

An interesting start...Cavin Carlton

There is something very special about the Holiday Lake 50K. This is the 3rd time I've run this race, and each year has offered up amazing memories & stories. Last year it was running 33 miles in five inches of snow. But this year, what I'll remember the most about the Holiday Lake 50K actually happened 2 hours before the race even started!

I live in Lynchburg, and had my running gear, gel packs, S-caps, hat, gloves, etc... all ready to go in my car by 4AM to head towards Appomattox. Running upstairs to grab a to-go cup of coffee for the drive, I had two thoughts pop into my head. First, it was colder than I expected outside – I had better grab an extra coat to keep warm. Second, I remembered the two stream crossings on the trail and thought I had better grab a second (dry!) pair of shoes to change into after the race.

So I pull out of my neighborhood around 4:15AM, and am driving on 501. All of a sudden, my headlights pick up a woman running down the middle of the road, screaming hysterically and desperately trying to flag me down. She was wearing only shorts and a tank-top....no coat, and no shoes. I had never seen anything like this in my life, and it startled me. But I stopped my car, rolled down the window, and asked her if she needed help. Crying desperately, the woman told me that her boyfriend had just tried to kill her and would I please call the police and have them come help her. Instead I asked the woman to get in my car and that I would help her and drive her to the police station. As we drove to the police station she proceeded to tell me what had happened. Her boyfriend had viciously assaulted and beaten her for the past several hours, even choking her until in her words "I knew for sure I was going to die". She told me that she was barely able to escape from him, and didn't have time to get shoes, a coat, or anything else. She was just running towards town to try to find help. Three cars had already passed her without stopping, swerving to avoid her and continuing driving.

I gave this woman the extra coat and extra pair of shoes that I had grabbed before leaving the house, and went into the downtown police station with her to explain to the officers what I had seen and ensure that she got help.

The only thing I had in my car with my name and phone number on it was a bible bookmark from my church (Lynchburg First Church of the Nazarene) where I serve as Executive Ministries Pastor. I gave her this bookmark and told her that I wanted to be of more help to her and for her to please call me if there was anything else I could do. She looked at the bookmark, and actually laughed – the first time she had done anything other than cry in the 15 minutes since she had gotten in my car. She said that she didn't attend church currently, but had when she was younger – and it had been a Nazarene church.

I am truly amazed to have been able to do a small bit of God's work Saturday morning to help this woman in trouble. I am very grateful that He put me in this woman's path at 4:15 that morning, with an extra coat and an extra pair of shoes.

As I ran the race that morning, watching the beautiful sunrise over the hills in the distance, I kept thinking of Psalms 121:1-2...."I lift my up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

In Christ,

Cavan Carlton