

The Cutting Room Floor

by John Farrow

The call was from Scotty Hart, editor of *Footnotes*, the quarterly magazine of the RRCA. We had chatted briefly at the national convention in Spokane, but her call was a complete surprise.

Hi, John. I'm calling to see if you might be interested in writing an article for Footnotes about some upcoming races.

(Immediately I recalled that the previous issue had featured an article about the Antarctica Marathon. Maybe this time they wanted something from the other end of the globe. Of course, I would have to go there and run the race, right? I love to travel anywhere I've never been and the North Pole is certainly one of those places. Even Canada would do. I could handle Canada.)

One of the races is in Anchorage, Alaska, . . .

(Close enough.)

. . . another is in Houston . . .

(Awright! Ol' stompin' grounds!)

. . . and also Berwick, Pennsylvania.

Excuse me? They run in Pennsylvania? (Oh, well. Two out of three ain't bad.)

Oh yes. It's one of the oldest races around. It's very popular up there.

I thought all they did was dig coal and sit around waiting for some fat gopher to stick his head out of the ground and wiggle his nose at Bill Murray. So, when do you want me to go to these races?

Sorry, John. We just don't have the budget.

(I was afraid of that.) How about just one of them? (Ask for the world, settle for anything.)

I'm sorry. You'll have to call each of the race directors to get information and photos about their event and then write from that. Maybe you know something about one of the races or cities.

Scotty, send me to Alaska. You won't have to worry about me getting eaten by a bear' cause I even have my own bear bells. They jingle to scare away the bears. I can even tell black bear poop from grizzly bear poop.

What on earth are you talking about?

Bear poop. Black bear poop is always full of berries. Grizzly bear poop is full of bear bells.

*Now **that** is a real comfort to know!*

Well, how about Houston? I used to hang out there off and on. I could take everybody to the Velvet Elvis. Kind of a seedy retro-lounge. Heard Kinky

Friedman and the Texas Jewboys play there once. They just tore the place up with *Get Yer Biscuits in the Oven and Yer Buns in the Bed!* The Kinkster is still the only Jewish country-western star ever.

John . . .

Look, I can handle any season that a Houston January can throw at you.

What do you mean?

Mid-January might be a Spring or Fall day. It could be so glorious that you'll want to run forever. It will remind you of all the wonderful reasons why you're alive and why you choose to be a runner. A PR, Boston qualifier, or both are definite possibilities.

And if the weather is bad?

If it's a Winter day, be prepared to learn first-hand the true ferocity of a Blue Texas Norther. It'll freeze your cap to your head and your gloves to your hands and you'll feel like you've been attacked by a thousand frozen knives.

Why a "Blue" Norther?

Look around and check the end of any body's nose or fingers. The race could be excellent preparation for any polar expedition.

And if it's not cold? If you catch the race on a Summer day, drink lots and lots of water and ease up. Otherwise, the heat and blanket of humidity you'll wear will seem like 26.2 miles of attempted suicide *étouffée*. Of course, you can try to get comfortable by taking off as many clothes as you want. Houston doesn't have an anti-nudity ordinance.

How do they keep cool down there?

Malls. Ice-box malls. The Galleria even has an ice- you want me to go to these races? skating rink. I'll check to see if Niemans still has the 1950s-style diner with juke box, soda fountain and spinning counter stools in an Airstream-like aluminum shell. It'd be a great thing to come home to after a long run. A steal at \$195,000.

No. Definitely no!

Pennsylvania, then. C'mon, Scotty. I'll even kiss that fat gopher if you send me to Pennsylvania.

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ARR News November 1999
Albuquerque Road Runners Club