

1998 Grand Slam: Part I

by Dot Helling

This year I took on the challenge of the Grand Slam: to complete four of the ultra distance world's top 100-mile trail races in one summer. It all began with automatic entry into Western States because of my win at the Vermont 100 in 1997. I was further prodded by friends Errol Jones of California and Lynn O'Malley of Washington who are also entered. It would be a great reason to travel all summer and run with good friends.

Western States is the first of three mandatory events in the Grand Slam. The other two mandatory runs are the Leadville Trail 100 in Colorado in August and the Wasatch Trail 100 in Utah in September. For your fourth event you get a choice, Old Dominion held in West Virginia in May, or the Vermont 100 in July. My choice for fourth is obvious. (Many "slammers" choose Old Dominion because it is first on the year's calendar, thus giving them a chance to "test" their mettle and opt out for Vermont if the going and/or weather gets rough at Old Dominion.) You must finish all four events within set cutoff times to earn the Grand Slam trophy.

I had worked as Western States safety patrol in 1996 and 1997, paced there several times, and completed the event twice, in 1989 in 28 hours and 40 minutes, and in 1994 in 27 hours and 34 minutes. It and Leadville have been my slowest 100-milers, particularly in comparison to performances like Vermont in 1997 (19:33). The terrain, the altitude and the extreme conditions, particularly canyon heat, make the event formidable to Eastern runners who cannot mirror the experience on their home turf. This year El Nino brought record snows to the High Sierra of California.

The Western States 100 begins at the base of Squaw Valley and immediately climbs 5 miles from 6,250' to 8,720' at Emigrant Pass. The course was rerouted this year to extend our start along plowed ski area service roads and later, along a paved ridge road where access to the high country was too difficult. Generally there is but 2 miles of pavement on the entire course. This year we had approximately 13 paved miles. This was done primarily for safety reasons so that supply stations could be set up. Nevertheless, on the high ridges it required helicopter drops to get food, water and volunteers onto the snow laden course.

We began at 5:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 27. My pre-race week had been a mix of anxiety and relaxation. Luckily I combined the race with a week's vacation. Friends and I rented a house in Alpine Meadows where I languished in 10 hour sleep nights, naps, healthy meals, good books and great company - plus the incredible Sierra sunny environment.

Because of my summer's agenda, I vowed to not run, but power walk the first climb. Conservation would be my day's motto. I stuck to that plan and felt remarkably calm and excited about the day which was unfolding before me, until I hit the icy snow at approximately 6 miles. On any other day, had I been traversing the high country in such slippery conditions, it would have been with crampons, ice axe, and lots of padding. I wore shorts and running shoes this day. At approximately 7 miles I was crossing a field of snow cups. These are firm, icy impressions in the snow shaped like the inside of an egg carton. They hurt your feet and are difficult to maneuver. I took a hard fall, wrenched my neck and saw stars, and stood up bloody with a baseball sized bruise on my right thigh. The fall hurt terribly and made me very tentative for the remaining 15 or so miles of snow. To master snow running, you must be surefooted and aggressive, and so I went on to fall dozens of times.

There were more snow cup fields along the way - visual moonscapes - and slick, steep snowfields that could easily have catapulted a runner to his or her death below. We also encountered dangerous cornices, crevasses, loose dirt and rock faces, rushing streams, mud, and sections of gnarly forest. The flagging marking the trail had been set a week earlier. Several feet of the 6-20' snow depths had melted since, leaving rotten breakthrough snow and exposing manzanita bushes that had been buried all winter. As we stepped over and through these bushes, I would gently push them away, as I felt environmentally irresponsible clambering over them. In the deep snow the trail markers had not been able to find the specific trail path and had followed their noses. My reward for pampering these bushes was many puncture wounds in my hands from the spiny branches and leaves.

The snow sections seemed endless. For some reason I just could not put my skiing prowess to work. I partnered up with a man from San Francisco named Allan Kaplan and found out he had done the Grand Slam last year. We stayed together through most of the high country and then leapfrogged one another throughout the entire race.

