

Story by Kenneth Wheeler

My friend, Eric Mitchell was always talking about running ultra races. I thought he was totally insane, no body in there right mind would run that far. Then he showed me a video of this crazy guy named, David Horton, that ran the PCT in 66 days. I began to think that if he could run that far, maybe I could try one of these crazy ultra things. With a couple of successful marathons under my belt by this time, I decided to try one.

Man did I pick a good one for my first. This is a first class race from the pasta dinner on Fri. til the end.

My wife and I arrived at the 4-H center at about 7:00 Fri. night. The check in went smoothly, and we had some wonderful food. My son, who is a Liberty student arrived too late to eat, but all three of us stayed for David's pre-race instructions. At this time I was starting to fill very out of place. I easily qualify for the fat boys class and here I am surrounded by probably the most fit group of people that I have ever been around. Then David had the meeting for the first timers, because he is so down to earth and genuine, by the time he was through I was totally at ease and looking forward to Saturday.

I slept very little Friday night. I still didn't know what to expect, the farthest I had ever run was 26 miles. The weather forecast was for 31 degrees at the start with sun and warming up to about 50, I thought that would be just about perfect, maybe a little cool to start, but it would be ok. I awoke at, (well just decided to get out of bed, I wasn't sleeping anyway) at 4:15. It was already 47 degrees. Praise the Lord. It was going to be my idea of a perfect day for running.

We got to the 4H center about an hour before the start. I got all my bathroom business taken care of, stretched, warmed up a little then it was time to start. I was a little bummed because I didn't think my wife and son would be able to drive to the aid stations. David had said on Friday night that the roads were pretty muddy, so I kissed my wife, told them I would see them at the turn around.

It is funny. I don't remember, was there a gun shot? Or did someone just say GO!! Well any way, when people started moving I went with them. Up the road we went till we came to what looked to me like a black hole in the woods beside the road. Everybody funneled onto the single track. It was pretty slow going for the first couple of miles. When I got close to the first aid station imagine my surprise to see my son Randy standing beside the trail, they were able to drive there after all, He ran into the aid station with me. My wife was there to give me words of encouragement. They told me that they would be at every A.S. again God had blessed me, because I really enjoyed seeing them at the aid stations. I was carrying water and power gels, so I went right through AS1, then AS2, again my family was there. After that I don't remember a lot of details. I started getting refills on my water and eating a few pretzels at every A.S.

Before I even realized it I was at the turn around. I felt great, it was about 3:15 minutes into the race. We had originally planned on Randy running the last 6 miles or so with me, but I told him at the turn around that if he was up to it I would like to have him with me for the last 9 miles. He said that sounded good to him. He runs, just not anything over 1/2 marathon yet.

Everything was going great, then around 20 miles I started having some cramps. I tried to drink more water and eat pretzels and potatoes with salt. That helped. I also ate an extra power gel. By the way THANK YOU to all the volunteers. You guys and gals are the best.

Around 25 miles the cramps were gone. I came to an A.S. and Randy informed me that it was about 9 miles till the end and he was ready to run in with me. I was really happy to have him with me. It was getting really lonely out there. There was no one running around me.

Those last nine miles were probably my favorite of the whole race. It was a beautiful day, the scenery was fantastic, but most of all I got to share the last few miles of my first ultra with my son. He wants to sign up for "The Promised Land" race. I am glad he wants to run it ,but that means he won't be there to root me on and run with me. Oh well, kids grown up and go their own way. That is the way of nature.

All too soon we came to the road, I knew it was almost over, then I saw David Horton waiting to greet me at the line. What a class act, what a race, what an experience, WOW! WOW! WOW!

Thank You David Horton Thank You Volunteers