

1998 Grand Slam Part II: the Vermont 100

by Dot Helling

Two down, two to go. For those of you who did not read my Grand Slam Part I, the Grand Slam is a series of four 100 mile trail races run in one summer. Western States in the High Sierras of California took place on June 27. Less than 3 weeks later, it was time for the Vermont 100 on July 18. I won Vermont last year in 19 hours 33 minutes and felt confident that, although it would not be speedy, I could complete the course even if I had to walk the entire way. The cutoff time for completion is 30 hours. This year celebrated the VT100's 10th anniversary.

During the weeks between Western States and Vermont I felt very tired, slept many hours, and had difficulty concentrating. I was in unknown territory. I was also nagged by a strained hamstring in my right leg, pulled during a fall at Western States, and aggravated when I slipped a week later coming down a slippery trail on Mt. Elmore in Vermont. Ice, massage and rest were my focus the week before Vermont. Unfortunately, work and anxieties prevented me from good night's sleeps leading into the event, something that would unexpectedly haunt me later.

On race morning we were greeted by warm and clear weather, still humid but nowhere near as oppressive as it had been the week before. I welcomed the warm weather which would help to keep my hamstring loosened up.

Many of my friends from the West Coast were competing, some as Grand Slammers. My friend and some times pacer Errol "the rocket" Jones arrived days before with his usual zeal. He is the person who initially dragged me into this endless summer of running. He and Ann Trason came from California as Grand Slammers, Ann with a plan to win all four events. She won the women's division of Western States this year for her 10th year in a row. She holds the course records at Western States and Leadville, two of our Slam events.

Before the start at 4AM, we checked in at the Smoke Rise Farm barn. To escape the hubbub, I wandered out to the starting line and walked the dirt road frontage of the farm. On my way down the hill to the road, a few fireworks were set off in the sky in front of me. The owner of the farm was playing a piano outside his home underneath a tarp. The stars and a milky way lit the dark, clear sky. As the fireworks completed and I wandered down the road, I heard the strains of Chariots of Fire above me. I looked toward the farm house. Between myself, the pianist and the night sky, two stallions pranced to the music, silhouetted in beauty. It was incredibly moving and centering for the day ahead.

I stuck with my motto to be conservative. The initial 12 miles are very runnable and generally downhill. Consequently it is very easy to get carried away and, in runners' lingo, "trash your quads early." I arrived at the 12 mile checkpoint about 15 minutes behind last year and knew I was sticking to my plan. However, it felt somewhat involuntary because my legs and feet were killing me. I was feeling the mileage from the Western States 100 run less than three weeks before. I also still had blisters and felt one of them festering under my right foot. Later on I changed to thicker socks, tied my shoes tighter, and was able to keep the blisters in check throughout the event. I finished with better feet than after Western States.

The Vermont course is breathtaking. It starts in South Woodstock and forms a clover leaf beginning with a loop through the Taftsville Covered Bridge, Pomfret and Barnard, then down towards the West Woodstock Covered Bridge. In that section you climb trail up to "Sound of Music" hill and over Suicide Six. Approaching the former I was struck by the amount of ice damage to the trees, as severe as I had seen near home on Camel's Hump, Hunger and Worcester Mountains. It slowed the going. Surprisingly the trails were much drier than expected and mud did not prove to be an issue for me. A horse race, both 50 and 100 mile events, takes place simultaneously with our running event, and occasionally the trail was "gooey" from the foot and hoof traffic, but always negotiable without sinking your sneaker into the grime.

This year I had my first uncomfortable encounter with horse riders during this event. As I was running down "Sound of Music" hill, some riders overtook me. They were not calling out trail and suddenly breathed down my neck in a group. I moved to the far right and got tangled in brush, falling down in front of the horses. I scraped and cut my leg. It irritated me because it was unnecessary and would never have happened if the riders had simply followed trail etiquette.

