my running. I was surprised to learn that very little scientific evidence supports my notion.

Most experts agree weight training cannot improve a long-distance runner’s endurance. Only running and more running can do that. The experts call it sport specificity.

Owen Anderson, editor of *Running Research News*, a Michigan-based newsletter that tracks running research, sums up the scientific work on this point in a past issue:

“Other activities which do not involve the same patterns of muscular use and control,” Anderson wrote, “will not be beneficial. Weightlifting...cannot make you a better runner.”

Evidence suggests training with heavy weights can lead to decreased endurance.

A workout with heavy weights makes your muscles larger but in so doing decreases the density of mitochondria in your muscle cells. These mitochondria are important in the creation of energy for aerobic exercise.

Dr. Fred Baldini, an assistant professor of exercise science at Sacramento State, said that as the muscles get larger, “the volume or pool that the mitochondria float around in increases so that the fuels, such as oxygen, have further to travel.” The result is a reduced aerobic capacity.

But what if a runner avoids heavy weights and concentrates on lighter ones? Baldini believes that by supplementing their running with lighter weights, runners can improve their overall fitness through the additional strength component.

“The person may be able to climb the stairs or pick up something heavy a little more easily, and that’s always good,” he said. “But it is really questionable whether running performance is improved.”

However, according to Anderson, some evidence indicates weight training may be useful in preventing injuries in sports such as swimming and tennis. But he is careful to add that he knows of no specific evidence linking such prevention directly to running.

Baldini, too, sees weight training as a preventive measure but also cites the paucity of evidence to confirm this.

“Put in very simple terms,” Baldini said, “muscles are surrounded by different layers of connective tissue that hold everything together. Studies have shown that weight training builds up this tissue a little, making the muscles more resistant to...damage.”

Evidence also suggests weight training may provide a balance among opposing muscles that connect to the same joint.

In runners, for instance, muscle imbalance can often occur between the hamstrings and the quadriceps. Running increases strength of the quads, at the front of the thighs, but can leave the hamstrings, at the back of the thighs, proportionally weaker.

During a mad dash to the finish line, you can easily tear weak hamstrings. But by using weights to strengthen these muscles, you may prevent a leg-grabbing tumble only a few feet from the line.

Many excellent coaches seem to believe in such preventive measures and that weight training offers some help. Those coaches include Brooks Johnson, Stanford University’s director of track and field, who was voted *Runner’s World* Coach of the Year in 1983. He also led the U.S. women’s track and field team to 16 medals in the 1984 Olympics.

In his 1988 book, *The Winning Edge*, Johnson advised runners to supplement their running with a few weight-training exercises such as hamstring, arm and wrist curls. In recommending such strength exercises, Johnson writes that “the delicate balance between strength and freedom is essential to good running.”

Bob Glover, coach, runner and fitness guru, in his 1988 book *The New Competitive Runner’s Handbook*, suggests runners follow a supplemental weight-training program to prevent injury and to improve overall strength and “arm drive.”

If you decide to follow a weight-training program, take a conservative approach. Join a gym and have a knowledgeable staff person take you through your first couple of sessions. Tell the person you want to concentrate on the areas where you are most vulnerable as a runner.

Follow a light weight program, relying on repetitions rather than heavy weights to increase muscle strength.

Finally, if you are a racer, reduce your lifting sessions before an important race. Before marathons, stop weight training about 10 days before to coincide with your tapering off. This allows your body to renew its energies before the big day.

This article appeared on July 24, 1991.

First-Timers Run Easy at Susan B. Anthony

Most runners treasure the memory of their first race, even the ones who later win trophies and medals. For all of us, the thrill was in just finishing.

On Aug. 17, women runners who have secretly dreamed of running a race can overcome their first-race anxiety by running the Susan B. Anthony 5K (3.1 miles) in an encouraging, generally noncompetitive atmosphere. More than 400 women are expected to follow the looped course through River Park, many of them running a race for the first time, too.

Race director Joanne Hollister said several first-timers have called to inquire exactly what a racer does. All of them are nervous.

“One of the women,” Hollister said, “told me she was very worried because the flyer for the race said, ‘No Pacing.’ The woman said that she didn’t know how to do a race without pacing herself.”

In fact, “no pacing” means that runners cannot have another runner lead them through the race.

Another first-time racer said to Hollister, “When you say divisions, what does that mean?”

For a veteran runner, such questions may seem silly. But all I have to do is recall my first race to realize how strange the world of road races can seem to a newcomer.

My first race was called Run for the Sun, a 10K (6.2 miles) in Arcata. I ran it with my equally inexperienced running partner, and we had never run more than three miles before.

I remember the almost all-consuming fear of coming in last, the intimidation I felt when I looked at the other runners, who all seemed so much fitter than I, and the confusion about what to eat beforehand. We settled on a substantial prerace feast: bacon, eggs, pancakes and toast. Ugh!

But, now, more than eight years later and with many races behind me, I remember that race with nostalgia. Even though I came in somewhere close to last, I remember a feeling of exhilaration and amazement as the huge crowd at the finish line cheered for me and the other stragglers as if we were the top finishers.

Kay Overman, a local runner, ran her first race at last year's Susan B. Anthony.

"Preparing for the race kept me motivated," she said. "It lifted me out of a period of lethargy. And, after I completed the race, I felt more confident. I had overcome a perception of myself as a nonrunner."

Hollister advises first-time racers to give themselves plenty of time to pick up their race number and goodies and to warm up with a few easy stretches.

Also, if you want to eat, eat something light about two hours before the race, such as a piece of toast or banana. During the two hours, drink a couple of glasses of water and leave yourself time to go to the bathroom.

But, most importantly, try to relax at the start and go out slowly. Begin near the back of the pack. The front is for the people who are experienced at running fast.

"The hardest part was being passed by so many people," Overman said. "It made me feel like I was crawling, but following the advice of a friend, I tried to maintain an even pace."

By sticking to a pace that felt comfortable, Overman found that toward the end she was able to easily pass some of the people who had passed her earlier. She finished the race to the proud cheers of her future husband as well as those of the crowd.

The race starts at 8 a.m. and is open to walkers as well as runners. The fee is \$12 before Monday, \$15 after. Registration is from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m.

Goodies include a T-shirt, cosmetic products, water bottles, a fitness magazine and coupons for running products. Post-race activities include food and beverages and a drawing for various prizes.

This article appeared on August 7, 1991.

Knees Often Need Some Special Care

Few things strike my heart with more terror than meeting a former runner who is permanently sidelined because of “knee problems.”

For those of us whose identities partly hinge on the running lifestyle, a future without running seems very bleak. But many knee injuries can be avoided if runners take precautions.

One of the more common knee injuries is chondromalacia, an over-use injury that falls under the catch-all term “runner’s knee.”

Runners suffering from this often feel a dull ache in the front of the knee. They may also experience a sharp pain, particularly when climbing stairs, running hills or squatting.

In a healthy knee, the kneecap, or patella, glides smoothly in a groove in the thigh bone. But muscle imbalances or biomechanical faults can cause the patella to misalign in this groove and rub on the underlying cartilage, wearing the cartilage down.

Dr. Harold Strauch, a local orthopedic surgeon who often treats running injuries, said that a muscle imbalance between the quadriceps, at the front of the thighs, and the hamstrings, at the back, can lead to chondromalacia.

Strong quadriceps support the patella, preventing it from shifting sideways. However, running develops the hamstrings more than the quadriceps so that these muscles are often proportionally weaker. Weak quadriceps may allow the patella to shift sideways, causing damage to the cartilage.

Don Torrey, a local therapist and former trainer for collegiate athletes, said that many of the runners he treats for chondromalacia tend to overpronate.

“The arches of runners who overpronate tend to stay flattened when the foot hits the ground,” said Torrey, “but the arch of a normal runner will come back up once the foot lands. When the arch stays flat, the foot turns too much, causing a rotational stress at the knee.”

Strauch and Torrey emphasize the importance of treating the injury as soon as symptoms occur.

“If it’s not treated,” said Strauch, “it could become a chronic condition. I get really frustrated with people who don’t listen to their bodies.”

In fact, surgery for chronic chondromalacia does not have a high success rate in restoring runners to the road. A runner with chronic chondromalacia may never be able to run again.

So, with the first twinge of real pain, reduce your mileage and intensity or stop running altogether. A few miles lost at this stage may prevent a complete loss later.

Ice the injury for 15 to 20 minutes several times a day, particularly after a run. Take an anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen, and don’t run on banked surfaces or hills. Substitute workouts with other sports, such as swimming, to maintain fitness.

“The treatment can be tricky,” said Torrey, “because it depends on why you’re having the knee problem. But you should check your shoes. If the soles are fairly worn down on the inside, that means you’re pronating. These days almost all shoe manufacturers produce at least one pair of shoes that help pronation. A good running store...will help runners choose the right ones.”

Torrey said that if the pain persists for more than a few weeks, runners should seek professional help. A pair of custom-made orthotics may correct a biomechanical problem.

“There is almost a direct correlation between early treatment and recovery,” said Torrey. “A lot depends on common sense. If you don’t have common sense, at least get the help of a professional who will use it for you.”

Torrey advises runners to keep leg muscles well-stretched, particularly quadriceps and calfs. He also suggests isometric exercises for the quadriceps, such as straight leg raises.

“Using a bent knee to push against resistance such as weights,” said Torrey, “could strain a weak knee even more. While isometric exercises won’t dramatically improve the strength of the quads, they may give them enough strength to give the knee the additional support it needs.”

This article appeared on August 21, 1991.

If the Fun Is Missing, Maybe It's Time to Change Course

For the last four years, on my way to work, I have passed a runner struggling loop after loop after loop around a local park; she even runs the same route on weekends. She rarely looks happy.

Admittedly, running does require discipline, but discipline does not have to be sheer drudgery. If it is, you may be heading toward burnout.

The key to avoiding burnout and enjoying the running seems to lie in a flexible attitude—to be consistent but not compulsive.

Eileen Claugus Taylor and Don Spickelmier are two local racers who have been running for many years and who credit their continued enthusiasm for the sport to this attitude.

Taylor, 36, has been running for more than 24 years. Her national high school record for the mile stood for 10 years, and she has won numerous races, including the Honolulu, Mexico City and San Francisco marathons.

Recently, she returned to her old form after having a baby two years ago. In June, she placed fourth at Grandma's Marathon in Minnesota with a near personal best of 2 hours, 41 minutes. At that race, she also qualified for the Olympic Trials in Houston.

Taylor said she still enjoys the sport because she has adjusted her attitude over the years.

“I've thrown out old time standards,” she said. “I don't try to compare current performances with past ones. I'm just happy to do the workout.”

Taylor also said she has five or six different and interesting running routes rather than the same one each day. And, she allows herself rest.

“I program my days off,” she said. “I don't wait until I'm so tired I *have* to take a day off. When I trained for Grandma's Marathon, I took one or two days off a week and scheduled them around my work demands.”

She also schedules recovery time after a big race. Following Grandma's, she intentionally took a break.

“A break meant that if I felt like running, I ran,” she said, “and if I didn't, then I didn't.”

Spickelmier, 50, who has been running for 17 years, uses many of the same strategies as Taylor, and he also still loves the sport. But, three years ago, it was a different story.

“I was not racing well,” he said, “and always running by myself, not having fun.”

Spickelmier was wise enough to take a six-month break without fearing that he was giving up the sport entirely. During his layoff, he put more time into his work and friends. When he was ready to run again, he thought about his previous patterns and realized they contributed to his burnout.

He began to seek out people to run with. He now runs regularly with different groups on different routes five days of the week. He also recovers from important races by reducing his running and by cross-training.

Spickelmier’s more flexible attitude is showing in his races. In December, he placed second in his age group running his first marathon at the California International Marathon. He ran 2:49, only a few seconds behind the first-place finisher in his division.

He also placed third in his division in Northern California’s grand prix circuit of races, organized by The Athletics Congress. He placed well, even though he had run only two of many races scheduled for the circuit.

Spickelmier suggests that as well as taking time off and running with others, runners should also set themselves goals.

“Without them,” he said, “you just flounder around. A goal can be just to go to a club run or to run with friends on Sunday—anything to motivate you to want to keep running.”

But for Taylor and Spickelmier, the bottom line is fun.

“It’s important to remember that none of it really matters anyway,” Taylor said. “As runners, we all tend to take it too seriously.”

Spickelmier added, “This is play. If it isn’t, do something else.”

This article appeared on September 4, 1991.

Injured? Try a Pool Workout

Water Running May Help You Rehabilitate after Surgery, Illness

For Joan Reiss, the oldest woman to run the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run in under 24 hours, the loneliness of the long distance runner took on new meaning last February.

Two weeks after knee surgery, Reiss, 54, ran in a swimming pool at the University of San Francisco’s health center every day for 30 to 40 minutes. Apart from one workout, when another water runner made a brief appearance, she ran alone, with only passing swimmers, the four walls of the swimming pool, and her watch to entertain her.

Reiss was in the pool because of an overuse injury. A missing piece of cartilage and more than 13 years of marathons and ultramarathons resulted in bone-to-bone contact in her knee, causing extreme pain. In January, she underwent surgery to create pseudo cartilage where the real stuff should have been.

For six weeks after surgery, she was on crutches to avoid putting weight on her knee. For Reiss, a woman with almost manic energy even after the longest runs, such a prescription was tantamount to torture.

But help came for Reiss in the form of water running, suggested by Chris Chorak, a physical therapist and athletic trainer for Ultrahealth, a sports medicine rehabilitation center in San Francisco.

“We have many ultrarunners who come to us suffering from overuse injuries or just soreness,” Chorak said, “and they can’t stand the thought of not running. We try and get them to supplement their running one or two days a week with water running.”

According to Chorak, water running eliminates land running’s typical weight-bearing stresses to the ankle, knee, hip and back while allowing the runner to maintain some degree of cardiovascular and muscular endurance.

With devices such as a Wet Vest, which looks like a life jacket, or an AquaJogger, which buckles around the waist, the runner can remain afloat vertically.

For best results, the water runner should stay in the deep end. The workout is completely non-weight-bearing—and, therefore, nonstressful to the joints—when the runner’s feet don’t touch the bottom of the pool. Also, the more water the runner can work against, the greater the resistance, and the better the workout.

In his book *Deep Water Exercise for Health and Fitness*, J. Glenn McWaters, a runner and the designer of the Wet Vest, advocates the proper form for water running.

“Lean slightly forward in the water as if you were running outdoors,” McWaters writes. “Progress slowly through the water, using the exact motion you would on dry land...don’t attempt to remain stationary. If

you try to stay in one place, you will end up with more of a bicycling motion....”

McWaters also said do not lean too far forward, as a swimmer might, because this decreases the resistance. And, even with a lot of effort, water running will not take you far. Reiss took 30 to 40 minutes to go about a half mile in the pool. So, water workouts have to be measured by time, not distance.

Water running also adds an upper-body workout that land running does not. If the water runner paddles with cupped hands rather than fisted ones, the arms have more resistance to work against.

“A lot of people who water run,” Chorak said, “tell me they have more developed biceps and triceps than before. That helps with upper-body endurance in a long race.”

But while water running may help rehabilitate injuries or relieve sore and tired runners, not everyone is convinced it improves a healthy runner’s performance. Much of the evidence to suggest it does is anecdotal.

Several famous runners, including Joan Benoit Samuelson and Mary Decker Slaney, have used water running to recover from injuries and apparently have achieved some dramatic results.

The August issue of *Runner’s World* magazine said Slaney used water running for three weeks after an injury in the 1984 Olympic Trials. Two days after her water workouts, she set a world record in the 2,000 meters.

But, in 1987, *Running Research News* (RRN) cited two studies suggesting that water running was not an exact substitute for land running—at least when using the Wet Vest.

One study concluded that “the physiological responses to wet running were slightly lower than those for land running.... Claims regarding significantly greater metabolic costs of wet running are unsubstantiated.”

The other study, according to RRN, concludes that “with a Wet Vest, you might have to exercise at an intensity that feels ‘very hard’ to get the same physiological benefits as a regular run that feels ‘moderately hard.’”

Don Torrey, a local physical therapist and former sports trainer for collegiate athletes, agrees.

“If you try to move fast in the water, it takes a lot of energy,” Torrey said, “and you move only in a *similar* way to running, not in *exactly* the

same way. If you want to improve as a runner, the best thing you can do is run.”

As for Reiss, after a month of pool running, she began alternating dry running with water workouts every other day. Now, only six months later, she is back to her normal mileage on land, completing more than two and a half hour runs on the weekend.

This article appeared on October 2, 1991.

Make Time for Your Roadwork

One Must Not Give Up Everything to Keep on the Fitness Path

Finding time to run is rarely easy when we have full-time jobs and relationships to nurture. But even with the demands of daily life, you don't need to sneak out at midnight just to squeeze in a workout.

By combining running with other activities, runners can exercise without sacrificing family, job, and friends—and still can sleep more than two hours a night.

Combining activities requires imagination and flexibility, but most people who run consistently gradually become masters at creatively managing their time.

David Ragsdale, a local runner for more than 17 years, said for his workouts he uses “dead time,” which includes commuter and lunch time.

Ragsdale's wife, Rosemary, has her own office downtown, and Ragsdale works close by. Some mornings, he runs about seven miles from his home to Rosemary's office, where he showers and picks up his work clothes.

Other days, he and his wife ride into work together, but in the evening he leaves his work clothes in her car and runs home. To vary his routine, he may change at a nearby gym and run through Discovery Park at lunch time.

In addition to using dead time for running, try combining chores with exercise. While the clothes are churning, take a quick run.

Occasionally, during my lunch hour, I run to the bank, about two miles from my workplace. I carry any necessary papers in a small

envelope. So far, the bank manager and tellers have accepted my sweaty visits with amusement rather than disdain.

Some veteran runners combine running time with family time. On weekends, Ragsdale runs on wooded trails pursuing his wife as she rides her horse. Other people run on the bike path on the weekends while their kids ride along on their bikes.

Jim Polisini, another local runner, pushes his 2½-year-old daughter, Cara, in a Baby Jogger on some weeknight and weekend runs. Polisini said running with Cara allows him to spend quality time alone with her while giving his wife a break from child-care duties.

Another way to squeeze in a run is to substitute running for breakfasting, and bring your food to work. I frequently run before work and ease into my in-basket over cereal, a muffin, and coffee.

If you choose to run before work, set out your clothes and pack your food the night before. If I don't prepare ahead of time, I stumble around in the morning, my brain at half speed. I waste precious time looking for clothes and dragging my shoes from under the bed.

Finally, if it is still difficult to balance running with family, work and friends, it may be time for drastic measures. Abandon your old family, marry another runner, associate with runners only, and force your kids to be track stars.

This article appeared on October 16, 1991.

Running Guru Expresses Himself on the Road

Paul Reese, 74, has participated in and influenced the running scene for more than 28 years. But despite many competitive successes, running has been less about *racing* time than about living well in the time he has.

Last year, Reese ran across the United States, a total of 3,192.6 miles in 124 days, averaging a marathon a day. His wife, Elaine, provided support, maintaining Reese's morale—as well as his weight.

Two years before this trip, Reese was treated for prostate cancer, running five miles a day “slowly, very slowly” while going through 68 radiation treatments.

But Reese insists his intention in running through his illness and across the country was not to prove his manliness to the world.

“It wasn’t to say, ‘Look at me, Mr. Genes, Mr. Macho.’ I didn’t want it to come off like, ‘Boy, look at me! I had cancer and I’m a tiger right now.’”

Instead, Reese said he ran during his illness because it enhanced his zest for life.

“I was just lucky that my cancer was detected early,” he said. “It hadn’t metastasized. The early detection and my recovery is a tribute to modern medicine—not running.”

And his trip, too, he said, was a statement about aging.

“People have missed the whole point if they see it as a jock thing,” Reese said. “Running through the South, I saw a lot of older folks sitting on their front porches in rocking chairs, watching the world go by. To me, that’s not quality of life. This trip was about quality of life.”

Reese also expresses other life values through his running. He believes in returning to a community the benefits it has given. In running, this means speaking at running clinics, representing long-distance masters runners at committee meetings of The Athletics Congress and organizing many races.

One of Reese’s many contributions to the local running scene was the well-attended Pepsi 20-Mile Run, which he founded in 1968 and continued to direct with his wife for 14 years.

This race has now evolved into the Foundation Charity Challenge 30K Run, which Reese ran this Sunday, with about 850 other runners, in a time of 2:41:09, winning, as usual, his age division.

In telling the story of the race’s evolution, Reese reveals the integrity he and his wife brought to race management.

Under the Reeses’ direction, the race grew from 68 runners to 1,650, and the start changed from Luther Burbank High School to Delta High School in Clarksburg, where the race currently begins.

Reese takes pride in the fact that he and his wife mailed complete race results to runners no more than a week after the race even though Elaine Reese had to record the times by hand, without the benefit of a computer.

Reese has another special link to Sacramento’s running history. In 1976, he became the first biweekly columnist for the *Sacramento Bee*, holding the post for more than three years.

His early involvement in the local running scene makes him an authority on how the times have changed.

When Reese began running at the age of 46, women runners were few, and races offered no awards for women.

In fact, his Pepsi 20-Mile Run was one of the first races to introduce awards for women and masters runners.

Reese remembers when a woman first passed him in a race.

“It was a 15K, and my first mile was a 5:15,” Reese said. “At about 3, I saw this person pass me, and at first I didn’t realize it was a woman. I remember thinking the person had a big chest.” Later, Reese learned the mystery runner was Francie Larrieu Smith, now a four-time Olympian.

In recalling his first marathon, in Belmont, Reese depicts race conditions as they often were—rugged.

“We ran over King Mountain, with two-thirds of the race on logging roads and trail,” Reese said. “There were only three aid stations, and your support crew almost needed a navigator to find you. Close to the end of the course, we had to climb a ladder to get over a six-foot fence.”

While Reese seems unwilling to advance himself as a competitive runner, he has certainly run some impressive times. He ran a 2:39 marathon at the age of 54 and a 6:28 50-miler at 52.

He also won, among many other races, the U.S. Masters National Championships in 1972 at the age of 55 for the 5K, 10K, and the marathon. He won each of these events during the same weekend. And, even at the age of 70, Reese was still able to run a 3:16 marathon.

But Reese is adamant that his achievements cannot be measured by race times.

His self-worth comes from his continued attempt to wholeheartedly engage with life. And he wants to encourage others to engage with it, too.

“A lot of people come up to me and say, ‘Boy, I sure hope I’m running at your age,’ but these are not the people I worry about. They’re already running. It’s the other people, the ones who aren’t doing it that I’d like to inspire.”

This article appeared on November 13, 1991.

1992

Stress Fractures Are Common Curse

In 1984, local writer Karen Coe had just won the Sacramento Marathon in 2 hours and 54 minutes, her fastest time ever. She felt great.

“I didn’t feel as if I ran with 100 percent effort,” she said. “I felt really fresh, not tired. After the race, I thought, ‘I’m *really* going to go for it now.’”

And she did.

“Too much long stuff, too much speed,” she said, “and then, WHAM, one day I felt the pain in my lower leg. And it didn’t go away.”

The pain turned out to be a stress fracture.

According to Dr. Richard Marder, who works with the Kings and is chief of sports medicine at UC Davis, stress fractures are fairly common in three bones in the lower legs.

They can occur in the fibula, a bone on the outside of the lower leg; the metatarsals, the small bones in the foot; or the tibia, the main weight-bearing bone on the inside of the lower leg.

According to *Running Research News*, stress fractures account for 10 to 15 percent of all running injuries. About half of these fractures occur in the tibia.

The pain can sometimes be sudden, as in Coe’s case, but it more often occurs by degrees, gradually increasing in intensity during a run until it feels as if it is throbbing.

Unless the stress fracture is severe, the pain normally stops once the run is over. Walking is not usually painful, but the pain is localized in one spot, and if you press it with your fingers, it will hurt.

A stress fracture is a breakdown of bone tissue that, if you could see it, would often look like a tiny crack. The breakdown occurs when the demand put on the bones exceeds the bones’ natural rate of rebuilding. There are several causes for the breakdown—including sudden increases in training.

“You see a lot of stress fractures,” said Marder, “in kids who go into boot camp and start running lots of mileage immediately. Anyone who’s never run before and does too much too soon is prone—as are

experienced runners who intensify their training suddenly.”

There are less obvious causes, too. Sometimes, inadequate intake or absorption of calcium can weaken the bones and make them more vulnerable to fractures—as can low estrogen levels in female runners.

In a 1989 issue of *Runner's World*, Christine Wells, Ph.D., wrote that low estrogen levels tend to occur in women runners with irregular or no menstrual periods. These low levels can lead to losses of bone mass because bone cells need estrogen to build and repair bone.

In fact, according to *Running Research News*, a study of female runners found that women with irregular menstrual periods had four times the rate of stress fractures compared to women with regular periods.

The study also found that females who used oral contraceptives were less likely to be injured, since the estrogen in the pills replaced the runners' low levels. But female runners should still monitor their training.

If you suspect you have a stress fracture, stop running immediately and request a bone scan. Most experts recommend a scan over an X-ray. An X-ray may not detect the fracture in the first few weeks of injury, but an early scan usually detects the injury before it has progressed too far.

To recover from the stress fracture, you have only one recourse—stop running. Trying to run on a stress fracture could lead to a bone break.

Healing can take anywhere from three weeks to six months and, in extreme cases, up to two years. For Coe, it took three months of no running and then a very gradual rebuilding of mileage and quality.

But not running does not have to mean not exercising. For Coe, the injury actually broadened her exercise horizons. She took up bike riding and competed and placed in many tough biking events, including the Markleeville Death Ride. She also rode across the country on a tandem.

“I know it sounds corny,” she said, “but when one door closes, another one opens. I learned how to cross train, and I learned that it's not the end of the world when you get injured. There's always something else you can do.”

This article appeared on April 1, 1992.

Fighting an Uphill Battle Is Worth It in the Long Run

At Houlihan's to Houlihan's 12K in San Francisco last month, flatlanders from Sacramento ran afoul of several tough hills. Jeannie Urness, of Mather Air Force Base, was one of the victims. Three women passed her on the last hill, less than a quarter-mile from the finish.

Urness, the overall winner of last year's Pacific Association of The Athletics Congress road-racing circuit, wished she'd run hills during her training.

"I don't have any hills to train on," she said. "When I lived in Hawaii, I used to run one long hill near my house all the time. Now, I crave hills. My husband thinks I'm crazy."

In Sacramento, it's hard to find even a mild lump. But, if we don't want hills to beat us in a race, we have to search for them in training.

Sue Williams, the men's and women's distance coach at UC Davis and a coach on the USA indoor track team, drives her collegiate runners to Solano Park. From there, they run a 2½-mile hill to Lake Berryessa. Williams' runners also do hill repeats on local overpasses.

"Hill workouts can improve your speed, power and form, depending on the kinds of hills you run," Williams said. "They even improve your upper body musculature because of the increased use of your arms, shoulders and trunk. You can't replicate that on the flats."

Hills certainly improve speed. According to Bob Glover in his book *The New Competitive Runner's Handbook*, runners who maintain the same pace on a 1-degree slope as on the flats will increase their energy cost by 12 percent. So running uphill, even without running faster, puts more stress on the cardiovascular system.

In the latest issue of *Running Research News*, editor Owen Anderson describes these effects from hill workouts on 11 marathon runners.

Over 12 weeks, the runners improved their running economy by about 3 percent; that is, they required about 3 percent less oxygen when they ran at a given speed. Thus, going faster was easier. Anderson equates this 3 percent gain to three-hour marathoners cutting almost six minutes off their time.

And hills build strength and power. After a period of endurance training, veteran competitors often do hill workouts for a few months before beginning speed work on the flats. Or, they will run hills once or twice a week, all year.

They do this not only for cardiovascular gains but also for resistance training. Such workouts build the calves, quadriceps and buttocks. If these muscles are not strong, they are more prone to pulls and tears during dramatic changes in pace. For distance runners in a race, such pace changes include surges and sustained kicks to the finish line.

But, not all hills are the same, and runners are often unsure what kind of hill they should use. According to Williams, runners can choose from three different kinds of hills, depending on what they are trying to achieve.

All hills improve strength, but a longer run over a course of gentle hills also develops form. Meanwhile, repetitions on gradual uphill of at least 800 meters improve aerobic capacity. And, repetitions on short steep hills, 200 to 300 meters long, develop anaerobic power. But make sure the short hills are not too steep. If they are, you may find yourself climbing instead of running.

Start with two to four repetitions and gradually work up to 10 to 12 repetitions per workout. To really benefit from hill workouts, Williams recommended attacking the hills a little more vigorously than flatland pace. But she warned against sprinting. Even on the short hills, sprinting can ruin your form and lead to muscle pulls and tears.

Form is all important during hill workouts. Peter Coe, father and coach of Sebastian Coe, winner of four Olympic medals, recommended the following technique in his book, *Training Distance Runners*:

“Vigorous arm action, a quick and powerful knee lift by action of the hip flexors, and...powerful toe-off from each driving leg...”

It is this same form, said Coe, that runners use for sudden increases in pace in a race.

And be warned. Take it easy on the downhills. Hard downhill running produces more muscle soreness than uphill running. The quadriceps, in particular, feel the impact as the feet hit the ground, as do the knee and hip joints. *Running Research News* reported that this kind of muscle soreness hinders running economy because sore muscles burn more oxygen.

Peter Coe is adamant about taking the downhill easy. For the first five years of his son's training, Coe gave his son a ride in his car from the top of each hill to the bottom.

But, Sacramentans are still left with the problem of where to find a hill in his hill-forsaken town.

Local runners have found a few. Pennsylvania Avenue, just beyond the village of Fair Oaks, and Bridge Street, both near Sunrise Bridge, offer great opportunities for hill repeats. Also, the entrance to Ancil Hoffman Park on Tarshes Drive has a 300-meter hill.

The Buffalo Chips Running Club is currently meeting the second Thursday of every month for hill workouts at Bridge Street. They meet in the parking lot near Sizzler's at Sunrise and Coloma at 5:45 p.m.

Also, the club meets for a biweekly—sometimes weekly—run in the El Dorado hills on Sundays. This run ranges from 10 to 16 miles of fairly challenging hills.

This article appeared on April 15, 1992.

Aching Backs Can Be a Part of Runner's Life

Many runners have something in common with Noureddine Morceli of Algeria, gold medalist at last year's World Championships in the 1,500 meters. But, no, sorry, it's not fast legs.

For six weeks before the Dream Mile in Oslo this summer, Morceli suffered from sciatica, a condition caused by lower back problems. Almost half of all runners are likely to suffer from sciatica during their less glorious, but no less vital, running careers.

The sciatic nerve is rooted in the spine. From there, it branches out, passing through the buttocks, down the back of the legs, all the way to the feet.

If the nerve is pinched, according to Randy Armstrong, medical director of the Sutter Pride Back Institute, runners may feel various degrees of lower back or leg pain. Some runners may develop cramping in the calf or shooting pains down the outer side of the thighs, he said. Runners may also feel pain in the hip and even down to the foot. At a severe stage, runners may also feel numbness and have difficulty raising their feet. The result may be a tendency to trip.

A pinched sciatic nerve generally results from structural problems coupled with the huge impact of medium-to-high mileage. Such problems include weak stomach muscles, different leg lengths, flat feet or high arches.

According to *Runner's World*, a runner's feet hit the ground 1,000 to 1,200 times each mile, resulting in 279 tons of force. This gets transmitted through the leg, up into the back. But Armstrong added some surprising qualifications to these heavy statistics.

"If you run more than 27 miles per week," he said, "the injury rate exponentially increases. But, if you average 3 miles or less a day, you have far less chance of injuring your back than a sedentary individual."

Armstrong's last statement may come as a surprise to many runners. Most of us are used to nonrunners telling us that eventually running will ruin our backs—maybe not now, maybe not soon, but someday.

In fact, Armstrong said, aerobic exercise is proving very beneficial for back injuries. Although scientists are not quite sure why, such exercise seems to provide the disks with the "nutrients" they need to stay healthy.

"It's the *amount* of running," Armstrong said, "rather than the activity itself, which is questionable."

For minor or moderate sciatica, and especially for prevention, Armstrong recommends strengthening the abdominal muscles and upper body and stretching the lower back. But, he said runners with any form of back pain should first consult a specialist. He also suggested they participate, with the specialist's consent, in a therapy program tailored to their athletic needs.

Be warned. Some runners with back problems have begun strengthening and stretching exercises without supervision only to worsen their condition. This is often because the runners do not understand their own physiology and pain or know the precise form for their exercises.

For example, runners will commonly try to stretch their lower backs by bending forward from the waist to touch their toes. Tim Noakes, a physiologist, physician and runner, advises against this exercise for those with weak backs.

"The force of gravity pulling on the trunk places an excessive load on the spine and lower back muscles," Noakes wrote in *Lore of Running*. "An athlete with lower back problems may find that this exercise may aggravate and prolong these problems."

Similar advice applies to runners who eagerly launch into a regimen of sit-ups. Not that stomach exercises are bad. In fact, Armstrong suggests runners do abdominal crunches at least every other day to help the stomach better support the back. But he said runners should bend their legs while doing this exercise and only go a third of the way up.

“If the legs are straight,” Armstrong said, “the runner goes further up, and the back muscles, not the abdominals, may be doing most of the work.”

And then, if you already have a bad back, the chances are you’ll make it worse.

This article appeared on August 5, 1992.

All-Comers Meet Helps to Stave Off Track’s Last Stand

At 6:30 a.m., on a Saturday morning, Mike Holzgang, working alone, hauls hurdles three at a time from under the bleachers of the track at Sacramento State. He struggles for a while to untangle them, breathing hard.

Meanwhile, just a few miles away, an army of volunteers swarm around the start line of the 19th annual Eppie’s Great Race, a triathlon that draws most of the area’s runners, bikers and kayakers. Camera crews climb the scaffolding. Officials check radio equipment and timers.

Outside of his full-time job at the phone company, Holzgang, 44, is a decathlete and track and field coach. He usually puts on several track meets a year for open and master runners. The profits from the meets go to Sac State’s ever-dwindling track and field program.

Holzgang usually has 20–25 officials at meets, but this recent Saturday, several of his regulars won’t make it because they are running in the Great Race. Also, this is only Holzgang’s first meet of the year. He had planned four more.

Three, meant for the early part of the year, never got beyond the blueprints. The CSUS stadium was under reconstruction for the Surge football team’s new home.

He had to cancel the fourth meet, scheduled for Aug. 1, also because of football. In fact, even the school’s track team had only one at-home meet since the Surge took over the stadium. Football takes precedence.

But this early Saturday morning, Holzgang is too busy to worry about any of this. He sets up the hurdles ahead of time, in the lanes that won't be used in the first events of the day. That way, later, when he is the official starter, he won't have to worry about equipment.

He also checks that the rings are cleaned out for the discus, rechecks the pole vault equipment, and lines with rubber mats the concrete water hole for the steeple chase. He fills the hole with water.

The day before, Holzgang had the chance to take four hours leave from his job to remeasure the steeplechase barrier without surveying the track.

This meant Holzgang had to find a new start line to make sure the course was accurate.

But Holzgang is not a last-minute worker. For the past three months, he's been preparing for this meet with some kind of daily task. Among other things, writing and mailing entry forms, buying medals, checking the 300-meter measuring tapes for the javelin.

Each task he does alone while working full time, running, biking, practicing drills for the decathlon, and worrying about his three children. He has raised them on his own for the last 13 years. But he worries less these days. They are all in college, all holding jobs.

At this meet, about 100 people show up. His daughter, Jean, handles the late registration. He thinks the relatively low turnout is because of Eppies's and a Bay Area track meet for masters the next week. But even on a good day, a meet may get no more than 160 people.

Last year, he raised about \$1,600 for the Hornets' track team. Its budget has been slashed to the nub, so Holzgang raises money for travel expense, equipment, shoes.

He says the team's coach, Joe Neff, and a few other track aficionados, including himself, tried to form a committee once to establish a special track fund. It didn't fly.

Now, after each meet, he has to fill out a series of forms to make sure the money he raises doesn't go into the school's general sports fund.

"I raise this money for track," Holzgang said. "I don't want any football player to touch it."

Once the meet is underway, runners and spectators are frustrated by more evidence of football's dominance—and track's slow death in America.

Now, at the point when lead runners often make their break for the final kick, no one gets to see the drama.

At the track's last turn, stuffed between the end zone and the inside lane, new bleachers, swathed in heavy green netting, block everyone's view.

“It makes for a boring race,” Holzgang said.

It's not easy for Holzgang to explain why he works so hard on these meets or why he has taken it on himself to tend the flame for his sport. Take him back to the question, and he seems to shy off in a hundred directions.

He'll tell you he was a former Olympic weightlifter, once ranked fourth in the American championships. That he got a back injury. That, via almost two years of excruciating pain and nine months off work, he found track and field a kind of salvation.

He'll tell you that he wants to be a good role model to his children, that he loves the outdoors. He'll even tell you he loves astronomy, the sky. He'll describe his bike ride to work in the morning, how he stops on a small hill on the bike path to watch the sun rise over a far off mountain.

But he can't seem to explain why he puts in so much work for a sport that he, too, thinks might be dying. He says that track and field doesn't have the money. He says football, baseball and other million dollar sports are a priority, that track is a losing game.

So, why keep going, Mike? After all, when you get tired, when you're gone, who will put on the meets?

But, perhaps for those of us who don't feel it, love is always hard to understand.

This article appeared on August 19, 1992.

Working on Flexibility Can Make a Big Difference

After nearly 10 years of running, I have the flexibility of a fence post. Anyone watching my short steps and low-to-the-ground running gait could diagnosis a stiff lower back and tight hamstrings. Like many runners, I never found time to stretch.

Yet now, because of a frequently aching back, I take flexibility far more seriously as part of total conditioning. But even beyond saving my back, flexibility offers many other benefits.

In their book *Training Distance Runners*, David Martin and Peter Coe agree with many other experts that flexibility can prevent injuries and improve race performance.

The authors define flexibility as the ability to move joints through their intended normal range of motion. When runners are truly flexible, the authors say, this range is greater than running actually requires.

This means that even when runners are doing speed intervals or sprinting to the finish line, their longer strides won't stretch the muscles and connective tissues to the point of tearing.

This increased resistance to injury is crucial to running well. If runners can work out consistently without breaks in training, they have a far better chance of improving in their sport.

After training, Coe and Martin write, the single most important contributor to improved performance is remaining injury-free for long periods.

The reality for runners is, if they are going to improve flexibility, it takes consistent and proper stretching. The good news is stretching offers some additional gains beyond flexibility.

According to *Running Research News* (RRN), stretching can stimulate the repair of damaged muscles after intense exercise by increasing the accumulation of protein in the muscle cells. It can also relieve aching limbs.

The muscle contraction and relaxation that occur with stretching promote better blood circulation through the muscles, which can speed lactic acid clearance and help prevent soreness, writes Owen Anderson, publisher and editor of RRN.

But what is the best way to stretch?

Most experts advise runners to avoid ballistic stretching, which consists of sudden, jerky movements. Instead, they suggest static stretching. This requires gentle, slow stretching—without discomfort and pain—and easy, regular breathing.

Experts disagree, however, on the minimum time for a stretch. Some suggest 15 seconds, others 30 to 60 seconds. The key point, though, is to avoid overstretching.

In their book *Target 26*, Skip Brown and John Graham warn that overstretching can tear muscle fibers.

You can tell if you are overstretching, the authors write, if the tension in the muscles is not somewhat relieved in the first 10 seconds. If you experience quivering of the stretched muscle, back off.

A few experts also suggest something called proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation (PNF) stretching. Despite its grand name, the method is fairly easy to follow.

Athletes contract a particular muscle for eight to 10 seconds, then relax it for two to five seconds and finally stretch it for another eight to 10 seconds. According to RRN, one study showed that this contract-relax method improved range of motion significantly more than the ballistic method.

Another kind of stretching, passive stretching, requires a partner. The partner will push another athlete's limb slowly and carefully to increase the extent of a stretch. But in his book *Lore of Running*, Tim Noakes writes that passive stretching is popular with gymnasts but is risky for inexperienced stretchers. And, of course, many runners fit into this category.

The issue of when to stretch is somewhat controversial, too. But Noakes writes that runners should ideally stretch before and after every run, but especially beforehand. Beforehand is crucial because the increased flexibility after stretching lasts up to three hours. Surprisingly, it is not necessary to precede stretching with a brief aerobic warmup.

The contention that stretching should follow a gentle warmup (e.g., a five-minute jog) because warm muscles stretch better and are less likely to be injured is now known not to be true, says Noakes.

The key muscles to stretch are those affected or used most often in running. In particular, stretch the hamstrings, calves, hip flexors, quadriceps, abductors, back, neck, abdomen and chest.

For some guidance on specific exercises, read Noakes' or Martin's and Coe's book. Also, *Stretching* by Bob Anderson offers excellent advice.

For myself, while I'm still tight in the torso at the age of 33, I look forward to a loose-limbed body by the time I turn 40. Perhaps, then, I'll be admired for my gazelle-like grace. Well, more realistically, at least my back won't hurt.

This article appeared on September 30, 1992.

Preparation Paid Off in This Long Haul

During the debates this month, Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton, making a jab at President Bush, defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

By this definition, at least, Dave Warady can never be accused of insanity—despite his crazy way of spending a vacation.

In August, Warady led 12 other survivors into New York's Central Park after racing for 64 days and 3,000 miles across the country. The runners averaged 47 miles a day in the *Runner's World* Trans-America Footrace, the first staged footrace across America since 1929. There was no prize money.

Warady won for many reasons, but one of them was because he stopped doing what did not work. Every runner—from a miler to a marathoner—could benefit from this approach.

Now back to insanity. Every runner knows someone who always runs too fast early in a race only to crash halfway through. We wonder why the person never seems to learn. Warady, on the other hand, used his head—and listened to his body.

Until the sixth day of the Trans-America, Warady, a former Sacramento resident, had not won a stage. Other excellent ultrarunners had held the lead. (Like the Tour de France, this race counted total time, not the place in a stage.)

Al Howie and Helmut Schieke pushed the pace at the beginning of the race but paid for it with injuries later. And Tom Rogozinski, the favorite, tended to run in fits and starts throughout, blowing away the field for a few days then falling back because of injury.

Warady, on the other hand, constantly monitored and controlled his pace. He had learned from experience.

In December, he ran Sacramento's Gibson Ranch Multiday Classic, a six-day race, with a plan to run 50 miles each day and get sound sleep at night to simulate Trans-Am conditions.

Warady went out too fast. By the fifth day, he could run only 29 miles. He also developed tendinitis in his ankle.

"That was the race to make mistakes," Warady said. "I learned I had to correct my pacing."

Warady took the advice of his coach, John Loeschhorn, a road racer once ranked second nationally as a master. Loeschhorn advised Warady, who has run a 2:34 marathon, to hold back, especially in the first two weeks, to get used to the stress of running so many miles. He even ran with Warady on the first day to help him settle into the perfect pace.

“I had to establish a feeling for it,” Warady said. “At Folsom Lake, once, I remember watching the water go back and forth until I got this very tranquil feeling. This is the sense I tried to get in the race. I became very sensitive to minor changes.”

Warady also learned from the mistakes of others. He gathered information on the Bunion Derbies of 1928 and 1929, the only other footraces done in stages across the country. He learned that, in the first Derby, less than 28 percent finished and that the runners faced short supplies and inadequate lodging. He began to make lists of all the things that could go wrong.

And it was just as well he did. To run the Trans-Am, entrants paid only \$200—a mere \$3 a day. Even with *Runner's World* as a sponsor and spectators giving generously along the way, help and supplies were minimal.

Disappointments came almost every day. Many runners had to sleep outside—one night, in the desert, under the awning of a deserted gas station. Sometimes they went without showers, washing at outside spigots. Several detours sent runners miles out of the way.

But Warady came prepared. For more than a year, he and his wife, Kelly Babiak, saved money for hotel stays, a minivan and supplies. Surprisingly, many runners either could not, or did not, budget for the same needs. Only four runners, including Warady, brought crews with them. Warady's crew, consisting only of Babiak, was probably the best.

Although Warady only won 10 stages, he ran consistently throughout, cruising the last stages. On the final day, he sailed into Central Park more than 6 hours ahead of the second finisher, showing that the race doesn't always go to the fastest. Sometimes it goes to the most prepared.

This article appeared on October 28, 1992.

1993

A Diary's Long and Winding Road

Most runners keep logs of their training runs and use them to discover why they failed or succeeded in reaching their goals. But how many runners use their training logs for a little nostalgia and a good belly laugh?

A few months ago, a friend in her early 20s wanted to look at my logs. She wanted to see how well I was running at her age. In my mid-30s now, I race any distance up to a marathon and tend to take my 50-mile weeks for granted, so what I found in my first few logs was a little unexpected.

I had forgotten how little I ran. In my first log, I recorded a lot of double digits, and at first my friend and I were quite impressed with my natural stamina. Then we realized the various “10s,” “12s” and “13s” were not miles but minutes.

What also surprised me was how much those few minutes hurt. Next to a 10-minute entry, I had recorded a lot of pain:

“Shins hurt,” I wrote. “Walked part of the way.”

In fact, I noticed considerable moaning and groaning in all the logs. “Knees hurting,” said zillions of entries. “Very tired,” said trillions of others. Apparently, I hurt—or complained—as much then as I do now. This is a revelation.

In my memory, I used to run with ease and grace. It's only now, with an older, more battered body, that runs have become tougher. However, the entries tell me otherwise. Since I began running, I've had only a few grace-filled days, as if I were lightly treading upon white, puffy clouds. Most days, it's much more laborious than that.

But my logs do hold more than just complaints. They also contain tiny treasures that remind me how refreshingly amazed and bewildered new runners can be. Next to a record of my first long run—5 miles—I eloquently wrote:

“Wow!”

For my first speed work, I did a couple of miles with a “rest” in between. I seemed proud but a little unsure of what I had done.

“Intervals?” I asked.

There were plenty of other incidental entries never seen in a veteran runner’s log.

“Must buy a watch!” I wrote in August, September—and October—1983.

In the back of my early logs, I also find half-ripped race results on parchment-like newspaper. The results remind me of other people’s progress as well as my own. I realize that they, too, had to work long and hard for their gains in the sport, though their beginnings were still more impressive than mine.

In 1984, a top local marathoner, Christine Iwahashi of Sacramento, ran 3:04 in the California International Marathon. Now she consistently runs 2:46. In 1985, Ann Trason of Kensington ran a 2:48 at San Francisco. Now she is the course record-holder of the Western States 100-Mile. And last December, at the CIM, she ran a 2:39, a personal best.

I’m reminded, too, of the friends I have made through running. Among the results, I see names of people I now count as friends whom I never knew back then. I also see names of friends who have come and gone.

In particular, I see the name of a woman I often ran with on lovely horse trails, some of which were washed away by the 1986 floods. Our brief friendship was washed away, too, by large changes in our lives—marriage, babies, divorce.

My logs remind me that running has given me far more than medals. When I ran my first marathon, I was not concerned about speed. “Felt GREAT,” I wrote, and that was all that mattered.

In fact, many of the most exuberant entries have little to do with racing.

A few years ago, I used to run in the early mornings with a large group of women. On many of our runs, we had dared each other to do something a little crazy. An entry revives one of those runs.

Halfway through our seven-mile loop, I dared the other women to climb a flagpole on the front lawn of a suburban home. Just as dawn was breaking, each of the women did it, even some in their 50s. Our uncontrollable laughter must have awakened more than a few residents but made our Monday less than blue.

My younger friend’s reactions also teach me something. She hardly recognizes the person who dared a group of runners to climb a pole. She

is amazed by my youthful entries such as “stayed up all night,” either to write a paper or to party. Her amazement measures how much I have changed. Yes, I’ve become more disciplined, but I’ve also lost some of my old spontaneity and playfulness.

When I finally closed my logs, I was more conscious of not only how much daily effort it takes to improve but also of what should be a very obvious point. It’s not just the times earned but the fun had and friends met that make running worthwhile.

So if you’re feeling a little burned out, sit in a big, comfy chair and dip into your logs. You may be surprised just how much of yourself you’ve forgotten.

This article appeared on March 3, 1993.

Don’t Suddenly Spring Back into Full-Tilt Training

Even though spring doesn’t officially begin until Sunday, Sacramento runners went a little crazy the weekend before last. That was when this year’s first warm weather lured many a pale, puffy body into the sun.

Unfortunately, some runners ended up not only sunburnt but hobbling.

At my local gym, one runner lay on the floor trying to loosen strained back muscles. Over the weekend, he had run further and faster than he meant to, inspired by soft, warm air and blossoming trees. Problem is, his body couldn’t keep up with his inspiration. He could barely get up from the gym floor.

Meanwhile, another acquaintance had pulled a hamstring while reveling in his first race since December. As for myself, OK, I had more than a few sore muscles, too. With weather like that, we feel as if we can do anything.

The reality, though, is that with several months of inactivity, or just slower running, we can’t leap back into intense training. We have to build up to our gladiator standards slowly and methodically; otherwise, our tight, untrained muscles will rebel.

Here are a few ways to return to tougher training without getting hurt:

- Remember you are human: We veteran runners love to preach this to rookies, but it’s amazing how often we fail to follow our own advice. David Costill, director of the Human Performance Laboratory at Ball State University in Indiana, warns against feelings of infallibility. These feelings can be particularly strong during the spring.

In his book, *Inside Running: Basics of Sports Physiology*, Costill explains that the runners who seem to be having the greatest workouts frequently are “on the verge of disaster.” These are the runners who tend to overextend themselves because they feel so good.

- Increase mileage slowly: Always err on the side of caution. You may take longer to reach a peak, but you’re also more certain of getting there.