At the Red Star Ridge aid station I had been out 5 hours. I have always gotten through that station in 3 hours. At Duncan Canyon (only 24 miles) it had been 7½ hours as compared to previous years in under 5 hours. Then came hot paved road for 11 miles where I felt roasted. That led to the Last Chance aid station and one of the course's two worst climbs, 1,565' uphill to Devil's Thumb from 2,800' to 4,365' with 47 switchbacks. Devil's Thumb is so named because of the difficulty of the climb and a rock outcropping near the top which resembles an aged human thumb. Nausea overwhelmed me as I started to walk up with my friends from the East Fred Pilon and Diane McNamara. I rested, drank and plodded to the top. At the aid station I weighed in light, so I knew I needed to force fluids and food. I ate and felt better,

then smothered myself in bug juice for the next canyon, notorious for its fat, hungry mosquitoes.

The two worst climbs are preceded by some of the steadiest and longest downhill sections on the course, into Deep Canyon and Deadwood Canyon and down to El Dorado Creek. I cruised across the Devil's Thumb Ridge and dropped down to the Creek. I had several cougar sightings in that area years before. This year my only animal encounter was a garter snake. I was finally running again, somewhat easily downhill, and my stomach symptoms subsided, helped by ginger tablets. I tried to catch Diane and Fred and instead caught Allan. We started the climb to Michigan Bluff, from 1,700' to 3,530' at 55.7 miles. In minutes the nausea was back and I had to stop. The mosquitoes attacked me ferociously. As I swatted and plodded on up the trail, my first serious thought to calling it a day arose. I run for enjoyment and this was not fun. I thought through all my reasons to continue or not, all the positive ways of viewing a DNF (did not finish) under the circumstances, and tried to analyze what was happening. I figured out that the new electrolyte drink tablets I had been using were not working and resolved to address that in my next event, and I decided that if this day was not fun, the Grand Slam certainly would not be. I came into Michigan Bluff ready to quit.

Michigan Bluff at mile 55.7 is a party site. It is a year round town with fewer than 50 residents at a dead-end road overlooking the canyons, in a postcard setting. This was the first point along the course this year, because of the snow, where crew and pacers could meet their runners. I had no crew but I know many of the runners and volunteers in the Western States community. Their support is extremely helpful when you reach a low point in an event of this magnitude. Diane and Fred were at Michigan Bluff when I arrived, and so was my pacer Tony Rossmann, who could start running with me there because it was well after 8:00 p.m. Diane informed me she was dropping out because of bad blisters and weakness from a recent bout with food poisoning, and would instead run Vermont in 3 weeks. But she told me to keep at it - that I would regret not finishing and had it in me. She knows me well. We have run together and paced each other through endurance runs for a decade.

Fred and Tony waited for me to come along. I discussed my electrolyte problem with Diane and she gave me some electrolyte tablets that I could take with plain water. My only other choice was lemon-lime Gatorade, a nauseating thought at the time. Diane's electrolyte tablets became a major turning point down the road.

Fred, Tony and I headed into the dark and into Volcano Canyon for a 7 mile stretch to Foresthill, pacer central at 62 miles. The race directors encourage the use of pacers after dark for safety reasons. One person wearing a matching number may run from either Michigan Bluff or Foresthill, depending on the time of day, to the

finish with you provided he or she does not physically assist you, unless you're in trouble. Tony Rossmann was my first choice. He's been a close personal friend since 1989, run many trail miles with me, finished five Western States himself, and served as President of the Western States Board for many years. He had also successfully paced me to my first 20 hour finish at the Vermont 100 several years ago.

When I arrived at Foresthill I wanted to hop in the car with Diane and drive to our Auburn motel. My entire body ached like never before from the bruising of my dozens of falls on the snow. I had raw scratches and punctures everywhere and was not the least bit interested in food or drink. My friends urged me to go on to the River at 80 miles. Fred challenged me to follow and left with a pacer. Tony had looked forward to our run through the night. This was the 25th anniversary of the race and we had never crossed its finish line together. I decided to change all my clothes and try a fresh start. When we emerged from the aid station at 11:30 p.m., an hour behind medal time, I began to run somewhat effortlessly for the first time in 62 miles. I took a pit stop and noted that my urine was crystal clear, a solid sign that I was rehydrated. I determined to overhydrate with liquids and fruits for all the miles ahead.

