

## My Back Pages

by John Farrow

**M**any of you may have heard the scurrilous slander that the Half-Fast Runner recently turned 50 years old. As true as it may be, it is still scurrilous slander. The truth of the matter is that I will never again be as old as I once was. I was so much older then

Turning 50 never really bothered me, except when I realized that I was born during the Truman administration. However, it took a trip back home to discover how young one can become.

*JD! Good to see you, man! How you been feeling?*

*John-Boy! Glad you came! Hey, I'm getting better. It's slow, you know. Doc has me up to a mile a day with my walking.*

In high school, Jimmy Dwayne had been one of the best athletes in school, sleek and smooth as the quarterback of the football team and play-maker of the basketball team, a sprinter on the track team I could rarely beat. Of all the guys in our class, he had had the best chance at an athletic scholarship. He let it pass in favor of marrying his girlfriend and taking a job at the post office. College was just not part of the program.

*Didn't A&M want you for flanker and their relays?*

*Yeah, but you have no idea how big and fast those guys are out there. I just didn't think I could cut it. It was easier staying here.*

At our 25<sup>th</sup> class reunion, he was overweight, but so were many others. A month later, at 43, he had his heart attack.

Now 48 and a grandfather, he was still too heavy. He was also having difficulty trying to walk a mile a day to recover some semblance of health. He

certainly did not appreciate the new diet that severely restricted his intake of steak.

*You look like you're still running.*

A little, I lied. It wasn't the time to talk about PRs or monthly mileage or running mountain trails, exhilarating in the cool, crisp air fragrant with evergreens.

We all have our self-destructive periods and I was no different. But that was long ago. It's hard to say exactly when my new life found me, but it feels good to feel good again.

Even as a boy I knew that running made me feel good, and I especially enjoyed the easy freedom and confidence that it provided. Some of this was no doubt gained from running near home, out past the orange orchards and oil wells, with the gentle southerly breeze cooling the moist air. Some perhaps was gained from trying new and different things over the years.

But how quickly and easily that feeling can be lost as lethargy creeps in and inertia breeds even more inactivity. Soon, even the things once easily enjoyable are simply too much trouble. The situation tends to define an existence of slow decline.

Running brings back all of the joy and freedom of youth, and with it a new-found confidence to continue to experiment, to learn, to try. And those who try, do.

*Good and bad, I define these terms  
Quite clear, no doubt, somehow.  
Ah, but I was so much older then,  
I'm younger than that now.*

*My Back Pages.* Bob Dylan (1964)

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