Just before the climb to Suicide, I first met my Crew Captain, George Belcher. He was great, ready and waiting with a yummy sandwich. The sun was out so I grabbed a visor and sunglasses, and changed my shoes and socks. I knew from my friend Diane McNamara that Errol was way in front and her husband Fred Pilon a bit ahead and feeling strong. This was at only 27 miles. At check-in I had weighed in heavy with a faster pulse and lower blood pressure than usual, probably from the close proximity to Western States. (Friends joked that it meant excitement and shock.) At this point, approximately 1/3 into the race, I was holding steady with my body signs, a favorable start.

I know the course extremely well, having now completed it five times and trained and paced on it often. I broke it into small sections with landmarks. Throughout the day I leapfrogged with a number of other runners and spent some wonderful early hours in

conversation with runners like Tracy Reusch from Massachusetts and Bruce Boyd from Connecticut. Bruce received his 10th silver buckle this year at Vermont for 10 consecutive finishes under 24 hours, all completed in his fifties. The day was also filled with glorious gardens and wildflowers, contrasted against a clear blue and sunny sky.

The run zipped by until I passed Camp Ten Bear the first time at approximately 45 miles. My stomach was getting queasy and all food and drink was tasteless and unwanted. It was also getting extremely hot in the sun and my legs and feet had not quit aching for a moment. I forced the liquids and some gel energy foods and pasta salad. I also took some ibuprofen and set out to complete the southwest loop of the course, the hardest stretch mentally. I hooked up with a couple of runners along the way and chatted, including my friend Terry Ulmer from Richmond. Earlier in the day Terry's girlfriend Nancy had saved the day by fixing my broken sunglasses with duct tape. Terry wanted to quit and I informed him that he looked too good and was on too good a time to even think like that. He continued and successfully finished in 21 hours and change.

The southwest loop takes you through towns like Cavendish and Redding. The entire course is an endless string of postcard settings of the wealthy. At Tracer Brook you hit the most southern point of the course and feel as though you've made your first turn towards home. Here I found Fred sitting in a chair calling it quits. His "quads were trashed." I also savored another sandwich prepared by George and headed north feeling chipper and strong. At Heather's aid station the volunteers were dressed in grass skirts and leis and we later pronounced this the Caribbean pit stop.

At mile 68 you return to the Camp Ten Bear where you are again weighed and may pick up a pacer. My chosen pacer this year was unable to run because of an injury. He was replaced by three of my closest running friends who don't normally run ultras. They split the 32 mile section in three and Eric Ryea started out with me up a steep hill to Gerry's, the next aid station. George awaited at Gerry's where I decided to change my clothes and grab a flashlight. Since my pace was slower than previous years I was concerned that I might run into dark before reaching the next crew station.

Eric and I had a grand time, and ran most of the way to Yates Farm where Donna Smyers took over. Shortly after the exchange my stomach began to revolt. I could not eat or drink easily and was full of gas. It became extremely uncomfortable. An intestinal problem I had experienced earlier in the day came back. Donna started to run with me at approximately mile 78. At mile 83 I began to reel and fall asleep on my feet. Later I attributed this to my failing to get enough sleep the week prior to the race. I

focused all I could on trying to keep placing one foot in front of the other. Nevertheless I wandered all over the road and trail and, on a couple of occasions, nearly fell off the roadway. No matter what Donna said to me, or how she reacted to my state, I could not alert myself enough to stop bobbing and weaving. We slowed down immensely and probably lost one hour's time between miles 83 and 90.

Finally we reached the Jenneville Aid Station where they had everything you could want. I had in fact needed my flashlight and decided to change batteries to have one less concern for the remainder of the night. I also ordered up some coffee mocha and slugged two cups. This broke the slump. At Jenneville Betsy LaFlame took over as my pacer and we took off at a run. We ran far more of the last 10 miles than I ever expected to. Most of this section is trail in deep woods. We heard some rustling in the bushes and saw some strange lights cast in the trees, that thereafter began to strobe. I wondered out loud if we were hallucinating. Betsy broke into a laugh and said that, although I might be hallucinating, she shouldn't be. As we broke out of the trees we saw two weaving runners directing their flashlights as if in a stage light show. They were practically sleep walking. We passed them and one said he was okay but could do no better.

