

It is the Season of the Resurrection ... the season of hope and light ... renewal and rebirth. I can tell by seeing the crocuses and jonquils coming back ... and the forsythia bushes ... and of course the whippoorwill and weeping willow. Everywhere I look and all the sounds I hear ... lawnmowers and motorcycles, fountains, and weedwhackers. And most of all, the firing of the pistol that starts the "spring running season". They assemble once again ... those runners who wish to test their spring fitness after a long, cold, hard winter.

I began running races almost 35 years ago. And though I had been running prior to that time, I never appeared at a starting line. And one day I found myself, on a Sunday afternoon, running a 4-mile race around the campus of Marshall University. It was autumn, and the race was called the Goose Gallop. I was hooked and never looked back. I have run 10-20 races every year since then. The memories of these races can sometimes flood my mind ... from Charlotte to Boston, Detroit and beyond I ran my marathons in both spring and fall. They were special days and special races.

Recently I find myself running what used to be my least favorite race ... the 5K. But it seems that is the most available locally these days. It takes an explosion of "speed" which I don't really possess. It is an exercise in being "on the edge" and maintaining a pace that you just don't ordinarily do. The first mile is the most difficult as I reach for a balance of holding a pace and not having my lungs and heart explode. The fear of being attended to by the EMT folks, especially one of those 300-pounders with his hat on backwards and a cigarette in his mouth, always tempers my effort. It's a scary thought. But finishing these races is the goal, and hopefully I'll be able to continue. The clock really doesn't matter ... yeah, right!

In the spring of 1983 I traveled to a place called Oak Ridge, TN, for the "Smoky Mountain Marathon." What was I thinking? We assembled for the start, and the Race Director declared that there were just two hills on the course ... and everyone laughed ... uh oh! The joke was on me. It was a tough course, rolling with some serious climbs. Two hills going out to the turnaround, and two hills coming back. Ha! And only 100 runners. I ran a 3:15 that day and was both disappointed and pleased at the same time. I was hoping to qualify for Boston but missed it by 5 minutes. A few months later I reached that goal with a 3:03 in Louisville.

1982 seems like a long time ago ... 28 years. Still running ... still waiting for the sound of the starting gun to break the morning silence ... still waiting for the echo of that first mile split ... still waiting to see the clock at the finish line ... still waiting to see my "old" running friends ... still waiting for more memories ... still waiting ...

And may the wind be always at your back.

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