Tony and I barrelled down California Street trail in the dark, turning off our flashlights at the first switchback to view the stars and a milky way over the American River Canyon. This 14 mile stretch to the Rucky Chucky River Crossing had been my most difficult section in past years. Here is where sleep deprivation takes hold. The trail is extremely narrow with dropoffs hundreds of feet to the river below, ripe for nighttime hallucinations. In 1989 I encountered numerous snakes and lizards. In 1994 a bear blocked my path. This time I gained momentum and energy with every stride. Tony and I ate soup and drank hot coffee mocha at each of the four aid stations on the way to the river. I decided going on was fun after all. I was with Tony, feeling much better, and we would get a boat trip across the American River. Ordinarily you must cross Rucky Chucky rapids in icy water to your knees holding a cable and negotiating river boulders. Because of the high water, a rubber rowing raft was rigged to a cable to take us across this year.

Before reaching the river crossing, along the canyon's sandy bottom, we caught up with Fred. He was at a low point. Tony informed him we were running for the next boat crossing and working against the medal cutoff. We had all been at least one hour behind when we left Foresthill. I ran to the river and climbed into the boat with Tony. Also in the boat was Gordon Ainsleigh, founder of the event and the first person to complete it by foot in 1973. Gordie has many finishes to his credit, most under 24 hours. He'd had a tough start as well. We had been leapfrogging and talking with him along much of the California Street section.

Last to enter the boat was Fred. The ride across the rapids was wonderful - magical with the stars - and our feet stayed dry! On the 3 mile climb out of this canyon to Green Gate Fred came alive. We last saw him around mile 85 when I took another pit stop and he charged downhill along the Auburn Lakes section of the course. This section had always been an endless one to me, winding in and out of the fingers of the canyons, slowly closing in on the finish. But this time morning light began to greet us and the wildflowers were glorious from the late winter snows and spring rains. We crossed many swollen tributaries. Our pace picked up and our footsteps became easier. We passed dozens of struggling runners. We entered Browns Bar aid station to tunes from the 60's and did some dancing. At mile 93.5 we came to Highway 49 where Diane was waiting. By now the sun was up so I took off my long sleeved shirt, replaced it with a singlet, grabbed sunglasses and had Diane slather me with sunscreen. I also chowed down on fresh strawberries, watermelon and cherry Jello. Fred was reported to be just minutes ahead.

Tony & I sailed out of Highway 49 and up the trail to Pointed Rocks and No Hands Bridge. We caught and passed Allan. At No Hands Bridge, 96.8 miles into the race, we realized that sub 30 hours for a medal was in easy reach and we had therefore more than made up the hour we were behind at Foresthill. From No Hands to Robie Point is a 2 mile sandy stretch along the American River in the hot sun. Then it's a steep, hot, quarter mile climb up Robie Point to the roads of Auburn, and a mile in to the Stadium finish line. On the climb to the point we came upon Fred's pacer, whom Fred had left behind. I yelled up the cliff, "Fred, here I come". By then he had mounted a charge and finished under 29 hours - in 28:56, making up two hours over the last 38 miles!

As Tony and I neared the top of the climb we caught up once again with Gordie Ainsleigh. Tony suggested we all run in together. Gordie said he couldn't keep up with me on the roads but would catch me on the downhills and the track. The last 1/4 mile is on an asphalt track to the finish. I promised to wait for him on the roads if he would wait on the track. We three ran in together and crossed the finish abreast in 29:13 holding hands, arms in the air, with ear to ear smiles for the record books. I was so honored, as I finished this event in its 25th year, to cross the finish line with its founder and past Board President. I was also crossing with one of my closest friends and understood that a day of adversity had been turned around with perseverance. Perhaps the Grand Slam would be fun after all. That was and remains the plan.