The rule of thumb is to increase weekly mileage by no more than 10 percent. This means that if your base mileage is, for instance, 40 miles a week, you should increase by no more than 4 or 5 miles per week.

Also, if you haven’t run for several months, start more or less—dare I say it—at the beginning. Run no more than three easy miles a day for no more than five days a week.

- Increase speed slowly: In *Running Research News*, Owen Anderson writes that jumping back into speed work after a period of only aerobic running may damage your more delicate fast-twitch muscles. They are just not ready for the stress.

Anderson offers a range of mini-speed sessions for carefully returning to speed. One suggested workout is to include within a longer run three sets of 10 fast 20-second accelerations at what feels like 5K race pace. Take two-minute recoveries at a slow pace between each 20-second burst and five-minute recoveries between each set.

- Vary the intensity of your training: Avoid two hard workouts in a row. Costill recommends following a hard workout day with a recovery day and following a hard week or two with a reduced-mileage or low-to no-intensity week.
- Listen to your body: Although I probably write this at least once a quarter, I witness many a runner forgetting to tune in at least once a week. Symptoms of a tired body include heavy leggedness, appetite loss, sleep difficulty, irritability, anxiety and an increase in resting heart rate.

Enduring runners and high-performing racers learn that being strong means heeding these signals. So if you are trying to run some speed but your body is telling you it's pooped, rein in your pride and let your buddies go for the glory this time around. You'll likely be the one still running strong when other, less ego-secure types are sidelined by injury.

This article appeared on March 17, 1993.

Open-Heart Surgery Can't Keep Her on the Sidelines

Janet Pedrotti is perfect material for an ad for the California tourist industry. She is blonde, blue-eyed and beautiful. She also is fit. She glows from eating healthy, low-fat foods and running more than 40 miles a week.

But Pedrotti carries some pretty big scars. A major one, in fact, across her chest.

Only 10 months ago, Pedrotti, 38, underwent her second open-heart surgery. She faces another one in 15 to 20 years.

The first surgery was to replace one of her own heart valves with one from a pig. The second was to replace the deteriorating pig's valve with a human valve. The third will be to replace the human valve because it, too, will wear out.

Pedrotti’s troubles began with a heart murmur she was born with. The largest valve in her heart, the aortic, would not close all the way.

“I had a normal childhood, though,” Pedrotti said. “I could do pretty much anything. I water-skied, snow-skied.”

In fact, Pedrotti’s heart murmur didn’t hold her back a bit until she had her wisdom teeth removed more than 12 years ago.

The dental work sent an infection through her bloodstream that eventually inflamed the valves and lining of her heart. The heart murmur had left her vulnerable to the inflammation, known as “endocarditis.”

“I remember running a 10-mile race, and about halfway through feeling really, really tired,” she said.

A few days later, her ankles swelled to the size of cantaloupes.

A running friend, a cardiac nurse, realized something was seriously wrong and got Pedrotti to the hospital. Once there, a doctor told her she had to stay for “a little while.”

“What’s a little while?” she asked. “He said, ‘Six weeks.’”

During that time, the doctors pumped her with antibiotics. What they were fighting, along with the infection, was the risk of congestive heart failure—a condition that can kill.

For a while, Pedrotti was lucky. The infection seemed to retreat, and she returned to her athletic life. A year later, the infection resurfaced.

This time, it caused an aneurysm, a ballooning of an artery in her heart. The weakest point, her aortic valve, was breaking down under the stress.

Pedrotti then suffered through eight weeks in the hospital and her first open-heart surgery.

Not that it was all suffering. She and her future husband still found time to sneak away from the hospital together.

“I would be wearing my pajamas and hospital gown, with my IV tubes still on my arm,” Pedrotti said. “One time I returned after dark and became the talk of the hospital.”

After surgery, Pedrotti became less tolerant of people who showed no respect for their health.

“I found myself really irritated at smokers,” she said. “I saw so many...who were open-heart patients. I didn’t understand why people smoke when they have the option of being healthy.”

During the next eight years, Pedrotti tried to take advantage of her options. She took up running again, gradually paring down her race

times. In the 10K, she was only 30 seconds away from breaking 40 minutes when heart trouble resurfaced.

She had some dizzy spells, a little light-headedness. She was tired. After a few tests, her doctors told her it was time.

“Time for what?” she asked.

Time for another valve.

Pedrotti received the new valve only 10 months ago. The day she left the hospital, she took a walk around the block. Soon she was taking several walks. Then she returned to running.

She has reduced her best mile time from 9:30 to 6:30. She runs speed work twice a week. She is racing again. She’d like to break three hours for the marathon.

She said she doesn’t fear for her life, but her last time in the hospital was different. She didn’t take unauthorized leaves, and she began to question her life and its purpose.

“Now I feel as if something is missing,” she said. “I’d like to start helping other people feel good. I’ve been thinking about becoming...a representative for the American Heart Association.”

Pedrotti views her next open-heart surgery, when she will be about 60 years old, as merely a speed bump in her future.

“I see myself as a 90-year-old,” she said, “running down the road in my little running shoes.”

This article appeared on March 31, 1993.

The Best-Kept Secret in the Running World

*Trason Proves She Can Compete at Any Distance...
with Anyone*

At midday about a week ago, the first of 408 runners, many the best in the country, were finishing a 50-mile run from Sacramento to the Auburn Hills. Fourth among them was a woman.

World-record holder Ann Trason ran 6 hours, 9 minutes and 8 seconds, demolishing her own course record by 15 minutes. Trason was behind winner Sean Crom by only 11 minutes, barely a beat or two in a race this long.

But despite her fourth-place finish, Trason still goes largely unknown in more popular running circles. More than once when her name is mentioned, I've heard veteran road racers ask, “Who's she?”

In fact, she is the best ultrarunner in the world. Not best female runner—best runner. Her dominance in women's ultrarunning and her competitiveness with the world's top men is unheard of at any other level of running.

At the American River 50, Trason, 32, was hard on the tails of three men who ran very fast.

Crom of Reno, who ran 5:58:35, will be one of only six American men to compete in the 100-km World Championships this year in Belgium. Jussi Hamalainen, who finished second, and ran 6:01:25, is Finland's top ultrarunner. And Rae Clark of Camino, who finished third and also will run in the 100-km championships, is the American record-holder for 100 miles. Trason was less than a minute from Clark's heels.

Ann Trason beat some very fast men, too.

She was 5 minutes in front of Tim Twietmeyer of Auburn, last year's winner of the world's top 100-mile race, the Western States Endurance Run. And lest you think Twietmeyer had a bad race last week, he ran 6:14:27, one of his better times. Twietmeyer was very happy.

Trason, however, was not. After she crossed the line, disappointment flashed across her face as she looked back at the clock. Her prerace goal had been to break 6:10, but during the race's final 3 miles, all uphill, she reached for a new goal—to break 6:09.

Delmar Fralick, the race's director, believes no other woman will come close to Trason's course record for a long time.

“She has a drive very, very few men can match,” he said.

Trason's drive is backed with plenty of natural ability—a perfect blend of endurance and top leg speed. Before she took to the trails, she ran 4:52 for the mile and 35:11 for the 10K, and as recently as last December, she ran a 2:39 personal best for the marathon.

But Trason, from Kensington in Contra Costa County, also has a psychological edge over many other elite women runners. She believes it's possible to beat the top men.

“I'm very stubborn,” she said, “so when someone says, ‘you can't,’ I like to say, ‘I can.’”

It's Trason's stubbornness that gets her past the point where many other elite women stop.

"When someone has beaten you for years," Trason said, "you have that doubt when you pass them for the first time in a race. You think, 'Uh-oh, something bad's going to happen. They're going to catch me or I'm going to crash.'"

But Trason takes that risk.

Witness a few of her many top places in some of the world's toughest races: In 1989, she won The Athletics Congress 24-Hour Championship outright—over women and men—by running the most miles (143 of them), in 24 hours. In 1991, she again won overall at the Sri Chimnoy 100 Mile in New York, running 13:47:41 to break her own world record.

In May of last year, she won the Quicksilver 50-miler with the second fastest time ever on the course. She was only 10 minutes off the course record set by Tim Ball, another ultrarunning star.

And at Western States last year, Trason broke her own course record in a time of 18:14:48, placing an incredible third overall. The 100-mile race usually draws one of the best fields of the year.

Ultrarunners have certainly recognized her accomplishments. For several years, she has received the TAC's Ted Corbitt Award for female U.S. Ultrarunner of the Year and *UltraRunning* magazine's Ultrawoman of the Year award, the most prestigious awards in her field.

During this year's AR 50, Trason worked her way up to fourth place from seventh place at about Mile 28. The second woman, Kathy D'Onofrio-Woods, a two-time women's winner of Western States, was almost an hour behind Trason in 7:00:54. Chrissy Duryea placed third in 7:01:54.

Other notable performances include Helen Klein's. Klein, of Rancho Cordova, who also holds world records, is the first woman over 70 to complete the race. She ran 10:12:44, running faster than Grover Daly, who set the men's course record for the 70–79 age division in 11:21:59.

Gloria Takagishi, 46, of Sacramento, is the only person to complete the race each year since its inception in 1980. Finally, Ray Piva ran 7:42:52, setting a new course record for men in the 60–69 age division.

This article appeared on April 14, 1993.

Don't Feel Guilty: Fitness Breaks Are Good for Business

In a former job, I often felt guilty for scurrying out of the building a few minutes before noon, gym bag in hand, for a half hour or so of running.

A few of my fellow workers seemed to look at me with scorn and disapproval as I broke off yet another meeting to squeeze in my workouts. When crucial deadlines were looming, my athletic pursuits must have seemed juvenile and irresponsible.

However, when I returned for an afternoon of work, I always felt renewed and clear-headed, as if I were starting a new day. Meanwhile, some of my more sedentary co-workers were stumbling around the office looking for coffee, or were wilting, like waterless flowers, at their desks.

Turns out, in fact, that I didn't need to feel so guilty.

Research shows that employees who exercise regularly take fewer days off because of illness or stress, have fewer work-related injuries, medical and disability claims, and may change jobs less often, work more efficiently and have better attitudes toward their jobs, supervisors and co-workers.

Even moderate running for 30 minutes, three times a week, increases stamina and aerobic capacity. Also, it limits the risks of coronary heart disease by reducing risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high body fat.

In the early 1970s, Professor Jeremy Morris of the London School of Tropical Medicine began a 13-year study of 16,882 British civil servants. Morris divided the workers into two groups—those who exercised and those who didn't.

At the end of the study, Morris discovered that the exercisers had less than one half the heart-attack rate of the non-exercisers. Also, the active workers' rate of heart attacks stayed the same between the ages of 40 and 60, while the rate more than doubled for the less active workers in the same age group.

Finally, the more active civil servants were less likely to have heart attacks despite other coronary risks such as a family history of heart disease or a smoking habit. Now, more recent studies confirm that a sedentary lifestyle is as big a risk for heart disease as factors such as high cholesterol.

The dollar costs of cardiovascular disease are high. In a February 1990 issue of *American Psychologist*, Deborah Gebhardt and Carolyn Crump write that because of medical treatment and absenteeism from the disease, the estimated cost to American employers in 1986 was \$110 billion. In fact, this amount accounted for 23 percent of all illness costs while the disease accounted for 46 percent of all deaths.

Though cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer, a sedentary lifestyle causes plenty of other ailments from the dramatic to the more mundane.

For instance, lack of physical fitness may increase a person's vulnerability to minor complaints, such as certain digestive disorders, fatigue, colds, allergies and backaches. Even though such complaints may not result in any direct medical costs for an employer, they can certainly lead to dollars lost through absenteeism and low productivity.

Studies also show that regular exercise may influence job performance and morale. In the early 1970s, NASA studied 237 of its executives. Fifty percent of those who exercised three or more times a week reported increases in job performance and positive work attitudes, compared with 12 to 15 percent for those who exercised less than one day a week.

However, though other studies have shown similar results, job performance and morale can be difficult to measure. Researchers usually have to rely on subjective criteria such as questionnaires or supervisors' evaluations.

Though the studies have not resulted in definitive proof, anecdotal evidence and common sense suggest that exercise reduces stress and generally makes people feel better. Many runners report increases in self-esteem, emotional stability, self-sufficiency, conscientiousness, humor, optimism and vigor.

And folks who feel better about themselves are likely to perform better at work and collaborate more harmoniously. Greater harmony at the conference table has to produce a better product.

Many employers have begun to appreciate good health. After instituting its own fitness program, for example, Prudential Insurance Company reduced its major medical costs by \$262.14 per participant after one year.

Problem is, some of our bosses still need convincing. Michael Springer is chairman of the State of California's California Wellness

Information Network, a coalition of health coordinators from state departments.

“Middle managers are often the most hard-pressed to get things done,” Springer said. “Some of the repercussions of this is that...employees might feel bad for leaving the office.”

Perhaps it’s time for runners to be a little more vocal about the benefits of their sport. If more employers understood the value of exercise, we might have a less stressed and more productive workforce.

As for myself, no job I’ve ever had has been more demanding than the one I have now—running my own business. Yet, I still insist on my daily run. And now and then, when she’s in a good mood, my boss lets me stay out on the trails for a few minutes longer.

This article appeared on April 28, 1993.

Nerves Need Not Be Detriment

Prerace nerves can choke the best of us, even Roger Bannister, the first man to break the four-minute mile. In the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, only two years before his milestone race, Bannister missed a bronze medal by an inch.

Bannister entered the finals of that 1,500-meter race exhausted.

“I hardly had the strength to warm up,” Bannister wrote in his book, *The Four-Minute Mile*. “As I walked out in front of the 70,000 spectators, my step had no spring, my face no color.”

Bannister later recognized that it was partly his prerace anxiety, which had knotted his stomach and left him sleepless for many nights, that had damaged his race.

Though we may not be Olympians, very few of us are free of fear when we put ourselves on the line.

Sue Williams is the men’s and women’s cross country coach at UC Davis. Last year, *Cross-Country Journal* voted the school’s cross country program No. 1 in the nation.

“You’re not trying to make anxiety go away,” Williams said. “You have to have a certain arousal level when you’re challenging yourself. The point is to channel it into your running, not away from it.”

Many successful runners use a trick or two to focus their nerves. World-record holder Ann Trason, the course-record holder in the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, reads a lot of mysteries before an important race to prevent her fears from nibbling away at her resolve.

Veteran runners also use rituals to keep their nerves in check. They may always eat apple pie after their pasta the night before a race, or they may always race in polka-dot shorts. An hour before the race, most follow a schedule of stretching, easy running, drinking water and going to the bathroom.

Such routines have psychological as well as physical value.

“A routine is comforting,” said Williams, “and brings you into focus.”

Shirley Matson, 52, who holds numerous U.S. age-group records, backs up solid training with visualization, imagining herself as she runs sections of the course in her mind.

Matson first used visualization in 1984 for the Peachtree 10K. At the time, Cindy Dalrymple was the reigning masters woman, and Matson was intimidated by Dalrymple's dominance. Even though her times told her she could beat Dalrymple, Matson had a difficult time believing it.

The night before the race, Matson imagined herself remaining close behind Dalrymple until the 5-mile point and then closing the gap between them for Miles 5 to 6. With two-tenths to go, she saw herself passing Dalrymple and kicking it in.

The race went according to plan. Matson ran a 35:59; Dalrymple was 4 seconds back. In her visualization, Matson did what Williams and other experts recommend to befriend nerves.

Said Williams: “Don't focus on what you want to achieve so much as how you will achieve it. Think about your tactics and concentrate on those.”

Finally, if you feel your prerace nerves rising into a tidal wave of fear, remember how bad Bannister felt at the Olympics. At least king, queen or country are not depending on our performance.

This article appeared on June 16, 1993.

Measuring Courage by Mile

Long-Distance Races Imitate Life—a Pleasure and Challenge

The weekend before last, more than 400 runners attempted the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, from Squaw Valley to Auburn. Meanwhile, in Sonora, hundreds more runners, from grade schoolers to seniors, tried to run a mile as fast as they could.

No matter whether they finished or not, whether they ran as fast as they hoped, each of these runners did something worth praising. They faced their fears—fears of failure, embarrassment and pain—and tried.

Millions of runners compete but only a handful come in first. So for most of us, competition is less about dominance than about finding the outer fences of our abilities and our spirits.

In life, we find dabblers and dilettantes, people who ooze potential but never commit to the hard work and difficult tests that make dreams a reality. But so many runners are those brave souls who risk falling flat on their faces to find out if they measure up to a nagging sense of potential.

Perhaps a runner tries a longer distance, the 10K instead of the 5K. Maybe another struggles to better an old time, or run as well as last year. Perhaps older runners, who might have seen the last of their personal bests, work simply to run as well as they can.

We each have our own measure. When we try to meet it, we’re exercising the better parts of ourselves.

An elderly neighbor of mine, Mildred, used to sweep the sidewalk in front of her house daily. A younger neighbor commented how pointless it seemed to sweep so hard when the pavement would soon be grimy again with dust and leaves.

Some folks see runners like my young friend saw Mildred, people wasting time on seemingly superficial things. Like a professor friend who asked if I was still running.

“When are you going to give that up?” he said. “Isn’t it time you put your energy into something more worthwhile?”

Runners get that a lot.

But I see Mildred’s and our own daily ritual differently. I sensed Mildred, like us, enjoyed the physical activity itself and saw it as a

refusal to give in to life's wear and tear, even though in the end, wear and tear always wins.

A few weeks ago, a friend of mine, recovering from an injury, watched his friends training hard on the track. Each of the runners had been competitive for an average of 10 years. As they ran through 800-meter intervals in temperatures above 95 degrees, my friend was suddenly filled with appreciation.

"I really like being out here with these people," he said. "They've been at it for such a long time."

For most of us who do run year after year, we feel its pleasures inwardly.

In his book, *The Four-Minute Mile*, Roger Bannister says it for many runners:

"It (running) gives a man or woman the chance to bring out power that might otherwise remain locked away inside. The urge to struggle lies latent in everyone.... No one can say, 'You must not run faster than this, or jump higher than that.' The human spirit is indomitable."

This article appeared on July 7, 1993.

Yell for—Instead of at—Your Kids

With all the publicity about "Little League parent syndrome," it's hard to believe a few grown-ups still yell at their kids for not meeting adults' expectations.

But earlier this year, Jane Serues, marketing director for *Runner's World*, saw a few parents berating their children at the Carlsbad 5,000 near San Diego.

"After the race, I saw three or four kids crying," she said, "while their parents yelled at them, saying things like 'You should have finished. How come you didn't finish?'"

This kind of pressure won't make a child a better competitor—or a happier person. Instead, it may cause "youth sports burnout," when a child's self-esteem plummets and the child feels depressed and anxious.

According to Allan Bruckheim, M.D., writing recently for the *Bee*, burnout symptoms include sleep disturbances, skin rashes, nausea,

headaches, muscle rigidity, lack of energy, sadness, frequent illness and a loss of interest in competition.

To spoil a child’s natural openness and enthusiasm so completely should be a crime. In November, though, many peers have an opportunity to improve their child’s self-esteem.

In fun runs tentatively planned for Nov. 6 in Discovery Park, kids aged 5 through 12 can amble through a series of one-mile races or blast through a shorter quarter-mile run. Meanwhile, teeny tots can trot through a 25-yard toddlers’ race.

The Road Runners Club of America and *Runner’s World* magazine have awarded the Buffalo Chips Running Club of Sacramento a \$300 grant to organize the fun runs. Forty-nine other running clubs in the United States also will receive a \$300 grant.

The RRCA and *Runner’s World* hope to entice youngsters away from the television set and show them that physical fitness bolsters the ego, and is fun.

Every child who runs will receive race bibs, awards and “I did it” iron-on patches.

The following are a few of the RRCA’s guidelines for parents training their kids for fun runs:

- Increase distance gradually: Don’t let your kids run a race if they haven’t trained beforehand. You want them to feel strong and positive throughout, especially for the kids running a mile, so allow at least six weeks to slowly build up to the distance.
- Stretch and start out slowly: Encourage kids to stretch their muscles before they run, in particular their groin, lower back, calves and hamstrings. Also, teach kids to start their runs slowly, rather than with a jet-propulsion start.
- Wear good shoes: Make sure your kids’ running shoes are comfortable, with plenty of support, cushioning and flexibility. Buy the shoes from a running store that will fit the shoe to your child’s feet and has sales assistants who are experienced runners.

- Avoid pressure: Make sure your children really want to run. Don't let your own aspirations obscure your child's. Also, don't pressure children to win. Hug them with plenty of praise for simple participation.

This article appeared on September 8, 1993.

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Don't Discount the Lure of the Trail

Many of us in the Sacramento running community know about Barbara Schoener's death more than three weeks ago. Barbara died on the Auburn Lake Trails near Cool, running by herself. She was killed by a mountain lion.

Like most runners, I was shocked and saddened by the battle she must have fought, and for her two children and husband so unexpectedly left behind. Even for those who did not know her personally, including myself, her death leaves a strange knot in the stomach, a pang in the heart.

Barbara died running alone. And some might say that was her mistake. But she also died doing something runners love to do.

For flatlanders who walk only from front door to car, and from car to office, such lonely treks through the wilderness must certainly seem crazy. But I and many others know what the trail is like. We know its lure. Only a week before Barbara's death, I ran with two friends near the trail she died on. From part of it, you can look down at the dark waters of the north fork of the American River.

At this time of year, on either side of the rocky, bumpy trail, wildflowers bloom—poppies, lupine and broom are just a few.

Part of the trail rises up through a wide meadow. When I saw it, a light breeze was combing the new grass as if it were long, glossy hair. There was no parking lot. There were no picnic tables.

Other parts of the trail dip down into darkened places, where, later in the year, blackberry bushes lure the bears. There are creeks to splash

through and slippery rocks to cross. Poison oak, green and oily, snakes onto the trail.

The point is, the trail is beautiful, and yes, wild, and Barbara liked to go there alone.

Once, during a long race across the Pacific Crest Trail, I became separated from the runners ahead and runners behind. I ran down a lonely, rocky trail, with buzzards wheeling overhead.

Because I usually play it safe, it was a strange feeling for me, being alone for the first time in wilderness. I felt small and vulnerable, but also, somehow thrilled.

I felt energized by this unexpected exposure to the land. Nature was all around. There were no walls, no gadgets, no stores, no people. For a woman, especially, that is a rare experience, to be alone outside, with no protector nearby.

Before I began this column, I intended to write a safety warning, urging runners not to run alone on any trail. I still advise that.

But I would like to think Barbara knew the risk and made her choice because being there alone, and yes, vulnerable, gave her something that much of modern life prevents us from knowing.

I'd like to think that her weekend runs, alone on the trail, filled her with a renewed sense of her own wildness. I'd like to think that she brought back some kind of power for her family and her friends.

Next time, I may write about safety. But this time, let's honor Barbara's choice to run, a mere once a week, in the wilds.

This article appeared on May 18, 1994.

The Last Day He Didn't Run Was in 1979

In 1984, Bill Finkbeiner was leading the Donner 100, a 100-mile race in the Sierra.

On a paved stretch, a couple of bicyclists, resting by a river, asked Finkbeiner if he would take their picture.

“You can jog in place,” they said.

He took the picture. He did not tell them he was racing. He did not tell them he had already run 75 miles, with almost a marathon left to go. Folks who ask him to jog in place might have trouble conceiving of that.

Finkbeiner's running is the same way. It's hard to get your mind around.

It's not even that he runs a 100-mile race. These days, there are at least a thousand or so runners who have done that—maybe once, or a couple of times if they're really pushing. It's that Finkbeiner does it lots of times, does it fast, and does it without any days off.

On June 25, he will run his 10th Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, a tough haul from Squaw Valley to Auburn, along a narrow, rocky trail in the Sierra.

Altogether, it will be his 25th 100-miler and his 100th ultramarathon. His best time for the Western is 18 hours, 11 minutes. For eight of his nine other races there, he has not run more than 69 minutes slower.

Running it under 24 hours for the 10th time will put him in the company of a mere seven runners. Running it without one day off in almost 15 years puts him in the category of his own.

In his first 100-miler, the 1982 Donner, he ran the last seven miles in snow. He couldn't even see the course markings.

"Now my social life revolves around 100-milers," Finkbeiner said. "Everyone I know does it—even my spouse. Unless I really sit back and remember that first one, it doesn't mean that much."

Like most ultrarunners, why he does it isn't always something he can quite explain. But underneath the sunburned face, under his closed, matter-of-fact voice, is perhaps a little romanticism, a little of the cowboy.

"My grandfather told me that Finkbeiner meant 'fleet of foot,'" he said. "I grew up believing that."

When he was between 7th and 8th grade, the mythic quality of his name drove him to his first run. With a friend, he ran 12 miles along the American River Bike Trail. He finished, but his friend ditched him in the last two or three miles.

Even though he is married with a son, even though he is a landscape contractor, laying sod, sprinklers, even concrete, Finkbeiner, 38, hangs onto a streak. The last day he didn't run was in 1979.

"My shortest distance averages five miles," he said, "but I've had some one-mile days, when I was sick or had a broken toe."

In fact, on the Wednesday evening after Western, he and his training partner, Wayne Miles, both from Auburn, run a hard six to 10 miles with members of their running club, the Sierra Express.

"We always hope someone wants to challenge us," he said. "It's

partly the high left from Western, the feelings of lightness. And if we lose, it doesn't matter. We're supposed to lose anyway.”

By now, Finkbeiner has found out what his name really means. But he is too far down the road of running to ever turn back.

“I guess,” he said, “it literally means ‘bird legged.’”

This article appeared on June 22, 1994.

Human Spirit Gets Stiff Challenge

This weekend, I covered the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run for Monday's *Bee*. Mainly, I wrote about the winners, Tim Twietmeyer and Ann Trason, and any records that they or anyone else in the race set.

All that is as it should be. Those who do something difficult better than the rest of us, no matter whether it was a race, an experiment, or a fine painting, should be honored.

They not only sacrifice time and energy to become good at what they do, they raise the standard for what is possible.

But each year, when I file that story, I feel some regret. So much more of what this race is about goes unsaid.

It is not enough to say the course ranges from Squaw Valley to Auburn over more than 40,000 feet of elevation changes. It is not enough to say that sometimes early miles are packed with snow and later ones burning with heat.

This race draws on too many emotions, too much willpower, to be a mere test of physical prowess. For those who run and for those who watch, the race is an expression of everything that is best in the human spirit.

As I hustled around the finish line, gathering information, I saw a runner, Greg Miller of Sacramento, sitting on one of the benches, waiting for a friend to take him to the hospital.

I had seen Miller earlier, at the 47-mile point, after he had taken a wrong turn on the trail and spend four extra miles finding his way back.

“I just need to finish,” he said.

But now, sitting on the bench, while other runners crossed the line, he stared into the night.

His right foot had swollen to about twice its size, and a bag of ice rested gingerly across the top. Even his leg was beginning to look discolored.

He had hurt his ankle within the first eight miles and thought he had twisted it. (As it turned out, he had fractured a bone.) But Miller kept on running until pain in his foot and other complications no longer allowed him to continue. It took more than 70 miles to stop him.

Some might say that going on like that was a kind of masochism, but I think it's more.

He had trained hard for many months for this, his first Western. He was willing to make the sacrifice to test his own strength of character.

For myself, I would be afraid of the emotions such a challenge might bring up. I have heard tales of runners crying on the trail, sinking into deep troughs of despair when the going got tough.

I would not want the rest of the world to see what lies under my own thin veil of control. Yet these runners, including Miller, are willing to risk the potential unraveling.

But Miller, immersed in quiet disappointment, was not yet able to see what his effort meant to people like me and to his family standing close by.

When I talked to him, he sounded apologetic, as if by not finishing, he had failed each of us. Yet, I think they, as well as I, were quite amazed with what he had, in good faith and with hard work, tried to do. More than anything, he tried his best.

Note—At the World 100-Kilometer Championships in Saroma, Japan, on Sunday, the six-member U.S. team, including Tom Johnson of Loomis and Rich Hanna of Sacramento, placed third overall. Johnson and Hanna earned personal bests of 6 hours and 41 minutes and 6 hours and 45 minutes, respectively. The German team won.

This article appeared on June 29, 1994.

Vacations for Runners, Nonrunners

In the past, I've spent most of my vacations with my nonrunning family and my less active friends. For many of us, these vacations often mean a few short runs, guiltily stolen, while loved ones are still sleeping. They also mean a kind of loneliness.

One Christmas in Eureka, I snuck off for a run while everyone else watched TV or snoozed on the sofa. As I left the house, I felt conspicuous, as if such effort on that special day was slightly sacrilegious.

Outside, rain fell softly. Through the steamy windows of house after house, I saw the blue glow of television sets. Wood smoke from fireplaces spiraled up through occasional shafts of sunlight.

When I got back to the house, I couldn't explain how glorious I felt. The experience was only mine, and with nonrunners it seemed impossible to share it.

But last week, I had a different vacation. I was at Camp Fleet Feet, where about 60 runners and their families camped at Sugar Pine Point State Park, on the west shore of Lake Tahoe.

Here, I shared all the wonderful things a running vacation can offer, not only getting runs in comfortably with running partners but also seeing nonrunning friends and families drawn into the experience.

Camp Fleet Feet is just one of many running camps around the United States and any one of them is a great idea for runners and their families who want to relax and also work out.

This camp is open to runners, bikers or swimmers of all abilities.

In fact, most of the activities were focused on enjoyment rather than prowess, with most folks wanting to share rather than compete.

The runs, of optional length, were along wilderness trails, with wildflowers on either side and clear mountain lakes to swim in.

After one run, an out-and-back from Emerald Bay, runners ranging from 20-year-olds to 60-year-olds took off their shoes and jumped fully clothed into the lake.

It was no later than 10 a.m., and the beach was empty except for one family, and a large rock, piled high with our ragged, dusty shoes.

One man brought his nonrunning wife to this year's camp. Previous years, he had come alone.

While he ran the trails with his friends, she walked them with other nonrunners. She also went on bike rides and swam in the lake.

By the end of the week, she was glowing from the sun and exercise and from the time shared in adventures with her family. She vowed to come back next year, fitter and ready for more.

On the last morning, we all participated in an extremely minitriathlon, each team a mix of youngsters and adults.

Each team's goal was not to come in first but to come closest to its estimated time. No one could wear a watch.

After the swimmers and runners finished their legs, they cheered their bikers on. The sounds, rising above the treetops and mingling with the smell of morning coffee, seemed joyful.

We each got to share a little of each other's playfulness, and running, after all, is best when it is play and when it is shared.

This article appeared on August 10, 1994.

Others Can Learn from Humboldt Race

Three weekends ago, I drove with a pack of friends to the Humboldt Redwoods Half Marathon. Though the company was great, six hours on windy roads is a long time to be crammed among other bony runners.

Yet the next morning, among the 1,000 or so folks gathering for the start, I probably saw at least 30 more Sacramentans. That was many more than I normally recognize at most local races, never mind in a race 250 miles from home.

One reason so many of us drove so far was because the race carries a solid reputation. Race organizers care about the runners.

Yes, the course is beautiful. In some ways, it's like running through a religious painting. Even with all the foot slapping and bantering, there's a cathedral-like silence in the trees. And shafts of sunlight, breaking through the canopy, are like promises of grace.

And yes, the race is one in the Pacific Association's USA Track & Field Grand Prix series.

But there are beautiful courses closer to home, and most of the Sacramentans I saw weren't there for the prizes. While the beauty and

prestige add to the charm, quite simply the race organizer gives all the runners, not just those in front, a sense that they are important.

I bring up this point because these days I'm leaving many races hearing many complaints about race organization. And I'm witnessing a certain lack of thoughtfulness, too.

A recent race in Sacramento was more than 30 minutes late starting, a local race organizer regularly promises awards and doesn't give them and several courses are at least 2 minutes too long or short.

Yet, these race organizers often have sloughed off complaints, essentially blaming their volunteers with statements like, "It wasn't my job."

The race in Humboldt County doesn't come across this way. Organizers take care of the important stuff. The race starts promptly, the course is accurate, and mile markers are big and brightly placed at the correct spots. Aid stations are well-supplied, there are plenty of portable toilets, and results are prompt and accurate.

Perhaps most revealing of all, the finish-line clock doesn't come down and finish-line announcers don't leave until the last person has crossed the line.

These may seem pretty basic, but I'm seeing more and more races where the basics simply aren't there. These days, it's something of a surprise when the course is actually the length it's supposed to be.

Failing to provide these things is pretty much a blatant breach of promise. Amazingly, even though runners are paying an average of \$20 on race day, organizers rarely are held accountable.

For contrast, watch Karen Angel, a former marathoner and veteran race director of Humboldt Redwoods. She is everywhere, checking everything. And when runners approach her with questions, she never bites.

Unfortunately, I'm seeing more and more race organizers who don't particularly understand or care about our sport. But runners aren't stupid. Like most folks, they can tell when they're being seen merely as moving dollar signs.

This article appeared on November 2, 1994.

Paralyzed Runner Is Glad to Be Alive

One night in 1982, Chris Houde heard screaming. He ran outside to find a neighbor beating his wife with a steel pipe. Houde wrestled the man down and dragged the bleeding woman to safety.

Then Houde went back, fearing for the couple's two children.

All seemed quiet at first. Then, he saw the husband in the darkness, about 10 feet away, holding a gun.

Moments later, Houde was on the ground, felled by two gunshot wounds, one to his right eye and another to his spinal cord, paralyzing him from the chest down.

This is an unlikely history for an athlete.

But Houde, now in a wheelchair, is one of the top entrants competing in the California International Marathon (CIM), a 26.2-mile race from Folsom Dam to the State Capitol that will be held Sunday, Dec. 4.

Like a lot of other wheelchair racers, his disability doesn't affect his athleticism.

"From the day I woke up in the hospital," Houde said, "I always focused on what I could do, not what I couldn't."

His can-do list is longer than most people's, whether wheelchair bound or not.

He has run the Boston Marathon twice and owns the course record for wheelchair athletes in the Clarksburg Country Run. He finished the 18.6-mile race in 1 hour, 30 minutes and 32 seconds.

This year, he also competed in Eppie's Great Race, a Sacramento run, bike and kayak triathlon, finishing the ironman division in 2 hours, 40 seconds. During the bike stage, he used a 21-speed hand cycle.

In 1993, he finished the CIM for the sixth time, setting a personal best of 2:03. This year, he hopes to break two hours.

Averaging about 15 races annually, he plans to include the Oz Day 10K, a well-known race in Sydney, Australia, in next year's schedule. The race offers big prize money and includes more than 100 wheelchair entrants.

Like any dedicated marathoner, his training is intense. Each week, he puts in 60 miles, including two long runs of 20 miles or more and two speed-work sessions on the track.

Twelve years after the horror that retired him from the Air Force and changed his life forever, Houde, 35, isn't bitter.

“There are people—whether they are in chairs or not—who are bitter and angry, but when I woke up in the hospital I was just glad to be alive,” Houde said.

But the hospital counselors were a little concerned. They thought he should be grieving more and sent a priest to help him release some tears.

The priest arrived unexpectedly while Houde was relaxing on the hospital grounds, playing his harmonica.

“I was playing ‘When the Saints Come Marching In,’” Houde said.

“Are you Chris Houde?” the priest asked.

“Yes,” Houde replied.

“Well, son, the doctors thought I should talk to you, but I can see you’re going to be all right.”

This article appeared on November 23, 1994.

CIM: Where’s Silver Lining?

*They Work So Hard Only to Encounter Dreary
Weather, Times*

With the last of the torn garbage bags and crumpled paper cups cleared from the streets, it’s time for a little catch-up after last week’s California International Marathon:

Sag wagon blues—During the marathon, finisher Carol Parise, 28, of Sacramento had enough presence of mind to notice the sag wagon.

This is a vehicle that runners hail when they’re having a bad day. It takes them to the finish line when their legs can’t.

As the wagon came alongside, Parise saw some pretty sad faces staring through the rain-spattered windows.

“They look like little pound puppies,” she said.

Go easy on yourselves, folks. Trust me, most of us have been there.

Finished but...—To onlookers, it may be hard to understand why someone who ran 26.2 miles may actually be disappointed, but this year spectators saw a lot of glum people crossing the line.

Some were trying to qualify for the Olympic Marathon Trials in 1996, others for the 1995 Boston Marathon. Then there were a whole heap of folks simply trying to better their personal bests.

These runners trained hard, put themselves on the edge and risked failure. When all that effort doesn't pay off, it hurts.

Let's respect the essence of what these folks were trying to do. They were trying to reach higher.

On the other hand—Several marathoners displayed a bit of joy out there, and not just the winners.

Many a runner took the time to wave a hand or banter with the crowd. And several smiled broadly and raised their arms high as they crossed the line.

Sometimes we're working so hard it's just about impossible to put one foot in front of the other, never mind think about the spectators. But whenever we have some spare energy, it's nice to share it with the crowd.

The volunteers and spectators at this year's CIM stood in the wet and cold to cheer us on. More than we sometimes realize, they enjoy it when we make that extra effort to give a little back.

Welsh rare bit—Anyone notice a man with a tall black hat and a skirt carrying a bouquet of plastic daffodils? He was wearing the Welsh national costume—for women.

His explanation? Well, when I finally got past his Welsh accent, it turns out he had made a pledge with his buddies to wear the outfit when he ran his 101st marathon. CIM was the big day.

CIM television coverage—KOV Channel 13 will broadcast the CIM at 9 p.m. Jan. 2. January tends to be dull and foggy around here, so watching the CIM may be the closest we get to anything related to running. Sit back and enjoy.

This article appeared on December 14, 1994.



Theresa, the first woman finisher, crossing the finish line at the Humboldt Redwoods Half Marathon in 1988

1995

You Can't Hide, but You Can Run

I turned up at the track last week, mostly out of habit.

That day I had some disappointing news. Nothing horrendous, but my emotions were drained. I didn't feel like working out.

But still, I was there.

Don't get me wrong. There is a difference between using a workout to take the edge off a bad mood and using it to solve life's problems. Running won't suffice as an escape from ourselves.

Yet sometimes when I stay loyal to my running—though I may feel downcast or unmotivated—it can deliver a little miracle.

This lesson, I learn over and over.

When life hits hard most of us can't afford to curl up with our faces to the wall. We still have to pay our bills, do our jobs, be kind to our families and friends. We can't quit.

And when we are dragging ourselves through our obligations with only willpower to haul the load, it hardly seems worth the effort to pile a workout on top of a loss of heart.

But I was there at the track anyway, though I wasn't up for chatting with my workout pals. I had only one-word answers to questions. No jokes. No cheeky retorts.

The workout was three times 2K (five laps around the track) with four-minute rests between. The coach told us to run the first three laps fairly comfortably, the fourth and fifth hard. We would need the long recoveries.

After our warm-up, I stepped to the line with six men and one other woman. I thought briefly about stepping off the track and going home, but then we took off, a line of people strung out through the first curve, running in the dark.

During the early laps, I scratched at my sadness. I barely noticed the track's red surface or the chill of the air. At one point, I asked, "Is it three laps yet?"

Then came the hard effort. Our breaths were shorter, our steps faster. My mind was nowhere but there.

Hard, hard, hard, push through the fourth lap, push through the fifth, barrel to the finish, bend over, breathe. Stand up, hands on hips, jog easy, start over.

Twice more, I was immersed in the world of the track. There was nothing outside the effort. We just ran. There was no room for disappointments, no room for sadnesses, no room for those other, less measurable pains.

When we finished, we patted each other on the back and shook hands.

"Good run," we said, smiling.

I am alive again.

We all have moments such as this, winning small victories over ourselves. It's not always running. Sometimes it's just showing up.

Sometimes it's trying hard. Sometimes it's being honest.

For me, that night, it was being faithful to myself, turning sourness into something good.

This article appeared on January 25, 1995.

To Increase Speedwork, Go Slowly

Speedwork is one of the basics for running fast. Though it comes in all shapes and sizes, it is essentially any type of running that is faster than training pace.

Everyone from moderately experienced beginners to advanced runners can get some fun and improvement from speedwork. But before you head for the track, ready to murder the 100-yard dash, here are a few tips to get you started:

- Find a coach. Speedwork involves running at certain efforts for certain distances for certain lengths of time. Effort, time, distance and recovery depend on your goal and how close you are to it. For beginning speedsters, there is no way to run faster without some expert advice.
- Don't attempt speedwork unless you have run at least 25 miles a week for at least six months.
- Once you begin speedwork, don't add mileage for at least two months. In fact, you may see your mileage drop a bit as your body adapts to the new workout. A common cause of injury comes from trying to increase mileage and speed at the same time.
- For at least three months, only do speedwork once a week.
- If you join a club or organized group, don't do the full workout for at least four to six weeks. For instance, if the workout is six half miles with quarter rests, do only three half miles. Adapt slowly.

If other members jeer or even mildly tease you for backing off, you might want to find another club. This one has an unhealthy group culture.

- Don't race the workout. Many veteran runners, as well as beginners, sabotage the races for which they're training because they don't know when to unleash—and when to rein in—their competitive urges.
- So far, these tips boil down to one basic point: Listen to your body. Don't expect your body to respond as would someone else's.

Signs of overtraining include excessive exhaustion, even on easy training days; lack of motivation; sleep disturbances; loss of appetite; irritability; and forgetfulness. If you notice any of these signs, cut back.

- Protect yourself against well-intentioned but lousy advice.

One of your best defenses is to ask a lot of questions. Don't assume that workout coordinators know what they are doing. Look for unhealthy obsessions or hidden biases. Coordinators should have solid explanations for workouts they suggest.

Another way to learn about speedwork is to read as much as possible.

The best book on the market is probably *Training Distance Runners* by Dr. David Martin, one of the sport's leading physiologists, and Peter Coe. Coe is the father of Sebastian Coe, who earned two gold medals in the Olympics and set 12 world records in middle-distance events.

However, this book requires a heavy dose of time and concentration. The writing is very technical, making it something of a chore to read.

Other useful but more friendly books include Roy Benson's *The Runner's Coach* and Bob Glover's *The Competitive Runner's Handbook*.

Begin your studies now on the whys and wherefores of speedwork. My next column will tell you about local running groups where you can find support and coaching advice for a faster, more sleek self.

This article appeared on February 15, 1995.

A Time for Reflection, Appreciation

Sometimes we value our blessings—a caring spouse, a loving parent or a healthy body—only when we lose them.

Likewise, as runners, we often value our sport only when we can no longer do it. Then we'll wax rhapsodic about the friends we used to run with and the trails we used to visit.

But today at least, I'm not sidelined with injury or dragged down by low motivation. Instead I'm marking my 12th anniversary as a runner with a bouquet of appreciation to the sport that has given me so much.

Here are a few things, other than a lower heart rate and lighter figure, that running has brought into my life:

Friends—Once we learn to run and talk at the same time, most runners discover that nothing encourages heart-to-heart conversation better than an easy run along the river or up and down a leafy trail.

When you're sweating and your shoes are caked with mud, it's hard to have pretensions. Running draws out our essential selves, while a cocktail party, with polite small talk over the rim of a glass, forces our masks.

Most veteran runners have developed long-term running friendships. One friend of mine has run with me for more than 10 years.

In that time I've graduated from school, changed full-time jobs and gone through a divorce. In that time he has retired from his business, mourned the death of his wife's parents and seen his father grow forgetful and weak.

But on our weekly runs, whether we're tired or frisky, we provide a small oasis for each other, offering a listening ear for the tumults and the victories of our lives.

We have more than 20 years between us and come from vastly different backgrounds, but our conversations on more than 1,000 runs have been the glue of our friendship. Without our shared love of running, we would never have met.

Adventures in nature—These days many Sacramentans see only the flat lawns of their homes or the restrained plant life of their offices. But thousands of runners, including myself, witness the wilder parts of our valley nearly every day.

Once, along the American River, a coyote and I, both loners that hot afternoon, exchanged a long stare, before the coyote ducked his head, tail drooping, to vanish through dry, purple brush.

This March, along a damp horse trail, a woman friend and I stopped for a few minutes in awe of a dark tree rising into an explosion of white blossoms.

On our next run that way, the petals had fallen, but the tree was furry with tiny leaves, only just unfurling.

Thursday I stood at the bottom of the north end of the Jibboom Street Bridge, facing Discovery Park. Flood water lapped the tips of my shoes, while ducks paddled over what was my usual lunchtime route.

It's not only views like this and the friends we find that make us love running so much. It's also the experiences we have with them.

For those who stick with the ups and downs of running, the rewards go far beyond the cosmetic. Running is less about muscle strength than it is about living life to the brim.

I hope our sport receives a few bouquets this spring.

This article appeared on May 10, 1995.

Snow Complicates Western States 100

If you see 36-year-old Tim Twietmeyer on an average weekday, he's doing what a lot of men do: pouring his kids' Cheerios, pounding computer keys at the office, taking the kids to a soccer game and on a rare evening, finding time to enjoy a movie with his wife.

He doesn't seem like a frontiersman.

In his heart and on weekends, he is.

Twietmeyer, a software design engineer, is the defending champion in Saturday's Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run. Starting at Squaw Valley, about 400 runners will follow a rugged trail through the Sierra wilderness, climbing a total of 18,000 feet and descending 23,000. They emerge in Auburn, Twietmeyer's hometown.

Last year, in a winning time and personal best of 16 hours, 51 minutes and 1 second, he became the first person to run the race 13 times. He generally finishes in the top five and has won twice, the first time in 1992.

Twietmeyer likes to imagine himself and all the other runners who enter Western States as having the faith of pioneers, like those who dared to drive wagon trains to California in the 1840s.

“The people who do this race are not professional athletes,” he said. “But to enter and run it, they’ve found some spirit or drive that says, ‘I think I can do it, even though it seems impossible to the normal person.’”

This year’s race is more daunting than usual as Twietmeyer and the other runners will have to foster even more of the frontier faith.

Because of the record snowfall, there will be more than 20 miles of continuous snow on the early part of the course.

“The snow’s at least 15 feet deep in the high country,” race director Norm Klein said. “Once the sun comes out, it will get very slushy, and it’s possible for runners to sink into snow depths over their knees.”

Klein said runners also have to worry about snow bridges. These are thin layers of iced snow that form over streams. It’s easy to step through the bridges and fall into the dark waters below.

Wayne Miles, 48, of El Dorado, last year’s second master, ended up with frostbite this year while running through snow during a 50-mile race he was using as training for the event.

“My feet got very wet and cold,” he said, “and a couple days later the skin turned black in a couple of spots. The doctors had to cut small patches off, peeling the skin off twice.”

Other than Miles, Twietmeyer is probably one of only a handful of runners who knows exactly how bad conditions are.

Last weekend, he and other race veterans planned to mark the early part of the trail, hanging yellow ribbons in trees.

“It was like being in a whiteout,” he said. “We couldn’t see but 150 yards, so there was no way to orient where we were in the snow.... We got to 10 miles, but it was foolish to continue. We returned to Squaw and went home. It was much worse than I expected.”

Jim Howard, who was with Twietmeyer last weekend, won the race in 1983, “The Year of the Big Snow,” when runners had to make steep climbs over drifts 15 to 20 feet high.

Twietmeyer said Howard estimates the snow to be far worse this year.

“It’s going to be a wild one,” Twietmeyer said, and for a frontiersman, that’s part lure as well as part terror.

This article appeared on June 21, 1995.

Knowing How to Manage Their Time

Last week, I heard a comment with which most veteran runners are familiar. It was from an acquaintance who was watching me do a five-second stretch before I took off for a run.

“I wish I could run,” she said, “but I just don’t have the time.”

I don’t, either.

In fact, most runners I know lead pretty busy lives. They often work more than 40 hours a week and have numerous commitments to friends and family.

But runners squeeze exercise into their lives because they want to. Their desire to run is so strong they will cut corners elsewhere.

Some of their time-saving methods are ingenious.

“In the winter,” said Mike Kinter, 31, “I wear my running gear under my work clothes. That way I can change faster.”

Kinter, a math teacher at Cosumnes River College, also will run home from the grocery store after driving there with family or friends.

“I’ve heard of some lunch-time runners who use baby wipes because they don’t have time to shower,” said Jodi Newman, 28.

Newman, an administrative assistant for the California Walnut Marketing Board, has another shortcut.

“Find a hairstyle that’s easy to take care of,” she said. “I’ve learned to French braid. It looks good for work and stays in place during a lunch-time run.”

Said family man Steve Yee: “You have to strike deals.”

He trades exercise days with his wife, Nancy, so each parent spends time with Cori, their 20-month-old son.

“Mondays and Wednesdays, I pick him up from day care and I run pushing him in the stroller,” said Yee, 42. “Nancy runs with a women’s group. Tuesdays and Thursdays, she takes Cori, and I run harder with friends.”

Yee also lifts weights about twice a week. He’s whittled these workouts down to 15 minutes.

Caroline Craig, 37, a veterinary anesthesiologist at UC Davis, doesn’t let herself relax at the end of her frequent 12-hour workdays.

“I don’t stop at go. I don’t collect \$200,” she said. “I just put my running clothes on and take off. After a while, I shed that icky tiredness.”

Some weekend days, Craig is on emergency call and has to be within 15 minutes of work.

“I run circles in the hospital parking lot,” she said.

Brad Lael, 30, landscapes by day and delivers pizzas by night. Between work and chores, he slots in about 100 miles a week.

“Today, I ran on the way to pick up my car from the shop,” he said. “I got in eight miles.”

Several local runners said that instead of reading the newspaper in the mornings or sleeping in on weekends, they exercise.

Patty Ernst, 38, who started running less than a year ago, already has learned the efficient but perhaps less fastidious ways of a veteran runner.

“I used to come home from work and clean house,” she said. “Now my running has made me realize how unimportant that is.”

Most runners don’t have particularly easy jobs or oodles of money from distant uncles. We make running one of our priorities. Though exercise is not a particularly world-changing pursuit, most of us know that we are making a choice. We know that any choice means losing something else.