Betsy and I passed numerous runners, and in fact I had been passing people steadily from the time I picked up my first pacer. We ran through the last aid station and entered the last four miles of woods. I informed Betsy that there were 3 or 4 steep hills before the final descent to the finish line, that I had counted them numerous times, but never remembered how many - just that there were no more than four. We started to count. We could not decide if the first hill was continuous or two hills with a break. Then we could not decide whether the second and third hills were actually one long second hill or two. All of a sudden we realized that we were just yards from the finish line. We passed one last runner and soared into the finish barn to be greeted by George, Donna, Eric and my would-be pacer Sigh Searles. I immediately went to the weight scales where I weighed in just one pound off my start weight, and then to the food tables. I felt extremely well and very satisfied with my finish in 22:17:10, even though it was nearly 3 hours slower than last year. I had stayed with my plan for the Grand Slam, conservation and fun.

252 runners started the event. 90 dropped. Of the more than 50 women, I finished 8th and was 2nd master (over 40) and 46th in the combined field of 162 finishers. Vermonters put in great performances. Shari Bashaw of St. Albans ran her first 100 miler and finished second to Ann Trason in a time of 18:37:04. Ann won in a course record time of 17:11:23 and was 5th overall in the field. Sue Johnston of St. Johnsbury was third in 19:22:59. I was the third Vermont woman and first Vermont female master.

In the men's field, Joe Hildebrand from Illinois won in 16:09:17. Ralph Swenson of South Burlington finished 10th overall, Vermont's first male, and winner of the men's 50-59 age division in a time of 17:47:15. Other Vermont notables included Terry Ulmer of Richmond in 21:24:06 and Ray Zirblis of Montpelier in 23:08:09. The mentioned Vermonters were silver buckle winners as a result of finishing under 24 hours.

The next and third event is the Leadville 100 in just over four weeks. It will be the most difficult, particularly since the lowest altitude on the course is 9,000' and it climbs twice to 12,500'. All of the events have significant cumulative climb and descent, including Vermont with over 14,000' of altitude change. My recovery is good, better this time than after Western States. When asked whether I felt lethargic and/or overwhelmed by the undertaking, I was surprised to find myself describing the experience as approaching a spiritual or religious journey. I am told that is good. It means I am focused and excited and taking some deep meaning out of the challenge. That is exactly what I hope to gain. It is far more than a competition or an opportunity and great excuse to spend your summer running in beautiful places. It is time with the elements and time spent within your own body's perimeters. It is also a time of edged strategy lest you hurt yourself physically and/or fall apart mentally. I recently likened a race in Death Valley and the hallucinations that come to all of its entrants to a Carlos Castaneda running experience, without the peyote buttons. I expect to perhaps levitate to that mental extreme somewhere in the third or fourth event, and will follow the nymphs of fantasy to the ultimate finish line.

Grand Slam Intermission:
Circumnavigation of Mt. Rainier
August 1-3, 1998
by
Dot Helling

Midway between this summer's Grand Slam events*, I joined ultrarunner friends in Washington to circumnavigate Mt. Rainier, which stands 14,411' at the Columbia Crest southeast of Seattle, Washington. We planned to run it in three days, camping in between at National Park sites. Not everyone would run every day so that those who didn't could cart our gear from point to point.

I flew into Seattle and met my friend Susan from southern California. We then drove with a Washingtonian friend to the Longmire entrance of Mt. Rainier National Park and set up a group camp at Cougar Rock amidst tremendous evergreens. The mountain was socked in with weather and we set up our tents in a steady mist and drizzle. We ate at the lodge and hit the sack early.