456 runners entered Western States this year. Only 397 stepped to the start line and 258 finished. My place was 185 overall, 13th amongst the masters women, and I earned a brass

buckle. Another Vermonter, Tony Treanor of Swanton, ran a silver buckle time of 23:35:26 in his first Western States.

This run involves 18,090' of climb and 22,970' feet of descent. Weather, aside from the snow, was not a limiting factor this year for me although the temperature extremes were present and you had to adjust your clothing. I felt so fragile in the high country, not having had my usual wilderness confidence. Before this run, my Leadville finish in 1994 had been my biggest struggle. Although this was my slowest, it was not my hardest. I sprang back and was able to enjoy the last 38 miles, finish with a smile, and do so with a negative split (eg. a faster second half).

Tim Twietmeyer of Auburn won in 17:51:20, his 5th Western States win. He has now completed the race 17 times. Ann Trason of Kensington, California, the world's greatest ultrarunner, won for the 10th year in a row in 18:46:16. She finished fourth overall amongst the men, just minutes ahead of her husband Carl Andersen (18:53:48). Ann holds the overall women's course record at Western States of 17:37:51 set in 1994.

My Grand Slam friends Errol and Lynn finished strong. Of the 35 Grand Slam starters, six have dropped or were unable to finish. In the remaining group of 29, five are women. Our next Grand Slam run is the Vermont 100 on July 18 starting in West Woodstock, after just three weeks rest. Ann Trason leads the Grand Slammers and undoubtedly will set a record on the Vermont course. My Part II sequel will follow.

CHAPLIN AND DAVIS PREVAIL IN MONTPELIER TEN MILER

Tara Chaplin and Sam Davis turned in impressive winning performances at the Paul Mailman Montpelier Ten Miler on June 27, 1998. The 17 year old college-bound Chaplin's time of 57:53 was the second fastest women's time ever recorded in the race's 24 year history. Davis raced to a time of 54:52 to hold off Jim Garcia and Joe McNamara in a close men's race. Lea Sikora Fowler, holder of the women's course record, was first Women's Master. Gordon MacFarland of the host Central Vermont Runners was the first Male Masters finisher. There were 116 registrants for the race; 105 actually completed it. The higher turnout this year was primarily attributable to the race being the finale of the Hockomock Swamp Rat race series.

Many thanks to the following race volunteers: Tom Bachman, Mike Baginski, Newton Baker, Steve Burkholder, Maureen Carr, Darragh Ellerson, Larry Gilbert, Bill Giles, Tom Kaiden, Laurie Lacroix, Bob Murphy, Colleen Noonan, Norm Robinson, Jamie Shanley, Donna Smyers, and any others whom I have neglected to mention. Thanks also to Onion River Sports who provided financial support to the race, and The World, Times Argus, Vermont Sports Today and the Hockomock Swamp Rat who publicized the race.

Tim Noonan
Race Director

RESULTS

<u>Overall Place</u>	<u>Age Group Place</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Time</u>
<u>FEMALE UNDER 18</u>				
5	1	Tara Chaplin	17	57:53
<u>FEMALE 18 -29</u>				
11	1	Maribel Sanchez	23	1:03:05
74	2	Kathy McDonnell	25	1:19:55
<u>FEMALE 30-39</u>				
26	1	Shari Bashaw	36	1:08:28
37	2	Gail Heinrich	32	1:11:23
43	3	Kim LeSage	35	1:12:25
48	4	Deb Doyon	30	1:12:55
66	5	Pam Lowe	35	1:17:06
67	6	Erin Brown	34	1:17:50
69	7	Ingrid Jonas	31	1:18:03
71	8	Nancy MacDonald	33	1:18:56
89	9	Michelle Helbok	32	1:26:48
94	10	Jennifer Campbell	30	1:29:05
95	11	Maryke Gillis	37	1:29:43
97	12	Jennifer Jordan	31	1:32:01
101	13	Veena Sangwan	33	1:37:14
104	14	Tammy McGinn	36	1:43:38