This article appeared on July 12, 1995.

Women Are the Only Focus of This Run

Women can find one of the few safe places to take their first athletic steps on Saturday, Aug. 12. Now in its 13th year, Sacramento’s Susan B. Anthony 5K is the only all-women’s run in Northern California.

Though women are no longer excluded from sports, many, especially those in their mid-30s or beyond, still feel self-conscious attempting to run.

Maybe they were not encouraged to be athletic when they were girls. Looking back to my youth, I must have been one of those kids who would have entered a sport with passion and joy.

Along with my older brother, I jumped off swings in midair, climbed the monkey bars with ease and, even though I never learned to swim, leaped fearlessly into the deep end of the local pool.

My mother, like many mothers back then, didn't recognize the spirit of the little girl on her hands. Her own wildness was never allowed to surface.

"I didn't know what to do with you," she said.

If I had been a boy, she might have known.

Then, perhaps, she would have funneled my energy into track, soccer or some other sport that would harness my wildness and increase my self-esteem.

But still, I have been lucky. I found running in my 20s, and now enjoy an athletic self-image. I do not feel guilty, and I am not afraid of disapproval for being sweaty or strong.

There are many women, though, who have yet to tap this potential. They have yet to include in their definition of self the idea they can be athletic.

That's why an all-women's run is still important.

"We need to make up for lost time, to make up for past mistakes," said Steve Ashe, race director in 1993 and 1994.

Sally Edwards, president of Trinity Fitness Company and CEO of YubaShoes, is the national spokeswoman for the Danskin Women's Triathlon Series, which she says is the largest and oldest triathlon series in the world.

Edwards believes women are not as far along as the opportunities suggest.

"When I speak to a room full of women, I'll ask if they've ever thought they would finish last in a race. Half of the women say they have. If I asked the same question of men, most wouldn't think that way," she said.

"What have we done to create such a deep athletic inferiority complex?"

Whatever it is, the race is a chance to continue to change it and perhaps to apply a salve.

Ellen Sampson, who leads an orientation for beginning women runners and is also the Sacramento director for Jeff Galloway's Marathon Program, believes the race atmosphere is perfect for the way many women seem to get their courage up.

“It provides a comfort zone,” she said. “Many of us seem to learn more through the social aspects of group running, whereas men are more likely to say, ‘Well, I just like to run on my own.’”

This year more than 300 women are expected to follow the looped, shady course through River Park. There will be no men’s race before or after it. The focus is entirely on women.

The race starts at 8 a.m., at Glen Hall Park. It is open to walkers and runners and costs \$13 until Saturday, \$16 after.

This article appeared on August 2, 1995.

Injuries Can Be Mentally Painful, Too

Two weeks ago, 12 years after taking my first step as a runner, I bumped into something most veteran runners dread—an injury. I mean a real sideliner.

When I realized I might not train for weeks, perhaps months, I faced a barrage of fears and disappointments for which I was not prepared.

I didn’t realize how much I would feel the loss.

“Post-injury emotional responses...entail anger, denial, bargaining, depression, and acceptance,” said Linda S. Gentling, a runner who holds a master’s degree with an emphasis in sport psychology.

Though the intensity is far less for an injury, these are the same stages we go through if someone we loved died.

But there are ways to cope with the difficult feelings. In fact, facing them head on can lead to unexpected opportunities. Here are a few tips to get through a forced layoff from running:

- Cry if you need to: My injury occurred the day before a vacation at a running camp. I went to the camp, but the first day there, I hid in my tent, sad and angry, all at the same time.

“The athlete must go through the stage of acknowledging the hurt,” Gentling said. “It is significantly different from self-pity.”

By processing the loss, we are less likely to get stuck in a stage such as anger or depression.

During this grieving stage, don't be discouraged from shedding tears. We are truly blessed not to have a terminal illness or to be confined to a wheelchair. Nonetheless, we hurt.

- Keep exercising: Now comes the kick in the pants. Even though most runners will say that nothing cleans them out better than running, don't stop some kind of exercise.

Rich Hanna of Sacramento holds the year's fastest 100-kilometer time for an American. But he was injured eight weeks ago, possibly losing his chance to compete in the World 100-kilometer Championships next month.

Despite his disappointment, he is concentrating on what he can do, not what he can't.

He rides a bike, uses a rowing machine, lifts weights, and runs in water. Continuing to exercise helps him to maintain an upbeat attitude that can actually speed the recovery process.

"Severe depression," Gentling said, "is often associated with decreased energy."

If this depression sets in, she said, injured runners may lack the motivation to go through arduous rehabilitation.

- Restructure your goals: "Injured athletes tend to dwell on irrational thoughts," Gentling said. "They need direction toward constructive task-related thoughts over which they have control."
- Stop and smell the roses: Most runners injure themselves because they are overdoing it. Though we still need to exercise regularly, a layoff from running is a good time to regain a little balance, especially in relationships.

"I've been in touch with people I haven't talked to for a long time," Hanna said, "and I've met a lot of neat people at the gym."

- Remember this experience: One of the best things a long-term injury can give us is a little empathy. Down the road, we might comfort another injured runner by simply acknowledging, “Yes, it hurts.” Later, if necessary, we can rouse them out of self-pity.

This article appeared on August 23, 1995.

Woman’s Marathon Debut Is a Success

Before Sunday’s California International Marathon, Kathy Ward of Sacramento sat in the back of the bus that was transporting runners to the start.

“She looks really relaxed,” someone said.

Even though it was Ward’s debut marathon, she planned to do more than finish the 26.2-mile race. She wanted to qualify for the women’s Olympic Trials in Columbia, S.C.

Most first-time marathoners—never mind folks who want to beat the clock—tend to be a bit edgy on race day. You could see this in the five men sitting alongside Ward.

One was chewing his lip and seeming to stare at nothing but the blackness of predawn. Another, wearing sunglasses, was looking at his feet. All had gloomy looks, as if they were about to be guillotined.

Ward was smiling.

“Good athletes have to be grounded,” said Randy Sturgeon of Sacramento, who has coached Ward since August. “They have to be balanced. Kathy is.”

That doesn’t mean she doesn’t get nervous, but she can face a race without being consumed by tension.

And that showed in her performance in Sunday’s race.

Ward, 40, was the only local woman to qualify for the Olympic Trials. She ran 2:46:21, more than 3 minutes below the qualifying time of 2:50. And she has been racing less than two years.

Many people have talent, but it doesn’t always show. Others work relentlessly, yet never seem to get the results they want. Ward has talent and will but also something else. It seems to be belief.

“She has no fear of failure,” Sturgeon said. “If she hadn’t broken 2:50, she would have thought it was a fluke and tried again.”

Ward’s conviction seems to come from other life experiences.

Since 1978, she has raced Hobie Cats, two-hulled sailing boats. She has been to the World Championships in Mexico, Guadeloupe and France. At the Worlds in Italy, she placed second. At the Nationals in Florida in May, she placed fourth.

Ward, who has played the flute since fourth grade but dropped music for a few years, now plays four or five times a week, usually during her lunch break from her job at a microbiology lab for the state’s Department of Food and Agriculture.

“It’s nice to express yourself,” Ward said. “Also, it’s a good feeling to play a difficult passage, like anything you do over and over, and then you do it well.”

Ward has tackled her inner self in the same way. You don’t have to be around her long to realize she is more comfortable observing than talking.

“I am shy,” she said, “but I kept putting myself in uncomfortable situations. I decided that I wasn’t going to let certain things stop me from doing what I wanted to do.”

It is this habit of facing challenges that seems to have given Ward her faith.

“If you tell Kathy, ‘Do A plus B, you’ll get C,’” Sturgeon said, “she believes you.... I don’t have any magic. It’s the belief of the athlete that counts.”

Ward now looks to her next challenge, the Olympic Trials on Feb. 10.

“Ideally, I’d like to run faster than at CIM,” she said. “But with them being so close, I think I’m going to just run the best I can.”

This article appeared on December 6, 1995.



Theresa crossing the finish line in the Wharf to Wharf Race in 1996 (Santa Cruz to Capitola).

1996

Rescue Run Brings Pain and Pleasure

When I first started running, 13 years ago, the hardest part was getting out the door. That took willpower. But these days, I just go. Running has become a habit I love.

Yet it still has challenges, and I wouldn't want to run without them, particularly when some of the difficult tasks call on me, and me alone, to tackle them.

Take Rescue. That's what many local runners call a 16-mile run in the El Dorado Hills. Rescue itself is little more than a hamlet, about three miles into the route, consisting of a general store and a fire station.

It is 45 minutes east of Sacramento, yet it is the hills that draw us. Sacramento doesn't have any, and runners are crazy enough to drive somewhere to find them.

Two Sundays back, I went there with friends. In addition to the usual series of ups and downs, we also ran in and out of fog.

Running through the denser shrouds of gray, everything near became intensely close—the breathing of others, the slap of feet, the beads of water on sleeves and hair.

In other places, the fog rose from the roads and fields, like Humboldt mist. The fields were shining, horses stood silently, and all things said, "Praise be."

But going to Rescue is never easy. Although I've gone there for more than 11 years, one stretch of hill is always hard. Until I reach the top, I'm never certain I'll get there. Doing it before is no guarantee.

The hill rises from Mile 11 to Mile 13—and that's after facing a series of climbs almost as intense. This one, though, asks the most. It requires you to climb steeply, to hang on for two miles.

That day, as I attacked the hill, I noticed how our group spread out, some behind, some ahead. We were each in our own world, climbing on our own.

It made me think about how hills strike in our lives sometimes, hills like this anyway, where we're each, existentially at least, on our own, faced with the necessity of our own climbing.

You could see it among us. On the flats, we adjusted our pace for togetherness, some of us going a tad faster, others a tad slower, so that we could all run as a group and chat.

But once the hill struck, we each went into our own silent world, heads bowed, running with small, determined steps. No energy to see if someone else is keeping up. No energy to show some manners to the other runners.

Just moving up, trying to survive. Never sure until we got there.

But in the end, we all came together again on level ground, a mixture of friendship, relief and accomplishment. Rescue is hard. Every time. But when you stop at the 16-mile mark, it all seems worth it.

We patted our companions on the shoulders, maybe even hugged them. We drank some water, put on dry clothes, brushed our hair and joined the others for a chat and a laugh.

We felt good, reborn and full of love for life.

Rescue asks a lot, but we go there again and again because that's what we love. Here and there, we need to do tough things, even when they hurt. But if we hang on, the toughness is worth it.

This article appeared on February 7, 1996.

Turning Back the Clock Allows for Play

During my college days, more than a decade ago, a professor, spotting me in the school library, came over to chat. I mentioned my running.

“Isn't it time you gave that up?” he asked.

Every now and then, I still bump into comments like this. I suspect other runners do, too.

To folks who don't run, we must sometimes seem a little silly. We put aside family, work and chores for a daily run. Even though we might lack the deer-like grace of true athletes, we persist. Nonrunners might think we are resisting adulthood.

But if running has any point at all, that's exactly it.

Only three years from turning 40, I find running is one of the few activities where I still find play.

Take Easter weekend three weeks ago.

Saturday, a pal and I visited our usual running route to plant chocolate-filled eggs. We were planning an Easter egg hunt for the next day. At one spot along the rural course, I asked the owner of a little grocery store if I could hide an egg out front.

She was working hard, serving customers, taking orders for sandwiches and supervising two young employees. I felt a little childish. Her look suggested I was.

But Sunday morning, about a dozen grown-ups, a few a decade older than myself, got into the spirit of play. Taking their clues with them, they set off to run, exploring country lanes on a pretty spring day.

We hunted behind bushes, under trees and by pigpens, looking for nothing more serious than eggs. In our laughter and the bonding that came with it, we forgot the lawns that needed mowing, the reports that needed reading and the Monday that always looms.

We were back on the playground. What we did for a living, what car we drove, where we lived had no bearing on how we treated each other.

We easily shed our grown-up selves.

As it is, we have too many responsibilities—tasks we must will ourselves through for remote ends. Most of us have too many bills to pay, too many relatives to support or please, too many bosses from whom we take orders. Running, when it's play, helps us recover from these.

Play has no goals. It's spontaneous, joyful and simply free.

When we play, barriers and guards dissolve, and we are suddenly open to each other, able to cast aside any concerns and release our love for family and friends.

Ironically, the professor who implied I was too old to run taught classes on the poet Emerson. It was Emerson who wrote in his journals, "It is a happy talent to know how to play."

If ever a day comes when I can no longer find my playground, I will have lost my art of living.

This article appeared on May 1, 1996.

Work Ethic Pays Off for Lael in S.F.

In this sport, you see quite a few shooting stars. I call certain runners that because they streak across the running scene, leaving a brief arc of stardust behind them. Then they're gone.

They could be first-time marathoners, for instance, who run the race faster than most veteran marathoners ever could. Or neophytes on the track who innocently outkick folks who have practically bled there, twice a week, for most of their adult life.

But July 14, I saw many Sacramento runners happy for a runner who isn't a shooting star but certainly got a well-deserved slice of fame.

Brad Lael of Sacramento won the San Francisco Marathon. While he didn't run an Olympic qualifying time, he ran well on a tough, hilly

course. Lael, 31, finished in 2 hours and 37 minutes, five minutes off his personal best.

He earned not only a huge silver cup but accolades he had never known. Beautiful women kissed him, a young boy sought his autograph, and Mayor Willie Brown shook his hand.

I’ve known Lael for at least six years. I first met him in the parking lot where my local running club used to gather for workouts. He stood in a far-off corner, shy beyond belief. And though he had talent, it wasn’t the in-your-face, streaking kind.

Lael’s greatest strength is his tenacity—his ability to work.

On top of two blue-collar jobs and more recently school, Lael runs a weekly average of 80 to 120 miles. Then there’s hard speedwork every Tuesday and Thursday.

But with Lael, it’s not only what he does but what he endures. Just lately, it’s his disappointments and injuries surrounding San Francisco.

Last year he wanted to better his previous best, but on a warm day he suffered dehydration, hurting by Mile 16. Still, he finished in 2:48.

This year he was injured in February and March and settled for running the race as a training effort. In his wildest dreams, he never expected to win.

Lael deserves his recent victory, not because of what he did in one day but because of all his efforts, year after year.

I know other quiet, dedicated heroes like him. Take Po Adams, a 72-year-old marathoner from Carmichael. She placed second in her division at Lael’s race.

Then there’s Folsom’s Connie Kondo, who has run the California International Marathon for many consecutive years, each time chipping away at her marathon best. Last year Kondo, 38, ran 2:51:04 at the CIM, finishing only a minute off the qualifying standard for the Olympic Trials.

Each of these runners is intimate with the little bits of daily discipline that sticking to goals can take. It’s not only the running itself but the other regimens, choices that mean something else can’t be done.

Some of the sacrifices—like stretching each day, refusing dessert and turning down the exciting night out—may not seem like much in isolation, but over the years they add up.

Whether a person runs fast times or not, it's impossible not to respect hard work. So every now and then, when something magical emerges from quiet dedication, it's worth celebrating—for all of us.

This article appeared on July 24, 1996.

Injuries Sometimes Start in the Head

I have a homespun theory about injuries. It goes like this: A few injuries—not all—are rooted in our personality. According to McCourt's Theorem, the more driven we are, the more likely we are to pull a muscle, aggravate a tendon or overuse a joint.

Now bear with me while I explain.

Injuries do have physical causes. Some of us have biomechanical quirks we aren't aware of until we get hurt. I have Achilles' tendonitis that flares up now and then. When it began, I discovered my hips have minimal range of motion. They'd move more freely if I bothered to stretch now and then.

Because my legs are stiff, the tendons above my heels take the slack. They do all the bending. Not surprisingly, they suffer from overuse.

Others might endure the same injury for other biomechanical faults. Perhaps their feet rotate too far inward on impact.

But sometimes physical problems are linked to behavior.

Like many runners I know, I approach just about every task with a certain inherent vigor. Whether I vacuum the carpet, empty the trash or turn the soil, I do not go lightly.

That may be why I—and a few other runners—don't stretch. Stretching is not the kind of thing our personalities like to do. After all, to stretch, you have to slow down, breathe deeply, relax. I'm not a good relaxer. That's probably why I run. It's the expenditure of energy that actually leaves me calm for later.

I do slow down for massages, but still, my various masseuses notice a certain resistance.

My personality shows in everything. One reason I like to write is that my fingers get to do their own form of running.

For vacations, I don't lie on beaches. I go to running camps.

This year, at Camp Fleet Feet, Tahoe, a group of us sat by the fire after a happy day on the trails. We talked about our lives before we found running. Even as kids, we were full of motion.

But clearly, our rapid-fire attitudes may sometimes push us beyond health, especially when combined with another trait: an overzealous need to leave a mark on the world.

With the latest bout of tendonitis, I can see how the inner McCourt, temporarily ruled by an overly competitive ego, made a series of poor decisions.

The silly behavior came the week before the injury. On a Thursday, I ran five miles hard. Fair enough. But only two days later, Saturday, I joined some folks from my club. I ignored the tired legs and tried to stay with the big dogs.

Then came Sunday. In the middle of a hilly, long training run, a male friend and I chose to race. We raced several miles to the nine-mile mark and then staggered through the next seven miles of the 16-mile run.

Trust me, I do know better.

But something sometimes happens to us on the way to injury. We want the thrill of the fast run now.

So if I've learned anything, it's simply that if we're running to race, winning the training run is worth nothing. And if we're running to run, why risk an injury?

Our personalities brought us to running, but they can lure us to injury, too. Now I'm trying to retrain my personality a little by learning to stretch. After all, we have to let the brain have some influence.

This article appeared on October 16, 1996.

Slowing Down Provided Perspective

It's no secret we runners sometimes miss the magic of where we are because we're so focused on the road ahead.

Surveys of runners show the majority of us are well-educated people who generally excel in our careers. Goal-oriented may not seem enough now.

In running, this niggling discontent may show in our striving to go faster or farther. But when we focus too much on getting ahead, we lose a lot.

Whenever I'm outside of our sport, I discover this fact anew. For instance, I'm recovering from an injury now, and when I'm in this stage, I tend to watch races. Each time, I'm struck by how ungrateful some of us must seem.

Not long ago, I watched a local race, cheering the runners from my club. Normally, I'd have been among them, one of the most avid at trying to pass a competitor or to equal a previous best.

As everyone sped by, of all shapes and ages, a spectator marveled that so many people rise so early to put their bodies to a test. To her, they seemed heroic.

But at the end, many of the runners themselves were complaining, mostly about their finish time or their performance. One runner even grumbled because he had improved his personal best by only one minute instead of two.

I could see other spectators looking askance at all the laments. To them, we seem miraculous simply because we're out there. Whether we're two minutes ahead or two behind doesn't make a difference.

On another occasion, I encountered my own lack of gratitude.

One Saturday morning, I was running along the quiet city streets. Because I am in that delicate transition between injury and full recovery, my run was slow and careful. The air was crisp, the sky blue, and I had a cushion of fallen leaves under my feet. But I didn't care.

Another runner had just passed me. Watching her put more and more distance between us, I was suddenly unhappy. I wanted to run faster than my injury would allow. I wanted to compete. For a few blocks, I complained because there was no way I could catch up.

Then I passed a garage sale. An elderly man was selling spades, wheelbarrows, hoes. Some house paraphernalia.

When I stopped for a moment to browse, the man proudly shared some personal thoughts with me. He was 80 years old and had been married for 51 years. Before his wife died from Alzheimer's disease, he had cared for her in their home. Despite the ups and downs of his life, he was grateful for his health. He had just one sorrow.

“The only thing that’s hard,” he said, “is eating alone. I just have a real hard time with that.”

After I left, I had rediscovered my own perspective, and I saw the silliness of my own complaints.

Tomorrow is Thanksgiving, and when we gather with our close ones, let’s really take stock.

For myself, I hope I remember this gratitude to my injury. Without it, I wouldn’t have slowed down enough to notice more than myself.

This article appeared on November 27, 1996.

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Scudamore Is Disillusioned No Longer

Though David Scudamore of Davis won the USA Marathon in Pittsburgh 10 days ago, many Sacramentans don’t know him.

Scudamore, a 27-year-old medical student at UC Davis, finished in 2 hours, 13 minutes and 48 seconds. He earned \$15,500 and a trip to Athens, Greece, for the World Championships in August.

Not bad for his first marathon.

Because of his relative anonymity, it’s easy to assume Scudamore is particularly lucky—someone who zooms to the pinnacle of success without paying the usual dues.

But Scudamore has been quietly perfecting his craft for a long time.

As a high schooler in Southern California, he qualified for the cross country nationals twice, placing 10th as a senior.

In his second year at Stanford, he qualified for the USA junior team at the cross country World Championships in Norway. Then came almost two years of on-and-off injury.

Despite the setbacks, Scudamore returned in his fourth and fifth years to become a track All-American in the 10,000 meters.

After Scudamore graduated in 1993, Stanford coach Vin Lananna agreed to continue coaching him if he postponed the lure of the roads, which has sidetracked many a runner of Scudamore’s caliber.

In America, the roads offer far more prize money than does track. But the sole pursuit of money can also cause burnout and prevent a runner from reaching full potential.

In the fall of 1994, Scudamore came to Davis. But Achilles' tendon injuries prevented consistent training for almost two years.

"I started to feel pretty disillusioned with the sport," he said.

Then came the fall of 1996, and after surgery and recuperation, he was fit enough to run a full season of cross country. Drawing on this momentum, he and Lananna began plans for a spring marathon.

He ran only two road races on the way to his goal.

In February, he ran a 49:04 at the Stockton 10-miler, and in March he ran a 29:16 10K at the Stanford Invitational.

"The week before the marathon, Lananna decided I should stick to a 2:15 to 2:16 pace for the first 20 miles," Scudamore said. "We thought being conservative would serve me better as a first-time marathoner."

On the big day, Scudamore mostly stuck with his plan. Until about Mile 12, he remained in eighth place, running the 5:10 mile pace he had promised.

"If the other runners surged," he said, "I'd hold back."

It wasn't until 18 miles that he took over, without increasing his pace. At Mile 19 he was all by himself.

He started going a little faster.

"At Mile 23 I finally looked over my shoulder, and I couldn't see anyone else behind," he said. "I knew then that unless I imploded, the race was mine."

Scudamore ran a 4:45 for the 24th mile, giving him a last 10K of 30:47.

Scudamore is clearly happy about his race. But he has the perspective of an old-timer who intimately knows the vagaries of his craft.

"I've had plenty of bad experiences, too," he said. "Part of being good is being able to lift your head back up and get ready for the next race."

This article appeared on May 14, 1997.

Western States Has a Boston Marathon-Like Mystique

Approximately 370 runners will huddle Saturday morning in Squaw Valley at the predawn start of the world’s oldest 100-mile footrace, the 24th annual Western States Endurance Run.

Despite the struggles and terrors that lie beyond—40,000 feet of elevation changes, rock-strewn trails and, for most, a long day and night through cougar territory—these runners consider themselves lucky.

“For the majority of ultrarunners, their main goal is to do Western,” said Norm Klein, who with his wife Helen meticulously have directed the race for the past 12 years. “It holds the same mystique as the Boston Marathon does for marathoners.”

As for who will win the journey to Placer High School in Auburn, probably early Sunday morning, most say it will be someone who has spent a lot of time on the course. That could exclude some fast runners who don’t live and train in Northern California.

With 15 Western States under his belt, Tim Twietmeyer, 38, of Auburn has run the race the most frequently, each time finishing in less than 24 hours. He became the race’s only four-time winner last year.

Barring accident, injury or sickness, he has a good chance of winning a fifth Western States, despite challenges from a deep field of champions, especially world-record holder Ann Trason of Kensington and Scott St. John, a local resident for the last few months of training.

Twietmeyer ran his fastest Western States in 1994 in 16 hours and 51 minutes. This year, the father of three has run several personal bests in local races, indicating he is probably in the best shape of his life.

At Sacramento’s American River 50-Miler on April 5, one of the largest ultramarathons in the country, he placed second in 6:04:41, improving his best by about nine minutes.

Trason, 36, holds world records for 50 miles, 100 kilometers and 100 miles. She has eight consecutive women’s titles at Western, with four consecutive top-three overall finishes. Her 1994 course record of 17:37:51 is about five minutes faster than Twietmeyer’s finish last year.

But Trason has broken the 18-hour barrier once; Twietmeyer has broken it six times.

Last year, Trason placed third overall, a tad more than an hour behind Twietmeyer, and about seven minutes behind the second-place man, Jerry Wittenauer, 38, of Palo Alto.

Only two weeks before last year's Western States, Trason broke the women's course record in South Africa's Comrades Marathon, a 55.7-mile race and the world's largest ultramarathon.

Given that Trason won Comrades again only nine days ago, winning about \$14,200, it's unlikely she will run her best at this year's Western States.

The most potent challenge to Twietmeyer and Trason could come from St. John. Although he hails from St. George, Utah, his part-time local residency should give him more course knowledge than most other top non-Californians have.

He was fifth in the 1995 Western States but last year dropped out after 78 miles. A 2:18 marathoner, he set a course record this year at the Quicksilver 50K in San Jose in 3:42:49.

Two other potentially competitive entrants no longer are planning to run. Tom Johnson, 38, of Loomis, is a three-time winner and the course-record holder with a 1991 time of 15:54:05.

Although he is entered officially, Johnson—like Trason—ran this year's Comrades, placing 18th overall, with Trason six minutes behind him. Unlike Trason, Johnson doesn't typically run an ultramarathon so soon after another. Most race aficionados don't expect him to show at Western States.

Sacramento's Rich Hanna, 32, the 1994 and 1995 100K national champion, also won't run as planned. Plagued by injuries for the past two years, he doesn't have the training base.

This article appeared on June 25, 1997.

Newcomers Have to Tone It Down

One thing veterans can spot a mile away are “newbies” to our sport. Be they 20 or 70 years old, most newbies have an unrestrained, wide-eyed enthusiasm about running.

When they head out the door, newbies don't have to wrestle the gravitational pull of the couch. Instead, they are lured for longer distances by the promise of a stronger body—and the siren call of an interview with Marty Liquori after a record-breaking race.

It's then that grizzled veterans, with their knee braces and hobbling gait, warn the new enthusiasts, “Beware, oh runners, your feelings of infallibility.”

Everyone, from joggers who run twice a year to Olympic hopefuls, knows that to run further or faster, they must increase the stress on their bodies. But if you go too far, the body rebels.

Newbies don't know this because they are riding a string of dramatic personal bests. They deny they could ever become like one of the many limping runners that surround them.

But unless they slow down now and then, newbies will start to show signs of stress. They may become more irritable. They may start tossing and turning in bed. They may eat less than usual for dinner.

If they ignore these whispers of trouble, milder symptoms can quickly evolve into head colds, allergic reactions, nausea, muscle soreness, weight loss, depression or injury.

Once a runner reaches chronic fatigue, it can take weeks or even months to recuperate.

“The key is to find what works for you,” said Joe Neff, running coach at Sacramento State. “Don't try to mimic the training programs of other runners without regard to your own body signals.”

Even top athletes range dramatically as far as their capacity for intensity and mileage.

“Some athletes can do 130 miles a week,” Neff said, “and others top out at 50 or 60. But both can do well on race day.”

Neff remembers one of his best athletes, who, two or three races into the season, said, “I'm working too hard.” At the time, the runner was not in the front pack.

Neff's solution was to allow the athlete to pick and choose his own workouts according to how his body felt. Within a few weeks, the runner was racing very well, even though he was running lower-intensity and lower-mileage workouts compared to his teammates.

Ken Grace, the dean of athletics at Chabot College in Hayward, recommends cyclic training. This means interspersing the low-intensity

weeks among weeks of higher-intensity running. It also means following a hard workout day with an easy day of just a few recovery miles.

“You can’t go hard the day after a hard workout,” Grace said. “It’s like going to the bank to take out a second loan when you haven’t paid off the first.”

Most experts also advocate cross-training. Aerobic sports such as swimming or biking continue to improve the cardiovascular system but avoid the constant pounding of running.

Top off prevention with a bit of ego control. Beware the tanned goddesses or gods zipping around McKinley Park. If you chase them on a day you meant to run easy, your ego may fall hard on a day you meant to run well.

This article appeared on July 16, 1997.

Beyond the Passion, There Is a Life

Runners’ careers go through many passages, no matter what age we begin. The adventure may start with a few tentative steps but often becomes a passionate gallop.

Those of us who remain with the sport for many years discover running can be like a good relationship, where love and experience lighten some of our darker parts—sides of us, say, like possessiveness.

I began running in my early 20s, and over 15 years of running I’ve been through many changes.

At first, it was a forcing of myself out the door to shed 25 pounds. I started running a block or two and then, over several months, the blocks changed to half-miles, and the half-miles to miles.

Running began to teach me that a little day-to-day discipline led to goals that I hadn’t believed were possible. For someone who wasn’t used to many successes, this was heady stuff.

After a year, I was running three miles every other day. After three years, my times were faster. I ran my first marathon. I was hooked.

At the time, as a poor graduate student, I owned only a small moped. But in the cold of winter, I would take the back roads from Sacramento to Elk Grove to run with strangers.

If I wasn't running, I was reading *Runner's World*, from the table of contents to the last classified ad. Or I was entering detailed notes in my running logs, describing the length and pace of the runs and how the body felt.

Hands down, I chose running over everything else.

Times have changed. As I write this column, the deadline is more than a week away. But just when I had planned to join my club for a workout, I felt an urge to write instead. Last week, instead of a five-mile run, I chose some quiet puttering in my garden, weeding around marigolds and cosmos and breaking faded petunia blossoms from their stems.

I see this flexibility in most of the veteran runners I know. Fewer runners fear that if they do fewer workouts, their conditioning will collapse. Fewer fear their lives will ricochet out of control if they can't perform to perfection.

Looking back at my old possessiveness, I see what Leonardo da Vinci meant when he said, "He who possesses most must be most afraid of loss."

I see that when I clung to my running, rejecting invitations from nonrunning friends, refusing trips from home because I didn't want to miss a workout, I really didn't trust myself. I believed that if I stopped running, I wouldn't have the strength to begin again.

But over the years, I've had to stop and start. At first, it was injury that took away running rather than a conscious or graceful withdrawal. With more years behind me, I discover that letting go usually has more positives than dreads.

I like the bend in me now, regularly choosing pancakes with my husband or a slow tending to my plants instead of a Saturday-morning run.

This passage seems the absolute best. I can receive the harvest the sport bestows, willing to tend my running rather than enslave it.

This article appeared on October 8, 1997.

What Incredible Willpower Can Do

Talk to most runners, and they probably will say the hardest part of running was getting started.

Many of us headed out for our first jog feeling like acne-smearing teenagers heading to a dance. We didn't begin our running careers with brimming confidence and lean, hard bodies but with a pudgy tummy, a 40th birthday or maybe a divorce.

Suffice to say, a fair number of us took our first steps hauling a suitcase of low self-esteem.

Imagine, then, how Autom Specht felt when she first took to the roads. She weighed a tad more than 330 pounds in a society that has a stormy relationship with fat.

"When people would drive by, all I could think was that they would look at this fat woman and think I was pretty pathetic," the 5-foot-11 woman said. "There were times when I would just cringe."

Five years later, Specht is 160 pounds lighter.

Her hips and belly first began pooching in her early 20s. Her weight finally drove her into a 12-step program. Once there, she cured some alcohol and drug problems, but the weight stuck.

Fast-forward to her 30s, past a nursing career, a move to Cameron Park from Southern California, a difficult marriage, then a divorce, and being told to get off a ride at Great America because an attendant couldn't close the safety bar around her.

"I had lost some weight before, but it was always by dieting, and the pounds always came back," said Specht, 39. "This time I said, 'I'm never going to diet again. I'm just going to get fit.'"

Her transformation began not only with aerobics in her living room but also with leaving nursing behind and buying a hair salon. It then transitioned to exposure to the roads, battling not only other people's judgments but her own.

"I can feel fit around normal people, but as soon as I'm around runners, I feel bigger again," she said. "I still worry about their perception of me and think they expect me not to be able to perform. I feel as if I have to earn my right to be there."

Specht may be overcompensating.

Saturday, she ran the Helen Klein Ultra Classic 50K, a 32-mile race in Sacramento. She placed third in the women’s 35-to-39 age division in 4 hours, 42 minutes, 47 seconds. Two weeks before that, she was the 17th woman to finish at Apple Hill, one of the most popular runs in the area, running eight miles in 61 minutes.

Now, when she runs a race and sees the increasing number of wheel-chair competitors, she relates a dawning sense of her inner strength to the gutsiness of these other folk.

“I say to myself, ‘If that happened to me, I could do it.’”

On Dec. 7, Specht runs her first official marathon, the California International Marathon in Sacramento. The race starts at 7 a.m. at Folsom Dam and ends at the west steps of the Capitol.

If you’re impressed with her stab at this race, it already has become a lesser goal in Specht’s mind. Within five years, she aims to compete in the Western States Endurance Run, a mountainous 100-mile trail race across the Sierra.

Anyone dare to bet she can’t do it?

This article appeared on November 19, 1997.

You Should Run for Your Life

It Is Time to Heed the Surgeon General’s Warning

Most of us lead fairly hectic lives, scurrying from one task to another, always battling the clock. What with family commitments and job deadlines, life can feel pretty stressful.

For myself, running my own business for the last six years is the most stressful job I’ve ever had. With clients’ needs to fulfill, invoices to write and supplies to buy, my job could easily invade my personal life.

Yet, I still insist on a run at least four days a week.

At the start of a run, my mind will fuss about money I’m owed, phone calls I should return, or jobs still left to do.

But give it a mile or so, and my mind begins to settle. By the last mile, my concerns seem far away.

It’s then, when I feel renewed and clear-headed, that I wonder how anyone survives without exercise.

In fact, some don't.

Last year, for the first time, the Surgeon General reported that lack of exercise is detrimental to our health.

"That report is a biggie," says Danny Tanner, director of operations for Spare Time Inc., which runs several health clubs in Sacramento. "Compare it to the Surgeon General's warnings about smoking."

The Surgeon General's conclusion came from reams of evidence collected over the years from a variety of sources.

In the 1970s, for instance, professor Jeremy Morris of the London School of Tropical Medicine began a 13-year study of 16,882 British civil servants.

Morris divided the workers into two groups—those who exercised and those who didn't.

At the end of the study, Morris discovered the exercisers had less than one half the heart-attack rate of the non-exercisers.

The active workers' rate of heart attacks also stayed the same between the ages of 40 and 60, while the rate more than doubled for the less active workers in the same age group.

Though cardiovascular disease is a No. 1 killer, a sedentary life-style also increases a person's vulnerability to plenty of other ailments, both the dramatic and the mundane. Some relatively minor, but nonetheless inconvenient, ailments include digestive disorders, fatigue, colds, allergies and even backaches.

Moreover, anecdotal evidence and common sense suggest that exercise generally makes people feel better.

Many runners report increases in self-esteem, emotional stability, productivity, humor, optimism and vigor.

Perhaps it's time for runners to be more vocal about the benefits of our sport. If more folks ran, perhaps we'd have a less stressed, healthier work force—and fewer family arguments at night.

As for my boss, she learned the message a while back. No matter how much work she has, she still lets me escape for a life-restoring run, leaving my worries—and her—behind.

This article appeared on December 10, 1997.

1998

Clinics Offer Women New Self-Image

When I began exercising, more than 17 years ago, I looked like a well-fed sparrow. My tummy bore most of my extra 25 pounds. I had never exercised before, never mind jogged along city streets for locals to see how uncoordinated and hefty I felt.

Suffice to say, I felt intimidated by exercise.

But through the support of another friend who began jogging with me and through the encouragement of strong women I met along the way, running has transformed me.

Beyond the changes in my body, I have found deep friendships and overcome challenges I never thought were possible—like running a marathon or racing to the peak of a 14,000-foot mountain.

There are lots of women out there who might find the same undreamt dreams come true—if they take that first step.

Starting March 11, they have a chance to change their lives by attending 11 clinics for beginning runners and fitness walkers. These clinics will help women of all ages and abilities establish basic fitness.

The kick-off clinic features a visit from Grete Waitz, nine-time winner of the New York City Marathon and silver medalist at the 1984 Olympic Games.

Since retiring from competition in 1990, Waitz has become a leading health and fitness advocate for women, addressing thousands of people each year. She holds her own 5K in Norway, her native country, and the race attracts 45,000 women each year.

Waitz was once a schoolteacher and has a gentle, unassuming manner despite her years of fame. Expect an evening of inspiration all women can relate to, whether exercising now or not.

Subsequent clinics will include group walks and runs, followed by seminars on topics such as nutrition, injury prevention, safety and much more.

The clinics' coordinator, Chris Iwahashi, has led several beginning clinics and served as the first Sacramento coach for the Leukemia Society's Team in Training.

Other clinic leaders include a variety of female runners, from stay-at-home mothers and grandmothers to busy career professionals. If they choose, women can also use the clinics to prepare for the Avon Running/Sacramento Fitness 5K Walk or 10K Run on May 30.

This event is part of a national circuit of 5K and 10K runs beginning April 4 in Atlanta. Katherine Switzer, the program director and creator of Avon Running, in 1967 became the first woman to officially complete the Boston Marathon. The barrier was more than bureaucratic.

A male official tried to shove her off the course at Mile 4, yelling “Get the hell out of my race and give me those numbers.” The shove, publicized by on-the-spot photos, led to Switzer’s worldwide notoriety—and to her mission to obtain equality in sports for women.

Switzer still competes in races and has authored *Running and Walking for Women over 40: The Road to Sanity and Vanity*.

This article appeared on March 4, 1998.

Life’s Changes Can Drain Performances

Most of us go through times when our personal lives change so fast that the workouts and training we’ve done for years suddenly seem wrong—too hard, too dissatisfying, too stressful.

Last year, that was certainly true for me.

Most changes were positive—buying my first house and getting married. But one other was less so—seeing illness in the family.

Changes like these demand more than we realize, yet I see many runners, including myself, attempt to press on with the usual goals, no matter how intense our emotional lives.

In my running club, where up to 100 runners gather on Tuesday nights, I can spot with ease all manner of folk going through life changes.

There’s always a period of denial.

At every workout, they run with a wild-eyed fanaticism that propels them at least a half-mile ahead of the field. On Saturdays, they’ll run an all-out 10K to “warm up” for a Sunday marathon. Despite this silly training, their personal bests still improve by 10 minutes a race.

In fact, they're burning so much energy, their cheekbones develop sharp angles and their eyes become dark orbs, receding farther and farther into the back of their heads.

Then comes The Crash.

Where once they could sprint miles uphill, they find themselves walking. Where once they could finish a marathon with a six-mile kick, they're stepping to the sidewalk at the third mile.

Suddenly, they're afflicted by injuries.

“For the life of me,” they say, “I can't understand what's going on.”

Welcome to the Law of Life.

When our emotional lives go through large changes, our outer lives have to give.

Emotional change is draining, even if the change is one you want. While transition ultimately can lead to a better self, change also requires some grieving for old selves who must die.

Problem is, we runners tend to live by our daily planners, with lists of things to do and yearly goals to accomplish. Many of us feel unworthy when our goals fall behind schedule.

Life, however, cares little for schedules. It cares, instead, that we slow down to absorb and attend to the new growth taking place.

But attending to our souls doesn't mean losing our running entirely. Rather, it means changing the way we run.

Slowing down for a while may translate to two or three rest days a week, instead of one. It may mean running 20 miles a week instead of 30. It could mean fewer races, or maybe a run by the river instead of on the track.

Whatever the change, it does mean cutting back.

Letting go has advantages. When I've exchanged running time for journal writing or more garden planting, I've found more than I've ever lost.

We may cry a little for what we've left behind, but the slower time also allows new roots to settle and to begin growing deeply.

That deeper growth means that when life is ready to kick-start our outer worlds again, we have an energy source—below the soil—to draw from.

This article appeared on April 15, 1998.

Happy Trails: Column Reaches the Finish of an Eight-Year Run

I wrote my first column in 1990. Now, almost eight years later, it's time to let the column go. But it's been good to me, and so have you, its readers.

You always let me know when my words reached you. And you let me know when I wasn't speaking true.

For my first two years of writing here, I dutifully gave you facts. I wrote about how to run speed workouts, tempos and marathons. I told you about the fast times of all those runners who led the field at our local races. I told you how to run safely in the dark, on the bike trail, or in our scorching summer heat.

During that time, I rarely heard from you. But in March 1993, I took a risk.

I wrote about my old training logs. I was in my early 30s, and a younger friend wanted to know how I trained at her age.

To my surprise, the logs revealed far more than numbers. Notes scrawled in the margins went beyond the tiresome data I had precisely recorded in the proper slots.

One note mentioned an early-morning run with some women I ran with every Monday.

On those runs, we took turns daring each other to do something mildly crazy. This entry revived one of my dares, when I had challenged my friends to climb a flagpole in front of a large suburban home.

Just as dawn was breaking, each of the women scrambled up the pole, not caring that we were mothers, grandmothers or white-collar professionals. As each of us climbed our silly Everest, the rest of us collapsed on the well-kept lawn, doubled over with laughter.

Toward the end of this column, describing moments both funny and poignant, I came to what now seems like a very obvious point: It was not just the races under our belt but the experiences had, and friends met, that made running worthwhile.

That's when you spoke to me. You thanked me for my words and added some thoughts of your own. I'd expressed some poetry about running that you, too, feel on your daily route.

You encouraged me to risk more self-exposure. In return, you continued to share your selves with me.

In April 1994, you taught me that we all have and need a wild side. I wrote about Barbara Schoener. Barbara was killed by a mountain lion on the Auburn Lake Trails near Cool. She had been running by herself. Some nonrunners urged me to warn you against a similar risk. I tried.

I intended to write a list of safety tips, but they wouldn't stick to the page. Even close to the deadline, I couldn't write in that direction. I kept thinking about you, and how you would feel if I wrote that way.

Then I had a moment that all writers aim for, similar to those rare races—and I've only had one—where your feet fly and no forcing is necessary. The column came, complete and right. Not because of me, but because of you, out there, and some simple, honest truth pressing to be said.

Among several points, I said:

“Barbara died running alone. And some might say that was her mistake.... Such long, lonely treks must certainly seem crazy to people who do little more than walk from front door to car and from car to office. But runners know what the trail is like. We know its lure.”

I agreed that it's not safe to venture alone on the trail. But here's how I ended:

“I would like to think Barbara knew the risk and made her choice because being there alone—and vulnerable—gave her something that much of modern life prevents us from knowing.

“I'd like to think that her weekend runs alone on the trail filled her with a renewed sense of her own wildness. And as a result, she brought back a kind of power for her family and friends...so let's honor Barbara's choice to run, a mere once a week in the wilds.”

More of you wrote back than ever before, letting me know that you understood Barbara's need. You told me that to react to Barbara's death by urging safety would have dishonored not only Barbara but all of us.

Now I remember another experience that also expresses what we've shared over these few years, a community of spirit that I know you understand.

A few years ago, I spent a Christmas with friends in Humboldt County. With the windows steamy from cooking, my pals were stretched

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

on the sofa and floor, watching the TV. When I decided to take off for a run, everyone was aghast.

But the world outside lured me. Out there, on a country lane, long shafts of afternoon light slanted through a stand of redwoods. The road was like a chapel, quiet and mysterious.

Toward the end of my run, returning to the house, I saw another lone runner approaching from the opposite direction.

“Isn’t this great?” he said.

“You bet,” I laughed.

May you, too, always feel that wild laughter on your path. I’ll be looking for you on the trails.

This article appeared on June 17, 1998.



Theresa running in the Race for the Cure in 1991.

PUBLICATION DATES UNCERTAIN

You Can Run When You Are on the Road

Like most runners, I prefer routine over a wild and crazy life. My workouts, by their daily repetition, anchor me in the midst of days that are usually hectic enough.

But since January, I've had to take several business trips, and until recently, it was hard to find that hour of calmness on unfamiliar streets, without my running friends around.

So a few months ago, before a trip to Santa Clara, I did a little planning. By doing so, I found a local running club. We ran six miles on a balmy Thursday evening in the Palo Alto hills.

Joining the runners after a day of work in a strange town was almost like coming home. The group was large and social, running anywhere from an 11-minute mile to a 5:30 per-mile pace, just like the club I run with here in Sacramento.

When I returned to my hotel, I felt rooted again in a sense of the familiar, even though I was in an anonymous room.

Since that trip, I have taken several more, and before each one I plan properly so that wherever I go, I find other people to run with or at least a scenic, safe route to follow.

Here are a few tips for those who like to maintain your routines when you travel:

Call a running shoe store—Most towns and cities have at least one of these. Just like Sacramento's Fleet Feet, these retailers usually have plenty of flyers about running events and clubs.

I did this last month for a trip to Portland, Ore., and found out that the owner of a store called Finish Line Sports runs with a small group of runners on Thursday nights.

Running with them, I discovered a belt of green land overlooking the Willamette River, which courses through the city's heart. I will run the same route again next month.

Call the Chamber of Commerce—These organizations offer information to newcomers. Often local running clubs will leave information

about meeting times and routes so out-of-town runners can visit with the clubs.

Join an on-line running group—Before my trip to Santa Clara, I checked in with the Dead Runners Society (DRS), an on-line group of runners with thousands of members.

I asked if they knew of any running clubs in the area and told them when I would be visiting. I received several replies, with one person giving me explicit directions on when and where club members met.

To subscribe to the DRS, simply send a request through e-mail to dead-runners-request@unx.sas.com. When the volunteer staff receives this message, they will send a note with more details.

The Road Runners' Club of America (RRCA) has a directory of more than 540 clubs around the country. You can contact RRCA at RRCAOffice@rrca.org.

Before you leave, study the maps—Look for scenic routes, particularly near rivers or lakes, around university campuses and through big parks. Try to register at a hotel that is near one of these places.

Ask the front desk—Most hotels offer information on safe and picturesque running routes. In New Mexico last week, I asked a receptionist, who turned out to be a runner herself.

Thanks to her, I ran through an older section of town, past adobe houses in high mountain desert. I knew I could still have my routines, but also find adventures through them.

For Top Masters Runner, Weight Loss Was a Big Gain

Less than a year ago, Jim Milton decided to lose the extra layer of fat that he had piled on over the last 20 years. And, now, he's the best masters runner in the area, running national-class masters times.

"There I was, heavy, and saying I could run a 32-minute 10K," he said. "It was time for me to stop saying it and do it."

In fact, he has done better than that. Last week, he finished the *San Jose Mercury News* 10K in 31:08. At December's California International Marathon, Milton, 41, won the masters division with a time of 2:26:27.

That race capped a year-long series of road races and made him the masters winner for The Athletics Congress/Pacific Association's 1991 Grand Prix.

While his improvement was sudden, it wasn't surprising. At 19, he was sixth at the World Cross Country Championships, earning a gold medal as part of the British national team.

After attending college, getting married and working for a chain of restaurants, he joined the Air Force, where he stayed for 17 years.

Milton, 5-foot-10, was 188 pounds at his heaviest. But between last March, when he decided to lose weight and train harder, and August, he went from 178 to 150.

Milton says the turnaround came when he began to feel his running was not getting him anywhere, that he was just going through the motions.

In June, he ran a 34:38 at the Sloughouse 10K, two minutes faster than the year before. At this point, he weighed 164 pounds. At a July 4th five-miler, he ran 26:18. And in August, at 150 pounds, he ran 32:00 at a 10K in Alameda. Now Milton believes he can run much faster than last week's 31:08.

To get these results, Milton, the chief of weather station operations at McClellan Air Force Base, puts in 90 to 105 miles a week. He runs twice a day from Monday through Friday with at least three speed sessions a week.

Manners Should Be Part of the Race

No doubt about it, most runners are competitive people. It does not matter who's in front 50 yards from the finish—our best friend, our boss, our mother—we still want to beat them. However, runners are rarely cutthroat.

During races, most exhibit fairness and graciousness under pressure. But, just as a reminder of what it means to be a well-mannered competitor, here is some racing etiquette learned from local runners:

Avoid excuses: At the start line, runners frequently complain about illnesses, injuries or tiredness. Face it, these complaints often stem from fear of failure. Drop the complaints and stand on the line with a brave and decisive attitude, willing to try your best, but forgiving of yourself

if you don't. Most of us are using our leisure time to race, so enjoy the experience, don't dread it.

Do Not Block: Blocking not only prevents a faster runner from getting a good start, but it can also cause accidents. At the Wharf to Wharf in Santa Cruz last year, I saw several runners tumble when slower runners ignored the pace signs and placed themselves ahead of a faster pack.

Encourage fellow runners: During a race, try to encourage other runners, not demoralize them. Even if you think someone is pushing too hard, avoid comments that may limit their attempt to excel.

In last year's California International Marathon, a woman passed a middle-aged man a few miles into the race. As she flashed by him, the man shouted, "Hey, if you keep that pace up, you'll crash before you get to the end."

The man assumed that the woman did not have the ability to sustain her pace; however, she finished well ahead of the man.

Be courteous to volunteers: Even if a race volunteer drops a cup of water you were counting on, never give a volunteer a bad time. Remember, volunteers are giving up their leisure time to serve us.

Never gloat: In running, what goes around comes around. You may have beaten your rival in one race, but the time will come, even if it's a year or two later, when that rival will probably beat you. The truly gracious runner sympathizes with other runners' disappointments and celebrates with their triumphs.

**FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN THE
SACRAMENTO BEE**



FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN THE SACRAMENTO BEE

For most of the time that Theresa wrote her running column at the *Bee*, she also published longer features in “The Great Outdoors” column and elsewhere on the sports page. She regularly wrote accounts of the California International Marathon, the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Race, and other races. When possible, the date of publication is identified.



Queen of the Hill

Tough Runs Bring Out the Best in Trason

During a long run in Kings Canyon on the John Muir Trail, south of Yosemite ultrarunner Ann Trason amazed a group of hikers who had not seen civilization for five days.

