**Running**

***People, Places and Performances***

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Preface

These stories are about people, places and performances, both athletically and theatrically. Sometimes I identify the people and sometimes I don’t, in order to protect the guilty; you know who you are anyway. People or more specifically Running Buddies are the salt of the earth. They get you up every day at five in the morning. They get you started and keep you going, or leave you groaning and whining, depending on their mood (or your mood) that day. They tell you the same story every day, but it doesn’t matter you forgot what they said yesterday anyway.

My first recollection of running, as opposed to chasing a ball, was on a cold Saturday morning in February 1949. Rob Beadle and I were taking our 11 plus exam, which would determine whether or not we would join the top ten percent of the cohort who went to Grammar School. We had Mathematics, English and General Studies sections, each lasting about an hour with 15 minutes in between. In these in between times we ran around the Sproatley Endowed School sports field to clear our minds. This strategy must have worked as fortunately we both passed and went on to Malet Lambert High School.

I met two exceptional running buddies, Garry and Mike, outside my home on Dutton Road (at the other end from Dutton Hill), Rochester in the early fall of 1986. I explained my great prowess as an athlete and that I would condescend to run with them that morning if they wished to learn something about the lack of importance of most things most people say about running, except NIKE that is – Just Do It! They agreed and then told me about all their marathons and if I would shut up and listen, they would get me through my first Free Press in October. And the rest is history; Garry has run every Free Press and Mike is still running. We ran together earlier this year 2016. I thank these two for starting me on these adventures and being the best running buddies anyone could ever wish for. The three of us ran under the name of the “Old Bull Young Bull Running Club.” Then there was Murphy, the genial giant, a great talker until one day we took him on a short cut which added another ten miles to our morning run. Not to forget Mary (Smith) a great triathlete and marathoner who worked with me at GM along with Rick Jayroe and Tim. Another group of Michiganians of Great Lakes Relay fame included Jim Karner, Wayne Zimmerman, Chuck Maxwell, Bob Cross and the late Dave Kanners. Moving on to Texas in 2000, there were Veronica, Colleen, Jay, Lisa and a whole bunch of Bay Area Runners, that club is still going strong. Never a dull moment as we ran around the Space Center. In New Bedford in 2004, there were Don Dayton and Vinnie Murphy. We adopted the label “Gentlemen of Leisure” (coined by Stephanie I believe) as we ran from the “Y” across the bridge to Fairhaven and back for a cup of coffee. On to Prescott in 2005 I met the Mountain Milers, particularly Steve Orth, Ken Ekman, Heidi Schuette and Rob Turpin, plus Julie and Dan and many other enthusiastic, altitude adapted runners, joggers and walkers. Other running buddies appear in these stories, but my memory for names like my legs for running fails me.

Running has taken me to many places. My favorites are the golf courses. I had a condo in Prescott, right on a 36 hole course next to the airport and a hill which to sit and watch the airplanes. Nova Scotia had wooded Point Pleasant Park through which we could run to watch the ships. Oklahoma had the long run to the Lake on Saturday mornings. Michigan had everything, from suburbia to golf courses, woods and dirt roads. Nassau Bay in Texas had the space station and the Kemah Bridge as well as Nassau Lake. New Bedford had the harbor and bridge to Dartmouth. Prescott has the fantastic Peavine Trail, as well as Mingus mountain for the hardy. In Singapore there are linear parks along the shore line, more parks as you run to and over the barrage and Dempsey Hill, the site of an old army camp now turned into chic restaurants, art shops, kindergartens, cricket pitches and kennels.

Marathons seem to find beautiful places, for those who lift their heads up long enough to look. Boston has Wellesley College, Heartbreak Hill and crowds 10 deep along Boylston Street. West Virginia has hills, that was a long day. Chicago has the lake side and Detroit has the river and parks. New York has the sky scrapers and Central Park. The Marine Corps is run through Washington DC and Arlington. Singapore has the Sundown marathon, run through the night. Kansas is flat. The Bataan run in New Mexico is hot and hilly. New Orleans has the French Quarter. Sacramento, Guam and Tucson have big downhills.

As the reader ploughs through this random collection of stories, some descriptive, some analytic, he or she may recognize the people and places that make running the best venue for fitness and friends. My running legacy is that all my family members run, because it’s fun and keeps them fit. Thanks are also due to running buddies. There are numerous repetitions: some critical incidents fit into various themes and the quadratic decline of performance related to age. Sometimes these repetitions expose the author’s failing memory for facts and sometimes they add another twist.