<u>Overall Place</u>	<u>Age Group Place</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Time</u>
<u>FEMALE 40-49</u>				
40	1	Lea Sikora Fowler	42	1:12:13
54	2	Merill Cray	46	1:14:40
58	3	Ann Straka Gilbert	40	1:15:32
63	4	Cathy Martell	40	1:16:27
68	5	Judy Romvos	47	1:17:59
76	6	Carol VanDyke	42	1:21:00
80	7	Ann Bushey	40	1:22:42
93	8	Ann Tassinari	44	1:28:35
102	9	Catherine Cannan	47	1:41:17
<u>MALE UNDER 18</u>				
77	1	Matthew Windisch	15	1:21:26
<u>MALE 18 -29</u>				
6	1	Bill McDonnell	26	59:53
8	2	Joe Gingras	22	1:00:38
9	3	Jeremy Davis	18	1:00:59
16	4	Stephen McDonnell	22	1:05:01
25	5	Steve Eustis	28	1:08:26
27	6	Eric Hayes	29	1:08:35
28	7	Chris Yengo	29	1:08:36
45	8	Jason Boisseau	27	1:12:41
<u>MALE 30 - 39</u>				
1	1	Sam Davis	37	54:52
2	2	Jim Garcia	39	55:24
3	3	Joe McNamara	35	55:56
4	4	Dave Lapierre	34	57:40
7	5	Tom Kaiden	39	1:00:07
12	6	John Howard	35	1:04:04
13	7	Dave Tyler	39	1:04:16
17	8	Peter Brook	38	1:05:18
18	9	Charlie Buttrey	39	1:05:41
19	10	Tony Kline	38	1:05:44
22	11	Jeff Gould	33	1:07:09
24	12	Kevin Heffernan	39	1:08:22
31	13	Will Graustein	37	1:10:06
36	14	David Martin	38	1:11:22
44	15	Tim Kruger	32	1:12:35
46	16	Jay Shattuck	37	1:12:44
57	17	Greg Johnson	37	1:15:29
59	18	Barry Metayer	38	1:15:33

<u>Overall</u> <u>Place</u>	<u>Age Group</u> <u>Place</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Time</u>
<u>MALE 30 - 39 (continued)</u>				
87	19	Todd Frank	38	1:25:01
90	20	Dave Koller	33	1:26:48
91	21	Domenick D'Amico	30	1:27:32
100	22	Paul DeLuca	38	1:37:03
103	23	Erik Schwarz	38	1:41:23

<u>MALE 40 -49</u>				
15	1	Don Burke	41	1:04:53
20	2	Charlie Windisch	44	1:06:08
21	3	Jamie Shanley	45	1:06:15
29	4	Reggie Allen	40	1:09:39
32	5	Fred Rogers	45	1:10:24
34	6	Eric Levin	44	1:10:55
35	7	Scott Caldwell	42	1:11:18
39	8	Steve Higgins	44	1:12:11
41	9	Craig Whipple	45	1:12:14
42	10	Jim Schneider	41	1:12:15
47	11	Mike Feulner	45	1:12:53
49	12	Manny Arruda	47	1:12:56
50	13	J. Atchinson	46	1:12:58
52	14	Richard Bushey	42	1:14:21
53	15	Gunnar Steates	40	1:14:37
55	16	Marc Metayer	41	1:14:57
75	17	Philip Connell	49	1:20:41
79	18	Steve Lombardo	49	1:21:53
81	19	Richard Jones	40	1:22:43
82	20	Fran Cook	46	1:22:51
84	21	Ed Dowling	42	1:23:33
85	22	Tom Micka	47	1:24:03
88	23	Kevin Churchill	42	1:25:57
92	24	Fred Glover	43	1:28:29