“I ran past them with only my fanny pack, a couple of bottles of fluid, and a water filter,” Trason said. “They had on very heavy-looking backpacks. There was no town nearby, and the next campsite was still fairly far away.”

The hikers asked Ann where she had come from and how. “I told them I was running 50 miles on the trail in one day and they said, ‘no way.’”

In fact, Trason completed that run in 14 hours, stopping for shelter for some time because of a storm.

“When I got back to my campsite,” she said, “I was so tired I didn’t want to take a shower. I just lay on a picnic table.”

After a run of that magnitude, most mortals would have forgiven themselves for delaying their showers. But Trason, world-record holder for 50 and 100 miles, has difficulty forgiving her body’s limitations. Her next event is the Western States this Saturday. In 1989 and 1990, Trason won the 100-mile race, setting the women’s course record in 18:47:46 and 18:33:02, respectively.

She has difficulty accepting other people’s perceptions of what is possible and impossible. She delights in proving people wrong, even if they are strangers.

In 1985, Trason decided to run her first ultra, the American River 50, the second-largest 50-miler in the United States. While buying a pair of running shoes, she told the salesclerk her intention.

“He told me that I better learn to walk, not run,” Trason said, “because ultrarunners do a lot of walking in their races. I don’t know why, but it made me so mad I decided that I would run every step of the way.”

And she did. In fact, she won the race in 7 hours, 9 minutes. But she concedes her first ultra was not a pleasant experience.

Most ultrarunners train for at least half a year for such an event. Trason trained for only three months. And she almost ran without a water bottle.

"I didn't even know that I needed one," she said. "Someone had to loan me a bottle at the start of the race. Also, I'd read that ultrarunners should eat dates, so I ate about a pound of them before the race."

Trason also lacked a pacer, so a volunteer at the start offered to pace her through the last miles. "He got pretty tired though and he finally had to stop," she said.

Even Trason's first meeting with her husband, Carl Andersen, also an ultrarunner who placed well, became a kind of proving ground.

"I met her in a dive bar," he said. "We were out celebrating graduations from Berkeley. We started talking and found out we were both runners. Then, we began saying things like, 'If you're really a runner, what are you doing drinking beer in a place like this?' And she'd do the same back to me."

To test each other's claims, they agreed to run the next day on a fire trail. It was then that Andersen realized how good a runner Trason was. At that time, Trason had already run a 4:52 mile on the track and a 35:11 for 10,000 meters at the 1977 U.S. Track Championships. She would later qualify for the Olympic Trials by running a 2:40 marathon.

After their first run together, it was another seven years before they married. In the meantime, they developed what Andersen terms a "family feud." The feud reveals another instance of Trason's perverse but refreshing trait of improving in the face of other people's doubts.

On one of their regular runs, Trason and Andersen climbed a four-mile hill. One section, called "The Connector," was staggeringly steep.

"One day we were on The Connector, and Carl told me I was a wimp on the hills. When I heard the 'Big W,' I just burned up the hill." Since then, Trason runs all hills hard. She and Andersen often compete to see who gets up them first.

Andersen, who fills in when Trason does not want to appear boastful, said one of Trason's greatest strengths is in breaking ground for women. He supports this with yet another tale of defiance.

After one ultra, a man told Trason she failed to beat him in the race because she did not have the right genes. Trason does not forget such comments. She beat the unfortunate challenger the following year.

That incident illustrates how Trason, 30, has broken a typical female mold in her attitude toward male competitors. While most elite female runners struggle intellectually and emotionally to perceive top male

runners as their competition, Trason seems oblivious to any differences in ability.

In two races, she has placed first overall, beating women and men alike. On May 4, she placed first overall at the Sri Chinmoy 100-Mile Run in Queens, N.Y.

There, she beat her own previous world record with a time of 13:47:41. She also placed first overall in 1989 at The Athletics Congress 24-Hour Championship by running more than 143 miles in 24 hours, setting her first 100-mile world record at the same time. The race was on a track, and Trason said as she passed some of her male competitors, she could hear them placing bets on when she would drop out. Their skepticism pushed her to excel.

And when Trason does not beat the entire field, she usually places high among the top men. She placed fourth overall at the Houston Ultramarathon on Feb. 23, when she broke her own 50-mile world record after setting it only five weeks before. For her efforts, she won \$10,000 and had the lead men running scared.

Toward the end of the race, the third-place finisher, Ray Krolewicz, was within striking distance of the second-place finisher. However, because Krolewicz was so concerned about Trason, who was less than a minute behind him, he did not risk a run at second place.

In addition to competing against the top male ultrarunners in the country, Trason often trains with them. Every Wednesday evening, Trason runs a fast 15-mile run with Andersen, Brian Purcell and others up and down Mount Tamalpais in Marin. Purcell is the 1988 winner and course-record holder for the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run with a time of 16:24:00.

As well as her 7-minute-per-mile 15-mile run, Trason's training includes a 40- to 50-mile run on alternate weekends. On the other weekends, she runs 20 to 25 miles on Saturdays and the same again on Sundays.

But Trason ran one ultra that she did not win. Last October at the Edmund Fitzgerald UltraMarathon, a national 100K championship, she placed second in the women's division. She ran with a 102-degree fever.

She admits that sometimes her efforts are borderline crazy, but perhaps her obliviousness to danger or the seeming impossibility of a task allows her to accomplish so much.

“Really, I shouldn’t have run that race with such a high temperature,” she said. “My doctor was really annoyed with me. It was a silly thing to do. Yet, I’m kind of proud of the fact that I actually finished the race when I felt so bad.”

Trason and Andersen say it’s hard for some of their non-running friends to understand what they do. “There are couples who come home after work and discuss their day over a cocktail,” Andersen says. “But Ann and I come home and discuss our day over a run.”

Trason has received numerous awards for her outstanding performances. These include the TAC’s 1991 Ted Corbitt Award for female U.S. Ultrarunner of the Year and *UltraRunning* magazine’s Ultrawoman of the Year award, which she has won for the third consecutive year.

Her goal in this year’s Western States is to place in the top 10 overall and not to get lost. (In 1983, Jim King got lost in the early part of the race because of late snow.)

“This year we also have late snow, and I don’t want 1991 to be known as the year Ann Trason got lost,” she said.

There’s probably one way to keep Trason on the course. Just tell her she is bound to lose her way.

This article appeared on June 26, 1991.

Weather Was Cool, but Race Was Hot

Johnson, Trason Set Records in Western States 100-Miler

Following a mountainous, often muddy and precipitous trail Saturday from Squaw Valley to Auburn, 369 entrants experienced the coolest day in the history of the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run.

In previous years, temperatures have often soared above 100 degrees, but this year temperatures never rose above 75.

Tom Johnson and Ann Trason both set new course records Saturday at the 15th annual race. Johnson broke Brian Purcell’s 1988 course record by more than 30 minutes in a time of 15:54:05, and Trason, world-record holder for 50 and 100 miles, broke her own 1990 course record by almost four minutes in a time of 18:29:37.

For most of the first half of the race, Johnson, of Sacramento, was a close second to Eric Clifton, of North Carolina. Johnson finally passed

Clifton at Mile 67 and from there gradually built up a 45-minute lead over Brian Purcell, who finished second in 16:39:08. Clifton dropped out somewhere close to 80 miles. Unlike most other entrants in the race, Clifton did not run with a water bottle, taking fuel only at the aid stations.

“When I saw Clifton without a water bottle,” Johnson said, “I knew he wasn’t going to make it. He was having to stop at least five or six minutes at each aid station because he needed to rehydrate completely. I took two bottles of fluid with me between aid stations, so that I only had to stop for 2½ minutes. You just can’t run this race without carrying fluids.”

Brian Purcell also commented on Clifton’s failure to carry water. “He’s a great runner, and I admire the way he goes out hard and takes a risk, but I think he should carry a bottle.”

Bob Lind, medical director of the race, agreed with Johnson and Purcell.

“If he’d carry some fluid,” said Lind, “I think he could do very well. A 160-pound runner uses at least four to six pounds of fluid every hour in a race like this. You just have to replace that. The runners who place in the top 10 think about fluid replacement as part of their race strategy. They are very measured individuals.”

This is certainly true of Peter Findlay of Canada, who placed third in 17:02:59. Findlay’s time is the fastest in race history for a non-Californian. He is also the first entrant from outside the United States to place in the top 10.

For Johnson, the first 35 miles of the race were tough. He said that the recent rain had littered the trail with fallen branches, pine cones and loosened rocks, and that he was worried about turning his ankles. Also, he admits to not being a cool-weather runner.

“The first miles were cold, wet, and sometimes foggy, and I really wasn’t having any fun. I thought about dropping out, but then, as the day got warmer, I started to feel better, especially when I saw how well I was doing.”

For Trason, too, the early miles were difficult. The muddy, gloomy conditions forced her to walk up to Devil’s Thumb at 47.8 miles when normally she runs all the hills.

Trason, now a three-time winner of Western States, tried to make up for lost time by pushing the pace from Devil’s Thumb to Michigan Bluff (55.7 miles). But the forced pace and an unsettled stomach led to

an exhausted and depressed-looking Trason at the aid station. Trason had lost her usual fire—and could hardly stand when her crew directed her on her way again.

But at Foresthill, only 6.3 miles later, Trason seemed a little better, flashing a brief but promising smile. And her exit from this medical checkpoint seemed more steady.

Despite her early difficulties, though, Trason remained unchallenged by any of the other 54 women entered in the race. Second-place finisher Shelby Hayden-Clifton finished more than two hours behind her in 20:55:45, and third-place Lynn O'Malley finished in 21:42:13.

In the men's division, Tim Twietmeyer, who placed fourth overall, earned a 1,000-mile belt buckle for running his 10th Western States in under 24 hours with a time of 17:25:26. Twietmeyer is only the fifth person in the race's history to have won this award. The four other winners are Jim Pellon, Doug Latimer, Bjorg Austrheim-Smith and Charles Savage.

Meanwhile, Ray Scannell, 41, was the first masters winner in a time of 17:34:20. Scannell picked his way through the field, moving from 11th place at 30.2 miles to fifth overall at the finish.

In sixth place was Carl Andersen, Trason's husband, running his first Western States and finishing with an impressive 17:47:57.

The cool weather helped those entrants who were trying to run under 24 hours. The first 100 runners all placed under 24 hours, with Cindie Grunt sprinting to the line in 100th place with a time of 23:57:45.

For Norman Klein, the race director, the previous day's rain and the early morning drizzle meant less worry about runners suffering from heat exhaustion. But the wet weather also led to new worries. It could lead to difficulty setting up aid stations on a particularly tortuous part of the trail.

As it turned out, the race volunteers finally managed to set up the necessary aid stations. Klein, pleased with all 1,400 of his volunteers and the 150 four-wheel drives used to operate the race, offered this challenge:

"If we had sent my volunteers over to Iraq," he said, "we could have gotten the troops out two weeks earlier."

Finishers in less than 24 hours received a silver belt buckle. There is no prize money.

This article appeared on July 1, 1991.

The Mental Challenge of Running a Marathon

Any marathoner knows that finishing 26.2 miles requires months of preparation to build the necessary physical stamina. But not as many runners prepare for the mental strategies necessary to run through the pain of a fatigued, aching body—particularly in the last 6.2 miles of the race.

This month's *Running Research News* reports on a study of mental strategies conducted by Jeffery P. Simons, Ph.D., a sports psychologist in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Colorado.

The study shows that tuning into your body, using positive imagery, and relaxing can lead to greater endurance and improved running efficiency.

Several local runners have stumbled onto variations of these techniques for themselves.

Christine Iwahashi, the top local female in this year's California International Marathon, has won several Northern California marathons. Last year she placed 11th at the CIM in 2 hours, 45 minutes, 29 seconds, only a few weeks after treatment for breast cancer.

Iwahashi is renowned among local runners for having excellent concentration during a race. One of her techniques is to tune into one part of her body to distract her from other parts.

"I focus on only one pain and ignore other pains such as tight quads or hamstrings," Iwahashi said. "I just think about the little blister on my foot."

Iwahashi looks for positive cues in a race.

"I might try to catch up with someone ahead of me or try to stay with someone," Iwahashi said. "But on the other hand, I don't get discouraged if I'm *not* getting positive cues."

Iwahashi also said she takes a scientific approach to the pain, using several rationalizations to get through the race.

"I tell myself that the next day will be much more painful than now and that other competitors are as tired as I am," she said. "They've gone the same distance. I also draw on my experience from previous tough races, which is one advantage an experienced racer has."

Iwahashi's scientific approach helps her retain some objectivity about her feelings.

"I don't want to be too quick to judge," she said. "At five miles I might feel bad, but I know races have ups and downs. I tell myself that later I might feel better."

Other runners need a more relaxing approach to run well. Connie Kondo, another local racer, ran 2:58 at last year's CIM and 2:57, her personal best, in April in Boston. She uses a combination of relaxation techniques and body checks to help her through races.

"I don't like to put a lot of pressure on myself," she said. "I don't do well with a lot of stress. At last year's CIM and Boston, I relaxed more than I have in other races, and it seemed easier for me to do well."

To ensure that she runs well without pressure. Kondo tries to run her own race, without chasing other competitors.

"I just let them go," she said. "I tell myself, 'Maybe I'll see them at Mile 20, maybe I won't.' And if I feel myself falling off the pace or not running strong, I tell myself to relax."

Kondo's method of relaxing comes close to some of the technique suggested in *Running Research News*. Kondo does what the newsletter calls a "body check," mentally tuning in to different parts of her body to make sure she is not tensing her muscles.

"Someone once told me that you can run better if you relax your shoulders," she said. "Now, in a marathon, I check that my shoulders aren't hunched and that my jaw isn't clenched."

Kondo's instinctive approach to relaxing is supported by Simons' study. As *Running Research News* shows, relaxed muscles can lead to improved running economy. For example, if stomach muscles are tense, runners cannot breathe as freely.

"...Anxious, tense runners tended to breathe with their chests while relaxed runners respired using deeper, 'gut breathing,'" the magazine reported.

Simons encourages runners to "drop their stomachs" and let their diaphragms move freely as they run. "As their stomach muscles become less tense, the athlete seems to breathe more freely and feels much more comfortable as they cruise through races and workouts."

Also, *Running Research News* points out that when muscles around the leg joints are stiff and tight, a runner has to use more energy to run "because tense muscles act as brakes and resist motion."

Moreover, the magazine reports that relaxed muscles contract more powerfully than tight ones. "Each time your nervous system signals your leg muscle cells to contract, they react more vigorously if they are relaxed, giving you a greater push toward the finish line with each stride."

Runners can use visualization as a way to deal with fatigue. Tim Frawley, a local masters runner who ran a personal best at last year's CIM in 2:44, visualizes the finish line during tough parts of the race.

"I think about how I'll have a good finishing time, how happy I'll be, and how I'll be bragging when it's over," Frawley said.

Iwahashi also uses positive imagery to run well. She imagines herself as a world-class athlete such as Mary Decker Slaney to ensure good form.

Michael Wilhelm, a local runner who hopes to break three hours at this year's race, has used as his motivation the image of Hiromi Taniguchi, the Japanese runner who won the World Championships this year in Tokyo. "His face had a perfect picture of pain," Wilhelm said, "but you could see he was willing to accept the pain and willing to run through it."

Accepting that you will feel some pain in the race is another way to prepare yourself to hang on until the finish. Iwahashi said she expects to feel discomfort during the race.

But along with this acceptance should come an ability to distinguish between pain that can be run through and pains that cannot.

Tom Johnson, this year's winner and course-record holder of the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, uses the thrill of the chase to his advantage in a race.

"I like to start out slow and then ease past people," Johnson said. "They can't see you, but you can see them. It's great fun to time it exactly right, so you can get by them to win."

Most experienced marathoners also break the race into segments in their minds. They try to think of the race as several bite-sized pieces instead of one large chunk. And when the going gets rough, they try to go from mile to mile.

If you feel a pain during the CIM that could lead to injury—or worse—drop out of the race, seek medical help as soon as possible and try again next year. Sometimes the toughest people are those who know when to quit.

This article appeared on December 7, 1991, as part of expanded coverage of the California International Marathon.

Blazing Temperatures, Rock-Strewn Dirt Paths and Dizzying Climbs. That's What the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run Is All About. And That's Why for Many Runners It Is Merely...

A Trail of Torture

Before dawn Saturday, more than 400 mere mortals will leave a chilly starting line at Squaw Valley and climb 2,500 feet to the crest of Emigrant Pass. And this is only the first four miles of a 100-mile encounter with the rock-bottom self.

This is the 16th annual Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run—generally considered the world's toughest 100-miler.

The runners follow a rugged, ankle-twisting trail from Squaw Valley to Auburn. Some years, the first 10 to 25 miles are thick in snow. Further on, temperatures can soar above 100 degrees. And, along the way, runners occasionally meet rattlesnakes, cougars and brown bears.

As if that were not enough, for many this really *is* a race. Last year, local runner Tom Johnson broke the course record by more than 30 minutes on an unusually cool day. His time—15 hours, 54 minutes, 5 seconds.

This year, Johnson is training for other races. But, as the course-record holder, two-time winner and three-time participant, he seems competent to describe the course.

“Your first thought when the alarm goes off at 4 a.m. on race day is ‘Finally!’” Johnson said. “You’ve really been training for this day for at least a year.”

In fact, for a minimum of six months, many entrants have run at least 30 miles on Saturdays and 30 miles on Sundays, often meeting before dawn. Of course, there's still the weekday mileage to squeeze in around job, family and friends. Johnson averaged 120 miles a week—and that's not unusual.

This training means the rest of the runners' lives go on hold. People training for Western States often talk about how they long to sleep late just one morning, clean out their cars, or write an overdue letter—things not done for half a year.

Fast Start for Eager Runners

As race day nears, stress can begin to tell. Some runners even cry during their last few runs, worn out by the imbalance in their lives and bodies, unsure why they even took on the challenge.

Then comes race day. Suddenly, everyone is eager again.

Their eagerness has them rushing up the mountain to Emigrant Pass, but this is a grueling race and the first miles are no exception. In the first 30 miles, runners pass through the Granite Chief Wilderness Area, along Red Star Ridge to Duncan Canyon and Robinson Flat. The altitude averages more than 7,000 feet, with steep climbs and wobbly footing over boulders, rocks and soft dirt.

This section, said Johnson, requires restraint. There will be more than 70 miles still to come.

Eating and drinking is as important now as it will be later. The high altitude, especially, can leave runners dehydrated even early in the race.

Johnson drinks gallons of water, Exceed and Matabolol. The latter is another challenge. Matabolol is a muddy primordial ooze that slips down the throat like unrefined diesel oil. But Johnson insists that, within 15 minutes, he can feel the energy drink taking effect.

“What goes into your body has to be readily available,” he said. “In a race like this, especially after 50 miles, you’re basically running on what you put in.”

The first medical checkpoint is Robinson Flat—30 miles. To reach here, runners have made a steep climb of up to 6,730 feet. Lead runners may reach it about 9:20 a.m., runners aiming for a 24-hour finish get there by 11:30 a.m., and 30-hour runners by 12:30 p.m. Runners breaking 24 hours get a silver belt buckle, 30-hour runners a bronze. There is no prize money.

“We’ve run 30 miles,” Johnson said, “and that’s already a lot of work. Then, we come into this wonderful, people-filled place, full of trees, food, laughter and clapping. Once I sit down to eat and change my shoes, I want to kick back, have a beer, enjoy the rest of the day. But, the race has hardly begun.”

Robinson Flat is made more difficult because the next 13 miles down rocky Cavanaugh Ridge to Deep Canyon I and then to Last Chance, a ghost town, are ugly. Ten of these miles travel an exposed dirt road when the temperature for most runners is reaching at least 100.

At Last Chance, they regain the trees and a little shade. But, as with most sections of this course, every advantage brings another disadvantage.

A Grueling Roller Coaster

Last Chance marks the start of *The Canyons*—a series of three steep, God-awful holes in the earth. Michigan Bluff, an old mining town, comes between the second and third. From Last Chance to Michigan Bluff lie more than 12 miles of sharp ups and downs with no flat land to speak of.

“Temperatures have reached 110 degrees at this point,” Johnson said. “No one can run out of these well.”

In fact, Johnson said, he, like most runners, walks the uphill. He argues that fast power walking here is just as good as running. But Brian Purcell, the former course-record holder, and Ann Trason, women’s winner for the last three years, make a point of running every step, although Trason hit her lowest point at this stage last year.

The first canyon, Deadwood, drops 2,000 feet. After most runners have pummeled their quadriceps (the front of their thighs) going down, they climb 1,500 feet in just 1½ miles to Devil’s Thumb. As if entering hell, runners begin to see foreboding signs.

“In 1987,” Johnson said, “while I was trudging up to Devil’s Thumb in the baking heat, I saw a guy sitting on the trail, white as a sheet. He’d given up.”

Then comes El Dorado, the second canyon. William H. Brewer, who headed a field survey in August 1863, had this description:

“Here is a toll trail very narrow—often a misstep on the...way would send the horse and rider, or mule and pack, down hundreds of feet to swift and certain extinction.”

By the time most runners reach Michigan Bluff, it already has been a long day. While the lead runner will arrive at about 1:30 p.m., 24-hour runners won’t arrive until about 5:30 p.m., 30-hour runners 8:30 p.m. They’re barely halfway.

Next, runners face the third canyon—Volcano. Here, the descent is 1,200 feet with an 800-foot climb.

Signs of Civilization

On the outskirts of Foresthill, at 62 miles, runners hit the first paved road of the race. Here, they are buoyed for a few precious minutes by hundreds of spectators, friends and family—and lots of food and drink.

“It’s like a big circus,” said Johnson. “People in costumes, aid stations, vendors. It helps a lot because, after this, you don’t get to see your crew for another 16 miles.”

From Foresthill, runners face the remoteness of the California Trail, 16 miles of rolling descent to the bottom of American River Canyon. Crew access is impossible in this stretch, and runners must rely on four small aid stations.

“There’s no easy way to quit on this section,” Johnson said. “You’d still have to hike out, at best. So, you better feel at least OK when you jump off from Foresthill.”

For the front-runners, the south-facing wall of the canyon reflects the afternoon sun, creating an oven effect at the hottest time of the day.

“One year, when I arrived at the first-aid station,” said Johnson, “the two guys there were practically sun stroked.”

But, for most of the runners, heat is not the problem. Once they leave Foresthill, only a few hours of light remain. Now they must run through the night when their energy is at its lowest.

They run with flashlights along narrow trails, their lights allowing them to see only a few feet ahead. Their entire universe, said Johnson, becomes that short distance inside their beam.

Runners have to shuffle because they cannot always see the roots and stones. A few miles can take forever. In some places, the runners are glued to the side of the canyon wall. A wrong step could send them tumbling down a precipice.

Many runners are now getting closer to their cores than they have probably ever been.

A Refreshing River Crossing

At Mile 78, runners arrive at Rucky Chucky, where the trail crosses the American River. Runners cross with one hand on a cable stretched from bank to bank. Volunteers standing in the water try to help the runners across. Lights shine into the water to show the slippery rocks below the surface.

Crossing the water can be one of the better parts of their race. The runners' feet are tender, often blistered. Their legs are coated with chocolate-colored dust streaked with sweat. The water cleans their legs and soothes their pains.

Most runners reach Rucky Chucky deep into the night. The crossing can look like a Red Cross encampment for war-stricken refugees. Lights hang from trees, generators whir, and doctors and crews give care.

However, the lead runners, such as Johnson, reach here in the afternoon. They are still dealing with daytime heat. Within two miles, their feet are dry again as they grind up a hot dusty road to Green Gate, a small aid station 20 miles from the finish.

Last year, it was here Johnson began to charge, after earlier passing Eric Clifton of North Carolina.

"I knew how much energy I had left, and I could start to apply it," said Johnson. "What was left seemed within do-able reach. I could feel the energy of being number one."

From Green Gate, runners follow the Auburn Lake Trails and Brown's Ravine to the Highway 49 crossing, less than seven miles from the finish. Although these trails are relatively gentle, most of the runners are weak and tired, and their emotional resilience is very low. A runner's spirit can be broken even in these last miles.

But not Johnson's. From Highway 49, with less than seven miles left, he ran with his father and they chatted most of the way, Johnson flying down three downhill stretches to No Hands Bridge at 96.6 miles.

"From here," said Johnson, "you can smell the barn. Now it's down to your morning run. You can walk it, crawl it; you can do it. You say to yourself, 'I know I can make it now.'"

Just 1.4 miles from the finish, at Robie Point, runners step onto pavement for their final stretch to Placer Hill School. Some do a final lap around the track under floodlights. Others won't be there until morning.

"Unless you're completely zoned out," said Johnson, "that last mile is one part you're glad is that long. Your crew runs with you, people on lawn chairs cheer as you pass, and you just savor every bit of it. You've got it licked."

This article appeared on June 24, 1992.

They Passed the Ultimate Running Test

Twietmeyer Wins, Trason Is Third in Western States

For Tim Twietmeyer of Auburn, victory was especially sweet Saturday at the 16th annual Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run. And, for anyone who might still doubt it, Ann Trason of Kensington proved she is, indeed, the best female ultrarunner in the world.

Before dawn, Twietmeyer and Trason were among more than 370 runners who left Squaw Valley for what is generally considered the world's toughest 100-miler. They followed a rugged trail to Auburn, climbing a total of 18,000 feet and descending 23,000.

For Twietmeyer, completing the race is old hat. Last year, he was only the fifth person in the race's history to have earned a 1,000-mile belt buckle by running the race 10 times in under 24 hours. A perennial challenger, he placed fourth last year, third in 1990. Until now, he had never won.

Although Twietmeyer was short of Tom Johnson's 1991 course record by about an hour, finishing in 16 hours, 54 minutes and 16 seconds, he was not short of support.

He moved from 10th place at Mile 30 to the lead at Mile 62 when he passed Peter Findlay of Canada at the Foresthill aid station. Here, he also took just about everyone's best wishes. Partly because he was running toward his hometown, but also because, as many said, he was the one who seemed to most deserve it.

"The tougher the battle, the sweeter the victory," said Bob Lind, the race's medical director. "He has run it 11 times...after 11 years of polish, he really earned this one."

Twietmeyer passed Findlay while the Canadian was cooling his blistered feet in a bucket of ice. Given Twietmeyer's experience, rushing through the station seemed like a calculated risk. But Twietmeyer said he barely stops at aid stations anyway.

Twietmeyer also said he did not enter the race expecting to win. In fact, it was not until he reached Mile 65, the start of the remote California Trail, that he really pushed hard. Twietmeyer is known for running well on the California Trail, 16 miles of rolling descent to the bottom of American River Canyon.

Meanwhile, world-record holder Trason surprised many of the lead men by relentlessly moving from 14th overall at Robinson Flat at about Mile 30 to third place at the end in 18:14:48. This is the highest finish for a woman in the race's history. Last year, Trason was ninth.

Trason also broke the course record for the fourth consecutive year. In 1991, with temperatures never rising above 75 degrees, she broke her previous record by about 3 minutes. This year, with temperatures a little warmer but still comfortable, she broke it by more than 15 minutes.

Kathy D'Onofrio-Wood of Colorado, who won in 1986 and 1988, returned to lead the race through Duncan Canyon at Mile 24, but Trason passed her between Duncan and Robinson Flat.

By Foresthill, D'Onofrio was at least 90 minutes behind Trason, feeling dizzy and nauseated. She finally dropped out at Auburn Lake Trails, at Mile 85. Findlay, who was third last year, dropped out at Green Gate, about 20 miles from the finish.

"My quads (front of the thighs) really took a beating in the first 60 miles," Findlay said. "I was pushing it a little hard...and I couldn't take any more fluids from Foresthill to the river (Mile 78). I started to feel really nauseous."

Ray Scannell, a first master from Sacramento, picked his way to sixth place at Devil's Thumb, Mile 48, and finished second in 17:27:54. Devil's Thumb is the top of a steep 1¼-mile climb. The hill has 34 hairpin turns and is considered the toughest climb on the course.

Scannell and his pacer, Judy Walker, ran into a wild critter during the race. They saw a 300-pound mountain lion heading up the trail less than a mile beyond Brown's Ravine, at Mile 89. In previous years, runners have spotted bears and cougars.

Dave Scott of Fremont was fourth in 18:35:47 and 1988 winner Brian Purcell of Sebastopol finished fifth in 18:45:11.

While some of the top men greeted each other as those behind caught those ahead, none of the top women met during the race. Second woman and first master Laura Vaughn of Tahoe City was more than 3 hours behind Trason in 21:52:19. Lynn O'Malley of Washington followed in 22:37:35.

O'Malley ran the last quarter mile around the track at Placer High School with her family. This included her 21-year-old daughter, Kim, who recently underwent a successful bone marrow transplant to treat Hodgkin's disease.

Shelley Dunlap of Truckee was fourth in 23:22:02 and Carol Hewitt of Foresthill placed fifth in 23:29:07.

Record-holder Ray Piva of San Francisco won the 60–69 age division in 24:04:52.

This year was one of the weakest for runners finishing in under 24 hours. Last year 100 crossed the line to win the sub-24-hour silver belt buckle. Saturday, only 70 accomplished the feat. Runners who finish under 30 hours receive a bronze buckle. There is no prize money.

Theories about the slower—and more nauseated—field abounded as runners greeted each other at the finish. Many thought the pace was too fast at the start. Others believed that “something” was in the water. Meanwhile, many shrugged, accepting the inexplicable.

Certainly conditions seemed near perfect, with temperatures ranging from 85 to 40 degrees. Also, the early part of the trail was free of snow and mud, which has clogged past races.

This article appeared on June 29, 1992.

That Special Lure

A Select Few Tell Why They Keep Coming Back

Among the approximately 2,000 entrants in Sunday's California International Marathon is a special group of two women and 27 men. They represent a different kind of elite runner. They are the people who have run all nine previous races.

For them, the race is part challenge, part tradition. Their reasons for running it offer a view on why so many people run marathons. And through their eyes, we can see how the race has evolved since 1983.

Many are middle-of-the-pack to back-of-the-pack runners who aren't looking for fast times. Yet they do it over and over, year after year.

Part of Susan Guenard's motivation for running each year is to remember her father and the stance he took to life.

“He was always active—a Golden Glove boxer, yoga,” she said. “He kept on going right up until the end. He would have died later, but he got exposed to asbestos working in military shipyards. He was very put out at the end. Like him, I want to keep on until my grave.”

But Guenard's approach to the race is far from morbid. As with many of the CIM repeaters, her annual pilgrimage from Folsom Dam to the State Capitol has become an opportunity for plain and simple fun. Guenard, 45, can't even remember most of her finish times, except for her best, which is about 3:45.

"I look forward to this race every year," she said. "It's a social event for me, because I know so many people."

Last year, Guenard's race strategy went upscale.

"Some friends and I took a limousine to the race start," she said. "And because there's been a shortage of toilets the last couple of years, we stopped at a fast-food restaurant on the way to use their restroom."

However, for some people running the race has a down side. Some feel a compulsion to run it despite soreness, bad weather or inconvenience—because of their streak.

Elliot Eisenbud, 49, who has run 153 marathons and 60 ultramarathons, said he prefers trail races now. His CIM goal is just to keep running.

"Yes, it's purely because of the streak," he said. "I have absolutely no good reason other than this—no rational reason, anyway."

Barry Turner, 39, who has a marathon best of 2:49 from his 1986 CIM, admits to feeling the pressure of a streak even though he also runs to maintain physical fitness and to stay light enough to eat ice cream. He said he will run even if the weather is as bad as it was in 1987, when a huge storm with high winds hit the runners hard.

For others, the race itself is enough of a draw.

"It's not pressure," said Wayne Sheffield, who ran his first marathon in 4:05 at the CIM, when he was 40. "It's not even competitiveness. I guess it's just the challenge of doing it. Heck, with the times I run, I can walk it if I want to. It's not going to hurt me."

Just as these runners have a variety of reasons for coming back each year, they also have a variety of observations, like most local runners, on the race's organization and evolution.

Thomas Stassi, 39, has a 3:19 best from his 1984 CIM. Like many others, he expressed great fondness for the CIM.

"Each year I just say to myself, I hope it stays around," Stassi said. "I love the course, that it's point to point. I love coming down Fair Oaks. I love the time of year we have it."

John O'Neill, 51, has a CIM best of 2:49 and said he wouldn't change anything about the race.

"Why do you think I keep coming back every year?" he said.

Eisenbud said organizers did a marvelous job, especially considering the logistics of a point-to-point course through the city.

Others, however, have a few suggestions. Some, including Neil Kelly, 51, who has a best of 3:14 from the 1989 CIM, said this year's mandatory membership in The Athletics Congress should be eliminated.

Membership includes additional medical insurance for runners, a bimonthly newsletter and funding of running programs for local kids.

However, membership adds another \$12 to the fee, making the total entry fee \$42.

Robert Herrera, a retiree who averages about 4:30, suggests that the marathon reduce fees for seniors. The Los Angeles Marathon, he said, charges only \$20 for seniors.

He and Mike O'Neil, a 68-year-old retired social worker who in the last two years has started to run longer than five hours, also suggested other concessions.

Both asked that the cutoff time of five hours be lengthened to at least six so that they and other slower runners can still receive credit for finishing the race.

John Mansoor, the CIM's executive director, said that while the present cutoff time is a problem, the city won't agree to keeping traffic off the roads for longer than five hours.

However, O'Neil said that the course could still be open to traffic after five hours as long as the finish line stayed up and slower times were recorded.

Herrera relates his memories of the stormy 1987 marathon.

"Even then," he said, "they closed shop after five hours. There were still 30 or 40 sweat bags out in the rain when I came in, and they had taken everything down. There was no tomato soup left, and I did not get my medal until the next year."

This article appeared on December 5, 1992, as part of expanded coverage of the California International Marathon.

Rookie Runners Ponder Just One Question: Will They Finish Race?

About 15 percent of the runners in Sunday's California International Marathon are first-time marathoners. Right about now, most of them are probably trying to rest their legs and calm their spirits. The likelihood, though, is they are doing a pretty poor job.

They are jumping up from the couch every few minutes, feverishly recounting their training miles from the last few months and checking—and then rechecking—the start time for the race. It's an understatement to say they are anxious.

For most first-timers, the monumental question is not when they will finish the race but whether they will finish. After months of hard training, they dread not achieving their goal.

It's pointless telling first-timers not to panic. But it might help to know there are ways to reduce prerace fears and some of the side effects of nervousness.

For instance, many first-timers and most competitive marathoners have at least one thing in common: They don't sleep well the night before the race. Often, they toss and turn all night. Yet, surprising as it may seem, many of these restless runners still have a great day.

In fact, Tim Noakes, M.D., author of *Lore of Running*, sees prerace sleeplessness as a good sign.

"...the mind is restless," Noakes writes, "because it is preparing for what lies ahead. My impression is that a good night's sleep before the race probably indicates that the runner is not properly psyched up."

So if you don't sleep well, tell yourself you must be truly primed for the race. And, if you do sleep well, ignore Noakes' words and tell yourself you have nerves of steel.

First-timers also worry when their prerace taper does not match their expectations. A taper is a period of at least two weeks before the race when marathoners significantly reduce their training. Theoretically, it is supposed to leave runners feeling well-rested with a renewed spring in their step.

Unfortunately, runners never seem to feel as good when they're tapering as they think they will. Some, instead of feeling energetic,

suddenly seem extremely tired. Their legs feel heavy, and even a short run feels like too much work.

Others develop withdrawal symptoms because of the reduced training. They become more irritable than usual and somewhat hyperactive in a crazed, rather than spry way.

So, this may be a time for family and friends to go a little easy on the runner, saving discussions of emotional issues for the week after the race. Their runner may not be in the mood to be reasonable.

The key for first-timers is to accept that very few runners end up enjoying their tapers. Their nerves are too jangled, and their fears are too high. But remember, a disappointing taper is not a sign that you will have a disappointing race. Something magical inevitably seems to happen on race day.

First-timers often have strange ways of dealing with stress on race morning. Former chatter boxes become eerily silent and withdrawn, while quiet types suddenly become extremely talkative.

First-timers may even become obsessed about getting to the race early—three hours before the 7 a.m. start. Many will be snappish.

To prepare your supporters for this, warn them that you may be difficult to deal with after the race. Also, to ease some of this race-morning panic, it's a good idea to set out all your clothes and equipment, making a list of all you could possibly need.

When arranging your clothes, think about the vagaries of the weather. John Mansoor, the CIM's executive race director, said that for the first Sunday in December, according to a review of weather patterns for the last 100 years, runners can expect a 20 percent chance of rain. Although this chance is low, the 1987 CIM had one of the worst storms in history.

So in case of rain, pack a spare set of clothes in the bag that race organizers will leave at the finish. Also, bring a plastic garbage bag with holes cut in them for your head and arms. These bags keep runners dry before the gun goes off and can be shed once the race begins.

Although race-day temperatures usually reach the 50s later in the race, the start is often around 40 degrees. So, many runners also begin the race wearing a hat and gloves and an old long-sleeved shirt over their singlet. They throw them to the side of the road later if they get too hot.

To avoid forgetting your race number in the morning, pin it to your race shirt ahead of time. Pin all the corners so that it does not flap as you run.

To channel even more of your nervous energy, prepare ahead of time for other potential emergencies on race day. For instance, many marathoners suffer chafing between their thighs, under their arms, between their toes and on their nipples. Putting a fairly thick layer of Vaseline on these areas should prevent the problem.

Plan now for the first-mile adrenaline rush that all marathoners feel on the day. More than 2,000 people will be waiting at the start. They are all nervous, too, and will be eager to take off fast.

Plan to start at the back of the pack. For at least the first half of the race, commit yourself to running a pace that feels too slow. If you go out too fast, you may build up too much blood lactate.

Further, first-timers often dread the “wall,” that legendary point when runners’ legs suddenly get heavy because they are full of lactic acid and out of glycogen. In the past, CIM organizers have played on this idea by having a cardboard wall at Mile 20, when the wall is supposed to hit.

The reality, though, is that the wall can hit later or earlier, or even never, depending on how well-trained marathoners are and how smart they run their race.

Also, despite its name, the wall generally does not hit like a ton of bricks. It usually begins more surreptitiously. Energy stores slowly run out until the marathoner is relying on sheer will, or not running at all.

To keep the wall back, do more than run easily. Take in water at each of the 11 aid stations.

Finally, prepare to think and be positive. Occasionally reward the crowd’s support with a smile or a cheer. Remember, this is your day. You’ve worked long and hard. Why not enjoy it?

This article appeared on December 5, 1992, as part of expanded coverage of the California International Marathon.

Running Wild

It's Half Party, Half Race and Mostly Total Lunacy. Just What Is It? A Hash.

Malcolm Rigby was slogging out another eight-mile run on the trail when he noticed something that made his heart beat a little faster. Heading off the trail toward the edge of a ditch were small dashes of white flour spaced about 15 yards apart. Further on, he found a long white arrow, its edges a little fuzzy. Somewhere in Sacramento, he realized, Hash House Harriers were having fun without him.

Harriers are party runners.

Their mottos are “disorganization” and “mismanagement.”

On a “hash” run, one or two runners called “hares” leave about 15 minutes ahead of the pack, laying a convoluted trail with flour. Hares, duty bound to be pranksters, backtrack and dead-end the course constantly and often throw in other tricks along the way.

Hashes are not races. To take a hash seriously, to be competitive in any way, is to commit a “hash crime.” And no hash crime is more heinous than trying to win.

Rigby has encountered deadly snakes in Malaysian jungles and dehydration in the Australian Bush—all for the love of hashing. Until he saw the flour on the bike trail, life in Sacramento had been a bit tame.

When Rigby got back from his run, he placed a sign in the back of his truck. It said, “Hash? Help!” and underneath he put his phone number. Soon a member of the recently formed Sacramento Hash House Harriers gave Rigby a call.

A couple of weeks ago, I met Rigby and the rest of the harriers on my first hash at Discovery Park Plaza in Natomas. While the hares scampered off, dashing pawfuls of flour to the ground, the newbies, about seven of us, gathered around Dave “Holdout” Kiehle, the disorganizer of this day’s hash.

Harriers, by the way, like to give each other names. Rigby’s name is “Mal Adjusted.” Holdout’s fiancée, Tara Moy, is “Welcome Wagon.” Jack, the only hash dog in the club, is “Sewersucker.” Other names aren’t fit to print.

Harriers get their names after their sixth hash, when an ad hoc naming committee has observed you long enough to choose something unfitting. The names usually rest on faux pas only harriers would notice.

On this hash, Dennis Scott of Sacramento was renamed.

“We’ll call him Whinonandonymonymous,” said a member of the committee, “because he’s always saying ‘When is this run going to start? When are we going to get going?’”

In hashing, it’s a crime to organize the group.

That’s probably why we were still gathered in the parking lot 45 minutes after the unofficial start time. Even though the clouds were gathering and several of us were shivering, none of us dared to hurry the proceedings along. Besides, Holdout was instructing us in a suspiciously organized way.

“An arrow with the point at the tip of the shaft means you’re on the right trail,” he said. “An arrow with the point drawn halfway down the shaft means you might be on the right trail. A circle with a cross in it means you’re within 100 ‘hash meters’ of the trail in any direction.”

A hash meter, by the way, can be any distance a hare feels like making it.

Finally, about 11 a.m., as the first few drops of rain fell and the last of the sun disappeared behind a gray pall, Sewersucker got the group moving by jumping up and pushing each of us with his two front paws. About twenty of us straggled out of the parking lot, the front runners shouting, “on on.”

“On on” is one of several harrier hunting calls. This and a lot of shrill whistle blowing means “Follow me, I’ve found the trail.”

“Are you?” means “I’m too lazy to run ahead but, hey, you up there, are you on the right track?”

“Checking” means “No, you lazy ---; I’m still looking.”

Though much of the hash itself was a blur, it was pretty clear to me that hashes are cross-country races turned upside down.

After playing kamikaze across a main road and sniffing back and forth around a deserted office complex, we slid down a muddy bank to the bike path. But from then on, our shoes rarely met a paved surface.

We hacked through bushes, splashed through creeks and labored through furrowed, muddy fields. We even climbed a few wire fences,

passing Sewersucker over the top from one harrier to another. Hashers love difficult or unusual terrain.

Holdout and Welcome Wagon, who hail from Orange County, have hashed in underground sewers, following a trail of glo lights. Once, wearing costumes, they hashed through John Wayne Airport. But that is nothing.

In a story about hashing in *Outside* magazine last year, Randy Wayne White, a harrier himself, said the Kuwait Hash House Harriers had a lively hash on August 4, 1990, two days after the Iraqi invasion.

However, Tim “Magic” Hughes has one of the most outlandish stories about the harriers’ run-anywhere-anytime mentality. Hughes, an Englishman living in Thailand, edits *Harrier International* magazine.

His story harks back to the founding club. This was formed in 1938 by a bunch of ex-patriates hanging out in Malaysia. The club’s name comes from a local “hash house” where the “ex-pats” used to eat.

Hughes told White that the founding members hashed right through the outbreak of war in 1939.

“A British officer,” said Hughes, “set his men in ambush position in the jungle and was waiting for the approaching enemy, and damn if 15 chaps in vests and running shorts from the local harriers club didn’t come running past.”

Hashing in Sacramento is not quite as dangerous, but it can be just as irreverent. Remember long, outside days of chase and hide-and-seek? Hashing revives the anarchistic spirit of youth, the spontaneity and craziness that adult responsibilities and worries tend to wear away. Yes, as White admits in his article, it’s a little “silly,” but it’s also a blast.

Our run ended with a climb over a strange mound in a vast field next to Interstate 5. The only recognizable landmark was Arco Arena on the far side of the freeway. A truck with dry clothes and drinks had made it to the finish, looking out of place in the midst of this muddy wasteland.

But the end of a hash house run is not the end of a hash. Runs are followed by a few rituals, including the “Down Down.” During a Down Down, harriers accuse and counter-accuse each other of various hash crimes. These range from claims of helping the hares, calling a false “on on” or even wearing a hat while drinking.

The main punishment for a hash crime is to stand in the bed of the truck drinking—there was plenty of nonalcoholic beer and soda

available, in addition to stronger beverages—while the rest of the group bawls a bawdy song. If drinkers cannot drain their cups by the time the ditty is over, they must pour the drinks on their heads.

Maybe it's hashing's lack of seriousness that has attracted such a huge following. More than 60,000 people hash in about 136 countries. Even places as tiny as Ascension Island, which is only 24 miles across, shelters a few harriers.

Hashing has become such a big deal that, every other year, harriers hold a World Interhash. The last one, in 1992, was in Phuket, Thailand. The next North American Interhash, in September, will be in the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

On On.

This article appeared on February 3, 1993.

The Western States Is a Test of Will, Weirdness

On a snowy trail in the early miles of the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, Bill McKean lost his footing.

He went sliding and cartwheeling down a slope, ending with arms and legs askew.

Luckily, McKean suffered no worse than a few purple bruises. But he still had more than 80 miles of treacherous trail left.

After he staggered back up the hill, Doug Latimer, a 12-time finisher, gave him some advice. "Bill, you shouldn't be doing stuff like that," he said. "It's really a waste of energy."

Runners everywhere love to spin yarns of adversity. They'll tell you how they battled their way to a finish line, fighting 100 mph winds and hail as big as bowling balls.

But finishers of the Western States have no need to exaggerate. Every mile of the rugged, often remote course is a story in itself. And the stories are never predictable.

Before dawn this Saturday, about 400 runners will test their footing in the 17th annual Western States, generally considered the world's toughest 100-miler.

The runners will follow an ankle-twisting trail from Squaw Valley to Auburn, over more than 40,000 feet of elevation changes.

The first 10 to 25 miles are thick with snow. Further on, temperatures may soar above 100 degrees. And most runners will have to run at least 20 miles in the dark hours from dusk to dawn, carrying only a flashlight to guide them.

Small wonder, then, that over its 16 years, the race has accrued a wealth of colorful stories, full of bawdy humor as well as courage. Perhaps the greatest act of heroism, though, begins with Gordon Ainsleigh, the first person to run the Western States trail.

Ainsleigh, 46, is now a chiropractor living in Auburn. Back then he was a wood cutter and expert horse rider from Colfax. At 6-foot-3 and more than 200 pounds, he was a true mountain man.

For two years, he had competed in the 100-mile Tevis Cup, a horse race held on the Western States trail since 1955. But in 1974 Ainsleigh ran the course, finishing in 23 hours and 42 minutes.

Dr. Bob Lind, the race's medical adviser, witnessed Ainsleigh's legendary run. "I would have bet \$1,000," said Lind, "you'd never see it happen in the 20th century. Full-blown Marines and other military types had never managed to do it."

In fact, in 1973 about 14 Marines attempted a two-day trek. Most never got beyond 30 miles. Two reached Auburn after two days of hiking.

Though Lind was skeptical at the start, he became a believer before the race was over.

From Foresthill (Mile 62), Clyde Nunn, known as Cow Mountain Clyde, planned to pace Ainsleigh to the finish. (Back then, many of the runners and significant others had colorful pseudonyms. There was Ken "Cowman" Shirk, the second person to run the course; Mike "Mushroom" Morrow; Mark "The Dog" Hoshler; and even "Joanie Dog," the Dog's girlfriend.)

By Mile 83, said Lind, Ainsleigh was fine but everyone was looking for Cow Mountain Clyde. Finally, Lind saw two men dragging him into an aid station, his toes scraping the ground.

"Man, I've never seen anything like it," Clyde apparently said. "He floats up the mountains like a cloud."

Ainsleigh, though, doesn't remember floating.

By Mile 45, he felt awful. Even Michigan Bluff, at Mile 56, seemed out of reach. But he didn't stop.

"I decided," he said, "that I could still take one more step. I told myself, 'I'm going to continue taking one more step until I can't take one more.' On that, I got to the end."

The year after Ainsleigh's amazing run, Ron Kelly became the second person to attempt the distance. He was ahead of Ainsleigh's schedule, but with only three miles to go, he took everyone by surprise.

Said Lind, "He left the trail, got in his dad's truck, and rode away."

Race fans have plenty of theories as to why Kelly gave up so close to the finish. But Lind asked the man himself.

"He told me that Auburn looked a thousand miles away."

Curtis Sproul, a three-time finisher, recalls through a letter the first official race in 1977, when he was race director. Andy Gonzales, a 19-year-old from Colfax, broke Ainsleigh's record with a time of 22 hours and 10 minutes.

Before the race, Sproul gathered the 14 entrants together for a briefing in the Squaw Valley meadow. It was a mixed bunch, with long-haired mountain men, including Ainsleigh and Cowman, and more conservative types such as a Marine from Florida called Major David Nederhaus. Wendell Robie, the director of the Tevis Cup, favored Nederhaus to win.

"The Major," writes Sproul, "was wearing the standard mirrored sunglasses made famous in *Cool Hand Luke*, and as the briefing began, three fighter jets roared through the Olympic Valley, headed toward Reno at low altitude. The Major looked up, gave his best salute...turned to our little group...and said, 'Those are my men.'

"Somehow, among us Bohemians from Auburn, there was a bit of poetic justice when the Major quit at Mile 50, only to be upstaged by a 19-year-old boy from Colfax."

Since then more than 4,700 runners have upstaged the Major.

Latimer, 55, pioneered the strategy of urinating without stopping.

"In a race that long," he said, "you drink a lot of fluids. You can save up to half an hour if you urinate as you go."

Latimer should know. He has finished among the top 10 finishers 10 times, each time over the age of 40. In 1981, he tied for first place with Jim Howard.

But not everyone has mastered Latimer's time-saving technique.

One year, on the way up to Robinson Flat (Mile 30), a runner accidentally urinated on another competitor, who later filed a written protest.

