

Half-Way

by John Farrow

Many of you may know that yours truly is in the process of running a race in each state and the District of Columbia - a quest, as it were. Not a marathon - that's for the incurably hard core - just any race.

In fact, since I was a boy I have wanted to visit every state but a few years ago I realized that I had also run races in quite a few, so that got tacked on as well. Last month I hit number 25, so the list is half-complete. What follows are a few of the highlights and low-lights so far.

#1 - 1984 Duke City 5k

My first road race ever. While I had been putting in the miles along ditch trails in Albuquerque's North Valley for several years, I had never tried a road race. In fact, I was even a little intimidated at the prospect of running a race of 3.1 miles. In school, I had only competed in track races, and then for no more than a mile.

Because I didn't know the first thing about road racing, or training for that matter, I started in the back. Not near the back, but *the* back, next to a gum-chewing woman in cut-off jeans carrying a radio (no headphones) and with huge pink rollers in her hair. That frightening sight should have been enough of a tip-off but believe me, I honestly had no clue as to what I was doing.

I don't remember my time, but I do remember how much fun it was passing people throughout the race. And I never started at the back again.

#2 - Gruene 10k, New Braunfels, Texas

This was my first 10k ever and I was a reluctant entrant at that. But it was the only race anywhere around San Antonio, where I was attending a college reunion.

Gruene was one of the first German settlements in central Texas where in the 1800s immigrants carved out a living in the cedar-choked limestone hills along the Guadalupe River Northeast of San Antonio. The settlement, now part of New Braunfels, even had a steamboat landing at one time.

Packet pick-up was in the old Gruene Dance Hall, one of the oldest in Texas. The small stage in

the back of the room has seen the likes of Bob Wills, Willie Nelson and Jerry Jeff Walker. For a time, the house band was the Ace In The Hole Band, with a young singer by the name of George Strait.

Once under way, the effects of the lower elevation were readily apparent. But this was my first 10k and I had no clue as to how to run one, although I didn't know that at the time, either. I did, however, have sense enough to listen as my mind uttered an almost audible "uh-oh" as the first mile flew by in 6:10. After easing up, the rest of the race was mercifully uneventful and enjoyable under sunny blue skies.

Barbecue and longnecks were part of the post-race refreshments. By the time I left, the current house band was in full swing as "Cotton-Eyed Joe" followed me out to the car. □

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