<u>MALE 50 - 59</u>				
10	1	Gordon MacFarland	50	1:01:22
14	2	Hank Gediman	51	1:04:33
23	3	Peter Orni	55	1:07:57
30	4	David Blanchette	56	1:09:44
33	5	Patrick Burke	50	1:10:47
38	6	Clifford Cary	56	1:11:52
51	7	Bill Considine	51	1:13:15
56	8	Frank Short	51	1:15:19
60	9	Dave Chioffi	55	1:15:49

<u>Overall Place</u>	<u>Age Group Place</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Time</u>
<u>MALE 50 - 59 (continued)</u>				
61	10	Patrick Donovan	51	1:16:00
62	11	Raymond Boutotte	52	1:16:21
64	12	John Kaeding	50	1:16:35
70	13	Peter Wallan	56	1:18:41
73	14	Rick Paulsen	54	1:19:36
78	15	Burt Villamaire	56	1:21:52
83	16	Peter Buhl	57	1:23:26
96	17	Newton Baker	56	1:30:04
98	18	Brian Poli	51	1:33:54
99	19	Fred Gladu	58	1:34:13
<u>MALE 60+</u>				
65	1	Burt Moffatt	63	1:16:43
72	2	Paul McDermott	63	1:19:16
86	3	Dick Fedion	64	1:24:16
105	4	Donald Lambert	60	1:51:17

TEAM RESULTS

- Male Open -
1. Hockomock Swamp Rat (Jim Garcia, Hank Gediman, Don Burke) - 3:04:50
 2. Central Vermont Runners (Gordon MacFarland, Tom Kaiden, Jamie Shanley) -3:07:44
 3. Green Mountain Athletic Association (Charlie Windisch, Steve Eustis, Matthew Windisch) - 3:36:00
 4. Somerville Road Runners (Peter Brook, Manny Arruda, Domenick D'Amico) - 3:45:46

- Male Masters -
1. Central Vermont Runners (Gordon MacFarland, Jamie Shanley, Richard Bushey) -3:19:52
 2. Hockomock Swamp Rat (Hank Gediman, Don Burke, Scott Caldwell) - 3:20:44

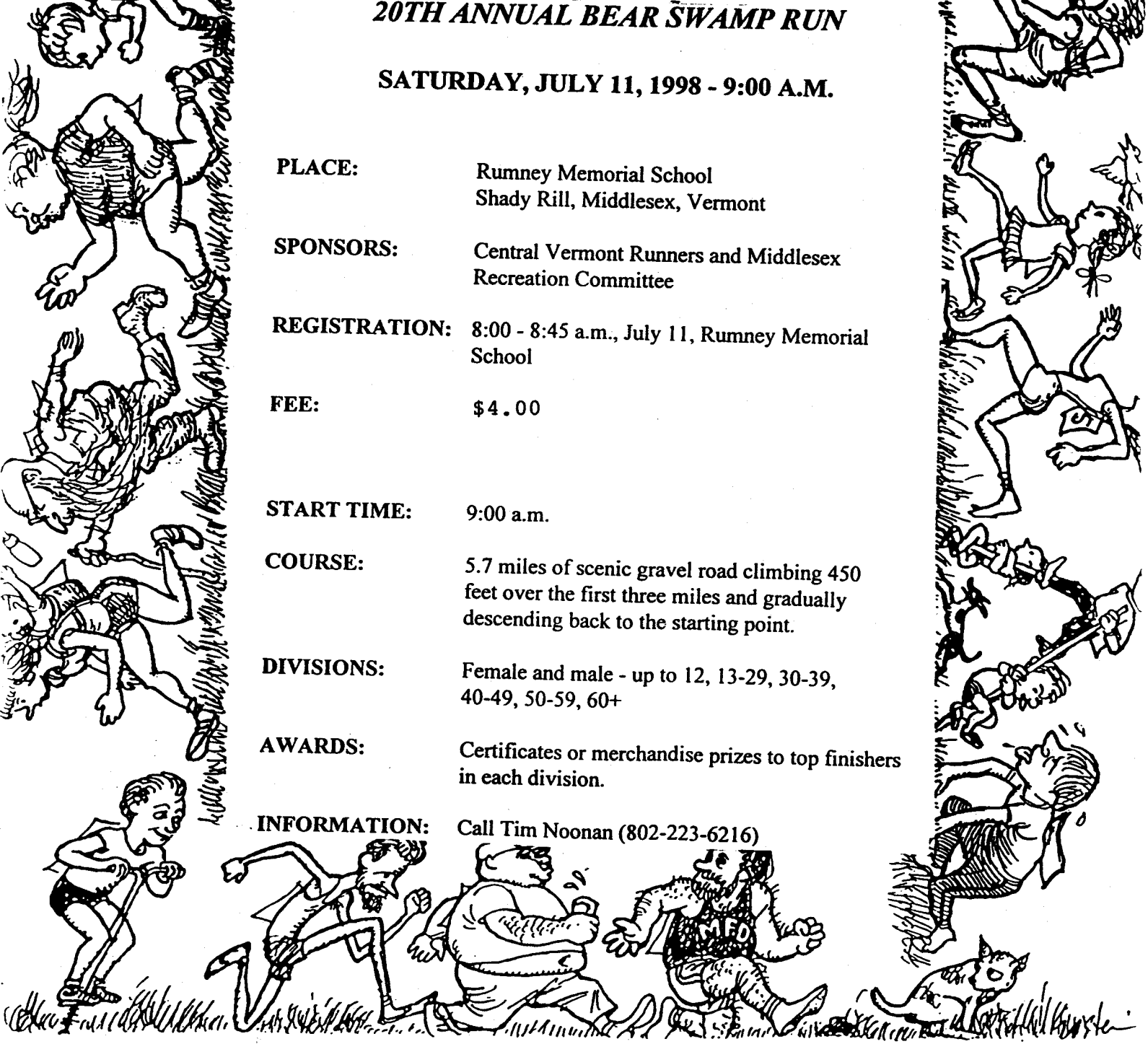
(There were no complete female teams.)