“The board determined,” said Latimer, “that being urinated on was a hazard of the trail.”

Nudity seems to be another hazard.

In 1985, Delmar Fralick, 29, a two-time finisher, was pacing another runner. At about 3 o'clock Sunday morning, near Auburn Lake Trails (Mile 85), they saw a naked runner ahead.

“The runner had chafed his inner thighs so badly,” Fralick said, “he'd taken off his shorts. Each time he came into an aid station, he'd wrap his T-shirt around the offending parts.”

Race director Norm Klein recalls another incident. One year, in Deadwood Canyon, a nude woman kept leaping out of the bushes. Finally, one of the top runners asked her what she was doing.

“I wanted to relax you guys,” she said, “by giving you something else to think about.”

In 1989, world-record holder Ann Trason, 32, was also surprised by someone jumping out of bushes. Though he was clothed, Trason wasn't sure about his sanity. He claimed he was with NBC and his name was Frank Shorter.

“I was pretty stunned,” Trason said. “I thought, ‘Yeah, and I'm Joan Benoit and it's the Olympic Marathon.’”

As it turns out, he was Frank Shorter.

Trason is certainly worth an interview. She has won the women's division of Western States four times. Last year, she finished third overall in 18:14:48, the highest finish for a woman in the race's history.

Tim Twietmeyer, 34, who has finished in the top four since 1989 and has run the race 11 times, was last year's overall winner. One year, a pacer joined him at about Mile 75. After about 10 miles, they came to an aid station and volunteers asked Twietmeyer what he needed.

“I didn't need much,” he said, “but my pacer asked for three aspirin. When the volunteers started to hand them over, my pacer said, ‘Not for him. They're for me.’”

Twietmeyer, Trason and course-record holder Tom Johnson, 34, will all be back for this year's race. Johnson did not run last year but set the course record in 1991 in 15:54:05.

This race will see the most snow since 1983, when front runner Jim King got lost at about Mile 16. Even though he made up more than 30 minutes after he regained the trail, Jim Howard beat him by about 30 seconds.

This year, Klein expects a number of problems. Because of snow, the Forest Service cannot clear a number of fallen trees in the first 24 miles. Also, Klein cannot use a horse patrol early in the race to look for injured runners. Instead, runners carrying hand-held radios will sweep the trail.

Despite the dangers of the race, though, most of the 400 competitors probably will finish, with anywhere from 70 to 100 people finishing in under 24 hours. If they finish within a day, they will earn a silver belt buckle. There is no prize money.

As usual, Dr. Lind will be out there.

"I love to watch these people do this amazing thing," he said. "It's so uncharacteristic from what I see every day. Sometimes my patients can't even make it from their cars to my office."

This article appeared in June 1993.

A Test in Tibet

Marathoners Discover Thin Air, Clash of Cultures in the Shadow of Everest

Tom Johnson was watching his footing when he almost ran into a yak.

The yak was another reminder that he was running at 14,500 feet, across windblown tundra, in one of the most bizarre races of his running career.

Johnson, a civil engineer from Loomis, was running the Everest Sky Marathon, the first marathon held in Tibet and the highest 26.2-mile race in the world.

Yak aside, though, the run was the easiest part. In fact, it was the only familiar thing on this trip.

Johnson and 18 other runners had arrived in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, more than a week before the Oct. 7 race.

At a mere 12,000 feet, Lhasa is where most foreigners acclimate before venturing to higher ground. Tibet is the highest and largest plateau on earth, with 14 peaks above 26,250 feet.

"For the first two days we were wheezing going up stairs, and our pulses were always high," Johnson said. "In bed at night, my heart would be pounding."

Johnson, course-record holder and three-time winner of the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, one of the most prestigious 100-milers in the world, wasn't used to feeling out of shape. But then there were many things he and the other runners weren't used to.

For instance, being stared at.

"We'd go out in groups of two or three to jog, and people would stop," he said. "We'd be wearing tights, fancy neon clothing and reflecto glasses, and women, especially, carrying their laundry, would just bust up laughing."

Lhasa was crowded with people, many visiting the Jokhang temple, the holiest shrine in Tibet. Outside its doors, hundreds of pilgrims fell to their knees, spread their arms forward and rose, repeating the motion over and over as a sign of their devotion.

On the streets, trucks and cars, spewing black smoke, skidded to avoid cows in the middle of the road.

Then there was the food.

"Yak butter was used for everything except a building product," Johnson said.

In fact, the rancid spread is often used in jasmine tea, and though Johnson is not sure, it could have led to his 24-hour bout with the "Katmandu Quick-step."

The bumpy road out of Lhasa was also hard on the stomach. To get to the Tingri plain, only about 40 miles from the base of Mount Everest, they took a three-day bus journey along the Lhasa-to-Katmandu Highway, the main artery across southern Tibet.

But this highway was more like the Western States trail—full of switchbacks and very rugged.

"It was unpaved all the way, and our old Mitsubishi bus churned up so much dust we had to wear scarves around our faces," he said.

To top it off, the bus driver was unfazed by the dangers of the road.

"He would drink one or two beers to get rolling in the morning, and then he'd have several more wherever we stopped," Johnson said.

The runners, mostly European, dubbed the driver "Niki Lauda" in honor of the former Formula One driver.

Though the ride was rough by Western standards, the bus did have one luxury, and Helene Diamantides of Scotland, who once ran from Lhasa to Katmandu, tried to make the best of it.

“She spotted a cassette player,” said Johnson, “and put in a Rolling Stones tape. Our mood improved 150 percent.”

“Niki” was not impressed. Soon, the road-weary travelers were swerving along to Tibetan folk music.

Still, the athletes weren’t complaining.

This was one of the most fascinating trips of their lives. By invitation only, they were part of Peak Performance Project, sponsored by Fila, a European clothing and footwear company.

The project’s mission—quite humbly—is to discover the limits of human performance.

For the last two years, a team of Italian doctors and psychologists have held grueling races in uncomfortable places, including a race up Mont Blanc, Europe’s highest peak, and a marathon in Nepal. The team selects its guinea pigs carefully.

For the Everest Sky Marathon, athletes included 29-year-old Matt Carpenter of Colorado, the only other American in the race. He holds the course record for two of the most popular mountain races in the United States—the Pikes Peak Ascent and the Pikes Peak Marathon. He also holds a personal best of 2:19 for the marathon.

Meanwhile, Johnson, 34, in addition to his Western States titles, also holds the course record for the popular Sunmart Texas Trail 50-miler and is a two-time national champion of the Ride and Tie, an endurance event that combines running and horseback riding.

Carpenter and Johnson were up against some tough competition, including Adriano Greco from Italy, winner of the 1992 Sky Marathon in Nepal and the course-record holder for the Mont Blanc race.

Before, during and after the Sky Marathon, the team measured energy expenditure, muscle fatigue, dehydration and even hormone levels. The doctors took at least three vials of blood.

“The doctors used a huge blood analyzer that was a real hassle to cart along,” Johnson said.

Then there was a 35-page questionnaire, written in Italian. Johnson, Carpenter and Diamantides, who speak only English, watched while the Italians cried with laughter.

“Some of the questions were about sexual activities before a race,” he said. “It led to a lot of jokes.”

The race started at 1:30 p.m., although officially it should have begun at mid-morning.

“We were told to be ready in the front lobby, bags packed, by 8:30 a.m.,” Johnson said, “but that was when the organizers rolled in for breakfast. Everything was on Italian time.”

At the start, locals forsook the barley harvest to watch the athletes stretch and chat. Around the crowd, in a comfortable 60 to 70 degrees, lay the flat, high tundra, spotted with grazing sheep.

Only 40 or so miles away, the highest peaks of the Himalayas marched against the southern horizon. Majestic Mount Everest at 29,028 feet was clearly visible in the crystal blue air.

Carpenter was the odds-on favorite. A few days earlier, during a hard 12-minute run to determine the runners’ anaerobic thresholds, he had gone 460 meters farther than the rest of the group.

A few minutes before takeoff, the runners learned there was prize money. The winner would receive \$3,000, the runner-up \$2,000 and the third-place finisher \$1,000.

“This changes my strategy,” Carpenter said.

Carpenter didn’t need strategy. He led all the way, despite a wrong turn that cost him 11 minutes. Johnson finished second.

They had run the worst times of their careers. Carpenter finished in 3 hours and 5 minutes, Johnson in 3:31.

Fact is, though, they had run with 40 percent less atmospheric oxygen than at sea level. That meant Carpenter’s 7-minute-per-mile pace really equated to a 5-minute one.

“Even though your legs feel great,” said Johnson, “your cardiovascular system is working away like great guns. If you even jump over a small ditch, your heart rate soars instantly up at least five beats per minute.

“In Sacramento, you’d have to make some sort of real effort, surge hard, say for 30–35 seconds, to get it to rise that much.”

Johnson will run the race next year, though he is not sure it will be at the same venue.

“Matt and I can be stressed more,” he said. “I think it would be really interesting if they held the race at 16,500 feet, made it last about five hours and got some hills in there.”

In addition to running the Sky Marathon next year, Johnson will run two other races as part of the Peak Performance Project, one in the United States and one in Europe.

After this year's Sky Marathon, Johnson and the others traveled by road to Katmandu. Two days later, in Room 214 of the Summit Hotel, he woke up laughing. Carpenter, his roommate, asked him why.

"Matt," said Johnson, "do you realize someone paid us to go halfway around the world, to run in the shadow of Mount Everest?"

They felt like rich, dilettante runners. But they were grateful.

This article appeared on November 3, 1993.

Century Club

100 Marathons? It Takes a Special Breed of Runner to Keep on Chugging

Every weekend this year, Jerry Dunn has run at least one marathon. That's at least one marathon. Most weekends he has run two. On some, he has run three.

That means he has been living out of his gym bag and neglecting his wife, his house and maybe his body to run a race that most people think should be run only two or three times a year.

Traditional running lore and many physiologists say running a 26.2-mile race more than once every few months damages muscles and beats a person down, psychologically and emotionally.

But this weekend, Dunn is leaving his home in Indianapolis to go for number 100—and that race will be in Sacramento, at the California International Marathon.

Joining Dunn in the same race will be Roberto Sanchez, Professor George Parrott, Elliott Eisenbud, M.D., and John Clark, four local runners who also have run 100 or more marathons—though they didn't do them all in one year.

In fact, with numerous ultramarathons—including the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run—thrown in, too, these runners took an average of 15 years.

Now for regular folks out there, who might be thinking of pulling some weeds today, these runners' weekend habits need some explaining.

Dunn's odyssey is in memory of his father, who died at 47, the same age Dunn is now.

"He was fat, smoked and never exercised," Dunn said. "I was 18 when he died, and I never got to tell him I loved him."

Dunn, named Indiana's 1991 Ultrarunner of the Year, is also celebrating 10 years of sobriety.

"After he died," Dunn said, "I took drugs and drank for about 16 or 17 years. I sort of suppressed my feelings about his death."

Over the next few years, Dunn revisited his grief. This trip is a kind of emergence.

"Most of my thoughts have been very positive," he said, "but I have had a few hours on the road when I've just been out there crying, hoping he knows I've done this."

For Sanchez, 55, who recently ran his 153rd marathon up, down and around Mount Diablo, running so many marathons is simply a way to stay in shape.

"It's just easier to keep on going than to let it go and then try to get back into shape," he said. "But I don't run too many hard ones. It takes too much concentrated effort and stresses the legs. If I run them that way, I won't be able to run another one for a month or so."

But, in their early days, Sanchez, Eisenbud and Parrott did run all their marathons that way (Clark declined to be interviewed). And for a while, their improvement made the effort worthwhile.

Eisenbud, big-boned, broad-chested and 6-foot-2, ran a best of 2:56, not an easy task for a big man. The CIM will be his 161st marathon. Sanchez, once a 100-meter sprinter in high school, hit 3:01. And Parrott, a former tennis player, peaked at 2:41 at age 39.

To run so well, Parrott, who has run 103 marathons, averaged more than 130 miles a week for long stretches. Eisenbud never did fewer than 100. But eventually times became slower.

"It wasn't fun anymore to keep banging your head on the wall and not get any faster," Eisenbud, 50, said. "Now, I don't run to race. I run to enjoy the experience."

Sanchez said, "I've mellowed out over the years. I don't want to beat everyone in town. I want to run and have fun and drink a beer after."

Meanwhile, Parrott, who turns 50 in two weeks, has lowered his standards a little, dropping his weekly average from 130 miles to about 80, but he still likes to push hard.

“To me racing is an interesting test,” he said. “Every time I put a number on, it’s ‘How much on that day can I produce? How much and to what degree can I sustain?’”

But, whatever degree of mellowness each of these men think they’ve reached, probably none of them would think of quitting.

In fact, race organizers had to force Sanchez out of a 100-mile race.

“They couldn’t get any reading for my blood pressure,” he said. “Personally, I think the damn thing was broken.”

As tough as these men are, though, some experts would say they’re damaging their bodies.

Tim Noakes, M.D., author of *Lore of Running*, and a runner himself, cites studies showing muscle cell damage can occur in races longer than about 13 miles and becomes progressively worse the longer the race. After many marathons, some veteran runners had muscle fibers that never completely repaired.

But if you ask Dunn, Sanchez, Parrott and Eisenbud, they’ll probably tell you they figure they’re a lot healthier than most 50-year-old men and that running those races beats sitting on the couch.

Besides, they also hear criticism of their achievements from the other side. Some people say running 100 or more marathons is not so incredible since some elite runners regularly run 26 miles on a training run and run at least four times the distance for their weekly mileage.

Dunn also has drawn some criticism because not all his marathons are official.

For instance, in front of witnesses, he often runs a marathon course Saturday and the race itself Sunday. In Boston and New York, he also ran the courses the day after the race.

While the jury is still out on whether Dunn will make the record book, no one can say his year has been easy.

Perhaps the most grueling part is coping with the logistics of visiting more than 20 states and 45 towns in under a year and trying to maintain some semblance of normalcy when he returns home midweek.

And for Parrott, Eisenbud and Sanchez, strapping on so many race numbers and fighting so many crowds to run a distance that never gets easy clearly counts as a paramount achievement.

Parrott, who coaches members of Sacramento’s Buffalo Chips Running Club, doesn’t claim his running is for anyone but himself. But he does see some positive effects on others.

“Virtually everyone in the club can see that I don’t have that much talent,” he said. “Yet for any of them to see some of the times I’ve achieved, that continues to serve as a concrete reminder as to what they’re capable of.”

This article appeared on December 4, 1993, as part of expanded coverage of the California International Marathon.

The Long Run

Rich Hanna Becomes One of the Elite

It’s barely 6 a.m. The year is 1977. A skinny 13-year-old boy is running down the dark, quiet streets of Sacramento. He has already finished his paper route and is hurrying to finish his run before school.

He imagines himself leading at the Boston Marathon, Frank Shorter and Bill Rodgers crumpling behind. Short-distance racing has no appeal. Rich Hanna wants to go the distance. He decides to enter the 26.2-mile Sacramento Marathon, learning about the race only a week before.

On race morning, his mother, equally innocent, feeds him bacon and eggs. (For marathoners, carbohydrates are the breakfast of champions, not protein and grease.)

During the race, Hanna passes long-time runner Glenn Bailey, a rite of passage that begins their friendship.

“At the 20-mile mark, this skinny little kid comes bobbing by me,” Bailey said. “After the race, I went looking for him, asking, ‘Where’s the little Bambi kid.’”

Meanwhile, Bambi Hanna finishes in 3:01 with something resembling a migraine headache.

“I told myself I am never, ever, going to run this far again,” Hanna said.

It’s a bright December morning. The year is 1993. Rich Hanna, a tall 29-year-old man, storms through downtown Sacramento, heading for a national-class 2:17 in the California International Marathon.

Hanna finished ninth overall and was the third American and top Sacramentan. The race also earned him a ranking by *Track & Field News* as one of the top 25 marathoners in the United States.

But on this run, he was not alone. Greeting him, among the hundreds of spectators lining the final 200 yards, were the people who have watched him work so hard over the last 16 years. Many of them are also veterans of area road racing, and to them he is running's favorite son.

It's not just that Hanna is a quality runner. People respect him and are drawn to him because of his qualities as a person.

"He's never belittled anyone, and I've never heard anyone speak ill of him," said Bailey, 46, a runner for more than 24 years. "By and large, he represents the attitude that permeates the sport."

Hanna's nice-guy image and friendly encouragement of others makes it easy for local runners to enjoy his recent successes.

He won the Jed Smith National 100K Championships in February, earning a berth on the United States team for the World 100K Championships in June in Lake Saroma, Japan.

This 62-mile race was only his second beyond the marathon distance and the farthest he has run. Hanna's time of 6:47:58 was the eighth-fastest 100K in North America ever.

Those who know Hanna understand that his increasing dominance of local running is not just from talent but from lots of hard work.

"He's the kind of person who can do anything he sets his mind to—he's that disciplined," said Bob Tribe, another veteran runner and long-time friend. "Look at how many of us waste time and don't set objectives. He's not like that."

Even as a kid Hanna wasn't like that.

"When I was younger, I'd rather be out by myself running than doing a lot of other things with my friends," he said. "I liked spending time by myself."

After his first marathon at age 13, he tried another one, in Saratoga. This time, he ran 2:56, breaking the three-hour barrier.

In fact, Hanna's rise coincided with the running boom. As a youth, he did odd jobs for Sally Edwards' fledgling Fleet Feet store on J Street.

One day, after he had cut the grass in front of the store, Edwards asked Hanna to mow the grass at her house.

"To get there, I pushed that lawn mower over a mile and a half on city streets," he said. "Basically, I would do anything for her because I really wanted to work in that store."

The day Hanna turned 16, the legal age to work, he showed up at Fleet Feet for his new job, advising runners about shoes until he was 19.

After high school, Hanna kept up a life of discipline, earning a degree in political science while holding down a part-time job with state government.

Meanwhile, he reduced his running, trying to cope with stress fractures from his early years of 70-mile weeks on immature bones. He cross-trained on the bicycle to make up the slack.

He competed in duathlons (run and bike races). On his one and only attempt, he even won the Ironman division of Eppie's Great Race, Sacramento's annual running, biking and kayaking event.

After Hanna graduated, he worked full time for the state until he was 25. Then he did something seemingly out of character. He quit.

"I think he didn't want to end up a bureaucrat for the rest of his life," said Tribe, who is the deputy director of the Fair Political Practices Commission.

The change was a shock for those who knew Hanna.

But for Hanna, the break was a natural reaction to years of subjecting himself to a tight, relentless schedule.

During the next year, he recovered the child that had never played. He drove a car across the country for a rental company and rode the Greyhound back. He went to South America.

About a year after leaving his job, though, his desire and discipline came back.

In 1990, he ran in the CIM and—without intense training—finished in 2:24, the best local time in the race.

That's when Hanna believed he could break 2:20 to earn a spot in the Olympic Trials.

While working part time as a waiter at the Hyatt Regency and part time for a real estate company, Hanna got serious.

He ran a 2:24 in Detroit during the next year. Four weeks later, he ran 2:22. He tried again but couldn't break the barrier.

Then, about eight months ago, the real estate company went belly up. It gave him the time he needed to rest and train correctly.

Since then, he has broken several course records, personal bests and the 2:20 barrier.

"The biggest frustration for me is that here's an athlete of this quality who can't get sponsorship," Tribe said. "He can't even get free shoes. If you train at that caliber, it precludes a lot of normal labor. It's not easy

in our American society if you're not a football player or into baseball or basketball. Then no one cares.”

All along, Hanna's attitude stayed closer to that of the 13-year-old than a national-class athlete.

Webster Chadwick, a long-time runner, had met Hanna just before the 1977 Sacramento Marathon.

“Now, I'll see him leading the field in a race, already coming back as I'm going out, and he still says hello,” Chadwick said. “My sense of him is that his humility is still there.”

It was this humility that brought friends, family and workout partners to the CIM finish that December day. As Hanna swept down Capitol Avenue, running strong and easy, those veterans who had watched him over the years clapped and cheered, and more than a few wiped a tear from their eyes.

“If I had a son, I'd like him to be like Rich,” Tribe said. “I mean that not because he's a great runner, but because he's an exceptional person.”

This article appeared on March 23, 1994.

Trason Makes Her Mark over 100 Miles

After running more than 93 miles and with less than seven left, leader Tim Twietmeyer briefly emerged from the Sierra wilderness to a small aid station on the rugged Western States trail.

While volunteers refilled his water bottles and scrambled to get him food, he turned a bleary-eyed face to someone in the crowd.

“Where is she?” he asked.

Everyone knew who he meant.

Ann Trason, 33, of Kensington, was about 35 minutes behind Twietmeyer. He would go on to widen the gap, winning his second Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run on Saturday and establishing himself as one of the dominant ultrarunners around. But he, too, was falling victim to the Legend of Ann.

Trason pushes top men runners to their limits as they try to stay ahead of her hard-headed pace.

In this year's battle, over more than 40,000 feet of elevation changes from Squaw Valley to Auburn, Twietmeyer, 35, of Auburn, was the only man who was safe from Trason.

Twietmeyer finished in 16 hours, 51 minutes and 1 second, a comfortable 47 minutes ahead of Trason and three minutes ahead of his winning time in 1992.

Meanwhile, Trason, the world-record holder for 50 and 100 miles, barely stopped at aid stations as she moved from 12th place at about Mile 24 to second overall by the end. Running 17:37:51, she won the women's race for the sixth consecutive time, beat her 1992 course record by more than 37 minutes and recorded the highest finish by a woman in race history.

Twietmeyer, who has run 13 Western States and generally places in the top five, is usually fairly conservative in the early miles.

This race, he wore headphones, not pressing the speed until he reached his favorite section—the remote California Trail at Mile 65.

“Coming into El Dorado (about Mile 53), I couldn't get any music on my radio,” he said, “so I listened to a Giants game for about 10 minutes.”

Trason's win this year is particularly sweet because she has just come back from what is probably her worst injury, a partial rupture of the Achilles' tendon. She wore a cast for the month of February.

“On the day of the National 100-km Championships,” she said, “I rode my stationary bike double the mileage they did. It took me more than five hours.”

Three-time winner Tom Johnson of Loomis, who set the 1991 course record of 15:54:05, did not run this Western, competing instead in the World 100-km Championships in Japan.

Two other top runners, Harry Johnson of Alaska and Eric Clifton of North Carolina, repeated mistakes they made last year—going out too fast.

Johnson was leading until Mile 65.7, and Clifton was second until about Mile 35. Both dropped during the last third of the race.

Joe Schlereth, 44, of Fresno, who was sixth at about Mile 30, finished third overall in 17:51:06, winning the masters division.

On the women's side, Evelyn Marshall, 36, of San Diego, who won the 1993 Angeles Crest 100-miler, finished second in 21:13:18. Helga Backhaus, 41, of Germany, placed third in 21:20:20, winning the women's masters division.

Of 381 starters, about 280 crossed the finish line. Two runners were hospitalized, however, bringing the total number of hospitalizations over the last 18 years to seven.

Greg Miller of Sacramento, a dark horse running his first Western, twisted his right ankle in the first seven miles but continued until well past Mile 80. He was taken to Auburn Faith Hospital with a severely swollen ankle and kidney problems.

Jim Larrieu, 33, of Nevada, also was hospitalized. He finished in 22:40:10 but almost immediately went into a seizure. Bill Conway, a registered nurse, said it wasn't entirely clear what caused the seizure, but it probably was a combination of stressful conditions.

This year, though, the weather was not a factor. The trail was snow-free, and temperatures never rose above the mid-90s.

Many folks earned significant personal bests or returned to times they haven't seen in years.

Gordy Ainsleigh, 47, of Auburn, who in 1974 was the first person to run the course on foot, celebrated the 20th anniversary of his historic run by finishing in 23:49:55, his first sub-24-hour finish in eight years.

Harold Carling, 60, set a course record for his age group, finishing in 22:08:36. Ray Piva, 67, the world-record holder in his age group, became the first person over 65 to run under 24 hours.

Bill Finkbeiner, 38, of Auburn, ran 19:49:18, tying with his training partner, Wayne Miles, 47, the second masters finisher, to become the first person to run a combination of 10 Western States and 10 Leadville Trail 100-milers, all under 24 hours.

This article appeared in June 1994.

Trudge Match

Last month, running columnist Theresa McCourt was asked to participate in the U.S. Fila SkyMarathon. The race, just one in a series of events conducted by a group of endurance researchers, took place on one of the highest peaks in Colorado. Here's her report.

At a prerace meeting for the U.S. Fila SkyMarathon, detail-oriented runners asked all the usual questions, mainly about aid stations, beverages and transportation to the start.

What they should have asked was how much climbing gear to carry. The top three men wore crampons.

Welcome to one of the more bizarre marathons in North America, run at dizzying heights, covering the standard 26.2 miles and attracting a small field of high-class talent.

Sure, it helped to be a veteran endurance runner, but the Sky Marathon was more conducive to mountain goats and downhill skiers.

Just six miles into the race, all of it very uphill, the 39 runners found themselves at the top of walls of snow. And there was only one way to get back down: on their rears.

This race was part of a series of high-altitude marathons conducted by Peak Performance Project, a group of Italian researchers, medical doctors and psychologists trying to test the limits of endurance on some of the highest mountains in the world.

The series, with financial backing from the Italian sportswear company Fila, included races in the Italian Alps and the Himalayas. This was the team's first torture test on American soil.

At times it felt like real torture.

Two of Sacramento's top runners, Tom Johnson and Rich Hanna, who last month represented the United States at the World 100-km Championships, finished the run looking as if they had been through an anti-graffiti treatment from Singapore officials.

Their rears were sore from the snow slide, their legs were scraped from falls on the almost vertical trail, and their skin was raw from breaking through the crusty snow and falling into nearly waist-deep holes.

Hanna, a 2:17 marathoner and winner of the U.S. 100-km Championships, took it on himself to make sure the pain was evenly distributed.

"At one point," he said, "I found myself falling down one of the snow faces headfirst."

A week later, on the long plane ride to the World 100-km Championships in Japan, Hanna had to stand for at least five of the more than 10 hours of flight. His rear end was still hurting.

The course began at the trail head to 14,265-foot Castle Peak, the highest mountain in the Elk Mountain Range, climbing from 8,000 feet elevation to almost 14,000, then heading downhill again.

Once off the trail, the runners still had 13 miles of unforgiving asphalt to cross the finish in downtown Aspen.

The winner, Matt Carpenter of Colorado Springs, Colo., was a man with proven mountain-goat credentials.

He is the course-record holder in Colorado's Pikes Peak Marathon and winner of last year's Fila Everest SkyMarathon in Tibet. At a constant altitude of 14,500 feet, the Tibet race is the world's highest marathon.

Carpenter was one of the few runners who knew he was going to need some mountaineering equipment.

As he clambered up one of the snow faces, using his arms as much as his legs, he realized he was wasting precious energy slipping back in the snow. He attached his secret weapons, a pair of lightweight crampons, to the bottom of his shoes.

But at the turnaround point, he was as much a victim of the terrain and gravity as everyone else.

"At first, I tried to run down the snow faces," he said. "Then I just sat on my rear, lifted my legs and slid down."

A runner behind him, Milan Madaj of Slovakia, followed Carpenter's style, except he yelled at the top of his lungs.

As Carpenter left the snow, Madaj briefly stole first place, also passing Tom Sobal of Leadville, Colo., three-time member of the U.S. Mountain Racing Team.

Carpenter reclaimed the lead on the rocky trail before Mile 10. Then, dragging a battered field behind him for more than 16 miles, he finally finished in 3:08:27.

"Overall, this race has a high beat-up factor," he said.

Italy's Fabio Meraldi (3:11:58) and Ettore Champretavy (3:15:47) finished second and third. Madaj sank to fifth place and Sobal to seventh.

Meanwhile, Hanna and Johnson, realizing they would not make the top five as many had expected, chose to save their legs for the World Championships.

Johnson, three-time winner and course-record holder in the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, finished 10th and Hanna 24th.

As for the women's race, no one had any doubt that Bruna Fanetti, a top alpine runner from Italy, would win. She was the first woman at the 1993 Everest SkyMarathon.

Melanie McHugh of Boulder, Colo., and Ellen Miller of Vail, Colo., placed second and third.

But the story of this was less the race and more the adventure.

For many of the Americans, a mix of triathletes, mountain runners, ultrarunners and classic marathoners, the race was a combination of survival and trying to maintain some dignity.

This writer, a veteran of some 20 marathons and an eventual middle-of-the-pack finisher in Aspen, found herself dead last as she scrambled through the snow. Just then, I topped a boulder and stared into the eye of a British television camera two feet away.

The camera and I stared back and forth for a moment, and I realized all hopes of anonymity were gone. But it was worse. The crew knew I was originally from England.

“Come on,” said a British voice, “don’t let the side down.”

But there were serious consequences to the race, too.

One runner, Terrie Minzer of Colorado Springs, who was the second woman at last year’s Pikes Peak Marathon, collapsed at the last aid station, only four miles from the end.

“Before it happened,” she said, “I was running with my eyes closed. I couldn’t keep them open.”

At the aid station, the lone Italian volunteer was unsure what to do. Another woman runner, straggling by, happened to notice Minzer’s feet sticking out from under the aid station table.

She ran into the middle of the road and hailed a family in a pickup truck. They loaded Minzer into the back and took her to a hospital, where she was treated for heat exhaustion.

But when it was over, other than battered butts and the occasional bout of heat exhaustion, it was unclear to most of the runners what the researchers had found.

In fact, this race was really a stepping-stone to the other two circuit races—Italy’s Monte Rosa, Europe’s second highest mountain, on July 17 and the Everest SkyMarathon on Oct. 9.

In addition to winning a slice of \$8,000 in prize money, the first three men and women in the U.S. Fila SkyMarathon won all-expense paid trips to these other races.

There, the researchers measure energy expenditure, muscle fatigue, dehydration and hormone levels.

Before and after each race, the team also tests the Italian runners to compare prerace and postrace conditioning. And they run

neuropsychological tests to measure a person's reaction time and ability to discern visual patterns while going down difficult terrain.

"This is an important ability," said Ugo Savardi, a teacher at the University of Verona, "because when going down a steep slope very fast, one small mistake can make a big difference."

Though the team hopes to have a book ready in the next year, its key point seems to be that when truly fit people climb in high altitudes, they debunk traditional mountaineering concepts about physiological limits, altitude sickness and how fast people can climb on reduced amounts of oxygen.

They support this claim with their annual 32.5-mile race up and down Mont Blanc, Europe's highest mountain at 15,770 feet. Because the race is so dangerous and difficult, they limit the field to only the most experienced mountain runners.

Marino Giacometti, originally a mountain climber and now an avid mountain runner, is the founder of the project.

"Most mountaineering expeditions take at least three days to get up and down Mont Blanc," he said. "Last year, one of our runners ran it in 7 hours and 3 minutes."

But by the end of this marathon, the researchers' tests and plans were about as clear to the runners as the directions for getting to the finish line in front of the Grand Aspen Hotel.

As runners entered the outskirts of town, they tried to find the small orange flags the Italians had used to direct them up and down the snow faces and along the almost 12-mile stretch of Castle Creek Road.

They found only two flags, but they came to at least six crossroads.

Several runners had to ask passersby, mostly tourists, how to get to the hotel.

With emotions stretched thin by the numerous challenges they had already been through, some runners waited several minutes while helpful couples debated about which way the runners should go.

Suffice to say, the runners got there eventually.

This article appeared on July 6, 1994.

Beyond the Top Favorites

Race Features Lots of Unique Runners

Marathons consist of more than just the top runners. In fact, Sunday's California international Marathon has its biggest field ever, with more than 2,300 runners attempting the 26.2-mile race from Folsom Dam to the Capitol.

Though most of us only hear about the top 10 men and women, a marathon is an enormously difficult task for anyone.

It's not just the race itself. It's the months of training beforehand, often more than 40 miles a week, with a long run averaging 16 to 20 miles every weekend.

Most marathoners are regular folks, trying to juggle training around full-time jobs and family responsibilities. That can mean predawn runs in the cold and rain and a quick dinner a few minutes before bed.

Here are just a few of Sunday's heroes and heroines:

Kim Van Gundy, 23, Sacramento—She is running for Team in Training, a group that raises money for the Leukemia Society. Each runner wears a bracelet bearing the name of a person who has had or still has the disease.

Van Gundy was diagnosed with leukemia when she was 15 and went through two years of chemotherapy. Five years later, the doctors declared her cured.

"She's an incredibly strong person," said her mother, LaVonne. "She's light years ahead of her peers in terms of maturity. Her experience helps her put things in perspective."

Van Gundy began running about six months ago after a man who ran a race in honor of her contacted her for coffee.

Po Adams, 70, Carmichael—Adams, who turned 70 in July, treated herself to a post-birthday treat. She competed with her friend Peggy Ewing, 67, in the California Senior Track and Field Championships in San Diego.

And what did these seasoned athletes eat and drink the night before the big meet?

Hot fudge sundaes and decaffeinated coffee.

The next day Adams ran the 50-meter dash, the 5K and the 1,500,

800, 400, 200, and 100-meter races. Between these events, she and Ewing ran over to the long-jump pit to squeeze in a few leaps.

On the return trip, airport security continually ran their bags back and forth through the metal detector.

“They could not figure how two little old ladies in running shoes could be carrying so much disc-shaped metal,” she said.

The discs were Ewing’s seven medals and Adams’ eight.

This CIM will be Adams’ third marathon since turning 70.

Ruben Gonzalez, 26, Citrus Heights—Gonzalez began running only seven months ago. Since then, he has lost 40 pounds.

“I got tired of coming out of the shower and seeing myself in the mirror,” he said. “That did it.”

As he continued to lose weight, running became easier and easier.

“When you first start running,” he said, “your body doesn’t like the work. You have to be disciplined because your body tries to play tricks on you.”

Barbara Ann Miller, 50, and Allen Miller, 45, Modesto—For the Millers, the CIM is just a training run. They use it to callous themselves for ultraruns (those longer than 26.2 miles).

In fact, they first locked eyes during a training run for the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run. The Western States is a trail race with almost 9,000 feet of elevation changes, starting at Squaw Valley and ending in Auburn.

In 1993 Barbara Ann ran the Grand Slam of ultrarunning—four 100-mile trail races in one summer. She finished two more 100-milers and a marathon.

Guadalupe Vargas, 55, Sacramento—Vargas was running past a used-car lot when a friendly farmer waved him over.

“He said, ‘If you buy this good car from me, you won’t have to run everywhere you go,’” Vargas said.

The farmer was serious.

Kirk Boisseree, 37, Fremont—In August he ran the Leadville Trail 100, a 100-mile race, with a cast on his arm.

He had slipped and broken it four weeks earlier, only seven miles into a 32-mile training run in Mineral Canyon, Sequoia National Park.

He finished the training run.

“No one ever said ultrarunners are logical people,” he said.

By the end of the Leadville 100, his cast was embedded with bits of food from various snacks along the way.

“When the doctors cut it off a couple weeks later, it stunk pretty bad,” he said.

This is Boisseree’s sixth CIM. Last weekend he ran the Quadruple Dipsea, a 28.4-mile race with more than 9,000 feet of climbing.

Jana Howard, 39, Sacramento—Though Howard has been running for about five years, this is her first marathon. She wanted to run one before she turned 40.

Until this year, she had a hard time going beyond five miles on any run. Then she found out why. She had been running too hard.

Since joining other runners, her training has gone well, but as the day approaches, she has questioned the demands of training.

“For so many weekends you have to eat well and not do this and not do that,” she said. “You even have to go to bed early so you can get up next day for your morning run.”

Hank Beal and Tina Beal, Sacramento—He turns 40 on race day. She turned 36 this week.

“I’m running to support my aging husband,” she said.

This will be the first time Hank Beal has run a marathon since he got Lyme’s disease from a tick in 1990 while he was running in the mountains.

It was two months before Beal received a proper diagnosis, and it took a year, after treatment with antibiotics, before he could start running again.

The Beals are trying to qualify for the Boston Marathon. She needs a 3:45, and he needs a 3:20.

Mo Bartley, 39, Cool—This summer she ran the Wasatch 100-miler. At the 90-mile mark, a herd of sheep came barreling along the trail, running over her pacer.

“He wasn’t injured,” she said, “but he had little hoof prints up his back.”

Jason Werst, 23, La Grande, Ore.—On a training run, he and a friend were running through the woods when a man suddenly appeared from behind a tree, holding a shotgun. It turned out he didn’t like trespassers.

“We were able to convince him we meant no harm and begged him to let us go,” Werst said. “Lucky for him. Ha, ha.”

The Roseville High School cross-country marathon squad—A

mix of juniors and seniors, the team is trying to qualify for the Boston Marathon.

This year's team consists of Noah Kincaid, Richard Betsworth and Jason Naess, who are running their second CIM, and Kelly Harless, Bryan Treadway and John Taylor, who are running their first.

Last year Kincaid came down with whooping cough a few days before the big day.

He decided not to run, but his teammates convinced him to do it.

"I thought I'd run only a couple of miles," he said, "but I finished the whole thing."

This article appeared on December 3, 1994, as part of expanded coverage of the California International Marathon.

Fell Surges in Stretch to Capture Marathon

After Graeme Fell finished the California International Marathon on Sunday, his wife, Debbie, asked him how he did.

"I won," he said.

"You what?" she said.

The last time she saw Fell, who was running his first marathon, he was at Mile 20 and almost two minutes behind the leader.

In a cold drizzle, Fell, 35, of Canada, passed Joe LeMay, 28, of Danbury, Conn., with less than a mile to go and won in 2 hours, 16 minutes, 13 seconds. LeMay was second in 2:16:56.

Women's champion Jennifer Martin, 33, of Erie, Pa., led from the beginning of the 26.2-mile race and won in a personal-best 2:36:19, more than four minutes ahead of runner-up Christine Kennedy, 39, of Cupertino. Fell and Martin won \$10,000 each.

More than 2,400 entered the CIM, Sacramento's most prestigious road race, making it the largest field in the race's 12-year history.

But it was the third-worst year for weather with many runners wrapped in garbage bags at the start to protect themselves from heavy rain. About 15 minutes into the race, the rain lightened, but just after Mile 5, runners faced a slight head wind most of the way.

While race organizers predicted Fell and several others capable of at

least a 2:15 marathon, the favorites began conservatively, averaging only 5:20 per mile by the 10-mile point.

The relatively slow pace meant a second tier of runners, those attempting a sub-2:20 to qualify for the 1996 Olympic Marathon Trials, generally could stay with the favorites until Mile 10.

Until then, the pack consisted of about 20 men, tightly bunched and constantly shifting positions.

Then LeMay took charge.

"I heard a spectator say, 'Come on guys, it is a race,'" LeMay said, "and that's when I broke away. I was surprised when no one came with me."

By Mile 12, LeMay was about 23 seconds ahead of the pack. Fell, meanwhile, had to make a decision: Follow LeMay? Or hold back because of his inexperience?

"A friend told me the first half had to feel ridiculously easy, so I waited until Mile 16," Fell said. "By Mile 15, I was impatient."

Fell is a two-time Olympian and Canadian record-holder for the steeplechase—a 3,000-meter (just under two miles) track race that includes 3-foot-high barriers and a water jump on every lap.

"It transfers really well to the marathon, because steeplechasing involves a blend of strength, speed and adversity," CIM executive director John Mansoor said.

At Mile 20, LeMay had almost a two-minute lead, but Fell started pushing.

Meanwhile, the large pack the race began with now was strung out over more than a mile.

Between Miles 20 and 24, Fell closed the gap on LeMay to less than 30 seconds.

"At 24, I said to myself, 'OK, let's hammer. You have two miles. This is your distance,'" Fell said.

LeMay was not prepared.

"I thought I was going to win until Mile 25, when he passed me," he said. "Then I just didn't have anything to say about it."

Carlos Grisales, 28, of Colombia, finished third (2:17:31).

In the women's race, Helena Javornik, 28, the women's marathon champion of Slovenia, ran shoulder to shoulder with Martin until about the 6.2-mile mark, running about 5:51 per mile.

"I started out a little fast, but I just felt really good," Martin said.

FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN THE SACRAMENTO BEE

By Mile 15, Martin was leading by about 25 seconds, and Javornik had fallen to fourth.

Martin continued to widen the gap, not knowing until she finished that no other woman was close.

“I was running scared,” she said.

Martin, who won the 1993 Columbus Marathon, has run all three women’s Olympic Marathon Trials. She now will attend the fourth one in 1996. (Women who run under 2:42 go to the Trials all expenses paid. Women under 2:50 go on their own ticket.)

Martin also regained some confidence. Three weeks ago, she dropped out of the Columbus Marathon because of a congenital heart condition that occurs when she is sick. She had a sinus infection in Columbus and, under that kind of stress, her heart rate can increase to 240 beats per minute.

Kennedy, the runner-up, surprised everyone. Even though she has run a best of 2:35, she has not run as well recently because of a string of injuries.

At Mile 25, though, she passed Deb Tornadoen, 32, of Eldorado, Kan., and finished in 2:40:57. Tornadoen was third in 2:41:25.

“Kennedy came from sixth place to second,” said Nancy Ditz, the 1985 CIM women’s winner who was in the women’s lead vehicle. “She wasn’t even on our radar screen.”

Said Kennedy, “I thought I was third. I had no idea I made it to second.”

Charles Thompson, 44, of San Francisco, won the men’s masters division in 2:36:08. Honor Fetherston of Mill Valley was sixth among the women and won the women’s masters in a personal-best 2:45:03. Each won \$500.

Top Sacramentans were Rich Hanna, who finished seventh in 2:21:09, and Francie Benson, who was 13th among the women in 2:52:09. Because Hanna ran a sub-2:22, he can attend the Olympic Marathon Trials.

Bert Egley of Walnut Creek won the wheelchair division in 2:02.

Prize money totaled \$42,000. LeMay won \$4,000 and Grisales \$3,000. Kennedy won \$3,000 and Tornadoen \$2,000.

This article appeared in December 1994.

Jacobs Tunes Up in Capitol Mile

Olympian Dares, Beats the Men

Regina Jacobs won about \$45 Sunday. That was more than race officials expected her to earn.

Jacobs, who will compete in the 1,500 meters at the Olympics later this month, ran the inaugural Fleet Feet Capitol Mile. But she chose to run in the men's open division (20 to 39) rather than compete for prize money against the women. Still, she couldn't resist upping the ante.

With her toe on the start, among about 60 serious-faced men, she smiled, raised her fist and said: "I get a dollar for every one of you I beat!"

Only 15 of her competitors left the race debt-free. Jamey Harris, 25, of Fresno, was one of them. He even added to his finances, running the fastest time of the day, 4 minutes and 6 seconds, to earn a \$150 bonus for breaking 4:10.

Had Jacobs, 32, of Oakland, run in the open women's division, her only competitor would have been the lead bike.

Jacobs, a three-time Olympian in the 1,500, ran 4:28, just one second off her best road mile and 15 seconds faster than first place in the women's race.

Not that the women's open was shabby. That was won by Santa Rosa's Julia Stamps, 17, who also traded up to a tougher race. Stamps, the U.S. junior record-holder in the 3,000 meters, ran 4:43 to beat Shannon Sweeney, 37, of Santa Rose, by 17 seconds.

Tom Craig, Jacobs' husband and coach, sees a message in her fist-raising banter.

"I'm sure she was speaking to women," he said. "She was saying to them, 'Let's get up there and run with the men.'"

Jacobs entered the Capitol Mile with tendinitis in her left leg, suffered while she was racing in Europe and worsened by the hard track at the Olympic Trials.

And while most competitors rested the day before, Jacobs ran eight 200-meter sprints Saturday, fast and uphill. She finished the day with a run in the pool.

"I'm very pleased with her performance," Craig said. "The fact that she could handle yesterday's load is a good sign, because she's going to have to tolerate a lot of stress at the Olympics."

FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN THE SACRAMENTO BEE

In the women's 40–49 division, Terry Adams-Schmidt of South Lake Tahoe ran 5:11. Adams-Schmidt, who just turned 40, leads her age group in Northern California's Grand Prix, a points contest over nine road races, including the Capitol Mile.

Joan Ottaway, 52, of Sonora, led the 50–59 division, running 5:32.

Viki Bigelow, 60, of San Lorenzo, who holds world records for her age group in the 800 and 1,500 meters, won her division in 6:27, with Myra Rhodes, 63, of Sacramento second in 6:41. Po Adams, 72, of Carmichael, the oldest woman in the race, ran 9:08.

Top runners in the junior divisions (14 to 19) were Zack McGahey, 17, and Nicole Johnsen, 15, both of Woodland, in 4:38 and 5:41, respectively. The top local woman, Meg Svoboda, 30, of Sacramento, was 10th in 5:11.

On the men's side, Jeremy Barnes, 23, was the top local finisher in the open division, placing 18th in 4:33. Dan Gruber, 40, of Aptos won the 40–49 division in 4:27. In 50–59, Ewar Gordillo, 51, of Columbia won in 4:51.

Bernie Hollander, 60, of Novato won the 60–69 group in 5:29, and Vic Lyons, 70, of Murphys won his age group in 5:51.

The oldest entrants were David Kaplan of Sacramento and Stan Demartinis of Saratoga, both 73, who ran 6:06 and 6:12 to place third and fourth, respectively, in their division.

The youngest entrant was Eric Sumner, 6, of San Jose, who ran 11:03.

And what about the money Jacobs sought?

"I'm still waiting for it," she said.

This article appeared in July 1996.

**FEATURES THAT APPEARED
IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS**



FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS

In addition to writing numerous articles for the *Sacramento Bee*, Theresa regularly contributed articles to a variety of other publications, including the *Sacramento Union*, *FootNotes*, *Mountain Living*, *Ultramarathoners*, *Runner's World*, and *Sacramento* magazine. The following articles are drawn from those publications. When possible, the date of publication is identified.

Kayaker Seeks Rougher Water

Kathy Lynch's parents hardly encouraged physical activity in their daughter, so it is particularly striking that Lynch is now involved in one of the most dangerous sports around, white-water kayaking.

Lynch, 33, a top kayaker in Sacramento, won the 1982 Women's Pacific Divisional Championships and, with her all-women's team, finished second in the Great Eppie's Triathlon Race held this year in Sacramento. They were first in 1985 and third in '84.

Lynch first began kayaking in 1979 through the encouragement of her husband Mike, with whom she also shared a kayak store in her home state of Texas.

This combination of sport and business was only the beginning for Lynch, who later headed a sponsorship program for female endurance athletes. Using her interpersonal skills for the advantage of talented but relatively poor female athletes, she generated funds from numerous big-name organizations.

Through such funding, Kitty Goursolle, a very talented bicyclist, qualified for the 1983 Race Across America, one of the toughest bicycling events in the world. Lynch also single-handedly elicited enough funds to create one of the best women's bicycling teams in the country for the 1984 Spenco 500.

As her funding of athletes reveals, Lynch cares that others gain as much from sport as she so obviously has and urges more women to participate. Currently, only about 10 percent of kayaking participants are women, yet she feels that it's a sport particularly suited to them because it involves skill and finesse more than brute strength. "In white-water kayaking," Lynch said, "the kayaker must be able to relax, to guide the boat and go with the river rather than power through."

Lynch's weekly schedule is intensive. Currently, she works 40 hours a week as a registered nurse at Sutter Memorial Hospital, as well as working as a real estate broker, which eats up an additional 20 hours a week. Yet, despite her incredibly busy work week, she still manages to complete a brutal training program.

Not only does Lynch run and weight-train regularly, but when training for important events, she also rises at 4 a.m. every morning to cycle 12½ miles to work. After work, Kathy arranges a shuttle system with her

husband, meeting him on the bike trail where she exchanges the bike for the kayak. Three days a week, she kayaks 21 miles (for approximately 2½ hours), while on the other days she kayaks 6–7 miles (about 45 minutes), putting in more distance than do most kayakers.

Distance, however, has particular relevance to Lynch since, eventually, she plans to tackle a grueling kayaking distance event, the Texas Water Safari, a 270-mile nonstop kayaking race which takes an average of 60 hours to complete.

Early in her kayaking career, Lynch attempted the Safari but being far from a seasoned kayaker, she completed only 100 miles of the journey—a mere 17 hours during which she was faced with middle-of-the-summer heat, numerous water snakes and rather hostile alligators.

Despite the toll such an event takes on its participants—it's not uncommon for finishers to lose their fingernails and to hallucinate profusely—Kathy is determined to challenge the course again.

But before she returns, Kathy and her husband will open a business which offers organized trips for mountain biking and kayaking fans. This business, combined with the fruitful results of their real estate ventures, will give Kathy six free months each year to concentrate on her training.

“Kathy has reached only 30 percent of her full potential,” said Mike Lynch, a successful trainer of endurance athletes. “When she is able to focus her work energy into her training, the results will be very interesting.”

“Kayaking is actually a peak-less sport; unlike other sports, it doesn't dead-end,” Kathy Lynch said.

“You can participate and do well for as long as you can use and control your mind and for as long as you can overcome the psychological factors.”

This article appeared in the *Sacramento Union* on November 25, 1986. It is one of several that Theresa ghostwrote for Sally Edwards, a biweekly sports columnist.

Bodybuilder Develops More Than Muscles

Forty-three-year-old Nancy Halverstadt, mother of three, has a body like a living anatomy chart. It has won her numerous bodybuilding awards—her most recent, a first place in the open lightweight division of the 1986 Golden Bear Bodybuilding Championships.

But Nancy's background and training prove that bodybuilding requires more than muscles. It requires grueling discipline.

While Nancy has participated in a variety of sports, she contends that judo first developed her capacity for concentration. She explains, "In judo, we would sit on our heels for half an hour just focusing on what we were about to do."

Now, in bodybuilding, Nancy tightly focuses on each and every repetition. To harden her body, she pushes past the normal point of muscular failure; she only ends a set when a muscle begins to "burn."

