



*C/o Nancy S. Rice  
P.O. Box 1382  
Montpelier, Vermont 05601*



CVR PD 2007

Robert Murphy  
35 Birchwood Park Dr  
Barre, VT 05641

**February 2007**

**CVR OFFICERS:**

President:	Betty Rose
Vice-President:	Michael Chernick
Treasurer:	Priscilla Carr
Secretary:	Sandy Colvin
Webmaster:	Dave Kissner
Newsletter Editor:	Nancy Rice

Publicity:

**NE XT CVR MEETING:  
ANNUAL MEETING**

**Sunday, March 18, 2007  
6:30 P.M.**

**Potluck and Meeting  
Details Inside**



## Become a Member of Central Vermont Runners Club

### When you join Central Vermont Runners you'll...

Meet, run with, and socialize with other area runners of all abilities.

- Keep up-to-date on area running races and events.
- Receive a regular newsletter with race results and club news.
- Be eligible for the Central Vermont Runners/Onion River Sports Race Series
- Join a club that's part of the Road Runners Club of America organization. Which
  - insures CVR races.
- Become eligible for discounts at area sporting goods stores:
  - Onion River Sports / Shoe Horn - 10% off running shoes and running apparel.
  - Lenny's Shoes & Apparel - 10% off running shoes.
  - The Sport Shoe Center-- Various discounts on shoes

Name (Please Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: M F Age \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Names and birth dates of additional household members of CVR:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

As a responsibility of club membership, I agree to be available to work on at least one club race during the year. My preferred race is indicated below.

\*April - Mutt Strutt \_\_\_\_\_

\*May-Oct - Tuesday Fun Runs \_\_\_\_\_

\*June - Kids Track Meet \_\_\_\_\_

\*June - Capital City Stampede \_\_\_\_\_

\*June - Montpelier 10 Miler \_\_\_\_\_

\*July - Bear Swamp Run \_\_\_\_\_

\*Aug - Berlin Pond 5 Miles \_\_\_\_\_

\*Aug/Sept - Northfield 5K \_\_\_\_\_

\*Oct - Leaf Peepers \_\_\_\_\_

\*Dec - First Night 5K \_\_\_\_\_

\*Other Weekday evening races \_\_\_\_\_

\*Nov.-Fallen Leaves 5K's \_\_\_\_\_

\*May-Black Fly 4 Miles \_\_\_\_\_

\*July/Aug- Barre Downtown 5K \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues are \$10 for individual or family, \$2 for students. Enclosed are dues for the following years  
- (2006 dues covers 3/2006-3/2007).

2007

2008

2009

2010

2011

Please make checks payable to **Central Vermont Runners** and mail to:

CVR, c/o: Donna Smyers PO Box 102, Adamant VT 05640



**February 2007**  
**Volume 28, Issue 1**

## **CENTRAL VERMONT RUNNERS FEBRUARY 2007 NEWSLETTER**

### ***Message from the President***

This will be my final message as President of Central Vermont Runners. I'm sure all the members will continue to give the same excellent support to the new President that I have enjoyed over the past several years. There are lots of changes going on and it is very important that everyone come to the Annual Meeting on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Not only will we be electing new officers and setting the schedule of meetings for 2007, but we will also be voting on some very important changes to the Club by-laws. These changes will help to determine the future of the Club and we need everyone's input. We will also be discussing a new place to store our CVR equipment. This will especially impact the race directors.

While you are enjoying the brisk winter runs in between the snow drifts, don't forget to renew your CVR membership. Check your newsletter mailing label to see if you need to renew.

See you on March 18th,

Betty



**NEXT MEETING:**  
7p.m.

**Sunday March 18, 2007**

6:30p.m. Pot luck, Business meeting at

MORSE FARM - p.s. Morses' will be having sugar on snow that weekend that ends at 4 p.m.

[www.cvrrunners.org](http://www.cvrrunners.org)



## Secretary's notes

CVR Meeting November 1, 2006

Began the meeting with a guest speaker. Nick Pederson from Onion River Sports spoke about offering a skate clinic to CVR members and families. Nick discussed ORS desire to work with clubs like ours in hosting skate clinics, events and even a duathlon. Other ideas he shared were linking our websites so CVR members and others who visit the website could learn more about skiing. Their website is [OnionRiverNordic.org](http://OnionRiverNordic.org).

Called the meeting to order –

Minutes from the last meeting were accepted.

## Treasurers Report – Priscilla

We looked at the tentative budget from Leaf Peepers and it appears the race was a great success bringing in enough revenue to cover the expenses, and make a generous donation to Harwood Boosters.

Welcome to two new members April and Celeste.

