

## The President's Dog

by John Farrow

The President recently got himself a dog so that, as Harry Truman once so astutely observed, he



will finally have a friend in Washington. We know this because the story was page-one news across the land. *USA Today*, perhaps the closest thing we have to a national newspaper, made the acquisition of the First Dog its lead news story. Inside the edition was another entire page of analyses on what the dog will mean to the remainder of the Clinton presidency, with various sidebar articles on past presidential dogs as

well as speculation on possible names for Mr. Clinton's dog.

Elsewhere, the newspaper reported other newsworthy items, albeit featured in less prominent locations. These stories included the fact that the economies of various Asian nations were crashing, that the United States was threatening to make war on Iraq, that relations between Israel and the Palestinians were at hair-trigger levels, that the Russian economy was unstable and its leader back in the hospital while control over the great bulk of its nuclear arsenal - still targeted at Western sites - was unclear, and that millions of children still go to bed hungry in a world of plenty. And, we were reminded again, the President has a dog.

So, what has all this to do with running? Probably little in the overall scheme of things, unless Buddy, as the dog came to be named, in a bout of puppyish exuberance, accidentally hits the button on the President's Black Box, thereby launching a preemptive nuclear strike against the rest of the world. In which case most of us will find our weekly mileage greatly curtailed.

But it does raise the question of putting things in their proper perspective. Things such as goals. With the new year, it is only natural to

reflect on what has passed and to prepare for the future.

For most of us, we can look back and think that perhaps we should have run faster in this race, or run more miles in that month, or done more speed-work or more long runs or more races or . . . . . Or perhaps we can look back and appreciate what we were able to accomplish with all of the other things going on in our lives and remember how much fun we had and how satisfying it is to have the health and energy that comes from running. Then we can look forward to the coming year with enthusiasm and anticipation.

Setting goals and working towards them is an important part of life. But if you are goal-driven, as I am, care needs to be taken to be realistic in setting goals and to not get so caught up in the pursuit of a goal that we miss out on so much of what life has to offer.

In looking back over this past year, I have to say that it was all in all a good year for me. Even though I was not able to run as many miles or as many races as in the past, speed-work helped me set an elusive 10k PR, and then I spent part of the summer prowling around Dublin, Galway, Stockholm and Riga. Not to mention that both the Rolling Stones and ZZ Top came to town. I consider any year in which you can combine the Stones and ZZ Top with a trip to Europe and a PR as a very good year.

When I started running some fifteen or so years ago, I had no clue as to how long this interest might last. But running is still fun after all this time, and that is perhaps the greatest goal any of us can hope to attain.

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Albuquerque Road Runners Club