Nancy's daily regimen certainly requires strength of character. She organizes workouts around a full-time job and her role, until recently, of a single mother. Still, daily workouts exceed three hours with more than two hours of weights, half an hour of posing and additional time several hours a week running, cycling, and teaching body fitness.

Obviously, her workouts are hardly social occasions. She explains, "I have to follow my routine religiously although I must pull it off without being a snob, without being ruthless."

A bodybuilder's diet, in turn, demands megadoses of self-control. To attain the necessary striations for the big day, Halverstadt's fat intake is always low—she avoids dairy products, red meat and sugar—and she eliminates sodium completely, using saltless toothpaste and drinking only distilled water. One gram of sodium holds 50 grams of water. Any salt in her diet, therefore, could ruin muscular definition by bloating her body with water.

Three weeks before competition, however, her caloric intake falls to 1,000 calories a day, two weeks before to 900, and during the final week to a mere 700. Then, meals such as steamed broccoli omelettes made with four egg whites become her standard fare. Workouts continue up to the last day. Her body fat drops to 7 percent.

While the last few weeks of dieting have been known to drive many a bodybuilder to a midnight raid on the refrigerator, Nancy says, "I'm too proud of what I've done so far to let food ruin my efforts. I try to be systematic and intelligent about dieting. Every time I eat, I set the table and make a ritual out of it—even at work!"

For the poised 5-foot-6-inch brunette, the day of competition is well worth all her efforts. With her charismatic stage presence and her ripped up, well-proportioned muscles, she always wins both the judges' and the crowd's support, including Harry Halverstadt's.

She recently married this 6-foot-4-inch, 300-lb former pro-footballer for the New England Saints, and he is one of her most vocal supporters in the always extremely vocal crowd.

Even though most events still fail to offer women's master divisions and so force Nancy to compete against women half her age, she can still expect to win more competitions in 1987. For, like any enduring champion, Nancy finds her reward in the struggle rather than the end. She concludes, "Discipline has become a pleasure in itself."

This article appeared in the *Sacramento Union* in late 1986. It is one of several that Theresa ghostwrote for Sally Edwards, a biweekly sports columnist.

Running for Excellence, Not Glory

Surrounded by simple but tasteful jade ornaments and Japanese prints in her Sacramento home, Christine Iwahashi does not flaunt her running achievements. Over the last few years, the 93-lb, 5-foot-2-inch runner has won many trophies but the only one in view is a recently won team trophy leaning against a sofa.

In the last two years, Iwahashi has placed in the top three berths in more marathons than any other woman in Northern California. And, in December 1986, she qualified for the women's Olympic Trials, following this success with several more marathons culminating in a personal record of 2 hours, 46 minutes, and 19 seconds only a month ago.

Chris feels her best racing qualities are her "patience, stubbornness, and analytical mind." This full-time research assistant in biochemistry at U.C. Davis says, "If I have a bad day, I'm usually able to reason myself out of feeling too depressed. I can tell myself, 'It's O.K. It's not the end of the world.' I also try to examine why I had a bad day, and I try to learn from the experience."

While these are clearly necessary qualities for any person's continued participation in competition, it's Iwahashi's lack of desire for plastic success that serves as the nutritious soil for her steady development in the sport. Chris works hard and pursues excellence for the pleasure of extending herself and not for supremacy over others.

During races and at her regular Tuesday and Thursday night speed workouts with the Buffalo Chips Running Club of Sacramento, a club with approximately 500 members, Chris remains unflustered by the many other strong women runners who use her as a measure of their own performance. Iwahashi is the measure of herself.

With this attitude, she is able to run an average of 85–100 miles a week and maintain a steady vitality that many of the other women runners chasing her lack.

Because Iwahashi does not care about supremacy over others, she is also able to care about giving to others. Iwahashi is currently coaching beginning women runners every Wednesday in preparation for the Susan B. Anthony 5-kilometer race in August.

This article appeared in the *Sacramento Union* in January 1987. It is one of several that Theresa ghostwrote for Sally Edwards, a biweekly sports columnist.

Taylor-Made Art

When Stephanie Taylor was 21, she had a headache bad enough to send her to the hospital. When she awoke the next morning, she knew it was time to change her life.

“I’d been a graphic artist, doing pasteup for seven months,” she remembers. “I realized my head was hurting because I hadn’t learned anything new.”

Twenty years later, Taylor is a nationally known muralist whose work appears at Euro Disney in Paris, in the Grand Floridian—Disney’s five-star hotel in Orlando—in the Hyatt Regency Sacramento and on cinderblock walls from Japan to Los Angeles and Sacramento, where she grew up.

At 16th and P streets, for example, incoming commuters pass a smiling woman on a scaffold painting a Victorian building. Below her stand a few cans of paint, a jar of paintbrushes, and a coffee mug. But do a doubletake and look again—it’s really one of Taylor’s murals. Others around town include those at 19th and U streets at Apache Enterprises, and at 17th and J streets on the west wall of The Bread Store. Taylor painted a line of moviegoers on the boarded-up facade of the Del Paso

Theater—perhaps a good omen for the cinema’s future—and on the wooden fence surrounding a crumbling building on K Street between 8th and 9th streets. She’s just completing a mural at 916 J Street, outside the California Loan and Jewelry Company.

Painting walls has dragged Taylor into some interesting conversations. “When I was painting a mural in Los Angeles,” she says, “a man came up and said, ‘My brother paints flies.’ I wondered if that meant the brother paints fly portraits, men’s flies, or flies in midair.”

Taylor seems most proud of a mural she painted recently for Amelia’s, a restaurant at Oakland airport. Amelia Earhart and two dozen other aviation pioneers who flew out of California stand gathered on the tarmac as if ready for a party. Some have their arms draped around their comrades’ shoulders or lean closely, as if in conversation. But most of them have their eyes on some distant place. “The day after I finished that mural,” says Taylor, “I heard on the radio that they’d discovered Amelia’s black box. I got chills when I heard that.”

The mural stirs the sense in most who see it that they should leave a mark on the world, just as the men and women portrayed have.

Taylor, of course, has already left hers.

This article appeared in the January/February 1993 issue of *Sacramento* magazine.

Running for His Life

Eleven years ago, doctors told Pat Drake her husband would not live through the night. But in the last two years, Jim Drake, 52, has not only run ultramarathons but also won some. In fact, during his most recent win, in January, he smashed a North American age-group record.

Drake ran 213 miles in 48 hours, stacking 25 miles onto the previous record. During the run, part of the Gibson Ranch Ultradistance Classic in Sacramento, California, Drake took only a two-hour break to guzzle food and soak in a hot tub.

On Tuesday, January 5, 1982, however, Drake fought for far more than a record.

That evening, Drake joined members of the Sacramento Buffalo Chips Running Club for a speed workout on the roads. But after one interval, Drake’s head began to pound and his neck wouldn’t turn.

Until then, Drake had been in the best shape of his life, preparing for a local 10-miler. He had never been ill, and these workouts were as familiar to him as his own face. He couldn't believe these strange symptoms meant anything serious.

Drake told himself all he needed was to get to his car, so he began to stagger back. Trouble is, he didn't tell the other runners about his symptoms. The night was cold and foggy, and he wore only shorts and a T-shirt. He didn't get far.

"I fell in the middle of the street," Drake said, "right in front of some stop lights. A car with a woman and a girl in it slowed down, so I tapped on the window and asked for help. The woman opened it only a quarter of an inch and said, 'Follow me.'"

Fortunately, Drake did not have to follow the woman far, since she lived on the other side of the street. He made it to the house, and the woman's husband came to the door. By now, Drake had turned an ominous blue.

"The man took one look at me," said Drake, "and said, 'Guy, you got trouble.' He pulled me into the house and put me into his bed."

At the hospital, doctors told Drake's wife he had suffered a brain aneurysm. Essentially, with an increase in blood pressure, an artery in his head had ballooned and broken. Worse yet, the doctors were unable to operate on him because the damage was too close to the optic nerve. They never expected him to live.

Somehow, Drake survived, staying in the hospital for five weeks. In May of that year, he even paced a good friend to a 3:21 marathon.

Drake's running did not cause the aneurysm, but his doctors think it may have saved him.

They believe a defect he never knew about had caused his Tuesday night drama. The defect meant he was vulnerable to a hemorrhage any time his blood pressure shot up.

"Lifting a heavy box," said Drake, "could have triggered the aneurysm as easily as running. In fact, the doctors said my strong cardiovascular system, built up through years of running, may have actually helped me survive."

Still, Drake has changed his approach to running since his diagnosis. Long, slow running does not raise his blood pressure in the same way short, hard speedwork might. So now, if he runs intervals, he never runs

them at maximum pace. That's one reason long races suit him so well, even if odd things happen during his record-setting ones.

"By the end of Gibson Ranch," said Drake, "stop signs were chasing me and green garbage cans were trying to attack me."

This article appeared in *FootNotes* in summer 1993.

The Ultimate Racers

They run through air hotter than a blast from a hair dryer and over pavement temperatures of 200 degrees. They run through the night, in sheer desert blackness with the flit of bats and the howl of coyotes chasing them through the dark.

When the race started, the temperature was 117 degrees in the shade. That was bad enough, but the 12 runners were embarking on 146 miles—from the lowest point in the Western Hemisphere to the highest in the continental United States. To get there, they had to pass through Death Valley, the hottest, driest place on earth.

What are these people doing? And why?

The short answer is that they are running the Hi-Tec Badwater 146, starting at Badwater, Calif., 282 feet below sea level and finishing on snow-covered Mount Whitney at 14,495 feet.

The longer, more complicated answer is that they are ultramarathoners, people who run just about anything longer than the 26.2 miles of a marathon. On the outside, most of them are normal, hardworking people. On the inside, they are a mix of pioneer, explorer, and hero. And, yes, with at least a twist of craziness.

Modern-day office work and a quick half-hour in the gym aren't enough for these people. They are drawn to more elemental challenges.

That's partly why in last year's sixth annual race on July 14, Marshall Ulrich of Fort Morgan, Colo., thought it worthwhile to limp through the last 70 miles on a sprained ankle. That's why, behind Ulrich—despite sleep deprivation, swollen feet, huge blisters, and nausea—nine other men also finished the race.

Ulrich, 42, did get \$1,000 for winning, finishing in 28 hours and 53 minutes, only two hours slower than his 1992 course record. But the

money barely covers expenses. Most ultramarathons don't even offer prize money.

But try to get ultrarunners to explain why they do it, and most of them stumble over their words like painters trying to describe their paintings. For them, the struggle itself, not language, is their medium.

"I don't know what it is," says 58-year-old Jack Denness of Kent, England, who finished eighth. "It just draws you back."

What drew Denness and the others back last year seemed to be a roller-coaster course—where one difficulty ends, another begins. They cross 43 miles of Death Valley, climb 18 miles to Townes Pass (5,000 feet), and descend steeply to the 12 flat miles of Panamint Valley, where dust devils swirl across the scrub and temperatures hit 110 degrees.

Again they climb, 2,000 feet in eight miles, from where they can see clouds of silt billowing off the dry salt pan of Owens Lake, drained by the thirst of Los Angeles. As the runners pass the lake, winds gusting up to more than 40 miles per hour blow salt into their faces and slam shut their crews' car doors.

Then comes Lone Pine, a small town at the foot of the Sierra Nevada, where Mount Whitney presides. From here begins the 13 uphill miles to the chilly trailhead at 8,360 feet, the official finish of the race. The Park Service won't grant permits to race organizers for the next 11 miles to Whitney's summit, so the runners get their own and climb to the summit unofficially.

Their times to the trailhead ranged from Ulrich's 28 hours 53 minutes to John Shehady's 58 hours and 41 minutes. Each racer was there by invitation only.

Their emotions ride the roller coaster, too. One of Ulrich's low points came about 102 miles into the race. Some 38 miles earlier, coming off Townes Pass, he turned his ankle on a small stone, and the ensuing battle with pain drained him of simple decision-making powers.

"What are we going to do?" Ulrich asked his crew as they repeatedly iced and bandaged his foot.

"We're just going to walk it off, that's all, just walk it off," one crew member replied, and Ulrich, trusting the voice, heaved himself out of his chair and continued.

Mark Macy, 39, of Denver, Colo., also lost hope for a while. "At one point," says Macy, who finished fifth in 43 hours and 40 minutes,

“I thought I had 30 miles left, but when I found out I had 47, I almost cried. Then I did nothing but whine for three hours. Finally, I realized I was bumming my brother-in-law out, and I decided I couldn’t whine all night long.”

And when there weren’t physical and emotional setbacks, there were nighttime hallucinations playing on the runners’ nerves, distracting them from their task. This year, blocking his path in the dark desert, Macy saw a sign that said, “Road Closed.” “I got kind of angry because my crew didn’t see it.”

Yet ultrarunners usually access difficulties as part of the game. “Everyone is the same,” Ulrich says. “We all feel pain, fear, sadness, happiness. It’s just our reactions to those things that can be different, how we deal with what we feel.”

But the race isn’t all drama. Seventh-place finisher Dr. Ben Jones, 60, from Lone Pine, Calif., traveled with a moving oasis in a large U-Haul truck. When he sat down for the occasional break, his crew pulled out two plastic palm trees to shade him. Such shenanigans are difficult for most regular folks to fathom.

Rick Senter, by all definitions just a regular guy, showed up near the race’s end, July 16, to see his sister, Willette, marry Ulrich. He expected the festivities of a 10K. Instead, Ulrich’s tired crew pressed him into service to feed Ulrich chicken noodle soup, water, and candy as the winner hobbled painfully up the last 13 steep miles to the end.

It was Senter’s first glimpse of an ultrarunner’s ability to push forward where 99 percent of us would give up. “I think the people who do this race aren’t the same after,” Senter says, “but I also think the people who watch it aren’t the same either. When I was younger, I used to do some hiking with my buddies, and we’d climb a summit or two and think we were pretty tough. I’d puff my chest out. Now I would just have to bow down in absolute admiration of these guys.”

This article appeared in *Ultramarathoners* in April 1994.

Saving the Elms

Marguerite Crouse has an eerie connection to elm trees. She was born on the East Coast one year after the first case of Dutch elm disease hit the eastern shores. The plague followed her, stop by stop, to the West.

“I lived in Madison, Wisconsin, in the ‘50s and ‘60s,” she says, “and every elm was lost. The disease hit like a whirlwind.”

Madison’s streets, once shaded by the stately trees, became barren strips. In addition to beauty, the city lost vital protection against the summer sun, the winter winds and urban air pollution.

Now Crouse lives in Sacramento, and in 1990, the disease struck within the county limits. By the end of the year, the disease had killed 10 trees, four of them within the city. Since then, it has accelerated, decimating about 122 county trees and 27 city ones in 1993 alone.

If the disease continues to accelerate, the community has a lot to lose. The county owns about 25,000 elms; the city has more than 22,000, about half of which city residents own. Each tree is valued at an average of \$1,000, and the American Forestry Association estimates that, during its lifetime, a tree contributes about \$57,000 through energy reduction and pollution control.

However, despite the savings elms offer in the long run, lack of funding in the here-and-now is making it difficult to maintain the trees so they have a better chance of resistance. Because Marguerite Crouse believes saving them now will save money later, she formed Sacramento’s Save the Elm Project (STEP) in July 1993.

Among other things, Crouse hopes her project will step in where government programs can no longer keep up. She wants to raise money and volunteers to inspect the elms several times annually so that diseased trees can be removed before they infect others.

The disease comes from a fungus carried on the bodies of elm bark beetles (not the same as elm *leaf* beetles that give leaves a lacy, skeletal appearance). The beetles lay their eggs beneath the bark of diseased, dying, or recently cut wood, such as prunings or broken limbs. During the spring and summer, the young bark beetles then feed on healthy elms, creating tiny tunnels in the wood along which the fungus spores stick.

To combat the invading fungus, the tree releases a gummy substance inside its branches and trunks. The gooey gel meant to save the

tree's life instead cuts off water and nutrients. The first visible signs of the disease are dry, wilted leaves.

If more than one major limb is infected, chances are the tree is beyond saving. Moreover, because the beetle can breed in diseased or dying elm wood, it is crucial to remove the tree quickly and bury it in a sanitary landfill. The trees cannot be burned because of air pollution standards, and to create special incinerators would be very costly, says Martin Fitch, park superintendent of the city's tree services division.

Budget cuts are not helping. From 1990 until June 1993, the state funded the Dutch Elm Disease Project to monitor trees in local counties, including Sacramento. In June, the project was cut.

"The project had people out surveying and sampling," says Fitch. "It did the best job where there was no municipal responsibility and where property owners didn't have the financial means to remove the trees themselves."

Now, without the state program, property owners are liable for removal costs.

"We'll encourage property owners to take responsibility," says Fitch. "But you can spend \$2,000 real quick removing a big elm." Because it costs so much to remove an elm, property owners may be reluctant or unable to do so, but the longer a diseased tree stands, the more dangerous it is to neighboring trees and the weaker it becomes structurally.

Another difficulty in controlling the disease is the shortage of diagnostic services. Dutch elm disease has to be confirmed through lab analysis. When the state cut its elm project, it also shut down a lab that specialized in this analysis.

"What we've lost is a higher degree of priority," says Fitch. "Although we have a lab in Sacramento to submit our samples to, it also diagnoses other problems." The danger now is that a backlog could develop at the Sacramento lab. Consequently, diseased elms may not be diagnosed fast enough to prevent the disease from spreading.

Also, while the state project had a special inspection program—establishing a data base of 16,000 trees, looking for symptoms and taking samples annually—the city and county do not have the resources to be this thorough.

City elms are not on a special inspection program but are examined during the course of other services. Some residents assume city tree

trimmers can watch out for the disease, but for the majority of the city's trees, the service is so infrequent that the disease has a good chance of taking hold long before a trimmer would find it. There is more chance of the disease being detected through another service—when pesticides are applied against elm leaf beetles.

These leaf-chewing beetles cause leaves to drop prematurely. Unlike the elm bark beetles, though, they do not kill the trees. However, though the elm leaf beetle has infested Sacramento's elms for many years, last year it struck in record numbers, causing locals to rake their midsummer leaves almost every other day. When trees keep losing their leaves prematurely, they have a more difficult time getting the nutrients they need to stay healthy. Eventually, they become weaker, just as a human might who suffers from a constant, low-grade infection. This makes the trees more vulnerable to other problems, including Dutch elm disease.

To pile difficulty upon difficulty, even the treatment program for elm leaf beetle is facing regulatory and funding problems. In former years, to keep the leaf beetle under control, the city used the pesticide Bidrin®. But last year, the manufacturer withdrew it from the California market because regulations required it to be tested for reregistration and the manufacturer found it unprofitable to pay for testing and registration costs.

The city chose another pesticide. However, it is more short-lived, requiring more exact timing and more frequent application. The city could not afford the additional humanpower to apply the pesticide effectively. Consequently, the elm leaf beetle got a stronger hold on the trees than it has had for more than a decade. Now, with the elm leaf and elm bark beetles breeding and laying their eggs during yet another spring, Sacramento is facing a run against time.

Crouse and others insist hope is out there in the form of more effective, even safer pesticides that require fewer applications, but only if the community can keep the trees alive long enough for research and testing to be completed.

Keeping the trees alive is essentially Crouse's goal.

As of January, STEP had gathered \$5,000, more than 250 volunteers, and the endorsement of the Sacramento Tree Foundation. But it needs more money if it is to reinstate the functions of the lost state program.

STEP plans to hire staff to continue the computerized identification of every elm in the county. It also plans to train volunteers to survey the

trees from May through September, when the elm bark beetles are at their most active and it is easiest to identify the disease. “The faster we can find a diseased tree and remove it,” Crouse says, “the more likely we are to save the surrounding population.”

STEP also wants to train county residents to monitor their own neighborhoods and to properly feed, water and prune their elms to keep them as healthy and resistant as possible.

But to succeed, Crouse says, people need to start caring now. “This is the state capital, the city of trees,” she says. “The elms are part of our sense of history and place.”

Theresa McCourt is a midtown-based freelance writer who replaced her 1981 station wagon last August after a tree fell and crushed it; during February’s storms, another tree fell, smashing her new car.

This article appeared in the April 1994 issue of *Sacramento* magazine.

Mountain Lion Attacks Runner

On Saturday, April 23, Barbara Schoener was attacked and killed by a mountain lion as she ran alone on a trail that makes up part of the Western States 100 course near Cool, California. In the months that followed, Schoener’s identity and love of long-distance running seemed to get lost in a controversy ignited by the circumstances of her death.

For eight days after the attack, the California Department of Fish and Game tracked the mountain lion over rugged terrain and through tick-infested bushes. During that time, environmentalists and hunters renewed a familiar debate.

Hunters pointed to an overpopulation of mountain lions, now about 5,000 in California, as the reason for Schoener’s death. They blamed a California law that allows mountain lions to be shot only if they threaten humans, pets or domestic livestock. Environmentalists countered that the real blame lies in the increasing encroachment of the suburbs into mountain lion territory.

The debate so occupied the media that little was said of Schoener, except that she was a 40-year-old mother of two, lived in Placerville and worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Accounts also

mentioned that a fund had been established for her two children, Andrew, 8, and Anna, 5.

On Sunday, May 1, the trackers found and shot the mountain lion. Three days later, they found the lion's 7-week-old cub hiding under some rocks. Animal lovers began sending donations for the cub's upkeep.

A little more than three weeks later, on his national talk show, Rush Limbaugh picked up a wire story and complained that the children's fund had received only \$9,000 while the lion cub fund had received \$21,000.

Limbaugh did not mention that \$15,000 of the cub's fund was apparently a pledge from the nonprofit Folsom City Zoo in California, where the cub was being cared for. At any rate, his report prompted new donations to the Schoener fund.

All this meant little to Pete Schoener, who was coping with his wife's sudden death amid all the controversies. "As far as the funds go, I don't want to make an issue of that," said Schoener. "People should be allowed to do what they want with their money."

Also, despite some newspaper reports to the contrary, Schoener insists that he is making no claims against the Department of Fish and Game. "Barbara and I weren't the type to sue over things no one has any control over," he says. "It's a matter of assuming responsibility for our own actions."

Barbara Schoener was known for her enthusiastic enjoyment of family, friends and running. "She always seemed to know that life is fleeting and should be cherished," says one of her closest friends, Cynthia Underwood of Sacramento, California. "It was her refrain."

On Memorial Day, about 75 entrants in the Western States 100-Mile gathered for a 20-mile training run dedicated to Barbara. As a lasting tribute, a bench will be placed alongside the trail where she died.

Before the run, Pete Schoener and Antonio Rossmann, a member of the board of trustees for Western States, each spoke a few words. Rossmann ended with some encouragement for Schoener: "When the press, the radio shows, the television and the politicians are gone," he said, "we will still be here for you. We will stand by you, Pete, because we are your family."

With that, the runners nodded their heads and filed silently onto the trail.

This article appeared in *Runner's World* in September 1994.

In Honor of Barbara

*A tribute to the California woman killed
by a mountain lion*

Forty-year-old Barbara Schoener died last April. She was killed by a mountain lion on the Auburn Lake Trails near Cool, California, while running by herself.

Like most runners who heard the news, I was shocked and saddened for the battle she must have fought and for her two children and husband so unexpectedly left behind. I didn't know her personally. But her death left a strange knot in the stomach, a pang in the heart.

I could not let another week pass without paying tribute to her.

Barbara died running alone. And some might say that was her mistake. But she also died doing something runners love to do: exploring their individuality on long runs through the wilderness.

Such long, lonely treks must certainly seem crazy to people who do little more than walk from front door to car and from car to office. But runners like me who love the outdoors know what the trail is like. We know its lure.

Only a week before Barbara's death, I ran with two friends near the trail where she died. From part of it, you can look down at the dark waters of the north fork of the American River. On either side of the rugged trail, wildflowers bloom—poppies, broom and lupine.

Another part of the trail, where Barbara was running, rises up through a wide meadow. When I saw it, a light breeze was combing the new grass as if it were long, glossy hair.

Other parts of the trail dip down into darkened places, where, later in the year, blackberry bushes attract the bears. There are creeks to splash through and slippery rocks to cross. Poison oak, green and oily, creeps onto the trail.

The point is, the trail is beautiful, and yes, dangerous, and Barbara liked to go there alone.

Once, during a long race along part of the Pacific Crest Trail through Tahoe National Forest, I became separated from the runners ahead and the runners behind. I ran down a lonely, rocky trail, with buzzards wheeling overhead.

Because, like many women, I usually play it safe, it was a strange feeling for me, being alone for the first time in the wilderness. I felt small and vulnerable, but also somehow exhilarated by this unexpected exposure to the land. Nature was all around. There were no walls, no signs, no stores, no people. For a woman, especially, that is a rare experience, to be alone outside with no protector nearby.

When I heard the news about Barbara's death, I first thought about writing a column about safety, an article warning runners not to venture out alone on any trail. I still advise that.

But I would like to think Barbara knew the risk and made her choice because being there alone—and vulnerable—gave her something that much of modern life prevents us from knowing.

I'd like to think that her weekend runs alone on the trail filled her with a renewed sense of her own wildness. And as a result of those runs, she brought back a kind of power for her family and her friends.

Another time, I may write about safety, but for now, let's honor Barbara's choice to run, a mere once a week, in the wilds.

This article appeared in *Runner's World* in September 1994.

Sick of Being Breathless

When Sue Anne Foster was in her late twenties, she got as close to being drunk as a person can who rarely touches a drop.

She went mountain climbing.

With her date, a handsome Norwegian, she climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, near the Kenyan border, feeling very giddy as they topped the mountain at an elevation of more than 19,000 feet.

"I felt very happy," she says, "yet everything was in slow motion. I felt as if it would be very easy to find a nice quiet spot to sleep."

But she didn't give in to her sluggishness or allow the cold mountain air to seep into her bones.

"My date kept nudging me in the back," she says, "so that kept me awake."

Though she felt euphoric, Foster's judgment was—rather like a drunk person's—impaired. She was showing a symptom of acute mountain sickness (AMS).

Foster was fortunate, considering her inexperience and how quickly she climbed, that she didn't suffer any of the more unpleasant effects. Other folks, even at lower altitudes, have not been so lucky.

In August 1992, for example, a plane crash investigator in the Himalayas died of severe altitude illness. He collapsed at 11,500 feet.

You don't have to be climbing a renowned peak or investigating jet-liner crashes to be susceptible.

"More and more people are going to mountain resorts," says Dr. Charles S. Houston, one of the world's leading authorities on high altitude disorders, "and about 25 percent of them who go above 9,000 feet get altitude sickness."

Many mountain resorts lie between 8,000 to 10,000 feet, and visiting skiers, hikers and mountain bikers will frequently reach heights of 12,000 feet during the day.

Of the folks likely to get AMS, about one percent could experience potentially fatal complications such as edema, which occurs when the brain or lungs swell.

But for most, altitude sickness is less dire—though the discomfort, like sea sickness, can sometimes leave victims fantasizing about a quick death.

The symptoms, which vary in kind and intensity according to the person, can include headaches, loss of appetite, lethargy, nausea, vomiting, sleeplessness, loss of coordination, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, personality changes, dizziness and nosebleeds.

Since humans can die within six or seven minutes when completely deprived of oxygen, it makes sense that, as we rise into thinner, oxygen-reduced air, our bodies would put up this kind of fuss.

The higher we go, the more difficult it gets. Our metabolisms race, breathing gets faster, and even at rest, our heart rates increase.

Meanwhile, the maximum amount of oxygen the body can take up and deliver to working muscles (called VO₂ max) decreases. The universal formula for this decrease is about a three-percent reduction above 5,000 feet for each 1,000-foot increase in elevation.

Going by this formula, by 9,000 feet folks have lost about 12 percent of their VO₂. That explains some of that huffing and puffing as new arrivals stagger up hotel stairs.

Even the fittest fall foul to a reduced VO₂.

Last fall, a group of invited athletes competed in the Fila Everest SkyMarathon in Tibet—at 14,340 feet, the highest 26.2-mile race in the world. The winner, Matt Carpenter of Colorado Springs, Colo., ran almost two minutes per mile slower than he would have at sea level. His 6:40-minutes-per-mile at the base of Everest was equivalent to about a 5-minute pace in the lowlands.

We also lose water more quickly the higher we go: the air is drier, and we urinate more frequently.

Yet, Dr. Houston and other experts say these effects don't have to turn into sickness. With the following precautions, most people can enjoy a highland vacation with very little—if any—discomfort.

Acclimate: A slow entry into the new environment counters one of the predominant causes of altitude sickness—reaching high places too quickly and exercising too much.

“In the Rocky Mountains of the U.S.,” write researchers Stephen Wood and Otto Appenzeller in a physiology article, “a typical case of AMS is a skier who flies in from sea level and within hours is skiing at 10,000 feet or higher.”

There is a rule of thumb: Above 5,000 feet, allow one day to adjust for each additional 1,000 feet. But, says Dr. Houston, if time really doesn't allow this, go a little faster but sleep at lower altitudes.

“Climbers,” he says, “call it ‘packing high and sleeping low.’”

Here are some other ways to avoid Rocky Mountain low:

- **Don't jump into it:** In the first 48 hours, take it somewhat easy. Research shows that some light walking, rather than full-blown exercise, will keep headaches at bay without taxing the system.
- **Drink plenty of water:** Normally, we need about eight glasses daily, but at high altitudes experts recommend about two quarts. Remember, though, don't drink from mountain streams or lakes. The presence of the bacteria giardia can cause a long-lasting form of Montezuma's Revenge.
- **Avoid alcohol:** Though you may feel as if you have a hangover, don't take a hair of the dog that didn't bite you. For one, it increases the hangover effect, and for another, it increases dehydration by causing you to urinate more.

- **Avoid caffeine:** Like alcohol, it causes dehydration. Also, you may already be counting yaks and llamas at night, so avoid drinks that prevent sleep.
- **Maintain a high-carbohydrate diet:** Avoid protein and fat on active days, and consume carbs every two or three hours. Foods that work well include bread, bagels, crackers, pasta and fruit. “A high-carbo diet is easier to digest than protein and fat,” says Dr. Robert Lind. He is the medical adviser for the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, from California’s Squaw Valley to Auburn. “At high altitudes, everything works faster,” he says, “and carbs are the easiest food to eat to fuel the system quickly.”
- **With a doctor’s okay, try Diamox:** Available by prescription, the drug can prevent altitude sickness and reduce some of the symptoms. Dr. Houston recommends half a 250-mg tablet twice a day.
- **On climbs, use power breathing and resting steps:** Foster, who is now 50 years old, has recently learned new techniques to move through rarified air. Last year, cancer claimed her left breast, but early this year, with other breast cancer survivors, she will climb Mount Aconcagua in Argentina, the tallest mountain in the Western Hemisphere. There, the group will combine power breathing (blowing out on each step) with foot rests. “When you take one step up,” she says, “you put all your weight on the back foot. On Mount Rainier recently, I got behind a guide who had a steady, steady rhythm. It was almost like meditation.”
- **If symptoms persist, descend:** If you or anyone else in your party develops symptoms, the best cure is to get to lower altitudes as soon as possible. Don’t let the fear of seeming weak prevent you from heading down. Quick descents, followed by medical attention, have saved many lives.

This article appeared in the spring 1995 issue of *Mountain Living*.

The Long Run

Athletes who compete in grueling 100-mile races thrive on the intensity, exhilaration, and lessons they learn about life.

The race spans a vertical distance greater than the climb from sea level to the top of Mount Everest.

Organizers describe the course, known as Hardrock, without euphemisms. It includes “extremes of altitude and the accompanying dangers associated with running in wild, remote country,” according to a description in *UltraRunning* magazine. The 70 runners who will gather in Silverton, Colorado, to compete in the July event will reach a peak of 14,048 feet, cross 11 passes exceeding 12,000 feet each, and climb a total of 32,700 feet.

All told, they will run 100 miles.

Runs of this length, on mountainous or undulating trails, are gaining ground in the world of cross-country competition. Last year an estimated 1,100 people ran 100-mile trail races in the United States. Since the first of these events was organized in 1977, at least 15 have cropped up from coast to coast.

Travel agent Suzi Thibeault, 48, of Colfax, California, has run 12 of the 15 races since she discovered 100-milers 10 years ago. “I do it because I can,” she says.

For Thibeault, running a 100-miler is like living a lifetime in one weekend. “I get to experience anguish and joy in this concentrated way, and I like that intensity,” she says. “It draws us runners together in emotional bonds that most people in their everyday lives just don’t get. You go to work. You come home. And there isn’t that kind of depth.”

In February, Thibeault ran a 100-miler through the Arizona desert. At 4:30 a.m., after 24 hours of running, she came across a man moving only 6 inches with each step. The course was poorly marked, it was dark, and he was crying.

“He didn’t think he could make it to the next aid station,” Thibeault said. “I walked with him, held his hand, gave him some of my Ibuprofen.” Eventually, Thibeault ran ahead to get help at the next aid station.

“I only knew his first name, the town he was from,” she says, “and yet I held his life in my hands.”

Joe Schlereth, 46, who manages a life insurance company in Fresno, California, is also a dedicated 100-miler. He is one of about 40 people who have survived the “Grand Slam,” a series of four races in one summer. In a distinctive feat, Schlereth placed in the top 10 in each race and also completed a fifth.

“There’s no money in it, or very little,” he says, “and it requires a lot of sacrifices. But what it gives you, you can’t see from the outside. It has inner-driven qualities.”

Schlereth, the father of two teenagers, compares running a 100-miler to life. “You feel excited at the beginning, but along the way you’ll have problems, hit bad points, want to quit,” he says. “But if you can just persevere, you’ll have a fifth or sixth wind, and suddenly it gets better. If it doesn’t, you just might have to bear your cross for a while.”

The two runners take very different approaches to training. Thibeault runs twice a week: 6 to 10 miles during the week and 25 to 50 miles during one day on the weekend. Schlereth averages 180 miles each week and sometimes tops 220. “Some people, if they’re not competitive like I am, can get away with 50 to 60 miles,” Schlereth says. “I’m probably extreme in the way I approach it.”

Former woodcutter and expert equestrian Gordy Ainsleigh initiated the oldest and largest 100-mile trail race in existence—the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run from Squaw Valley to Auburn, California—more than 20 years ago. For two years, he had competed in the 100-mile Tevis Cup, a horse race held on the Western States trail since 1955. But in 1974, the 6-foot-3-inch mountain man left his horse behind and ran the course in 23 hours and 42 minutes.

Ainsleigh, now a 49-year-old Auburn chiropractor, will again be among the competitors in this year’s Western States, which 198 of 400 runners finished last year. Ainsleigh has completed 10 Western States races, eight of them in less than 24 hours. About four years ago, he began running other 100-milers, including races in Wasatch, Vermont, and Leadville, Colorado.

“I seem to be doing more and more, not less,” says the man generally credited with sparking the 100-mile craze. “I think as long as my health holds, I’ll keep doing these runs.”

This article appeared in the May/June 1996 issue of *Mountain Living*.

Three-Part Harmony

Different in some ways, similar in others, the Rouse triplets are closest when sharing a run.

If you ran with them in a race, you'd think the same woman was passing you again, and again, and again. And rather than slowing down, like many runners their age, the "Rouse Triplets" are getting faster.

Honor Fetherston of Mill Valley, California, is 42, and last year she ran 2:44 for her fastest marathon ever. Her sisters, Sharon Vos of Riverside, Connecticut, and Shelley Sumner of San Jose, California, also run, and they have marathon bests of 2:57 and 3:07.

The triplets were born November 1, 1954, to Honor Rouse, whose husband, John, was an Air Force general. Like most military families, the Rouses moved from base to base, but when the triplets were 11, the family finally planted their roots in Tacoma, Washington.

At Clover Park High School, the triplets became almost the entire girls' track team. Shelley was the powerhouse, running the 100-yard dash, the long jump and the triple jump. Sharon ran hurdles and occasionally the long jump, and Honor did the 440 and occasionally the mile. Now and then, Honor would even fill in for the high jump.

Throughout high school and college, they earned straight A's. "None of us wanted to be the dumb one," says Honor, "and none of us wanted to be last."

It wasn't until they were about 14 years old that the triplets tried to take separate paths. They decided not to wear the same outfits on the same day. "One would buy an outfit, and the other two would want it," says Honor. "Finally, we said, 'You know, we really ought to stop this.'"

They made a similar decision at graduation. "We never planned it," says Honor, "but we intuitively knew we'd go to separate colleges. We needed to separate, get our own identities. Be apart from each other."

Despite the sisters' efforts to head in different directions, they still veered toward a common path. All three earned business degrees. They married their husbands within a year's time in 1976–77.

While Shelley and Sharon each have two children, Honor doesn't have any. But she sometimes feels as if her nephews, Ben and Eric Sumner (ages 11 and 7), and her nieces, Jennifer and Sophie Vos (9 and 5), are her own.

FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Normally, the kids never confuse who is who. But occasionally, when Honor and Shelley return from a run, both wearing hats and sunglasses, Eric will look from one to the other and ask, "Are you my mom?"

It took the triplets' brother, John (four years their senior), until his college years to distinguish them from each other. "One Christmas, he sat opposite us," says Honor, "and stared and stared. When we asked him what he was doing, he said, 'I'm gonna tell you three apart if I have to sit here forever.'"

Honor has the longest history as a competitive runner. Her first road race was in 1979, when her husband Bob's siblings and father wanted the couple to run the Virginia 10-Miler. To everyone's surprise, including Honor's, she finished it in 80 minutes.

In 1984, Honor ran her first marathon at Oakland, finishing in 3:27. Over the next two years, she lowered her best to 2:57:08, clocked at the 1986 California International Marathon in Sacramento. It was there that she began to dream of qualifying for the Olympic Trials. She made several attempts over the next four years but fell short.

Then she began training under Ken Grace, currently Dean of Athletics at Chabot College in Hayward, California. Honor met him when he was the cross-country and track coach at the City College of San Francisco, where she was taking classes in '92 and '93.

"The biggest change," says Grace, "was getting Honor to slow down. I tell my runners, 'You can't go hard the day after a hard workout. It's like going to the bank to take out a second loan when you haven't paid off the first.'"

Before long, Honor began smashing her old, long-standing best times. In 1994, at the age of 40, she finally qualified for the 1996 Olympic Marathon Trials. In 1995, she ran 17:06 for the 5K and 1:13:54 for the half marathon, becoming the American women's masters record-holder for the half (since broken).

At the 1996 Trials, Honor finished as the second masters woman and 49th overall, even though she entered the race with a seeding of 78th. Her best came just two months later, when she ran 2:44 at the 100th Boston Marathon.

"You could say to Honor, 'Run a 63-second quarter tomorrow at such and such a heart rate,' and if a storm were coming down with the

rain horizontal, she would follow your directions to a tee,” says Grace. “That’s a self-discipline you don’t find in many people. What she does is try to take her gift to its highest level.”

Sharon and Shelley are really no different—just more recently zealous. Sharon has more history than Shelley in long-distance running. Still, her pregnancies and the children’s toddler years made serious racing difficult until now.

Sharon first took an interest in the marathon while living in New York. She moved there in 1984, after spending three years in Holland and another three in Belgium with her Dutch-born husband, Joost. One fall weekend, they took a break from painting their apartment and went to Central Park. It was hard not to notice that thousands of runners were trudging by, and the couple realized they were watching the New York City Marathon. The following year, Sharon ran the race, finishing in 3:32.

She continued to run races for recreation until after the birth of her first daughter in 1988. Then she really focused. In 1989, she clocked a marathon-best 3:02, and in 1994, she hit 2:57. For the next two years, she was plagued on and off by injuries. Now working with a coach (Mike Barnow, head of the Westchester Track Club), she wants to take her marathon time below 2:55.

Shelley’s path has perhaps been the toughest. Until the fall of 1990, when her youngest son was six months old, she and her husband, Stan, skied, biked, golfed and even ran a few races on weekends. They always did it for fun, not competition. But then Stan was diagnosed with throat cancer, even though he ate well, exercised and never smoked.

As Stan went through a roller coaster of recoveries and setbacks, Shelley turned to running as a way of holding herself and her family together.

“It was my chance to get away, to cry if I wanted to,” she says. “I didn’t have to talk to anyone, so I could think and figure out whatever I needed to. It must have relieved the stress in my body, too, because I’d come through the door afterward and feel like I could deal with whatever was waiting.”

Stan died in 1993 at the age of 40. He and Shelley had been together for 18 years. Her throat tightens with the effort of holding back tears whenever she talks about him. But she proceeds nonetheless.

FEATURES THAT APPEARED IN OTHER PUBLICATIONS

After Stan's death, Honor encouraged Shelley to increase her running and racing. In 1995, the sisters ran together at the Cal 10, a 10-miler in Stockton, California. Honor placed second in the masters division, and Shelley placed third in 66:39. "I was thrilled to get a medal with Honor," she says. "After that, I was hooked."

Honor and Bob have stayed with Shelley just about every weekend since Stan's death. They take turns babysitting so Shelley can squeeze in workouts. Bob frequently fixes things around the house and mentors the boys.

Each sister says her biggest loss has been the death of Stan. "His passing away was devastating," says Sharon. "We are all so close, even spending our vacations together."

Honor agrees. "It jolted me into realizing that life is very short," she says. "It helped me focus. Instead of saying, 'Oh, some day I'll do that,' I start doing it."

Says Shelley, "I see people get upset about little things, just like I used to, but now I know there are bigger things to get upset about, and one day those people will realize it, too."

Last year, the sisters ran the 100th Boston Marathon together, coming full circle from the day they sent each other into the world to develop their independence. They wore identical Asics outfits.

Honor led with her 2:44 best, finishing as the first U.S. masters woman and third U.S. female. Sharon followed in 3:00:05, and Shelley completed the team in only her second marathon with a 3:12.

"Of all the races I've done," says Shelley, "that race meant the most. I would have done anything to finish, so I could give something back to my sisters."

This article appeared in *Runner's World* in July 1997.

OTHER PIECES



My Notes

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Winter Cutting

It is February, and the stems of the passion vine are brown, with brittle tendrils that, when my fingers lightly brush them, fall to the ground. Last year's summer sun wove the stems in and out of the trellis, leaves filling the empty spaces between the slats of pale wood. Now, I can see through the holes, between the bare wood and bare stems, to the other side.

Still, I take my large scissors, the ones with black handles, and cut the stems back. I am severe in my cutting so that yards of vine, once clinging to their mooring, now lie at my feet, dried of sap. They crackle as I tread over them to cut more and more.

When I step away, only a few strands of vine, like thin pipe lines, remain. For a moment, a fear takes hold. With the gray sky, the bitter air, it is easy to believe that, this time, I have cut too much. But when I move closer and carefully search the dark lines, I see a few small nubs, pushing against the skin of the vine.

Then, I hear my gardener, just beneath my fear, full of strength and promises.

This piece appeared in *The Sac City Literary Express* in 1992.

Save the Watchdog

In California government, taxpayers have very few real friends. But come November, they may lose one of their last defenders.

Since 1955, the auditor general has exposed a huge range of wasteful government practices. These findings have saved hundreds of millions of dollars and made a multitude of services more effective.

A few examples of the office's disclosures of wasted money in recent years include: \$67 million in grants and other funds mismanaged by the Oakland Unified School District; \$156 million in federal funds for California's foster care programs that went unclaimed by the Department of Social Services; at least \$26.6 million in state funds wasted in one year because of weak fiscal controls among 30 state agencies.

Further, through the office's yearly audit of the state's financial statements, California receives \$16 billion annually in federal funds.

No other state department or outside contractor can conduct this audit as efficiently.

Even though the office has benefited the state so significantly, it spends less to expose government abuse than any other state. For every dollar the office spends, it saves California taxpayers more than \$6.

So why is the office threatened with closure? In November 1990, taxpayers voted for Proposition 140, not only to impose term limits but also to cut legislative spending by 38 percent. To meet the cuts, the Legislature laid off more than 600 employees. It also cut several district offices.

The Legislature then looked beyond the Capitol for more cuts and found two offices, the legislative analyst's and the auditor general's.

Even though the auditor general receives no legislative funds for its operations, legislators decided that the office fell within the meaning of "total aggregate expenditures of the Legislature" for the purposes of Prop. 140.

The fact that the office actually receives its funding from the state's General Fund, not the Legislature's budget, was never revealed in the politicians' speeches to the public.

Indeed, it is the auditor general's nonpartisan stance that has left it vulnerable to closure. The office's reports are always unbiased, never favoring one party or person over another. Now, it has no political favors to fall back on. And the employees of the office, exempt from civil service status, have no union to defend them.

Meanwhile, the auditor general is struggling to do its job even though half of the staff have resigned because of the financial uncertainties Prop. 140 has caused.

Ultimately, however, the decision as to whether the office will stay open is left to the voters. In November, they will have the opportunity to retain their advocate by voting "yes" on Proposition 159. This measure will allow the auditor general to continue its work for taxpayers without legislative constraints.

If taxpayers do not pass this proposition, they may never know how much public money such a mistake could cost. They would have written off the one office that could have told them.

This guest commentary appeared in the *Sacramento News & Review* on October 22, 1992. Theresa worked as an editor for the California Bureau of State Audits for several years.

[Story on DNF]

Yesterday, at mile 22, I dropped out of a marathon. This was my ninth consecutive year running this race. Now, I am disappointed, but searching as I always do, with defeat, to find meaning in a fall.

[Yesterday, at mile 22, I dropped out of a marathon. I stepped off the course, with a mixture of relief, sadness, and shame, watching other runners stagger on. Now, in my disappointment, I am searching, as I always do, to find meaning in a fall.]

[Yesterday, I attempted to run a marathon. Not my first. Probably not my last. But this one I did not finish.]

I am disappointed. The marathon course runs through the heart of my hometown. On this course, I ran my first marathon, broke three hours, earned all my personal bests. I have always been successful here.

On this course, I have run many training runs as well as this race. On these streets, I have grown from a 23-year-old beginning jogger to a 32-year-old veteran competitor.

On this course, for the previous eight years, I have established my own tradition, ending the year with a hard, completed effort. This race has comforted me, a little, against other defeats. The end of my marriage, the loss of family through suicide, the discovery that life is not black and white like I wanted it to be.

Now, stepping off the course, unable to face the agony of the last four miles, I feel my year ending without its usual bang. Suddenly, it's open-ended, stretching into next year without any line to divide what has passed with what is to come.

During the last three months, my training was solid, almost perfect, pointing toward a great race. This year's race comes about two-and-a-half years after my separation from my former husband. I was enthused about my marathon goal. I attributed this enthusiasm, which I had not felt since I left my husband, to the freeing of some of my emotions from the long and painful healing I had gone through during this period.

I was so confident of my training that I was more direct about my intentions this year. Usually, when asked what I'm aiming for, I prevaricate, like most runners, about my hopes. Usually, like most, I don't want to expose them in case I fail.

But this time, I said I wanted to break 2:50. I took the risk of putting my ambitions on the line. I even asked my friends to come to the race, to cheer me to the line. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't even finish.

I look out of my window. Yesterday's gray spreads into today's with a sameness that seems as if it will stay forever. [And I am searching as I always do with defeat, to find meaning in my fall.]

[INSERT B—Yet I know I have to believe otherwise to go on again, to keep my spirits up. There is something I must not give in to. In the abstract, I know that many a veteran runner has stepped off a course. I know that a failure makes success all the sweeter. I've heard the stories of many a person—athletes, yes, but also artists, writers, parents, teachers, and many others—who've failed far more convincingly than myself. Yet, each of these has come back stronger, more determined than ever to complete what they set out to do.]

But now, the day after my own small defeat, I am having trouble shaking off a kind of pessimism. Part of myself wants to see this defeat as a sign that more bad things will come.

Part of me registers my step onto the sidewalk as confirmation that, in fact, I am not meant to succeed. My child self remembers early failures and adds them to this, forms a pattern from them that says I cannot change the foreordained, downward direction of my life.

Even though in between the defeats of my life are an equal number of successes, my child self makes me into a victim by seeing only the falls. They confirm her early memories.

Yet, it is she who is the victim. Not me. She had no choices in her parents' world where her father was an alcoholic and her mother a hurt, angry woman. She had no choice in becoming the target for her mother's anger. She could not choose to end her recurring nightmares, her bed-wetting, her inability to read. She couldn't help interpreting these symptoms of suffering as her own failures. Her own inability to be a good child.

And now the child self speaks to me today, casting me into one of my black, self-recriminating moods.

But now there is the adult, too, who wants a life without omens. Who sees the danger of thinking herself a victim. I remember a childhood event, a moment of success.

It was sports day at my elementary school. I was trying to jump a pole stretched horizontally a few feet high. Twice I failed to clear it. On the third try, I closed my eyes as I leapt with all I had, asking for assistance from my family's now defunct Catholic God.

When I opened my eyes, the pole was still up but I was on the other side of it.

[Something clicks in this. I look out of the window and see that the gray clouds have thinned enough to show a pale tint of blue.]

This unfinished piece regarding the California International Marathon, which Theresa identified as "very 1st draft," was written in December 1992. She may have considered publishing a revised version later in her "Running" column in the *Sacramento Bee*. The piece is untitled, but she wrote at the top "Story on DNF." ("DNF," which stands for "Did not finish," is the abbreviation used in running events to indicate that a runner did not cross the finish line.) The use of bracketed text and the reference to Insert B are Theresa's, indicating variations she was considering when she set the draft aside.

The Explorer

(Theresa McCourt is the running columnist for the Sacramento Bee, a position I once held. She's quite a runner in her own right with a personal best for the marathon of 2:50:11 and for the 10-K, 36:59. —Paul Reese.)

It is tempting to measure ourselves by numbers, and Paul Reese has them: more than 50 ultramarathons and 225 marathons, plus age-group records by the bushel.

But Paul is not humbugged into measuring himself this way. He runs for experiences, not statistics.