At 5:00 a.m. it was raining. The rest of our friends had arrived through the night. We packed our soggy gear into the van, ate breakfast, stuffed our packs with food and headed down the trail. The early miles were all heavily wooded and formed a natural umbrella. The trail was pine needle soft and runnable. Our route was the Wonderland Trail, approximately 93 miles around the mountain in a clockwise direction beginning from the south.

As we climbed to higher elevations the wildflowers were glorious. Over the next two days with the sun out there would be places where you found yourself in an alpine flower shop of heather, fragrant lupin, Pacific Northwest Indian paintbrush in lipstick shades, myriad colors and varieties of daisies, and flowering beargrass, to name a few. On day one we munched on blueberries and huckleberries just above Devils Dream Creek and in the Indian Henry's Hunting Ground where we saw our first glimpse of awesome Rainier. We encountered bear (from a distance), marmot, a gray trail rabbit and lots of happy chipmunks and birds. The bear's name was Henrietta, according to the rangers.

We passed through several areas called parks, including beautiful Sunset Park at 5,500'. Parks are a convergence of high meadows which were chock full of colorful wildflowers.

Day one ended with switchbacks and a long haul up to Mowich Lake, the highest elevation campground in the park. Our crew greeted us with hot food and dry tents. We had covered 36 miles, ascended 12,000' and descended 10,000' over the course of a full day. Bedtime came early.

Sunday dawned clear and sunny after a cool night. Many of us packed out early and did a dogleg detour through Spray Park to see the waterfalls. From there it was a grunt climb to one of the high points of our run, Crescent Mountain. We traversed glacier and moraine and crossed the Carbon River, loaded with silt and glacial debris. While there was snow all around us, not much appeared on the trail. We crossed over Winthrop Glacier and Skyscraper Mountain (7,018') and dropped down into Berkeley Park and the Sunrise Visitor Center. The sun and clear blue skies greeted us the entire day with one enthralling view of Rainier after another. At times you felt you could almost touch its peak as we traversed the higher ridges. Just above Sunrise Lodge a cluster of mountain goats grazed on a scree slope by a frozen lake. Then it was 3 miles straight down to our next overnight at White River.

This second day we completed 26 miles and climbed 9,000'. At night I was inducted into the "circumnavigation club" - 60 seconds in the White River, so cold it makes you scream. We celebrated our last evening together with an open-fire salmon dinner by the shores of the White River complete with rice, baked beans and beer. The Pacific Northwest salmon cooked and eaten outdoors was the most incredible fish I've ever tasted. The crew had also rigged up a sun shower so that each of us could get a thorough cleansing. We ended the night with a song and birthday cake for Lynn O'Malley who is also a Grand Slammer and turning 48. That night I slept

without a rain tarp with my screens open listening to the rushing sound of the White River. I awoke the next morning early enough to catch the sun rising above Rainier, casting a beautiful pink and red light over the entire mountain just like the photograph on Rainier's best selling postcard.

Day three we left early from White River and ran up Governor's Ridge through a series of switchbacks into more meadows filled with brilliant wildflowers. As we crossed over this highpoint on the route we moved back to the south side of the mountain and away from the snow. Here it became very arid and dusty and we began the first of interminable downhills into the Stevens Canyon and then Box Canyon. The first downhill went on and on for many miles into a huge bowl which brought visions of the Sound of Music. Our destination was a ranger cabin and a river by a magnificent waterfall and gorge. The flowers carpeted the way and we ran down, down, down over hundreds of waterbars and around dozens of switchbacks. My quads and knees stiffened and became very sore, reminding me of the many miles I've run this summer on similar extreme terrain. At the ranger cabin we soaked our feet, ate lunch and then headed up another steep climb which topped off with a magnificent view of Mt. Adams in the distance. It was a bit foggy and one of the runners told me it was smoke from forest fires in the northwestern part of the state. Then we ran yet another interminable downhill - dry, arid and very buggy. The biting flies bit right through the clothing we wore and we found it impossible to take rest stops. We ran out of water as we continued down, down, down searching for the Nickel Creek, the next water source. Again my quads and knees were sore and tense and I decided that I would apply my motto of conservation and call it a day at Box Canyon, the approximate 82 mile mark on the route. I'd been told that the section from Box Canyon back to Longmire where we began, an approximate 11 mile section, was deep in the canyon, brushy, without views and full of bugs. It also travelled below a tourist-filled highway and did not sound at all attractive as an ending to a most incredible journey.