## 2007 Tentative Race Calendar

April 29 <sup>th</sup>	Mutt Strutt
May 6 <sup>th</sup>	Black Fly
June 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Kids Track Meet
June 9 <sup>th</sup>	Capital City Stampede
June 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Paul Mailman
July 9 <sup>th</sup>	Bear Swamp
July 28 <sup>th</sup>	Barre Homecoming
August 9 <sup>th</sup>	Berlin Pond
August 16 <sup>th</sup>	Hubbard Park Predict a Time
August 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Montpelier Chase Race
September 1 <sup>st</sup>	Northfield Labor Day
September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Sodom Pond
October 7 <sup>th</sup>	Leaf Peepers
October 14 <sup>th</sup>	Bobs Barre Race
November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Falling Leaves
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Falling Leaves
November 17 <sup>th</sup>	Falling Leaves
December 31 <sup>st</sup>	First Night

These are tentative dates and are subject to change.

Annual CVR Meeting will be held on March 25th. This is the meeting where officers are elected. Mark your calendar, the location is to be announced, possibly Morse Farm and we may try and coordinate a running or skiing event prior to the meeting .... The nominating committee for new officers is Priscilla, Dave and Bob. (After the meeting the date was changed to March 18<sup>th</sup> due to a conflict. The date is March 18<sup>th</sup>)



## The Annual CVR Awards and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

A committee of Donna, April and Celeste was formed to work on planning this year's event.

### Spirit of the Club award

A committee of Darragh, Donna and Sandy was formed to pick a winner and choose the prize. The club approved a budget of \$100.00 for the award.

### Leaf Peepers as a Grand Prix Event

Discussed nominating leaf peepers for a Grand Prix Event in 2007. An application would need to be completed, delivered and fee paid for this. Discussed the pros and cons of having a CVR race part of the series. After discussion decided we will not send in an application for Leaf Peepers.

### Race Director Reports

Tim Noonan – Northfield 5K – Granite State Racing Services, the timing service that provides timing to many CVR events, will no longer be able to provide timing for the Northfield race. Tim discussed some options for the race, perhaps using the service of Run Vermont, which would rent CVR their equipment etc. Or we could do it ourselves with our equipment and software. Discussed what would be involved in either scenario, costs, labor etc. After long discussion decided that the club could do it and for this service we would charge \$2.00 per runner.

First Night – Rowley wasn't present but it appears he will be the race director, although his wife is expecting around that date. He has the back up of Steve Commolli should he need it.

Leaf Peepers - Discussed not only the success of the race but the unfortunate weather, which led to a lot of water damage to the green at the state office complex. It was decided that CVR should approach the state, apologize for the damage, and offer to cover any and all costs associated with the repair to the green. Also, CVR should offer to change the set up of the race in the future, so that vehicles are not permitted on the green. Either Roger can approach the state, as the Race Director, but if he felt he wanted more involvement from the club or felt it should come from the club, Darragh and Tim offered to do it. Once they hear back from the state with a cost estimate for repairs they will report back to the executive committee for final approval on paying.

All Race Directors are asked to review the format of their applications this year. If you don't already have it, please add a section for e-mail addresses. This will permit us to start communicating more via e-mail vs. direct mail. Cuts down on costs and gives us more open communication with our members and race participants.

### Equipment

Donna and Bob will research new timers, as ours are broken, unreliable, illegible etc. Looking to purchase at least 3 more.

### CVR Onion River Race Series

Bob Murphy asks that someone else take over the scoring. Discussed changing the format of the scoring. The last race Bob will do will be 1<sup>st</sup> Night, unless someone volunteers before then.

Meeting was adjourned at about 8:45 pm.



## CENTRAL VERMONT RUNNERS

### 2007 RACE SCHEDULE



Contact persons: Betty Rose, President, [BRose@nationallife.com](mailto:BRose@nationallife.com)

\*indicates race is part of the Central Vermont Runners/Onion River Sports race series.

ONGOING – FUN RUNS Every Tuesday, rain or shine, at 5:30 until the clocks change (MAY-OCTOBER). Choice of distances: 1, 2, 4 or 6 miles. If you don't want to run, volunteer to time.

April 29 <sup>th</sup>	Mutt Strutt
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These are tentative dates and are subject to change. Race Directors and details to be published next issue, and will be on the web site.

**NEXT: ANNUAL MEETING, SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 2007**

**Come and elect your officers and have input to important bylaw changes.**

[www.cvrrunners.org](http://www.cvrrunners.org)



## 2nd Annual Green Mountain Relay - Jeffersonville to Bennington, Vermont First weekend in June - the full moon will lighten our way!



**Scheduled in June around the full moon, the 2nd annual Green Mountain Relay will take place on SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, JUNE 2-3, 2007.** The GMR starts in the small town of Jeffersonville - about a 50-minute drive from Burlington - and finishes in the beautiful community of Bennington, which is nestled between the Taconic and Green Mountains in the southwestern corner of Vermont. The majority of the GMR route traverses the central Vermont Route 100 corridor, taking secondary country roads, some trails, and portions of historic Route 100. Once south of Londonderry, the route utilizes sections of US 30 and RT 7A and paralleling side roads. Runners will cross seven of Vermont's historic covered bridges and will sample many of Vermont's natural wonders: rivers, brooks, farmlands, maple forests, the Green Mountains, Stowe Hollow, Granville Gulch, Killington, Okemo, Mount Bromley, and many other classic Vermont postcard scenes.