Stats are dry, one-dimensional. Experience is rich, dense, multi-layered.

To run for stats is to burn out. To run for experience is to enjoy and endure, as Paul has done.

He did not run across the USA because of an immature fight to recapture his youth and manhood. He did it to heighten his senses to the possibilities of old age.

"People have missed the whole point if they see it as a jock thing," he says. "Running through the South, I saw a lot of older folks sitting on their front porches in rocking chairs, watching the world go by.

“To me, that’s not quality of life. This trip was.”

Paul ran across America to see the country in slow motion, to take the back roads, to FEEL the sun rise and set over the deserts and mountains. He took this journey not just to engage life but to celebrate it wholeheartedly.

Only three years before, he continued running while being treated for prostate cancer. There are several ways to perceive someone who runs through cancer.

Perhaps denial, perhaps anger. Or perhaps Paul’s simple way of accepting adversity as he would luck—as nothing personal, just doing the best he can no matter what the limitations.

“It wasn’t to say, ‘Look at me, Mr. Genes, Mr. Macho,’” he says of that experience. “I didn’t want to come off like, ‘Boy, I had cancer and I’m a tiger right now.’”

Instead, Paul speaks modestly. He recognizes the part chance played in his fate.

“I was just lucky that my cancer was detected early,” he says. “It hadn’t metastasized. The early detection and my recovery are a tribute to modern medicine, not running.”

Whenever Paul talks of his accomplishments, he tries to distract us from perceptions of himself as someone out of the ordinary. Though his times may rank him higher than others, he sees such rankings as the false gods of running. What he cares for most is the inner effect of his best and most enduring efforts, not the outward scoring.

He insists that each of us has this same ability to make the most of our lives. He wants us to recognize that we can weave our distinct self into the complex and sometimes overwhelming scheme of life.

This self, he says, deserves a voice. Running is only one of many ways to help it speak.

*This essay appears in *Ten Million Steps: The Incredible Journey of Paul Reese, Who Ran Across America—A Marathon a Day for 124 Days—at Age 73*, published in 1993.*

What's a Buffalo Chip?

In “From the clubs” in the Winter ‘92 *FootNotes*, Chris Stockdale mentioned the Buffalo Chips Running Club and wrote “there must be a story to that name.”

There is. Ten runners whom we now call the “old bison” formed the club in 1974. They decided to run the Tahoe Relays, which wind about 70 miles around Lake Tahoe. Since they always met after their workouts in a bar called the Buffalo Club, they came up with a name for their team—the Buffalo Chips.

Now the club has more than 600 members and is the oldest and largest running club in Sacramento. More than 100 members turn out for Tuesday night speedwork, and each year the club puts on a race called the Buffalo Stampede. One year, the club offered really classy awards at this race—nice pats of genuine buffalo dung, dried, varnished, and mounted on large wooden plaques. Thanks for the mention. As you can see, we’re very proud of our heritage.

Theresa McCourt
Buffalo Chips (Calif.)

This letter to the editor appeared in the spring 1993 issue of *FootNotes*.

Speech to the Sacramento City Council Members

Recently, I won a small claims case against the city, but the city plans to appeal the decision on May 20 in Superior Court. I am here to ask the city to waive the appeal. But let me explain. It will take less than three minutes.

- A large limb fell from a city elm on Saturday, August 7, last year. It crushed my car. Only one minute earlier, I was standing under the tree, sweeping the sidewalk.
- In February, I won a small claims case against the city, and the court awarded me the amount I asked for, which was \$1,750. I had simply asked for the worth of

the car. I did not want to gouge the city, and in fact, as I should have, I took \$150 off the original estimate because I sold the remains of the car for salvage.

- Now the city is appealing the small claims case. However, I won the case based on the following:
 - First, my property owner, Jim Powell, had called in a complaint to the city before the limb fell, saying the tree needed trimming. The tree was never trimmed.
 - Second, an arborist gave me a signed statement that the tree was rotted throughout and was top heavy. He declared the tree a hazard to public safety.
 - Third, the city cites a government code section that grants it immunity for incidents such as this. I have learned that another code section makes incidents such as mine an exception to the code the city has cited.

Let me add, that a second limb from another elm on the same half-block fell on my second car in February, and I had decided not to pursue the city about it, even though the property owner had called the city beforehand about that limb, too.

Also, last week, another limb from a third elm on the same half-block also fell on one of my neighbors' cars. That's three limbs from three separate elms on the same half-block. Though the city finally removed the first tree in February, after the second incident, it has still not trimmed any of the other limbs on the other elms.

Moreover, simply by looking at the trees, I can see at least two more dangerous limbs. So far, a limb has not fallen on a person.

Further, I am a small business owner who lost a car in the second year of business, a time when most businesses are still struggling to get established. Losing the car *was* a financial setback.

Finally, I am an honest, hardworking person who cares deeply about being a responsible citizen. In fact, I have helped to make my street a safer one by calling the police about several crimes as they were taking place. Two of my calls have led to arrests. I have also initiated communication between myself and my neighbors to create our own

informal neighborhood watch. I have also belonged to the Fremont Park Neighborhood Association, yet I am a tenant, not a homeowner.

I would ask the city to look at the merits of my case and the fact that I am a person of good character who simply is asking for justice. Thank you.

(By the way, Josh Pane is my council member, and is planning to discuss this issue with you on May 17.)

Theresa read this speech to the Sacramento City Council on May 10, 1994.

How to Court the Muse in Five Easy Steps!

I've been a runner for almost 17 years, but despite my experience in the sport, starting a run is usually an effort. When I stand on the threshold of my home, facing a cold, foggy day, I have to beat off the urge to stay indoors, read the paper, go back to bed instead. Even when I do reach the street, for the first mile or so I feel more like a hobbling Quasimodo than a long-time lover of the sport.

It's the same with writing. I want to avoid the task. And forcing my fingers to move across the keys is barely any better. Lean, lithe sentences don't bound across the screen. Rather, my words stumble, like babies struggling to walk.

For most of us, getting started is rarely easy. We must haul ourselves over a hill of inertia, opposing various inner demons along the way. Yet the myriad of accomplishments around us—from pyramids to space-ships to novels—are monuments to the many humans who go beyond the first climb.

How do they do it? Here are some of the ways experienced writers get started.

They Know Writing Is a Process

If I didn't think I could improve upon my first efforts, I would lie down now and never get up. My first efforts at anything are usually abysmal. Take these early floundering for this column:

As some of you may know, I like to run in races—once I get going, that is.

Gordy Ainsleigh—first one step, then another, until eventually, he reached the end.

Clearly, I'm pretty gutsy to expose this. And clearly these early efforts don't resemble anything that remains here now. But that's the beauty of writing. It's OK to begin badly.

Anne Lamott, the author of a best-selling book called *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*, has this to say about getting started:

I know some very great writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money, and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident.... We all often feel like we are pulling teeth, even those writers whose prose ends up being the most natural and fluid. The right words and sentences just do not come pouring out like ticker tape most of the time.... For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous. In fact, the only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts.

If there's any difference between those who are willing to call themselves writers and those who think they aren't, it's that "writers" have learned to take the pressure off themselves when they first sit down to write. They remind themselves the beginning is inherently weak. They remember they have more than one chance—later—to make it right.

They Break the Task into Bite-Sized Chunks

How do we begin badly but still finish well? A lot of writers begin by working back from their due date, dividing the larger task into smaller, bite-sized chunks. Then they allot a set time to accomplish each part. Breaking a task into its parts has a huge psychological boon. Smaller things are less intimidating.

Let's compare this breaking down of the larger into the smaller to my approach to housecleaning. If I say, "I'm going to clean the house today," I'm already tired. I'm less likely to get going. If I say, "I'm going to vacuum the carpet" that doesn't sound so bad. Inevitably, though, when

the carpet is dust-free, the next task follows more easily. Now I have momentum. Writing usually works the same way.

One early step in the writing process is one we've just discussed—the bad beginning, also known as the “Sh-tty First Draft.” But it has to be early. If we procrastinate completing this stage until it's bumping against the deadline, then our busy readers have only our poor beginning to deal with. Usually, they won't.

They Don't Write Important Things at the Last Minute

As a business owner, I have many deadlines to meet and many clients to please. I must do this while managing the books, buying supplies, repairing equipment, and booking my own travel. If I kept my former habit of last-minute writing, I'd be dead. I can't afford that.

When a report has large consequences—say potentially big savings or significantly improved services—we can't afford to write at the last minute. Some people say, “But I do my best writing under pressure.” I used to say the same thing. But now, when I look back at some of that stress-ridden writing, I don't see my best. I see an excuse for mediocrity.

If we start earlier, we can do more than desperately plop down ideas. We have time to reconsider. We can take breaks to see our words more clearly. We can remove the unnecessary, add the essential, and craft our ideas for the most precise, persuasive language possible. We have time to test our writing on others. These are all legitimate stages of the writing process.

Amazingly, by pacing ourselves evenly through the parts, we may even have time for our personal lives. I've missed more friends' birthday parties by last-minute writing than I ever have when I've planned my writing tasks well ahead.

They Reject Their Demons

Every time I face a new beginning, I feel the same old things: Anxious. Fumbling. Incompetent. Wondering if I'll be able to finish what I've started. If it will be worthwhile. I remember the failures of my childhood. The nasty comments of a relative who suggested I would never amount to anything good. And yet, I've got past these little demons,

nipping at my heels, many times before. That's what I tell myself anyway, when they start to hound me again.

Demons are all those inner selves who tell us we're no good. If we let them, they'll make it hard to start anything. For some of us, these voices began with critical parents who quickly grew angry when we didn't get something right the first time or who cringed whenever we stumbled. But in the end, it doesn't matter where these voices come from. Fact is, nearly all of us have them, even the good writers. These folk have learned to never, ever give their demons the time of day.

Ignore your demons too. They're only as real as you allow them to be.

They Learn to Love the Writing Struggle

Though my runs may start with a hobble, something changes as the miles go on. Give me a mile or so, and my stiff, cranky muscles begin to relax. Slowly but surely, my gait smooths out, I find a rhythm, and though there's still some effort, I'm running with my will, not against it.

It's the same with writing. Once we get past the start, the effort itself begins to absorb us. Though we may be working hard, we are more apt to lose ourselves in the process, without having to wrestle our own resistance.

What sustains my faith through the bumpy, early stage of writing is my experience of getting to this next place. I remind myself how good the next stage feels, when I become enveloped in a bubble of timelessness, unaware of hunger, cold, or tiredness. In the end, it's this place I reach for. To me, nothing is better than this moment.

This article appeared in the December 31, 1997, issue of *The Audit Trail*, the staff newsletter of the Bureau of State Audits.

Chip Profile

Name: Sandy Dog MacPrice.



Date of birth: Unknown. Adopted after being abandoned.

Place of birth: Possibly Folsom, CA. That's where I was found. I was so frightened, I didn't speak for three days.

Current job: Bison herder. Formerly cattle herder.

Marital status: Single.

Children: None, but I have strong motherly instincts.

Height: On all fours, I'm about 2 feet high.

Weight: When I'm in racing shape, about 40 lbs.

Pets: Two humans. Their names are Howard and Theresa. They're house-broken.

Religion: Zen doggist.

Educational background: BA and MA in cattle herding. Ph.D. in animal psychology.

Least favorite subject in school: Cat psychology. Boring!

Favorite subject in school: Cattle herding—especially the lab work.

Favorite thing about Sacramento: Squirrel population.

Best physical feature: My eyes and ears.

Worst physical feature: Hmmm, that's tough.

Favorite book: *Call of the Wild* by Jack London.

Book you are currently reading: *Women Who Run with the Wolves*.

Favorite non-running magazine: *Gourmet Dining*.

Favorite movies: *Where the Buffalo Roam* (Bill Murray).

People you'd most like to invite over for dinner and why: Anyone who feeds me under the table.

Favorite foods: Whatever you're eating.

Least favorite food: Hmmm, another tough one.

Favorite restaurant: Dos Coyotes.

Bad habit: Stealing Power Bars from my mum's running bag.

Political leanings: Socialist. I like to hang out in packs.

Best Chip moments: Doing the Salmon Roll on the bike trail.

Collection: Chew bones.

Favorite games: Playing with my pink, squeaky football. I'll play with anyone who wants to throw it.

Favorite vacation destination: Van Damme State Park in Mendocino.

Favorite non-running leisure activity: Eating and playing with my pink, squeaky football.

Favorite time of day: I seem to like all moments.

Favorite item of clothing you own: My purple running harness.

Most prized possession: My pink, squeaky football.

Years running: Ever since I could stand on all fours.

Favorite races: The Doggie Dash.

Personal hero or heroine: Jake Hicks. He runs really fast, seems gentle, and looks good!

Favorite personal quote: Beg and you shall receive.

Personal philosophy: Live for today; don't worry about tomorrow. Eat now; you never know what the next day will bring.

Worst running-related moments: When a 10-year-old wiener dog passed me at the finish of the Doggie Dash.

Best running experience: Any time I'm let off the leash!

Best Buffalo Chips moment: When I placed first in my dad's age group at the 1995 Doggie Dash. I won a 20 lb bag of Science Diet dog food.

Non-running achievement of which you are most proud: I help humans feel good about themselves.

Secret ambition or fantasy: To spend a day running on the horse trails with Jake Hicks—no leashes!

Pet peeve: Being told "Lay down" or "Go to bed" for things I have no memory of doing.

Short-term goal: Eat, run, and play with my pink, squeaky football.

Long-term goal: Eat, run, and play with my pink, squeaky football.

Personal strengths: I am very forgiving.

Personal weaknesses: Rolling in you know what.

Greatest fear: Being abandoned.

Trait you most deplore in others: People who think I'm just an animal.

Your greatest extravagance: A bed in every room.

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery: Watching my owners leave for work.

Quality you most like in a man: Ability to listen.

Quality you most like in a woman: Ability to listen.

What do you most value in your friends: A willingness to break the rules.

Personal bests in running: Every day is a personal best.

Non-running personal bests: Training my mum and dad to let me climb into their laps in the evenings.

What would people be surprised to know about me: I'm very quiet at home.

Any other comments: Thanks to all my fellow Chips for all the affection and encouragement during workouts. You're the best!

This profile appeared in the *Buffalo Enquirer* in the April/May 1998 issue.

Creation

A single yellow rose, a small bud, from a climbing rose in a wooden planter. The planter is half-rotten from almost seven years of watering. I cut the rose with my pruning shears, and place it in a vase on my windowsill, an attempt at hope, to start my writing day.

The rose bush, a birthday present from friends in the running club, needs planting in the ground. Yet all these years, from apartment balcony to house patio, I have kept it alive, in its narrow space, through so much arid weather.

I'm good at keeping plants alive under difficult conditions.

I have put today aside, driven by the anxiety of these last two weeks, as if I have nothing else to turn to but writing.

Yesterday, on the edge with myself, crying over the kitchen sink: a tiny bone fracture prevents me from running; a plateau in my professional life leaves me despairing in empty space; and lack of physical conception leaves me feeling hollow. (But I fantasize, hopelessly, that my breasts are getting bigger, that my stomach swells, that my mood comes from a new combination of hormones.)

My desire for a physical pregnancy—and the lack of it—has become a symbol right now of my life. I am not birthing anything.

Even reading is hard now. I have eight books open, only partly read: a self-help book, a book on writing, a book on investing, a book on publishing, a book on health, two novels and an autobiography. Yet nothing is complete, or even rolling along.

I am between stations, neither getting on nor getting off. Simply getting around and around the Inner Circle.

I know the signs: the breaking into tears, the sense of hopelessness, of not making a difference.

I am in a little crisis.

In general, I know what I need, but in specifics, I'm floundering, not knowing what I should do.

I've come to this place several times in my life. And each time, I battle the family inheritance.

It's the worst place.

It's where I saw my mother crumple at the kitchen table, smoking her Woodbine cigarettes, obsessively spinning the same tales, the gist of which is that someone else should bring salvation to her door.

I have inherited this point of view. No matter what my head says, it's in my emotions.

I didn't grow up learning ways to fix or solve problems. I wasn't taught choices. What something else was there that any of us could possibly have the strength to reach?

That was the atmosphere I swam in.

Where I lived, people crumpled under pressure. People cried, smoked, vented, blamed, paid back, hit out, drank, disappeared into TVs, into bed, into food, under bed covers, into meaningless books, into page 3 of the *Daily Mirror*, into chocolate-covered digestive biscuits, into toast and jam, into anything but creative transformation.

As a kid, I would try. I would clean out flower beds by tearing out weeds that were strangling each other. But I had nothing to put into the beds. They remained black oblongs of mud until the weeds came back for their warring.

In my house, no one felt capable of completing anything. The father started projects that were never completed: a half-painted bookcase, a hole dug but never filled. Windows remained broken. Faucets always leaked. Nothing ever was fixed.

The mother coped with survival: the basics of food, bills. Nothing left over for anything that could possibly go beyond that.

No wonder, then, that whenever I now hit an obstacle, it appears like a wall with a height and width that go on forever. No wonder I buckle, fall weeping over sinks. No wonder I am first overwhelmed with "I can't."

GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

What I envy—and sometimes resent—in others are their family inheritances, laden with “I can’s.”

Don’t tell me that we all struggle to the same degree. Don’t tell me that everyone has the same opportunities for success. Don’t tell me that we all have our crosses to bear.

Some of us have not only the obstacles, but also the lessons we were never taught. For some, it’s tougher.

You don’t know if you’ve never been there. You have no idea.

This piece is dated October 12, 1998.



The Ina Coolbrith Circle

IN HONOR OF CALIFORNIA'S FIRST POET LAUREATE

The objects of this Association are the promotion of the art of poetry, the study of history and literature of the Golden State, the discussion of the works of its writers

Theresa McCourt
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San Francisco, California

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Dear Theresa:

As contest chair for 2006, I am writing to congratulate you on your recent accomplishment in the Ina Coolbrith Circle 87th Annual Poetry contest!

I do hope you will join us on Sunday November 19th at 2pm Fellowship Hall, 10 Irwin Way, Orinda for a special event. During our November meeting, contest winners are invited to read their winning poems. We would love to hear "Passing" in your own voice.

In addition, you will have the opportunity to hear from our featured poet. Sandra Lee Stillwell finds inspiration in life, nature and from the culture of her ancestors, the Karuk people of Northern California. All of these, coupled with years of experience and hard work are reflected in her first book of poetry, *In a Dress Made of Butterflies*.

Hope to see you there!

Maria Rosales
Maria Rosales
Contest Chair
Ina Coolbrith Circle

*Ball
Dad
Loving*

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POEMS

At my age, after you're done—or ruefully think you're done—with the nagging anxieties and complications of your youth, what is there left for you to confront but the great simplicities? I never tire of bird-song and sky and weather. I want to write poems that are natural, luminous, deep, spare. I dream of an art so transparent that you can look through and see the world. *

me look

Stanley Kunitz, from his essay "Reflections" in *The Collected Poems*, along with Theresa's marks and annotation in her copy of the collection

Theresa was drawn to writing poetry for several reasons. During an interview on a local news program, she noted that writing poems offered a peaceful break from a rushing world. “Poets have this side of them that wants to pause in the stream,” she said. “They don’t want to rush like that. They want to be able to stand and observe the world and understand it as it’s progressing.”

She used poetry to help her understand what she saw outside, but she also turned her gaze inward, using it to better understand herself and her relationships with other people. She wrote, “I believe that art, and poetry specifically, fills a basic human need with the power to heal and connect us.”

As indicated in the credo presented below, she was also drawn to writing poetry because of the creative challenge it presents—the need to be truthful and precise in the selection of each detail—and because it offers the possibility of discovery.

Theresa’s poetry appeared in *The Squaw Valley Review*, Bill Gainer’s *Magnet Project*, *Peter Parasol*, *Toyon*, and other publications.

She won second place in the 79th Annual Berkeley Poets competition (2005), first place in the Ina Coolbrith Memorial Poetry Contest (2006), and first place in the Maggi H. Meyer Memorial Poetry contest (2007). In 2008, she received the Albert and Elaine Borchard Fellowship.

In 2007 and in 2008, she was part of the Artist Residency Institute through the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission and taught at the Women’s Wisdom Project.

In 2009 and 2010, she taught poetry at Galt High School and Elk Grove High School as an adjunct teacher hired through the Artist Residency Institute, preparing students for the California Poetry Out Loud competition.

Theresa was a member of the Sacramento Poetry Center Board, and three times she served as coeditor of *Tule Review*, the organization’s poetry journal.

With two exceptions, the following selection is presented alphabetically by title. “Ongoing Credo” is presented first because it describes Theresa’s beliefs regarding what makes a good poem. Her credo was a living piece that she had revised and likely would have revised further. The last poem presented below, “Give ear to my words,” is a draft of the last poem Theresa wrote.



There is a border line, beyond which joy sinks to false security and contentment, loses its airy and delicate dissatisfaction.



The compulsion of spiritual animation should never be felt any heavier, than a frail hand touching your shoulder. For the poet a forced effort seldom gives birth to anything but falsification. And it cannot be different for the thinker. Whatever good that was thought, happened without effort. To sense the truth is the art of being still.



Swedish poet and essayist Vilhelm Ekelund, from his posthumously published book *Agenda*, along with Theresa's marks and annotation in her copy of the book

Ongoing Credo

I believe:

You don't make the details of a poem up

You don't lie in a poem

You don't force a conclusion in a poem to simply "get it done"

Poems express self most accurately for me

A poem should have unity—and I should ask of each thing in a poem, "Why is it there?" If I can't answer, then that piece should probably come out—or the poem's not ready to go out till the answer is made more clear within the poem.

A poem should aim to communicate, to make something clear—it's not to say "clever" things.

A poem's details must be presented in a factual way.

Conclusions should be delayed as long as possible—the facts should prove any conclusion or infer the conclusion

Report the facts in a poem, *don't* invent.

Originality of expression, fresh expression will come with accurate, with as-true-as-possible observation

POEMS

A poem isn't interesting to do unless I discover something in the process.

A poem is a gate way.

A poem is an entry point.

A poem is a time warp.

To write a solid poem is to be in eternity.

To enter a good poem is to be in eternity.

To write or read a worthwhile poem is to pray—to feel God.

To write or enter a poem is the antithesis of the administrative, bureaucratic life. Is the counterpoint. The balancing of the other.

I'm only a writer when I write.

I'm only a runner when I run.

Poetry, to write or read it, is a descending grace, a gift.

Better to attempt, sincerely, than not at all.

Poetry requires you both [push]work and wait—all at the same time.

A flock of birds gathering or dispersing has some meaning for me.

Ian has a spirit.

Outdoor exercise helps the brain and soul

Between night and day is the best time to read poems

Between night and day is the best time to write them

Dreams are telling us something

Important to pay attention to your dreams

To grow a plant may need certain conditions, but does not take special skills, just observation—it's the same with poetry?

Almost December

An almost leafless crepe
around which the
Anna's hummingbird
briefly flits without reward.

Its small nest gone
and the coral flowers fallen,
fully rotted in the dark mud
of this gray November day.

But the bird does not dwell:
It moves as fast and straight
as before, simply shifting
to what remains:

The Mexican sage still persists,
its blooms at the richest dark
of its purple, though stems bend
low with the weight of what they bear.

And then to the penstemon's
subdued trumpets,
for none of the lighter-colored
(the pastel pinks, the whites) are left.
Only maroons exist today.

It doesn't linger over
the flowerless lavender,
and it simply ignores
the few black-eyed Susans
that remain to catch my eye.
It knows that here
there's no sweetness to collect.

So why, in this last month
before winter,
do I continue searching
the old nests and places
where a home and nectar do not exist?

Along the Canal

Unmooring behind the backs
of coal-darkened warehouses,
small window after small window
smashed or cracked,

we saw the spoilage
the rusty pipes crisscrossed
over and under,
leaking corrosives.

Then the murky water seemed
to renew in a meadow place,
with coots and moorhens calling.

The twilight returned starlings,
thousands swirling,
pouring themselves into the reeds.

That night, head against the stern,
I dreamt my first living creature,
a slate-eyed wolf, staring.

Thirty years later, I am parked
in a new, mostly empty lot:

And birds, just past dawn, rise and
fall on ground they cannot enter,
splinter the air into bits of black ash.

Arriving by Airmail

in a blue envelope
folded in wordless paper,
my mother's wedding ring.

I had remembered it this way:

a central stone, black,
boxed in
by claw-pronged settings,
meant for a couple
of shallow-cut diamonds.

Long before I grew up,
I believed them lost,
their sockets empty.

Today the ring lies in my palm:

At the center, a ruby
I keep turning &
turning against
the window's light.

As for the diamonds—
they were always there,
no empty holes,

just meager.

What did my mother intend?
A gift to trade, hoping worth?
Or memory she wished were beloved?

No matter.

I still see her hands
immersed
in sinks and buckets of scalding water,
him leaving her to it.

August

Across the weather map,
dark orange spreads:

The tough yellow petals
of black-eyed Susans
are brittle to the touch.

The dog abandons her food bowl
to swarming ants.

On cracked mud,
a black bee faces upward,
legs crimped.

Such things happen. I remember.

Do one thing:

Tip the bird bath
—a heavy ceramic plate—
so the dank water pours off.

The slim copper pipe,
with a fresh supply,
refills drop by drop.

Bearded Iris

To you I gave the leftover places
with no thought of light or shade.
And when I tore your brown parts off,
it was only for looks, not for any gardener's purpose.

Through hot days, all I knew
were your razored leaves
and your gnarled rhizomes
poking like bones from cracked soil.

I planted and divided
only from reluctance to waste any gift,
no matter how carelessly bestowed.

Yet in this second winter,
you give more than ambivalence deserves:

Again and again, in the rain and fog,
your purple sepals curve back ardently,
while royal standards, erect and tall,
arch over where we begin.

Desire

The casement window swings outward,
presses the stem of a pink rose.

In the trembling air, tiny creatures flit
between lavender and penstemon,

become quick flashes
as fragile wings catch the light.

From somewhere, the turning on
and turning off of water.

In the morning warmth, a curtain billows,
rises on a momentary breeze

before the sun closes all the windows.

A Directed Life

In daylight everything is clear and tangible; but the night lasts as long as the day, and we live in the night-time also.

From *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, C. G. Jung

Through midtown, she haunts a daily path,
impelled to Safeway. Hair now grayed,
her body bent, she returns merely
with rolls of bargain toilet paper.

Today, she passes through Christmas shoppers,
all of us chimeras buying from chic boutiques.
But this dead-eyed ghost of basics,
she does not turn or speak—

Folding Laundry

Across the fence, white magnolias open.
I fold cloth, slowly, gently,
as if someone were leaving.

Across each sheet, I place my palm,
hold it there as if over a body breathing.
I smooth after each folding
to erase every crease.

Outside, the magnolias' thick
white petals spread to their reach,
yielding so freely to summer heat.

Inside, I fold from whole, to half,
to quarter.

Friendship

From across the ocean,
the one who knew my dead,
who walked beside me
through wet fields
on Sundays
we had to escape,

writes

*...it is comfortably warm here
when it looks so cold
and inhospitable outside...*

Beyond my own window,
the sky is white and flat,
but in this weathered cottage,
my small heater hums.

From the World's Last Lamplighter

What they don't tell you
is how the flame keeps going out—
a small crosswind,
the hinge of the lantern closing too quickly,
or rain dousing the small flare.

You can start with pockets bulging,
full of match boxes—
but sometimes you have to go back, midway,
to refill them.

You can lose a lot of time that way,
depending on conditions,
whether you can stick to your own unhurried pace.

Garden Design

I planted thoughtlessly,
made mistakes in the layout
by rushing to fill the empty space:

take those two patches of grass,
the size of door mats,
obscured on all sides by spires of hollyhocks.

I still mow this pointless turf,
trim the edges, scrape the bits
into an insignificant pile.

Then the roses with petals of blood,
drooping in the darkest corner,
abandoned by those who rarely watered.

I moved them to a sunnier spot
only out of pity.

Now they steal the eye's delight,
upstaging all the purples, the silver,
the sage greens I have begun to love.

I have spent so much time maintaining things
that no longer apply,
reluctant to uproot anything I have planted.

Getting Started

Gimpy, ragged,
shifting
from stillness to motion,
relearning after so many repeated efforts,
that breath will even out,
that heart, after the initial flurry,
will recover an even beat,
that hips and knees
will be anointed
a certain distance from the house.

After one or two miles,
the Achilles will even shed
its shadowy film of scarring,
grown anew
from one night of stiffening sleep.

Since first stepping onto the road,
twenty-two years ago,
I've listened to such grumblings,
such groanings, a variety of complaints—
all of them reciting
what can't be done,
what I could be doing instead,
what I'm not capable of.

The Goodbye Window

The air is still fresh.
My son lolls in the jogger,
singing the names
of all the people he knows.

When he turns and asks
Mummy, is your daddy dead?
and then,
Where did he go?

his tone is easy, conversational—
no concept of loss:
friends, grandparents,
father, mother, sibling.

My voice meets his
with mirrored lightness,
appearing
sincerely undisturbed.

Yet when I leave him at the school,
his face becomes a gash,
and his arms sway like tentacles
from the goodbye window.

On the way home,
without his ballast,
the jogger bounces wildly
over ragged cracks in the road.

Morning Ritual

I

My mother's nightgown, old smell,
lots of wear from all the wearing;

her stewed tea and cigarettes, *Himself upstairs*
breathing out foaming pints of weekly rent.

Her jobs at Woolworth's and KC Cleaner's,
no-where-else-to-go and no-way-to,

her words cracking every dawn:

I never wanted to marry you!
You dragged me down the aisle!

Up the narrow stairs, we three kids
pull pillows over our heads.

II

In a foreign land, decades later,
I am half-awake at dawn,

mumbling over burning pyres
built during the night's complaints.

Why my inward litany,
of done-upons and done-to-me?

I have a room to read and write,
flower beds filled with growth,
a house where my boy can sleep.

Why do I wake in her head
with the only view she had—

a gray rope to hang the wash.

[My Hands]

My hands are knotted like my father's
and his mother's
I fall on his side of the family
my hands are large

My hands betray me because they are not elegant and graceful
they are knotty at the knuckles
the knuckles are large and knotty
so knotty that only the largest of rings can slip over them
They are scarred from a fight when I was 10
turning up at a new school
I was challenged to a fight at lunch time and the girls scraped my
right hand, knuckles against a brick wall, down the side of a building
At home, I dug them into the soil from an early age,
pulling out weeds from flower beds
so that they were bare,
no money to put flowers in them

and at my first job,
I plunged them into hot water
to wash dishes
liking to pull spiky forks from the hot water
without fussing

These hands have held a bread knife
to a strange man who sneaked into my house
and shook it at him until he fled,
me chasing him up the road

These hands have faced fears
These hands are not smooth
they are scarred and cracked by hot water and strong sun
and fights when i was a child

POEMS

These hands are not ugly as you once said,
but like an old face
bear their life on the surface
unprotected
by creams and easy work
These hands could work with clay
strong and molding
the nails short
These hands are like the cracked, throaty voice
of a woman who has led a rough life
These hands are like the roots of an old oak
rising up through the ground and weathered by the sun and the rain
like old bark
These hands speak for my future

For the last three birthdays
I've hoped for your card
forgiving and admitting
to what we had
No card from you
wasted everything else
from others
But this year,
a day before my birthday
you sent a note

Notes in the Margin

(After finding handwritten marginal notes beside William Stafford's poem "People Who Went by in Winter.")

Only eight weeks
since my last parent
returned to the earth.

In this book,
barely held together
by a peeling spine

penciled words
jostle each other,
claim the margin:

*Ancestors—
when can our blunders,
yours and ours—kiss?*

Who can claim these words?

The girl half my age,
the teacher, or the poet?

No matter.

These are the words
that arrive today.

October Stasis

At last, bleached sky turns kindly:
For days, we bathe like convalescents, suspended—
hazy air, soft caressing light,
the bells of towering foxglove without
a tremble, the impatiens in swollen
mounds, quiescent.

Tonight, storms arrive—
though beneath the stillness, the genteel poise,
something has already begun to tilt:

In the dark, while we turn away from touch,
the first cold rain, the first cold wind, will snap
the spines of foxglove, stomp the grass—
tear the impatiens apart.

On Returning

Back from a country where it is still raining
and temperatures continue cool,
I sit in my garden, where it is almost summer
and the white magnolias open again.

Today, there is none of the scrub jay's swooping
or screeching. He moves low to the ground,
his only sounds the rustle of wings amidst lavender,
the roll of a pebble as he skitters across the path.

I have just filled the bird bath—
left dry while I was gone—
and wait for the birds that pass through this place
to discover water here again.

To make this garden, I had to dig up stubborn
Bermuda grass, and haul from the dirt
the heavy, complicated roots of trees.
What grows here now I mostly planted myself.

Back in the home of my ancestors, it is still raining,
temperatures continue cool,
and the pains of the dead remain deep and unforgiven.
I return to my garden where joy may be made.

On Tuesday, you say
The moon is full, I think

On Thursday, I take the wrong freeway,
exit at the wrong "Watt,"
head far more north than I should have.

With a vacant mind
I drive on streets I don't know,
cross the county line before I U-turn.

On Friday, the moon stays up late,
almost complete except for the merest sliver.
When I forgot where I was going.
The moon was as full as it could be.

Pain

It doesn't matter which way I apply it. Take one of my more banal approaches: I locked your left Achilles, refusing you those tight turns on the race track, when all you sought was speed. But so far, I haven't completely tied you up. Here and there, I let your tendon loose a little, unwind a bit, for those more leisurely paces, that take you out (slowly mind), on the soft shoulder of the trail, beside the river, early mornings, so you see, with the speed I allow, mist rising from the river, the swirl of currents, the view from the bridge; so that you raise your eyes, stop to watch the geese flying south, the white egret swallow the frog, count the seven deer motionless in the blanched grass—or notice your own incessant commentary. I only tighten, pull your tendons, give you pain, when you start to forget I can stop you anytime—because I want you always to remember your weaknesses, take account of them, do nothing, attempt nothing, without first consulting me.

A Partial Explanation

Then we mostly had what we'd had before:
no meat, no car, no father to call upon.

You cleaned a hotel swimming pool,
and I made pizzas, but only half a week.
Otherwise, you painted, I wrote,
and we walked the dog at midnight.

Every now and then we'd go to Safeway,
buy a Betty Crocker cake mix.
After baking and frosting,
we'd feast at three in the morning.

Our first Christmas, we sat cross-legged,
made paper cutouts, colored them,
serious children with crayons.
We hung our work on a ragged tree.

One February, we borrowed bikes,
rode in the dark, no lights
—seven miles along a rainy coastline—
because we wanted live music.

When your paintings began to sell,
and I earned white-collar money,
I went to bed early,
and you walked the dog alone.

Passing

As I stir this milky chocolate,
waiting for steam to rise,
spots of white light
dance across the stove's
pale yellow surface:

suns refracted in my diamond
from rays passing through the window.

Across the world,
my father passes through
his last black night.

What will be returned?

Past the despair

darker in places
smudged a little

light hovers, enters
through the window
like a hologram

my mother calm now
—the window open
enough for light,
for a slight billowing of air

light and dust

floating.

No more shouting
Oh Mother of God!

the same way she screamed
when she lost her youngest.

We have cooled her face.

The priest has gone.

But almost blind, she still
catches
the light and motion
coming closer
her pulse increasing
beside her last words
referring to the dead:

Elizabeth is here!

Review Mirror

The sun, neon orange,
stalls on the asphalt
where the road meets the sky.

Hard to look forward
with such intensity behind.

Running with Ramona

Dawn sky lightens
to snow-frosted roofs, fields,
even the limbs of manzanitas.

Yet the redbuds dangle
petal pink blooms,
and the road is clear,
no sheets of ice to trip us.

Both of us in our mid-forties,
our easy talk and easy stride
earned from our many runs here.

Beneath a leafless oak, several deer,
ears pricked but otherwise unroused,
watch our passing.

Farther on, daffodils sun a southern hillside,
their multitude a gift of human planting,
their own naturalizing, and soil enough to grow.

In our twenties, we complained about this run,
the steep ascent,
its ever-receding horizon.

something thin about his epidermis

eyelids
bluish tints

I can't bear

how he is passed to his father

myself too cracked
from complications

a cry across
the room

of precision cutting

why won't they bring him to me!

my baby

under glass

isolette

4lbs 10 ounces

in sleep
chimeric wraithlike
transmundane

a Chinese ancient
the look of ending

even 10 years later
some nights
I lean low
an ear to his breath

tug his pillow
rustle the sheets

till he half wakens

Sorrow

For this death, there is no funeral,
no body to wash one last time.

No one will clasp the hand of the bereaved,
look into her eyes, say *I'm sorry for your loss*.

No one will bring ham or turkey sandwiches,
beans and dip. No one will pour some wine.

No one will lay out the pies, the cream,
gently coax, *Try to eat a little*.

The old men won't huddle in the corner,
pull on their pipes, sip their whiskey,

chuckle softly as they recount the early days
of the now deceased.

Still, there is the time after,
when there are no visitors,
the door closes, and the house is dead.

Still Life

110 degrees.

I think,

Nothing moves,

shifting in my chair.

Still

A magenta cluster

on the myrtle

quivers slightly.

Silver blinks from a spider's

thread, spinning

from one petal.

Beyond the wall

the elm's topmost leaves

whisper to each other.

What a Gardener Needs

You need patience to garden,
says the woman in the newspaper.

After these eight years,
do I have the patience
to nurture our ailing plant?

Even with more effort,
it might never branch out,
never open new leaves to the sun?

How long did I tend our mandarin?
Six, seven years? Only this winter
did it birth two perfect fruit.

Will more arrive next January?
Were those two orange globes
a sign to remain faithful to our duties?

I could water and feed a lifetime,
not knowing—or worse, knowing all along.

What is missing this season?

Here's what I now remember:

When I lifted the mandarin from its pot,
placed it in a space out front,
I believed in its desire to grow.

What I Throw in Their Grave:

for Mary, Desmond, and Elizabeth McCourt

Our narrow hallway.
The carving knife swinging.
The key in the midnight lock.

The four a.m. phone call.
The stewed tea.
The rope.

My dreams of killers pursuing.
Your dreams of being stuck.
My insistence on making sense.

But not the dream last night:
all three of you
living in a bright yellow house.

Winter Planting

By light from the kitchen, this sapling
quiet in a circle of freshly turned mud:

Naked, except for two tags, a yellow, a white—
one bearing its name; the other, the ways to care for it.

Reddish nubs barely raise its silver bark,
but from it stretch two invisible lines—

one to the apple, the other to the myrtle,
forming a triangle in the garden's vertical aspect.

Though years behind these two older trees,
it is a presence, loaded with fruit to come.

Give ear to my words

let me not overwhelm
the salt, the sour, the sweet
with the acrid, the caustic.
Grant me the better bitter—
the tang of stringent herbs
that though they bite, do some good:
Let me soak, through and through
in the watery crush of cress,
the dandelion flower & its long root
—may my acerbity come from wormwood,
turmeric, saffron, myrrh

so as to cleanse wounds
promote circulation.

Keep me on the path
of favorable interactions
pluck from my heart
the gall and the grievous:

Detoxify my own enraged blood—

Theresa completed this draft of "Give ear to my words,"
her final poem, on March 16, 2012.

JOURNAL ENTRIES AND LETTER FRAGMENTS, 1984-2012

"Somewhere along the way, though, I did understand one of the basic premises usually recommended for good writing—that specifics really do ground what we say."

—THERESA, JUNE 2002

ST. JOHN'S (LINDOW) PATHFINDER GROUP.

PRESENT

TWO ONE-ACT PLAYS

ON

SATURDAY, 11 JANUARY 1975

At 8 P.M.

IN THE CHURCH ROOMS

(Doors open 7.45 p.m.)

- - - - -

LIBERATION by Norman Holland

(Set in Northern France - 1945)

MICHELE	-	Theresa McCourt
LOUISE	-	Elizabeth Riches
JEANNE	-	Michèle Bingham
PHILIPPE	-	Bruce Taylor

Produced by Estelle Bushell, Margaret Hawkyard
Stage Manager - Nick Sims.

INTERVAL - 20 minutes

THE HAPPY JOURNEY by Thornton Wilder

(Set in New Jersey, U.S.A. - 1952)

MA KIRBY	-	Ruth Makin
PA (ELMER) KIRBY	-	Simon Lowe
ARTHUR	-	Andrew Lowe
CAROLINE	-	Gaynor Armstrong
BEULAH	-	Christine Manning
STAGE MANAGER	-	Tony Castle

Produced by Tony Castle.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM.

House Manager	-	Ian Head; Chris Freer; David Royle.
Lighting/Sound	-	Nick Sims
Props	-	Howard Heath
Piano	-	David Smith
Catering	-	Sue Burgess; Tina White
Tickets	-	David Smith

Proceeds, less expenses, will be sent to
The Church of England Childrens Society.

PRICE : 20p

Through most of her adult life, Theresa kept a journal. In an email to Howard, she wrote, “I started out writing a journal (diary) for many years—just the facts ma’am—and then, suddenly one day poetry started happening. But I still love just journaling. It’s the way I sort my life out, try to figure out what’s bugging me, why I have this feeling or the other, or just [capture] funny or annoying things from the day. A journal can be a garbage can for my anger, my more mean side, or a place to pray, or a place to praise. A place to have a conversation with the self—and/or something higher. Journals are amazing things—can lead to a lot of understanding of self.” The following excerpts include a combination of regular journal entries and, beginning with the May 14, 2002, excerpt, entries that sometimes also functioned as letters to a former boyfriend from her days in Wilmslow, England. The entries below refer to Tony, her friend from Wilmslow; Tommy, her first husband; Elizabeth, her younger sister, who died in 1985; Ian, her son with Howard; Jason, her university boyfriend; and Lenin, Tommy’s husky.

The Preamble [January 1984]

As you know, before I presented my last article, I wanted to publish—but only so that I would be admired when my name was in print. Now I've changed my course. Your perceptive reviews of my article were not what made me change direction but trying to develop my article along the lines you suggested did. I felt as if I were stuck and that anything that did come from my pen was a contrivance.

Now I'm back to the kind of writing that I seem to enjoy most—and though it may seem like a cop out, it doesn't feel that way. It's been a long time since I last kept a journal, the only kind of consistent writing I've done apart from essays for English Literature classes and other academic courses. But journal writing, when I did pursue it consistently, had started to give me a more solid sense of who I was. I began to discern more easily things that were truthful and things that were not. I was beginning to come through to myself.

However, after a few years of graduate study and over two years of full-time work, I was losing that delicate thread that I had only barely grasped before. Now, more than anything else, I want to get back in the habit of conversing daily with myself. As William Stafford says, "It's a little touch by touch trail to the mountains."

Sunday, 29 January [1984]

Spring weather, warm enough for me to sit on the back steps of the second floor of the house. On the third floor, at the top of the steps, our neighbor is also taking in the sun. A squirrel, resting on his haunches on the fence, manipulates a huge orange with his two front paws, taking tiny, relentless nibbles. Then, as if the tree's moss-covered trunk were a horizontal surface, he skips up the elm tree, dropping the shell of clean peel. His tiny claws make light scratching noises against the bark, his bushy tail sailing up to show its orange underside.

Inside the apartment, some bread is proofing, the bowl wrapped in a warm towel in a warm cupboard. Below me, under the wooden steps, on the back porch, Tommy hammers and saws wood to make another large frame for another sheet of clean canvas. Lenin, lying near Tommy, watches the squirrel. Across the alley, hidden by our garages and the trees, I hear the typical Sunday laughter of children at play.

A bug to my left, no bigger than a lentil, lifts his wings and seems to shake the winter from his back. He disappears through a knothole in the wood of the stairs. At the back of the garden, about ten early camellias lie around the base of the big camellia tree—in only a few days they have changed from bright green buds to fallen flowers, brown and juiceless at the edges.

I go on an evening walk with Lenin. Near 26th Street, a miniature poodle, no bigger than a squirrel, shoots out of a corner backyard. He jumps up and down on all four legs at once, as if his tiny, bold barks, like hiccups, are lifting his body off the ground. Lenin, giving him hardly a glance, pees on a tree and leisurely moves on.

When we get back to the house, my bread is done. As it cools, I iron a shirt for tomorrow and catch the whiff of clean laundry as the shirt steams.

I realise I haven't moved any distance.

A Sunday is a Sunday—anywhere.

Saturday, 4 February [1984]

The camellia tree is in full bloom, but the orange tree has very little fruit. Around its base lie a few half-shells of peel, cleaned out long ago by the squirrels and the ants. Now the peel itself is half consumed by a grey furry mold. My garden, piled high with decomposing leaves, looks patient. A squirrel drops down from the old elm tree, which is covered with mistletoe, onto the top of the camellia. In the Saturday afternoon quiet, I can hear the squirrel's chattering and the swish and scraping of branches as he moves along them.

On the garage roof lie the dry leaves of last fall and also someone's old Christmas tree, poised on the edge of the roof, a dry brown with silver icicles shimmering and waving in the sun. Below me, under the

stairs, I hear Lenin's chain running along the concrete, and a few blocks away I hear the noon hour chimes of the church clock.

In the sun, Tommy lines up three recent and complementary paintings along the length of the garage wall—three figures dancing through moody clouds of purple and red. The sun reveals all the canvasses' scratches, strokes, and colors, reveals by its piercing light that these emerging figures are true.

A Quiet Weekend, Saturday Evening

[Saturday, 11 February 1984]

I'm working on an essay on Hawthorne for school. Tommy is in San Francisco. The house is very quiet and Lenin is lying at the end of the room, stretched out and calm, as if he were lying before a log fire. He gets up to drink some water and lies down again, nearer to me, on the other side of the table. I made cookies today and now I have some with a mug of coffee. I'm making slow progress on my essay. I look over the far edge of the table and see Lenin dozing again, but with his back leg in the air.

Sunday, 12 February [1984]

Last night, Lenin slept in the house, so I wake this morning to his wet tongue licking my face, his way of telling me he needs to go outside. Days like today make good walking days. It's been raining quietly, so softly the rain hardly penetrates. Around the base of the camellia tree lie many fallen blooms, bright reds and light pinks. I think about raking them, but I don't particularly care.

Tommy comes home from San Francisco. I am glad to see him. He says, "It's good to be home." Hugging him, I enjoy the feel of his body leaning in softly, his arms firm but never holding me too tightly.

Later, in the evening, I'm back in my study, with the little heater on, my full mug, the rug over my legs, and the sound of rain outside in the dark. Tomorrow I begin again, another chatter-filled week, but from the silence of the weekend in a house all to myself, I am ready for another long and babble-filled Monday.

[April 1999; Theresa's reflection on the funeral of Harvey Price, her father-in-law]

A few weeks from my 40th birthday, I watched a man die. And a funeral come and go. And I watched his sons lift his coffin into a hearse on a cold and gray day, gusts of wind blowing their dark jackets, lifting their graying hair.

Men lift the coffins. Carry them across parking lots, slide them into the dark tunnels of hearses all the while the wind buffeting them, flapping their clothes, lifting their hair, as the others, the women, the children, the remaining guests, watch from the other sides of parking lots, watch the men perform the last task.

We're so hard on men sometimes.

We expect so much of them.

Then the men return to the others, bring the cars to the mothers, daughters, sisters, help their wives into the cars, climb into the driver's seat, take their women home.

May 14, 2002

On my travels around Central America, on the coast of Mexico, Jason and I met a French couple called Maria and Lazar, a couple whom I particularly seemed to hit it off with. They gave us some Peyote, mixed with orange juice, something I'd never had before. I remember that for the rest of the day, laughter seemed to continuously bubble up from great depths within me. People, animals, the waves on the shore, seemed enormously amusing in some grand, mystical way. The world was not tragic, but comic. And intensely brilliant and vibrant. I would watch waves roll up, as if in slow motion, aqua blue, and I could see shoals of fish rising up within them, like children's book fish, all in techno-color. I remember lying in a hammock, with Maria and Lazar lying in hammocks next to me, and all of us laughing at each other, understanding each other's one word statements. I wonder if Ian's world is like this without the aid of such keys, without the need of something powerful like Peyote to open his doors.

I still remember the days I would wander through my neighborhood as a three or four year old, letting myself out of the house at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, and find the world so brilliant, all of one piece, each thing I saw connecting seamlessly from me to it and to each other, everything continuous. I remember coming across a branch alive with caterpillars, an entire colony, the branch a living thing with all the crawling creatures clambering over each other. Today, coming across such a thing, I think I would feel more horrified at this example of nature's fecundity—but back then it was a seamless part of my world. Is Ian's world like this now? Is this how he sees?

When he laughed at the tennis game, at the one man grunting each time he hit the ball, it reminded me of my day on Peyote, of my vision of things then. I'd like to think Ian will hold on to that laughter longer than I did, without the need for forbidden keys to unlock his heart, his joy. I'd like to think he can take his joy, his freedom of heart further into the adult world than I did. This laughter, this joy is his treasure, his inner heaven.

May 17, 2002

In fact, my day began much earlier with a long phone call to my mother. It's always emotional when I talk to my mother. More so now, when she's so incapacitated, lying bed bound, in a nursing home—and I am over here, not helping her. Not taking care of her.

It was even more disturbing today because at first, when I asked if I could talk to my mother, the head nurse said that she was asleep. Over there, though, it would have been 2:30 p.m., and I know that when I've called at other times, it's either dinner time, tea time, bedtime, and then it's very hard for the nurses, because they're so busy, to coordinate a call from me and hold the phone for my mother. So today, I insisted, and they put her on the phone.

My mum is always coherent in her own strange way, but yet also both in reality and out of it at the same time. She said that my dad's uncle, Uncle Hugh, lives just down the street. But Uncle Hugh has been dead for a long time. Sometimes she says, "How's Elizabeth doing?" and to that I always tell her, "She's doing great."