We passed Nickel Creek and soaked ourselves again. From there four of us ran the last mile down to the Box Canyon where our crew awaited. On day three we travelled just over 20 miles and climbed another 4,500'. As we traversed open face rock, less than 100 yards from the trail's end, the crew below us hooted and hollered. I was distracted by visions of a cold soda and took a header down the rocks. I lay there stunned and noted a considerable amount of blood oozing from my right knee and my left hand. I checked the mechanics of my body and decided that I was okay but this was a dramatic finish, tell-tale of what might have come. As I came off the trail, one of the crew appeared with a bag of ice for my knee and another with a can of ice cold Coke. It was a sight as grand as an oasis in the Sahara Desert. The crew took photos of me, battle wounded but with a big smile on my face. It had definitely been an incredible journey and one I wish to return to and make again, taking perhaps more time to soak in the glorious surroundings of Mt. Rainier.

CVR Fun Fun Party
August 13, Hubbard Park



3-legged race



Tissue race



Tissue race



Costume race

Berlin Pond Couples Race
Sunday, 2 August 1998

COUPLES RESULTS

Open (combined age under 80)

Name	Combined age	Combined time	Rank
Chip Pierce Danielle Pierce	50	65:26	1
Laura Medalie Dave Kissner	67	71:06	2
Pamela Lowe Todd Sternbach	72	71:14	3
Kim Kendall Jamie Shanley	78	73:27	4
Maureen Carr Tim Noonan	75	73:41	5
Mike Gillis Maryke Gillis	78	75:56	6

Masters (combined age 80 and above)

Name	Combined age	Combined time	Rank
John Valentine Merill Cray	94	66:54	1
Bev Coon Wayne Hunter	96	80:45	2
Wayne Bell Mary Roux	80	82:50	3
Jill Fisher Wayne Fisher	92	85:12	4
Jim McWilliams Marie McWilliams	113	88:27	5

INDIVIDUAL RESULTS

Male Open (Under 40)

Name	Residence	Age	Time	Rank overall	Rank class
Chip Pierce	Newport, VT	37	26:54*	1	1
Joe Gringras	Berlin, VT	22	27:52	2	2
Dave Kissner	East Montpelier, VT	32	32:30	7	3
Todd Sternbach	Waterbury, VT	37	34:44	10	4

Male Master (40 and older)

Gordon MacFarland	Montpelier, VT	50	29:54*	3	1
Jamie Shanley	East Montpelier, VT	45	30:52	4	2
Tim Noonan	Montpelier, VT	42	31:01	5	3
John Valentine	Roxbury, VT	48	31:49	6	4
Mike Gillis	Middlesex, VT	41	32:38	8	5
Harvery Lavoy	EastCorinth, VT	43	34:41	9	6
Wayne Bell	Northfield, VT	41	34:48	11	7
Jim McWilliams	Worcester, VT	58	37:42	14	8
Wayne Hunter	Northfield, VT	52	38:06	15	9
Wayne Fisher	Arnum, Ohio	46	40:18	19	10

Female Open (Under 40)

Pamela Lowe	Waterbury, VT	35	36:30	13	1
Ivy Fisher	Arnum, Ohio	15	38:30*	16	2
Danielle Pierce	Newport, VT	13	38:32*	17	3
Laura Medalie	East Montpelier, VT	35	38:36	18	4
Kim Kendall	East Montpelier, VT	33	42:35	20	5
Maureen Carr	Montpelier, VT	33	42:40	22	6
Maryke Gillis	Middlesex, VT	37	43:18	23	7
Mary Roux	Northfield, VT	39	48:02	26	8
Susan Thayer	Waterbury, VT	33	54:56	28	9