20TH ANNUAL BEAR SWAMP RUN

SATURDAY, JULY 11, 1998 - 9:00 A.M.

- PLACE:** Rumney Memorial School
Shady Rill, Middlesex, Vermont
- SPONSORS:** Central Vermont Runners and Middlesex
Recreation Committee
- REGISTRATION:** 8:00 - 8:45 a.m., July 11, Rumney Memorial
School
- FEE:** \$4.00
- START TIME:** 9:00 a.m.
- COURSE:** 5.7 miles of scenic gravel road climbing 450
feet over the first three miles and gradually
descending back to the starting point.
- DIVISIONS:** Female and male - up to 12, 13-29, 30-39,
40-49, 50-59, 60+
- AWARDS:** Certificates or merchandise prizes to top finishers
in each division.
- INFORMATION:** Call Tim Noonan (802-223-6216)



• **Upcoming events in brief**

July 11 (Saturday) CVR Bear Swamp Run, 5.7 miles, Middlesex. (see flyer inside).

July 11 (Saturday) GMAA Partner's Race, 4.8 miles, Jericho Center, VT.

July 11 (Saturday) Tour de Burlington Boathouse 5K/ 10K, Burlington, VT.

July 13 (Monday) CVR meeting, home of Darragh Ellerson, Upper North St., Montpelier. Pot luck starting at 6:30 pm, 223-2080 for directions.

July 18 (Saturday) Vermont 100-mile race, West Woodstock, VT.

July 19 (Sunday) Stowe 8-miler, Stowe, VT.

July 19 (Sunday) Goshen Gallop 10K, Blueberry Hill Inn, Goshen, VT.

July 26 (Sunday) Race for the Cure 5K, Manchester, VT.

August 2 (Sunday) CVR Berlin Pond Couples Race, Berlin, VT.

****In the next issue....coming soon!**

Still to come, CVR member results from Corporate Cup, Covered Bridges, Vermont City marathon, Whiteface and Mt. Washington Hill Climbs, plus full results of the Montpelier One-Mile on July 4, a report on the Kids' Track Meet, Bob Murphy's compilation of new Vermont age group records, and more!



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