But yet, when I told her about you, Tony, and said that we were writing to each other, she said, “Send him my love.” She asked what you were doing, and I told her how you’d captained boats, had your own boat business, and now were involved in making movies. She said, “I always knew that Tony would do well at whatever he did.” Same thing I’d always felt about you. I told her that you had written to me, “Your mother treated herself so harshly” or words to that effect, and I could feel how grateful she was for that statement. She said, “Thank him for me.” Like me, I see how my mother has such a hard time thinking well of herself. How grateful she is for mercy.

And yet, today when I told her about Ian, updated her a little, and said that I thought he might have a fair amount of sensitivity, I also dared to say to her, “Do you think I was sensitive, Mum?” I already knew the answer, and yet it still hurt me when it came. “No,” she said.

Growing up, she had always labeled me as the one who could take care of myself. Certainly, I’m here in America, living a life that is definitely far more sane than the one I grew up with. I do have wholesome tendencies, tend to find wholesome outlets for my frustrations and passions. And tend to find wholesome friends. That’s been true all my life.

And yet, I carry so much tension and anxiety, and only in the last two or three years have I become more aware of it. Now I see how tense a person I mostly am.

This morning, when my mother said so quickly, “No,” I felt such a thump in my stomach. I felt pain. However, I replied in my adult voice, without anger: “You know, Mum, I AM very sensitive.”

I asked her if she knew I had nightmare after nightmare as a child, from a very early age. She said she didn’t, but then she said, “It was probably from all the fighting between me and Dad.” I believe that, too.

I remember also wetting my bed all the time. And wetting myself at school, being bullied by boys because of it, and running away twice from school as a very small child because of the shaming and cruelty of the kids. I didn’t tell my mum this. She will probably never know it—and that’s OK.

But I remember how furious my mum used to be with me when I wet the sheets. How I was physically punished. How inconvenient I was. How much extra stress I caused her.

I remember how she only came to me once during the night when I woke up screaming from my dreams—even though I woke up screaming a lot. And when my mother came, she came with my brother, my dad, too, who were all woken up. And yet, I can still see my mother across the room, on the far side—not coming over to rub my back, reassure me. Now that we're parents, isn't it almost impossible to imagine not attempting to comfort our child's fears?

I remember my anxieties about money. How to get bus fare, dinner [lunch] money. And how one day, I didn't have dinner money, and was too afraid to ask my mum, knowing the stress it would cause her. So instead of going to school that day, I hid in the garage, under blankets, and I stayed in there all day. I've never shared these things with my mum—and now I believe it's too late to do so, even though I know my mum's heart is probably still strong enough to ultimately take it, to hear it, and I feel that we both have forgiven each other for whatsoever has passed. Still, she lies dying but doesn't seem to die.

Today, she talked about how she prays to her father, John. Who I have heard from her and my brother was a good man, though my Auntie Kitty, my mum's oldest sister, doesn't seem to idealize like my mum does. I'm always wary when anyone says anyone is "A saint" and that's how my mum describes my grandfather. I never met him.

After I talked to my mum, after I told her I loved her (to which she told me she loved me—and then said, "but you know, no one can describe that. We just know it"), I talked to the head nurse, asking about my mother's condition.

She weighs just under seven stone [98 pounds]. She is bed bound, and they turn her every two hours. Why does my mother hang on? Why does my mother still live? I don't know how she can bear it—and yet she still does. She has been in the nursing home for several years.

Seems like most days, I think about "What if the call came today?" And yet on the day it comes, I will still be unprepared.

My brother said on the phone to me the other week, "Don't leave me to deal with this funeral on my own."

When Elizabeth died, I was in America, and here on an illegal visa. If I had gone home, they would have caught me—and never allowed me back. I never went to Elizabeth's funeral—and my brother was the only sibling there.

And yet, I wonder what good it would do to go to her funeral. If I can go to that, why not go back now, for another visit, while she's still alive? When I went back three years ago, for a week, I thought it was the last time I would see her alive. I thought it might be my last visit. And yet, she still lives. And I haven't been back since.

And yet, I do feel that most of what needs to be said has been said. That I love her. That she loves me. That though I still feel pain from the circumstances of my childhood, I have come to understand the place she was in—the prison she occupied. We have forgiven each other.

I expect my mother to die any day now—and yet it feels as if I've expected that for several years.

Such an odd day now. Beginning with my entry about the softness of Ian this morning, his easygoing manner, and then backing into the early morning talk with my mum, her power to still hurt—and yet me not feeling the anger so much anymore as the grief, the sadness.

In the end, you're left with just the wound. A wound that ultimately you can't blame anyone for—because in her circumstances, her mental state, in the conditions in which she grew up, lived, with the lack of opportunities she faced, could I have done any better—and in fact, might I have done worse?

Or maybe, simply, there's just no going anywhere with blame. Blame is just more pain, more hurt being thrown out. But all this makes it sound as if we make rational, logical decisions to forgive. As if we can switch it on and off like a light. How do we get to forgiveness? Perhaps when we wear ourselves out with the alternatives?

I've got to stop. Take a break. Ian's not awake yet. I'm going to pay some bills.

Monday, May 19, 2002

It's early morning, and I've just sent you those photos yet again—third time in 24 hours—but this time they're smaller and faster to download.

It's raining again, and I love the smell of rain, the sound of car wheels slooshing on wet roads, the darkness of the sky, even at 6:43 a.m.

Yesterday, it started raining in the afternoon. Rain in May is not a first here in Sacramento—but it is unusual. Typically, we may go from

about early May to October without rain. More and more, it's become a long parched period for me. When the first rain comes in the fall, I feel such relief and calmness come over me.

Rain here always brings me back to England. For the most part, I don't miss England—but I do miss its countryside, which together with the weather is in my heart.

I think the land of a person's birth is typically the only land that really seems beautiful to that person. When I see a place like Yosemite, here in California, I can say, "Yes, it's beautiful" but I don't feel that sense of beauty in my heart like I do when I am in the country I grew up in.

I wonder, do you ever miss England? I'm guessing because you spent the first years of your childhood out of the country that perhaps the attachment is not so strong?

Do you remember how much we walked? When I went back to England the last time, I ran a lot of our old routes—not necessarily because of you because getting around Wilmslow means a person has to take pretty much the same routes each time.

However, I couldn't help but remember and think about you because basically we were really each other's best friend there—and we walked so much! Looking back, I realize I had no other friend that was closer to me than you. In fact, I had no true friends but you. Wow.

What a couple of loners we both were—though on the surface, perhaps, I may have appeared more genial, more hail-fellow-well-met.

But in fact, I think I'm still a loner, still basically liking to socialize a little bit each day, but also absorbed in some pretty quiet, loner hobbies. And I can still feel lonely, still feel as if I don't quite fit into the groups around me. There, present, talking, but always finding that in a group, I end up feeling different from them, not quite of the same ilk. Perhaps that's the way all humans feel, though, and maybe most folk don't like to look at that side of themselves—or admit it. But since most people won't tell me what they feel, I'll never really know.

But back to those old routes we used to walk, many times over. From the center of Wilmslow, down the hill past the pub and the fish and chip shop (on opposite sides from each other), through the graveyard, past the church, past the Carrs [a public park] and the River Bollin, up the hill to Twinnies Road.

A couple miles on, past the Blue Bell pub where my father mostly went, over to the Dean Drive house (completely remodeled) and then along that same road, taking a right at the end, running into Handforth. The area we walked is very small in reality, and yet back then, it seemed like we walked so many miles.

I also pass the smaller park just outside of Wilmslow where I seem to remember us making love—perhaps for the first time?

Silvio's, the place where I waitressed, is long gone.

I ran along Knutsford Road many times (because the bed and breakfast I stayed in was two houses down from yours) and passed St. John's church, stopped off at a little corner store near it, to get various odds and ends. I even took a bus at the old bus stop—the one you walked me to so many times after Pathfinders [St. John's youth acting group].

As I mention the bus stop, I see you in a long trenchcoat, warm, thick. And I can still feel the first time you held my hand. I said my hand was cold, and you said, "Put your hand in my pocket," and when I did, you put your hand in there, too, over mine. That memory seems so innocent, now, to me.

I love walking. If I'm not running these days, I still walk. I especially love walking through our Sacramento neighborhood, which has relatively "old" houses (ours was built in 1922—did I already mention that?) and mature, full canopied trees.

I cried the last time I left England. I'd had a good week, by myself, visiting my mum, visiting some old teachers (one of the nuns who taught me, Sister Gerard), and an old high school acquaintance. Going to Liz's grave.

Getting on the plane to leave, I felt a sorrow I'd never felt before when I'd left England. The emotions of seeing my mother so incapacitated. The revisiting of the past. It wasn't to wish it back, by any means, but it did seem as if my heart had really opened to my old self, some of the people who had shaped me, more than ever before. I felt as if finally, I'd built a bridge between my younger self and the self I am now—and they were no longer two separate selves, the former to be kept in a dark, out-of-the-way place. Now, I could go back and forth from younger to older.

It's about time for Ian to wake up—so I'm going to get dressed, make the bed, and give that little guy his morning hug!

Tuesday, May 21, and Wednesday, May 22, 2002

My life now, here—and what you offer for me. What I want you to offer me. What I wait for, what I'm always seeking—connection. What I pin my hopes on. What I want to get from your response—from anyone's response.

I've had these signs before. Burning up good fuel on situations that don't pan out, on things that don't sustain, that aren't really of substance. Something is going on in my life right now—or not going on—and am I really looking at a mirage, putting out good energy to get to it, as a way to ignore the here and now—find the more substantial thing I need.

I'm trying to say to myself, for each disappointed day, that I must write anyway. For each time your response isn't there, write. For each time I don't hear from you though I hoped I would, write regardless. Write for simply salvation. Write for simply the hope of finding something, anything, that answers the quest for something I'm not sure of. Write regardless of whether you get answers or not. Write to fill this void. Write whether what you say is anything or not. Write even when I have no one to send it to—and even when I have no one to answer back. Is this it? Just write in faith. Write even in a state of blankness. Write even in this wasteland. Just keep pecking at the keys. More and more, I feel as if I'm so removed from those around me, so unknowable, so unknowing. So wanting to connect, and so unconnected.

I think more about our friendship. For that, it seems, is what it really was back then, wasn't it? Two lost souls. Two people isolated. Lonely. Different. Two ships in the night. On the vast ocean (or in the vast wilderness). How on earth did we ever find one another?

And odd, how easy it seems, looking back, it was to let go of one another. We never had any deep, agonized parting, at least as far as I can remember. It didn't seem as if we struggled to let each other go. Not like my partings in other relationships. And yet, in our three short years, we spent so much time together, so many hours. And I do remember feeling the sadness you described that we couldn't continue, but it came, now that I think about it, with acceptance. A sad fact.

Why didn't we experience the agony we experienced in other relationships?

We never even thought about marrying each other. Marriage didn't even seem to come up, not that I remember. It came up with others, later, but not with you. Not between us. You never asked. I never mentioned. I never wanted. You never wanted. Marriage seemed ridiculous to me then. My mother had always said, "Don't get married right away" and that seemed so obvious to me. I couldn't imagine marrying at that age. I remember a girl in my class, Janet Copper, I think her name was, who married her high school sweetheart. It fit her. It didn't seem surprising for her—and yet it was so far removed from something I would do. To me, she already seemed married, settled. I would bet my bottom dollar she's still married to the same man.

I don't remember any agony between us about the question of marriage. Seems now that we both somehow understood that you would go on to do something else—and that I would too. That we both had our journeys. What a strange—and yet accepting—relationship we had, now that I look back. Am I reinventing this? Am I pulling out connections and patterns where in fact the reality was merely randomness? Seems now like even listening, as we did many times, to Cohen's song "So long Marianne" is significant. Foreshadowing again. Foreknowing that we would part. That we both had other places to go.

My gosh, Tony, now I feel even more grateful that we met when we did. That we were somehow there in fact for each other. That we were so lucky.

Do most young people have that? Seems to me now that it was a fairly mature relationship. Even sensible. Any parent should be glad we had each other, given each of our situations. I believe my mum was glad you were in my life. I believe it relieved her. Gave her one less worry about her children.

You and I were steady together, really. We were two steady people when we were together—even including those punishing times.

Am I reimagining our youth, making it up, reinventing it? Or am I consciously seeing now something that more unconsciously existed back then?

Simply, we were companions, with no real holds on each other, no chains. We didn't demand forever. We didn't demand proof of the marital kind. That still seems ridiculous to me—that we should or would have.

What an unusual bond we had, now it seems to me. I don't think I've ever had as free a one since.

So there is the foundation. And then, years later, I have my dream, and a week later, you pop up, in an e-mail, saying "hello Theresa" and "Remember me? I remember you!" And suddenly, from there, I'm writing you long, involved letters, and you're writing back, and I feel this dependency on you to write more often, to keep writing. I am humbled. More grateful for you than I was back then, perhaps? More needy.

And my little boy, sweet Ian, cries from his crib for me to go and lift him from his prison. I go. But wish you would write.

Postscript: I see I have never expected you to be kind—and yet you always have been. I am continuing, at this rest stop, to be surprised by your kindness. I am always surprised when someone gives me kindness. And I find myself so grateful for it now.

Wednesday, June 5, 2002

Writing is joyous even when the subject is hard, difficult, because writing is such an act of hope, swimming against the incoming tide, swimming against it even when I know nothing will stop that tide coming in. And yet, to do it anyway, for the act itself of fighting the current, fighting that force that pushes us back anyway, is such a daily victory, such a triumph in its own small way. In its humble striving. No one may witness this act. It is an ordinary, simple act of hope, one that many ordinary people perform in various ways, through various means, through various forms all around the world. By people who aren't in the lime-light, aren't on the world's stage, who don't have their names in newspapers, on TV, on the radio, but they do their bit anyway, asserting dignity, health, hope.

I am enjoying my hour of writing, my hour of communing, whether anyone sees it or not. It's my time. My moment each day, like doing yoga, my form of getting in touch, listening to my breath, seeing how my breath can connect to a universal one. If I'm lucky, if I keep doing it, having those moments of my small breath finding the rhythm of the world's. Of space. Of a continuum.

[Later, in the same letter] I also hear our neighborhood chicken, crowing like a rooster. When we moved into this house, over five years ago now, the chicken moved into the neighborhood at about the same time. No one knows how she got here. Where she came from. She violates city ordinances that disallow domestic animals other than cats or dogs within the city limits. She is such a survivor, and though she can be annoying, you can't help but admire her pluck, her audacity, and sheer ability to remain alive and well all these years.

I saved her from a wandering dog once. That's the only time I've seen her panic. Cats don't phase her. Cats do not chase or hunt her. They know this chicken won't give up without a fight.

When I garden, dig a bit of soil, she suddenly appears, seemingly out of nowhere, and will peck around my spade or hand, to get a fresh worm, a fresh grub, a fresh something I can't even see. Sharp-eyed chick. Sharp beaked chick. She doesn't care whether she pins my hand or not. I am the one who has to take precautions, pull my hand away fast. I try to shoo her away. She gets annoying the way I can't weed or dig in peace. But my shooing is nothing to her. She flutters away a few inches or so, but she's right back, pecking again almost immediately.

A neighbor two houses down the road used to feed her, but now rumor is she gets fed by someone on T Street, just the other side of the alley.

A summer or so ago, I used to find a small shallow basin at the side of the house, up against the wall of the house, outside what is now Ian's window. I wondered what caused it until I realized it was the chicken's summer retreat on hot afternoons. A cool basin, in the shade, where she could have her siestas.

I always like to hear the chicken's crowing—especially if I haven't seen her for a while. I like to see how she keeps on going, year after year. She is another ordinary symbol of hope in this urban place. A spirit of tenacity. A spirit of almost impossible survival.

No one has yet called animal control. No one with a small, constricted heart, and a vacuum in their heart has yet done the bureaucratically correct thing to do by complaining to the authorities. It's a mercy. It's a grace—that so far, no one on our street has shown that kind of negating.

I like this street. I always call it the "industrious street" because we fall between two areas in Sacramento. We are south of a big divider in this part of Sacramento—Highway 50. To the north of Highway 50 is

the sumptuous area known as East Sac. Just a straight 12-minute walk north from us over the freeway is the area within East Sac known as the Fabulous Forties. Here's where Ronald Reagan lived when he was governor of California. It's an area I walk or run in just about every day. Here it's rare for anyone to do their own housework or gardenwork. Houses, lawns, have a constant air of perfection. No peeling paint. No moss on the roofs. No misaligned gutters. No leaves on the grass.

To the south of us, about a 12 to 15 minute walk, is the start of an area called Oak Park. If you headed into the heart of it, kept on going, you'd see ghettos, once grand Victorian homes, now with boards over the windows, graffiti on the walls, broken down, wheelless cars on dried patches of weed and grass. And black people everywhere, looking lean and angry.

In between is us. We live in an area called Elmhurst, with homes built in the 1920s. Small homes built for people with jobs and kids, who make their car payments, home mortgages, have a pet or two, but live humbly. On the weekends, especially Saturdays, you'll see them out washing their cars, mowing their lawns, digging their flowerbeds. Small remodels occur here and then, occasionally a second story goes up—but rarely. There's pride in their small homes, but nothing grand about them.

And unlike East Sacramento in the evening, here you see a lot of people sitting on their porches, making calls on their cell phones, having a smoke, watching the kids play ball on the lawn or on the street. People walk their dogs a lot on our street. We have many cats. Runners use our street because it's a residential street—doesn't lead to any major part of the city.

And I love to see the leaf piles, the pruned branches or limbs of shrubs and trees, appear by late Saturday afternoon, left in front of houses for Tuesday's city pickup.

Friday, June 14, 2002

Tonight, I'm squeezing in this session, too, just to do it. To keep my fingers limber, to keep some consistency in the exercise of writing, just as I try to do with my running. Build up a base.

When I'm writing these days, I am just trying to focus on doing it as consistently as I can, stay in the moment while I do, but with restraint, not focused on too much hope, that at some point some breakthrough will occur of a direction I can start heading towards that is more focused, more coherent, that could be something that could be considered some definable kind of "work." If not, though, I am enjoying my exercise, keeping the small flame alive, making small, sometimes very delicate, discoveries along the way. If nothing happens down the road, if nothing develops to be more focused about, I am enjoying the day-by-day meditation.

On something Tony said in this last letter, he noted how specific, how concrete I am, mentioning this in the context of how I am different from my mother and perhaps how part of my answer to her is to insist on this concreteness. I'm not sure I totally agree with him on the reason why I insist on this concreteness.

In writing, at least, I know that when I first began this process, in my early twenties, I was very abstract, very nonspecific, too intellectual, and my writing was much weaker because of that. I still have a tendency to veer that way, on a more surfacey writing day. Somewhere along the way, though, I did understand one of the basic premises usually recommended for good writing—that specifics really do ground what we say. They're our proof, our examples, our evidence. They're what convince. What makes someone else believe. What interests. What makes what we say unique, our own and no one else's. They're what give a piece its individuality. No matter what kind of ideas or thoughts we have or want to express, specifics make the difference in whether someone else will accept or reject. Specifics make the piece a self-expression.

And yet, I also think I know the point he's trying to make about me. I am insistent on what I call "reality." I'm not a reader of fantasy. I'm not a reader, typically, of escapism. I want things portrayed as they are. What I consider to be as they are. I don't want Hallmark statements. I don't want sentimentalism. I want to hear what something is really like, not what we're supposed to agree it's like. The older I get, the more I want this realism—and I get impatient when I don't. Sometimes I'm aghast when I don't get it.

Take mothers. I've met quite a few mothers who will say sugary things about being a mother—and only those sugary things. "Don't you

just love being a mother?” they’ll say. “Aren’t they just adorable?” And, “I just love being a mother.”

I can’t state the experience this way—or only this way. Just as with so many other experiences in life, I find motherhood so much more complicated, composed of so many different feelings and experiences, and they don’t add up to a simple statement like “I just love being a mother.” I wouldn’t want to NOT be a mother, now that I’m here, but when someone makes a sugary statement, I want to say, “Are you kidding?” or “Do you really believe this?”

I find motherhood so challenging, so hard sometimes. So demanding. It’s composed of the sweetest moments, and also some frightening, worrying ones. It’s composed of easy days and very hard ones. Easy weeks, and very hard ones. Sometimes I’m too darn tired to appreciate it as I would like to every minute of every day. Other days we’re gliding along, swimming with the current.

Sometimes I dislike the feeling of being something of a white slave to an imperious child. Other days, I feel so tenderly giving, so willing to subjugate everything. A lot depends on how tired I am, how much time I’ve had for myself, how much Howard and I are teaming it.

On the very whiny days, especially if I’m tired, I could never phrase the experience in Hallmark terms. And yet, tell me that I couldn’t have Ian, tell me that something had taken him from me, and I can’t imagine what there would be to get up for again. It would be an incredibly dark, long road back to even a modicum of this meaningful life I have now.

I have an array of reactions when a mother doesn’t admit these things—when she doesn’t convey the complications. Inwardly I roll my eyes, and right there, at that moment, I’ve pretty much written the person off as someone I would enjoy having an extended conversation with. And I do feel a bit aghast at the thought that societal pressure on us is so great that we cannot even admit that sometimes it’s hard, sometimes we don’t always feel immense, unending, continuous feelings of love for our children—that our love can get buried sometimes by grimy, thick layers of daily grind and bodily weakness.

Well, I feel as if I’ve hardly written at all, and yet I need to go. Head to the store. Pick up some chocolate dessert for the potluck tomorrow. Get back home.

At least I came here.

August 12, 2002

Early Friday morning, my Uncle Owen called with news that Mum had died. Such a soft call. Such a soft, sad feeling to hear it. I've had such a long goodbye with her—over so many years. Just a couple of months ago, in a letter to Tony, I said I've been expecting the call for a long time.

And yet, when the call comes, we're still not expecting it. It still surprises. It still isn't what we expect when we talk to the unfortunate messenger at the other end.

My mother is now dead.

It's a hard thing to absorb still. Perhaps I've already absorbed it over so many years of such a complicated, difficult relationship, with so much pain in it. Such strong feelings of knowing she loved me—and yet with so many hurts there, so much rejection, neglect, anger. But it did finally end in love—even with hurt in our last phone call, love was so there.

I still don't know the exact details of Mum's death. She was in the hospital the previous week (after being in a nursing home for more than five years). Someone, Owen I think, said—in the end—she died peacefully. But did she die early Thursday or Friday morning? I don't know. Did she say anything before she died? Did she have last words?

I had a kind of "adult" revelation this week, versus a more childish one. I was thinking about my brother, about how glad I was that he got to speak to her a few weeks before she died, for an hour.

For so long, I've been wondering why my mother has held on so long, why—when it seemed to me she was so ready to die, so much resolved—she hadn't left yet. But in fact, though my mother and I were resolved, I think, in fact, it didn't occur to me that she might not be resolved with other people, that others in her life might exist for her with the same intensity that she has existed for me. I had the child's narcissistic view. She was my mother. She existed only for me.

But earlier this week, it occurred to me that my mother also existed outside my still childish world. That perhaps my mother's lingering had to do with others—or something completely not to do with others. Or nothing in particular at all.

But my thought was that perhaps she needed to talk to her first born before she died. Michael, my brother. It suddenly occurred to me, silly though it now sounds, that there was a completely separate love there

that I knew nothing about, that in my world as her daughter had not occurred to me. Her firstborn. How much love she had to have poured into him, born three years before me. How he had existed for her, her first child, for three years, without any other person to take her attention from him.

Already in the almost 16 months of Ian's life so far, I know the intensity of love I have for Ian. How I can't imagine another child changing that. How I can't imagine having this kind of love for any other. Yet my mum, my brother, have their own private life and existence that I know nothing of. That her relationship with him, or perhaps with others, could have been the sticking point, the thing that held her here so long—a sticking point that had nothing to do with me. Phew. How long we hold onto childish views. See ourselves as the centers of our mothers' lives. Imagine we're the center of their world. What bondage we hold them in.

Could I have had this revelation if I hadn't become a mother myself?

Who will even be at the funeral? I hope I'll be pleasantly surprised. That known and unknown folks will come out of the woodwork. I wish some of Mum's long ago male lovers will amazingly emerge for one last goodbye. Men who were good to her. Men who appreciated her. I'm still glad she had that: Men who loved her, other men than Dad, who was too weak, too small a person, too fearful, too pinched, to appreciate her. I'm glad she knew men somewhat involved in the arts, or one plain, simple, hardworking man, a man of the land, who admired her, fell under her spell. That these other men confirmed her own enlarged feeling about herself.

But it's likely that the turnout will be pitiful. Family-wise, me, Mike, Uncle Owen. Will her sister Kitty show up? Will Kitty's daughter Bernadette? Those might be possibilities. But I suspect Mum's other sisters, three I think, won't. And her brother? Is he alive or dead? I don't even know. Will some folks from around Wilmslow perhaps read an obituary (did Dad even do that?) and turn up, on a whim, with some small, kind memory of Mum? Will Sister Gerard perhaps show up? A wake is unlikely. Will anyone gather afterwards?

From an older person's point of view, a dying person's, does it matter in the end, these things? Maybe it matters more in life, when we look ahead, with all our living fears, than when we're close to the end, or have already reached it.

Mike just called to confirm funeral times. I read him the brief passage about him, Mum. He halfway joked, “Maybe she just hung on to try and outlive The Bastard.”

Well, it’s 6:22 a.m. So much more I could have written before I left. I’m not taking the computer with me. Too afraid of damage on the way, the hassle of carrying it. Wanting to stay fairly light. As unencumbered as possible. And yet, tapping on keys has now become an easier way for me to write than pen on paper. What an irony given my old views about writing.

I’ve got a pad of paper for the journey, a few pens. We’ll see.

Thank you for the opportunity to write here this morning. One last chance before I leave. Keep Howard and Ian in good health in body, heart, and mind. I love them.

August 14, 2002

(In Wilmslow, England, writing to Tony Castle)

Old friend,

Here in the Garden of Remembrance, I write to you again, sitting on one of the worn, wooden benches. They’re still encircled by those trees, under which, winter and summer nights, you and I made love.

The sky, so far, has mostly been broken gray clouds and a few warm showers, here and gone again.

I’m staying on Manchester Road, so it’s almost the same short walk to the town center. Yesterday, with the sun so late to settle, I walked through Carrs, following the deep bends of the river. I found the right-of-way and went up to Twinnies Road. The gate was still rickety, the hedge still high, but most of the other council houses have been bought—fixed up. The phone booth has gone.

Earlier today, I went in and out of town getting ready for the funeral. Up on Grove Street, I bought a skirt, a blouse, even high-heeled shoes, turning myself English-seeming again for my mother’s pride. I looked for Silvio’s, but it no longer serves drink or food. Your old workplace—and Woolworth’s, too—have become something else.

Still, I stood on the sidewalk, nose against the window, seeking someone who used to be me. I saw her clearly, in her sullied apron, pink

uniform, stale with the smell of teacakes and Danish sandwiches. She was looking out, through the glass, hoping to glimpse someone who used to be you.

Now, on this bench across from St. Barts, I can see the workers and pub goers as they cut through the church grounds, walking either hurriedly or glum-shouldered across the graves. Remember when we, too, cut through the graveyard, returning from work on cold Saturday nights?

I remember how your hand would tighten on mine each time you saw the ghost. I tried to see it, too, but never could.

You are now the last person living of the three who once made this place home for me. Throughout this visit, along all the old routes, you have trailed beside me, holding my right hand, tall and lean in your long, gray coat.

Sunday, November 14, 2004

Today, my dad died, but in British time, it was 3:45 a.m., in a hospital in Macclesfield. I got the call from Michael first, then my first cousin Catherine, who came over from Ireland to be there. I could have called sooner but didn't. I am still not free of anger. I was afraid, even in my dad's last hour, given the chance, were he awake, aware, I might say something in anger that perhaps would not allow the kindest passage.

But then, in the evening, with Howard, both of us on one of our in-the-cottage kind of dates, with 14-year-old Olivia from up the road, watching Ian in the house, I called. Got a floor nurse who told me Michael had just left for tea a minute or so ago. To call back in five to 10 minutes when he might be back and the ward nurse would be back, too.

I waited longer than five to 10 minutes, and so when I called back again, Michael had left, and the ward nurse told me he had died. "I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad news" she said in that kindly, person to person way that I also experienced when Mum was sick and then when I called the nursing home, something so immediate and "small town" about it—though I'm in reality just a stranger "calling from America."

And I don't say anything but "Thank you" a couple of times. What can I say?

And so I then call Michael, and by this time it's 4:15 a.m., and he's just made it back to Dad's flat, only a half hour after Dad's death. Mike said he went for a cup of tea, only gone a few minutes, but when he got back, Dad had passed away. No one beside dad in that moment death occurred. Catherine had left around midnight.

Mike said before he left him to get a quick drink, Dad seemed more at rest than he had in the last two days—he'd had another morphine drip, seemed calm, sleeping.

Mike is left with the clearing up, the papers, the photos, the phone calls on Dad's phone to return, the disposing of things. Mike is sober and when he's sober he doesn't talk much. I can hear his feelings behind his words, his voice more soft, but still trying to keep a firmness there. I tell him he's earned his medals, shown a lot of kindness to Dad. What else is there really to say? It's true of Mike. He's been responsible and kind.

Mike tells me that no one could understand Dad in the last few days—he'd had a tumor removed from the side of his throat, and I'd heard mention of throat cancer, but I don't know if that was what he had exactly—but yes, some kind of malignant cancer.

Dad had made some attempts at talking in the last few days, but because he'd lost his voice, his efforts to whisper couldn't be understood. He seemed agitated for a while until just a couple of days before he died.

Mike said he found in Dad's flat, among all the various documents and photos, a picture of me as a baby in Chesham, sitting on my mum's lap in a swing. He brought it to the hospital, gave it to Dad. Dad held onto it for an afternoon, kept looking at it.

Then I cried—but not enough for Mike to hear.

What else could Mike and I say? I told him I was sorry I wasn't there. If I was, I would have for sure helped him with all the stuff in Dad's flat, taken care of some of the bureaucracy. I wish I could be there with him. I would want to sort through everything with him—and only him.

After we ended the call, I sit at Howard's desk where I make the call, and the predominant thought, the predominant grief seems to be about the total number of losses: Liz, Mum, Dad, and each of their sad endings, the misery of each of their deaths—the conditions in which they died. Most of what I could express to Howard was something like "What pathetic endings." Maybe it's always pathetic—and in the end,

the surroundings, the conditions, in which death happens, don't matter that much. But how am I to know?

As I sit now looking out the window, the crepe myrtle is now an autumn tree, leaves of red, yellow, warm brown, a fiery look to the canopy that it's had all day, particularly early this morning, when the eastern sun lit it up.

Now among all the other leaves, one leaf spins while with a fair regularity other individual leaves fall around it, but the one orange leaf, part fiery red, just keeps spinning, while others fall from above it from below it. Now it swings from left to right, light turning it yellow in occasional moments of swinging, now it sways more vigorously even while other leaves around it do not move.

Why does that one leaf move while others either fall so straightforwardly, straight down, no spinning, or seem so still, still attached to their branches? The one leaf I keep my focus on tries to fall while others fall so easily and effortlessly. But this one seems to have to work at it, as if trying to unbind itself against its natural schedule. Why, if it's an outside force or breeze that moves it, does the "outside force" not shake the other leaves too? It sways, it spins, inside the canopy, not on the outer edges, and I am typing without taking my eyes off it. I am cold. I want to turn the heat up in the cottage, but yet, if I move, I know I will miss its fall. In all my looking it has not stopped its movement in some form or another. Now it is spinning as fast a top, amazing that its stem does not loosen, detach. It's a small leaf, alone on a branch inside the canopy while on the outside, outer edge of the canopy, lots of leaves hang completely still, with there no effort being made. Occasionally, while I try to keep my eyes on the leaf I catch the movement of another falling, out of my peripheral vision, but not this one, despite all its swinging,

The tree is beautifully lit on this crisp blue-skied morning. The tree overall is an orange mostly, with fiery red hues and a little yellow when only last week it seemed more the color of copper, darker, closer to brown, and the now the leaf spins again, twirling alone on the tree, no other it seems spinning like this one, it's twirling slows as if exhausted and then it seems to make another desperate spin. One close by falls without all this twirling, this energy, but still the one that works harder at dropping remains, single orange drop on dark tertiary (this level?) bough.

Saturday, May 20, 2006

[In Dunsmore East, Ireland]

Reading something about Yeats, and believe that one of my strengths is that I'm fairly holistic, got various strands that work together when I write my poetry—got a thinking, rationale side, and a feeling side, and a spiritual side, and a witty, earthy side. My weakness is being too prosaic. Need to work on tapping into the intuitive, dream world—which is there in me, but which I don't bring out nearly as strongly as I'd like. Other weakness, not enough work on rhyme, meter—need to do more conscious revisions in these areas, get more melody into my work.

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

Something large has been happening—or not happening—for most of this year. Unsettled. Unfocused now it mostly seems. Not having the sense of having worked on writing, but more the sense of distraction—from Ireland in May onwards. Now Hawaii looms, with all the pretravel distraction of buying things for the trip, packing—and the resettling again after the trip. All year, it feels, I have felt out of my groove—without a groove in fact. Running this year flat. No big deal there, though. But writing, reading, all flat, a large part of me antsy, not settling for the most part into books, or even finishing them. Skipping from one to the next—looking for something, it seems, but not finding it.

Settling Ian into school—the whole preparation of the school staff for managing Type 1, all the documents—all of us getting settled into the new schedule of Ian's kindergarten. So many small, unimportant tasks—in reality, just administrative things that I wasn't required to perform when Ian was younger—but now that I have “free” time I am expected to perform—feel that expectation from myself—and perhaps from Howard. But the admin stuff more and more seems to drain me. And I allow myself to be distracted, by e-mail, the web, small tasks done at a time of day when it would be better for focusing here. What is going on? Why have I lost my discipline?

And now insomnia returns again—last night, so restless, lying still for so many hours, awake, worried about the insomnia coming on again.

There IS larger stuff below, which I still struggle to write about—fear stopping me—and here I cease again. Stop for a long moment before I begin tapping again. The Thing that is in the way I really know. It wants out so badly. It wants to speak, be examined, be understood, its actions analyzed, assessments made, but I don't, I keep not doing so! And there's this inner pressure building that makes me want to run from the computer, do busy stuff, garden, exercise, move, and I should know myself better than this right now, because myself, that inner something does not like me to be in avoidance, to be untruthful with myself, to hide, disseminate. I used to have an essentially honest self. What do I have now?

Been reading on and off Carl Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, again (last time when I was in Birmingham or maybe Eureka, I think!) but this time there's no linear progression from Chapter 1 to the last. I pick and choose, and now I read "Chapter VI: Confronting With the Unconscious"—and in so many ways it's out there—and yet Jung stirs me in so many ways.

Whenever I have read him I want to open doors I believe are in me. To discover more of the underparts. And to have an inner guru of some kind that can advise me so "directly" as his seemed to—to KNOW more about myself—but also the parts of myself that are NOT myself. I'm searching for something right now, missing something, wanting to find something new, to break through somehow, and I feel disoriented in many ways as he described at the beginning of his chapter, after his break from Freud: "I felt totally suspended in mid-air, for I had not found my own footing."

I have quotes from the chapter that I've underlined. I'm guessing I'll save them to my list of quotes—a few gems from my reading—and now I am also collecting words, with the intention of learning their meaning either again (for once I knew the meaning of some of them) or learning them for the first time. I have my place to write down my dreams. So now I have a journal, a dream place, a word place, a quotation place, poems by others, and poems by me. The latter, though, at this point, I feel I have lost faith with. It's a feeling that's difficult. It's another part of my antsiness. I'm doubtful now about my writing—whether I really have it or should I be doing something better with my time—or just earning money instead—or what? I've been in this space now mostly for a year.

Part of me right now, without having hit some [new] ground, without having got to some clear insight or point, wants to rush out into the yard, and just clear a messy bed of plants—just pull out stuff. And then I ask myself, “Is that what I should do, or should I just stay here and keep on tapping, mostly coming up with abstractions, nonentities, and who really cares?” If I plunder the bed outside, rip out fading plants, clear the space, at least I can step back at the end of the day, point to it, and say to Howard and myself, “I did that!” My time can be accounted for. There is proof I worked.

But This! This unfocused tapping of the keys! No proof. I don’t even know myself if this counts for anything—this floundering around in what feels like mostly a void!

Beyond my window, a rose bush with two pink blooms sways in a slight breeze, and September light seems to slant across the yard, the light not the bleaching light of August, but softer, gentler, while in here, I’m on the sofa, laptop on my legs, the air conditioner making all its noise—shutting out the sound of any possible birds (where have they gone this year!!! Seems like numbers have dwindled significantly compared to past years—where are the birds!) and I want to go out and clear a bed and forget this Goddamn writing that ain’t happening!

January 1, 2012

This last year has been somewhat trying: Our cat—Cashmere—died in January (but she was 20 years old), our 14-year-old dog died early summer, a house fire followed and then my husband’s mother died—and another issue around that time that is still a big shock! [Theresa was diagnosed with primary progressive aphasia, a type of frontotemporal dementia that results from degeneration of the frontal and/or temporal lobe of the brain, in July 2011.] But I have to say, as a family we have done well this year, getting closer rather than further away—and we seem to be laughing much more than before. We have a family, a roof over our head, warmth, etc. when we all know so many people around the world have barely anything. These days, what I appreciate are my family, long known friends, good conversation, laughter, trees in any season, light

filtering through a window, and even more laughter! On that note, I am ready to leave 2011—but not stupid enough to know that 2012 may be better—but let's all raise our glasses for the New Year!

January 25, 2012

I truthfully, don't really understand what's going on most of the time. I do go somewhat up and down—in and out of denial. But I realized this morning when I woke up that I was falling into a pit—and realized that just telling Linda about the diagnosis sort of made it more real for me today. Arrrgh! I started fixation on how most of the friends I've know who have been very sick and some who've died—even though we make a visit or two, bring a dinners etc—still there is a gradually growing space between the healthy and the dying—and at some point, both healthy friends, some relatives and the “dying” person separate from each other in some way—and there becomes fewer and few contacts between the two. It really is true that the living must go on living—house, work, cars, etc force the living to get back to the world—and the ones who are going the other way—I think they move toward more and more distance from the life in the world—and the big question IS what am I here for, what does this all mean, and assuming that the person still has some precious energy for a year or too, where should that energy go. I know I have good friends, etc and I know my husband and son loves me—but still this morning, I felt that I am moving further away from them—and they are out there doing worldly things that they should be doing, and I am detaching from those—and more and more I am thinking about my road ahead—and right now it feels really lonely.

Rating Today: Six Kleenex Tissue

July 2012

And now, Tony, I am getting to your message re: “Why can't I write a long letter”—

I have wanted to give you the answer for a while, but it's been hard to tell you—especially to you, pretty much my oldest friend. I will say

that just writing this letter has taken a lot of hours—dispersed over three weeks now I think—and with a fair amount of frustration. Ugh!

However, I'm so grateful that "Word" and e-mail have spell check!

But here is the reason I have not written many long letters for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a year or more:

After a lot of MRI's etc., etc., etc., I was diagnosed near the end of last year of something called Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA). I have attached the info so you can understand why I am having a hard time writing even a short note—never mind a long letter (but I should try).

On the happier side, our first doctor here in Sacramento sent me to the world's best neurology doctor (Bruce Miller)! *Truly!* Amazingly, he works in San Francisco, and that's only 1.5 hours away from our house. Ironically, before this all started, we had see him several times on the TV, being interviewed on a show here in America called "Charlie Rose."

About two months ago we went to meet him—an all day thing—with lots of tests and screening etc. And I have to say he seems very real, very caring, and was very happy that I am at a very early stage (doesn't feel early for me!), that I am athletic, that I have no drugs in my body, don't drink ever (two glasses a year maybe). He also was so sweet about my poetry. I had a sense he is one of those very rounded man.

We told him that we can't go over more than a certain amount of money and that our first concern is our son. However, Bruce Miller does a lot of clinical trials. I said that if it makes me so drugged up that I can't be with and enjoy my son and husband for as long as I can, then it would not be worth it for me. I also said that it's not worth it for me if I get a clinical trial if I end up with the pretend drug rather than the real one.

But as it turns out, he has a clinical trial that is apparently close to being approved by the Feds (with no pretend drugs).

(Pops, Ian just asking for a popsicle!)

Sooooo,

Next week we'll find out when we have to go back to S.F. But we will be there for three days and night when we go again—for more tests etc., etc.

On how I'm doing: so far mostly fine—had a bit of cry writing this to you—but overall, I have become a mad woman about my front and back gardens—working in them many hours when Howard is at work and Ian is in school—and it seems to be my newish way of seeing poetry.

I find myself going to the nursery quite often for some new flower—and keep getting new ideas for what the garden needs next. Gardens are my salvations, it seems.

I also went back to my old running club a couple of months ago—and I'm ramping up again to hopefully a race at some point. After I decided to go back, a friend of mine said that he'd read that running and pushing it a bit actually helps with the brains!

Also, I've lived here in Sacramento for more than 30 years now—and I have a great community—as well as a few true blue friends that have always been there for me and me for them.

Also, my sense of “family” was already deepening in the last 3-4 years, but even more so with this change—I really feel lucky that Howard has been so loyal, loving, and protective of us. I try to help him do his work by mean doing the stuff at home.

Finally, I also feel lucky that we have meet Bruce—though I am not expecting a miracle—I am open to what we have chosen—going in knowing that any one who is “losing their mind” hasn't done so well up to date! 😊

Phew!

Hope you're latest film does well—and if you have a chance send a list of your other latest stuff! I did see on your FB a said plea from on of you boys—missing you—so hope you got that one.

Hope you're feeling better—let me know how things are going for you!
Always the best to you, Tony,

Theresa

About the Author

Theresa Mary McCourt was born on April 29, 1959, in the county of Middlesex, in southeastern England. She was the middle child, three years younger than Michael and seven years older than Lizzy (Elizabeth). Theresa worked hard all her adult life to establish the sense of stability and feeling of connection she rarely experienced while growing up. Desmond, her father, was an alcoholic who was largely absent from home and usually unemployed. Her mother, Mary, had emigrated to England from Ireland as a teenager, married young, and essentially raised the three children alone, often exhausted and depressed, while working a series of minimum-wage jobs.

In her poem “Morning Ritual,” Theresa refers to her father’s “breathing out foaming pints of weekly rent” and her mother’s working “jobs at Woolworth’s and KC Cleaner’s, no-where-else-to-go and no-way-to.” She describes her siblings and herself, children in bed upstairs, covering their heads with their pillows as their mother shouts, “I never wanted to marry you!”

Her mother struggled with mental illness. When Theresa was still a child, Mary attempted suicide and spent six weeks away from home, recovering in a psychiatric hospital. Many years later, Theresa rarely recalled getting comfort from either of her parents. In a journal entry about her mother, she wrote, “I remember how she only came to me once during the night when I woke up screaming from my dreams—even though I woke up screaming a lot. And when my mother came, she came with my brother, my dad, too, who were all woken up.... I can still see my mother across the room...—not coming over to rub my back, reassure me.”

Lack of money was a constant source of worry in the family, even for the children. In her journal, Theresa described the uncertainty and fear she felt related to whether she would be able to pay for bus fare and food. On one particularly difficult day, “I didn’t have dinner [lunch] money, and was too afraid to ask my mum, knowing the stress it would cause her. So instead of going to school that day, I hid in the garage, under blankets, and I stayed in there all day.”

While growing up, Theresa found solace and happiness outdoors. From the time she could turn a doorknob, she was frequently out of the

house, fearlessly exploring the world, sometimes relying on neighbors to feed and look after her. “I still remember the days I would wander through my neighborhood as a three or four year old, letting myself out of the house at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning,” she wrote in her journal, “and find the world so brilliant, all of one piece, each thing I saw connecting seamlessly from me to it and to each other, everything continuous.”

Theresa started elementary school in London but later attended Mount Carmel School for Girls, near Manchester. She was a bright student, winning awards for her writing and speech and participating in school stage productions. She had gained a love of art, drama, and recitation from her mother—the great oral tradition brought from Ireland. Although Theresa’s life with her family remained painful, her long-time friend Tony encouraged her not to run away from home but instead to pursue education as the best means of escape from poverty and neglect. She took his advice, obtaining a scholarship to Birmingham University, where she earned a BA degree in English literature and drama.

In 1980, she and a boyfriend traveled to the United States. They explored Mexico, Belize, Los Angeles, and other locations for nearly a year. Then Theresa ventured out on her own. Eventually, she settled in Eureka, California, and enrolled at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt. Theresa realized that in the United States, she could build the kind of full, stable life that would be impossible if she returned to England. In her poem “On Returning,” written after a visit to England, she contrasts the life she has built for herself in America with the one she left behind. The garden she describes is her literal garden, but of course it is also the life she created in California. “What grows here now I mostly planted myself,” she writes, concluding:

Back in the home of my ancestors, it is still raining,
temperatures continue cool,
and the pains of the dead remain deep and unforgiven.
I return to my garden where joy may be made.

By embracing risk and acting with characteristic determination, Theresa largely succeeded in leaving behind the pain and deprivation of her childhood. Sadly, sister Lizzy and brother Michael were not as fortunate. For years, Lizzy suffered from anxiety and depression. At 19, she took her own life. Many years later, after a long struggle with alcoholism (and three months after Theresa’s passing), Michael also died.

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In 1981, she met and fell in love with artist Thomas (Tommy) Leaver. When he enrolled at the University of California, Davis, they moved to Sacramento, sharing a flat in midtown. Theresa transferred to California State University, Sacramento, where she excelled, working as an English tutor and teaching college writing courses while earning an MA in English. Theresa and Tommy married in 1987. They divorced three years later but remained close friends.

Theresa was a devoted runner and member of the Buffalo Chips Running Club. She took her first jog, in midtown Sacramento, in her early 20s. As she wrote in her *Sacramento Bee* column, she took up jogging to lose weight. In those early days, she never could have imagined how her choice would transform her life. “I started running a block or two and then, over several months, the blocks changed to half-miles, and the half-miles to miles. Running began to teach me that a little day-to-day discipline led to goals that I hadn’t believed were possible. For someone who wasn’t used to many successes, this was heady stuff. After a year, I was running three miles every other day. After three years, my times were faster. I ran my first marathon. I was hooked.”

Theresa loved running in all its forms—track, road, trails, and all the training. She completed more than 40 marathons, winning four, including her favorite, the Avenue of the Giants marathon in Humboldt Redwoods State Park. She ran the California International Marathon 13 times and was the first Sacramento woman finisher in 1993. Her fastest CIM time, achieved in 1990, was 2:50:10 (10 seconds too slow to qualify for the USA Olympic trials).

She loved running fast and building her strength and endurance; she loved the competition, strategy, and tactics; and she loved sharing her knowledge if asked and helping newcomers to workouts feel welcome. But most of all, she loved the “chat”—the hours and hours of talk and connection with her friends while running. Many of her closest friends were runners she met in the club.

Theresa also loved to write and garden, and as with running, she had the drive to immerse herself and excel. These activities brought her countless hours of joy and wonder. An award-winning poet and member of the Sacramento Poetry Center, Theresa coedited *Tule Review*, the organization’s journal, for three years. Over decades, she transformed her yards in midtown and later on U Street, creating lush, colorful

landscapes. The flowers, shrubs, and trees she planted and tended were often the subject of her poetry.

Theresa was employed as an editor-in-chief for the California Bureau of State Audits and later started her own one-woman business, Capital Wordplay, providing teaching and editing services. For more than a decade, as a freelance journalist, she wrote articles for local and national publications. Her running column appeared in the *Sacramento Bee* for nearly eight years.

In 1997, she married Howard Price, a fellow member of the Buffalo Chips Running Club, in a ceremony held beside the American River, with bride and groom dressed for the five-mile jog that followed. Their “miracle baby” son, Ian Matthew, was born in 2001, when Theresa was nearly 42 and after Howard had a reverse vasectomy. Motherhood was a long-time desire of Theresa’s, and in her journal and in conversation with others, she explored her experience honestly. She wrote, “I find motherhood so challenging, so hard sometimes. So demanding. It’s composed of the sweetest moments, and also some frightening, worrying ones.... Sometimes I’m too darn tired to appreciate it as I would like to every minute of every day.” Motherhood, when it finally arrived, became the most significant part of Theresa’s life. “Tell me that I couldn’t have Ian,” she wrote, “tell me that something had taken him from me, and I can’t imagine what there would be to get up for again. It would be an incredibly dark, long road back to even a modicum of this meaningful life I have now.”

Around the age of 50, Theresa noticed that she was increasingly experiencing word loss and occasionally slurring her words. Sometimes, words on the page seemed to move as she tried to read them. At one Sacramento Poetry Center meeting, she had to stop a reading of her poetry and ask someone to finish for her. In 2011, Theresa was diagnosed with logopenic primary progressive aphasia, a type of frontotemporal degeneration that attacks the language center of the brain and affects an individual’s ability to communicate. In the years that followed, the disease gradually robbed her of her ability to write and read, and it made speaking and understanding speech difficult for her.

In the months and years after her diagnosis, Theresa took regular runs until they became too challenging for her. When she could no longer run, she walked and walked, a favorite pastime since she was a girl. As always, she found comfort tending her garden. She spent time with

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the numerous friends she had made over the years—fellow runners, former classmates from CSUS, other moms she met at Ian’s schools, neighbors she had grown close to. Although the Theresa they knew was slipping away, they still readily recalled the friend who laughed so easily, who displayed remarkable will and patience, who was so quick to speak words of encouragement and so eager to share what was beautiful and true, the friend who reminded us that we all have the ability to transform our lives.

Theresa died on April 30, 2017, one day after her 58th birthday.



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