

## *Sometimes it is more about the journey than the race.*

*by Jack Kurisky*

That's what I kept thinking as Dad and I wound our way around Holiday Lake. Here we were at various stages of life. Dad at 70, enjoying the lazy life of retirement (not really). I, at 41, experiencing the mid-life joys of raising three youngsters, paying the mortgage and trying to avoid the mid-life spare tire. But here we were on a beautiful February morning, able to share another memory along the journey of life.

My interest in running started many years ago as a youngster, tagging along during Dad's runs / races doing my best to keep up with him. Certainly my interest in running can be attributed to him. Fast forward 30 years as I began to explore ultras. Dad has always been there for me during those races. Sometimes he helps out with a water bottle as I run by. Other times, he passes along words of encouragement and kick in the rear to propel me to the finish.

Now the tables turned. Sharing my ultra experiences sparked an interest in Dad. In late 2008, he started talking about attempting an ultra. His lifetime of fitness and completing numerous marathons gave him plenty of experience. However his pacemaker was the only real wildcard. How would it affect his ability to finish? I wasn't qualified to answer. But I did know that if he didn't at least try, he'd forever be kicking himself. Holiday Lake is a great race to experience your first ultra. Dr. Horton extended the finish time to 8 hours and that sealed the deal. Dad sent in the registration. I sent mine in shortly thereafter.

It was great to see Dad so excited the morning of the race. It's funny to think that despite his running resume, it was as if this was his first race. He was eager to start and finally burn that nervous energy. We briefly debated apparel a few times and headed to the start. Soon enough, we lined up and then we were on our way.

As we made our way around the lake, I couldn't help think about the past 40+ years. 40 years of Dad helping me grow, achieve and succeed - camping at Holiday Lake many years ago, Cub Scout Pinewood Derbies, 10k races, helping with homework and general guidance to keep me on the straight and narrow. Many of those memorable achievements rooted in his advice and encouragement. Running with him that day was my opportunity to return many of the gifts he had given me. It was my chance to help him achieve and succeed.

As we made our way around the course, it wasn't about what place we were in or about watching the clock. We were simply enjoying the beautiful day with each other. Dad did awesome - running the flats and down hills, while power walking the hills. He regularly hit the fluids and gels. He was like an ultra veteran out there.

We hit mid-point well ahead of the cut off. We move efficiently through the aid stations on the way back. As we pulled out of the last aid station I kept reminding Dad that with each step, we were closer to being done. He continued to move well, but his quads were starting to bother him. We kept targeting trees ahead of us to run to, and then take short walk breaks. That approach worked for us and pretty soon we found ourselves at the top of the hill turning towards the finish.

I did my best to motivate Dad. I was hollering every couple of seconds to push hard and ignore any pain. We were so close and I wanted him to finish by the previous year's cut-

off time of 7.30. By this time Dad was in the zone – the zone of let's get this thing done already! The crowd was yelling as Dr. Horton cheered him on. We finished in 7.30.01. I gave dad a congratulatory hug and Dr. Horton did as well. So great job Dad!

In conclusion, thanks to all the aid station volunteers and race organizers. There are so many people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to put on these events. You guys are wonderful. Thanks so much for being out there and keeping us nourished and encouraged. Of course, thanks to Dr. Horton. He is quite the entertaining emcee along the course and at the finish. It is truly inspiring to see him bring out the best in people.