Female Master (40 and older)

Merill Cray	Montpelier, VT	46	35:05	12	1
Bev Coon	Williamstown, VT	44	42:39	21	2
Jill Fisher	Arnum, Ohio	46	44:24	24	3
Elizabeth Meiklejohn	East Calais, VT	50	47:07	25	4
Marie McWilliams	Worcester, VT	55	50:05	27	5

*New age group record (see accompanying article by Bob Murphy)

More Age Group Records Fall by the Wayside

by
Bob Murphy, VRDC

Despite a small turnout at this year's running of the Berlin Pond Couples Race, quality was evident in the performances. A total of four new age group records were established! The biggest upset was when Chip Pierce from Newport shaved over two minutes off John Valentine's record for 35-39 year-olds, a mark which had stood for 9 years. Here are the details.

- **Men 35-39** 26:54 Chip Pierce, 37, Newport, Vt.
 Old record (1989) 28:56 John Valentine, 39, Northfield, Vt.

- **Men 50-54** 29:54 Gordon MacFarland, 50, Montpelier, Vt.
 Old record (1991) 30:02 Bob Murphy, 51, Barre, Vt.

- **Girls 12-13** 38:32 Danielle Peirce, 13, Newport, Vt.
 Old record none

- **Girls 14-15** 38:30 Ivy Fisher, 15, Arnum, Ohio
 Old record (1987) 39:57 Lynne Wells, 15, Calais, Vt.

In addition to the above age group records, the following set new single-age records at the 8 km distance.

Men

- 41 32:38 Mike Gillis, Middlesex, Vt.

- 45 30:52 Jamie Shanley, East Montpelier, Vt.

- 58 37:42 Jim McWilliams, Worcester, Vt.

Women

- 46 35:05 Merrill Cray, Montpelier, Vt.

- 50 47:07 Elizabeth Meiklejohn, East Calais, Vt.

- 55 50:05 Marie McWilliams, Worcester, Vt.

For those who think that small races don't deserve the same attention as larger ones (based on the assumption that we'll never have a record here), let this fine event be a lesson! Congratulations to all on their achievements, and thanks to race director Mike Chernick for prompt submittal of results.

Upoming events (for complete list visit our web site)

- **Next CVR meeting**, Monday, September 14, 6:30 (pot luck), 7:15 (meeting) at Bob Murphy's house

Directions to Bob's: From I-89, take So. Barre Exit (Exit 6). Follow road downhill about 1.75 miles, take a left at the flashing light onto Miller Road. Then take second left (about 0.2 miles) onto Birchwood Park Drive (dirt road). Murphys' is #35, white house with green shutters, about 0.5 miles on the right.

From Vt. 14 in So. Barre, take Route 63 (Interstate Access Road) toward I-89. Follow road uphill about 1.5 miles, take right at flashing light onto Miller Road. Then take second left (about 0.2 miles) onto Birchwood Park Drive (dirt road). Murphys' is #35, white house with green shutters, about 0.5 miles on the right.

If you get lost, call 476-4328 and we'll try to guide you in.

If interested in a 4+ mile hilly cross-country run, show up at 5:30pm and I'll try to find the path through the woods (haven't run it in over 2 years, so it could be a real adventure!) -- Happy running, Bob

- Sep. 5, 9 am, **Northfield 5K**, Northfield, VT. Tim Noonan, 223-6216
- Sep. 7, 8 am, **GMAA Mt. Mansfield Toll Road Fun Run** (not a race)
- Sep. 12, 9 am, **GMAA Archie Post 5-Miler**, UVM Field House. Oldest race in Vermont!
- Sep. 27, 10 am, **Mad Dash 4-Mile / Kids' Fun Run**, Waitsfield, VT.
Greenway flooding repaired, race is on! Call 496-7907
- Oct. 4, 11 am, **CVR Leaf Peepers Half Marathon-5K**, Waterbury, VT. Richard Cleveland, 485-8892



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