**The 200-mile Green Mountain Relay is modeled after other long distance relays.** The course is divided into 36 legs with designated runner exchange zones at the end of each leg. There are three main categories for teams to choose from: 12-person teams, Ultra teams consisting of 6-runners who can run either a 6x1 or 6x6 configuration, or a Super-Ultra category for 1 to 3-person teams. High School teams are also encouraged to participate. The course is well marked and monitored with plenty of access to aid.

**Race Director Paul Vanderheiden, owner of Timberline Events LLC, also organizes the Wild West Relay in Colorado and is a relay runner himself.** Paul's vision for his relays is to find very scenic, rural routes so both local and out-of-state teams experience the essence of the area. He gathers support from the local communities and gives back to them through his Volunteers With A Purpose program, a unique program providing local non-profit organizations with a fund-raising opportunity.

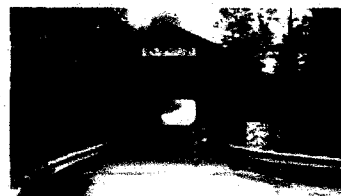
**One difference between the GMR and other eastern relays is the very rural nature of the relay route.** It is necessary for teams to help with the recruiting of volunteers to staff the exchanges. Teams have two options - the team can either recruit friends or family to be volunteers, or they can make a donation to Volunteers With A Purpose. The funds raised by VWAP are then directly passed on to local non-profit organizations that participate in the GMR as a fund-raising opportunity. The 2006 GMR distributed \$4,200 to organizations that provided volunteers, such as Habitat For Humanity, Women Helping Battered Women, the Manchester Lions Club, and the Ottaquechee Community Partnership.

**Last year's event was plagued by cold rain and winds. Even so, twenty-one smiling and laughing teams participated in the soggy inaugural event, 19 of which finished.** It was truly a "shake out" for this year's event and the many years to follow. What already was a well-organized relay will only get better. The weather owes us some cooperation - the 2007 date is one week earlier which should help as June rains typically wait until mid month to start drenching us in Vermont.

**Mother Nature owes us - the Sun will shine on  
this year's GMR!**

*JOIN THE CAMARADERIE -*

long distance relays are fun!



[www.cvrrunners.org](http://www.cvrrunners.org)



**With a congenial relay team, you will have the time of your life for 200 continuous miles.** Last year, my team - a masters women's ultra team of six named the "Vermont Hot Shoes" - and our wonderful driver Vic, giggled and laughed between solid runs by each member. We maximized the circumstances - small van, six cramped and wet women, and one man. It was hilarious fun and we ran well, winning our division as the "only old ladies team" but also placing strongly overall. We did have our secrets - plenty of dry clothing, good food, and a driver who could handle anything with a bright smile.

**The GMR is a two-day event.** Teams are given staggered starts based upon the average of team members' 10k times. This formula spreads teams out while attempting to get all the teams to the finish in time for the prize drawing and awards ceremony afterwards.

**THE COURSE IS PHENOMENAL - LIKE VERMONT LIFE!**  
**The challenging course has all the rugged features of Vermont softened by the constant beauty of the surroundings.** The hills come often and are challenging. The dirt roads have little traffic and lots of barnyard and backyard views. The locals come out and offer cheers and support. In between the exchanges, there are many of the country stores Vermont is famous for. They not only love your business but also are thoroughly intrigued by the scope of the event. Part of my team camped at the back of one store in an open area with the proprietor's blessing, using the bathroom and their space for stretching and keeping warm, while buying coffee and local-made cider donuts to munch on. Later in the run we camped out in a diner and enjoyed mouth-watering hot homemade soup to take the chill off. The locals treated us well; at least while they were awake. There was a period during the night where we hit "quiet zones" and were warned to keep down the noise lest we lose our permission to run through the area.

**Runners experience the route far differently than from a car or on a bike.** For instance, Granville Gulch and its fast running brook and powerful waterfalls, the very distant horizon and views coming into Bennington, the relentless hills in areas such as Stowe Hollow and Terrible Mountain south of Killington Peak. Vermont is anything but flat and you'll know it after this run. This feature not only makes for the challenge but also defines the beauty of the course and your surroundings. Last year's full moon was not visible because of the bad weather.

**THE NIGHT IS DARK BUT EXCITING!**

**Still, with headlamps and flashlights, passing through the countryside and community hollows of Vermont during the night hours was spiritual and very special.** Between rains you could hear the night critters contrasted with the pregnant silence of rural Vermont, where all is a still life when the farm families turn out their lights and hit the sack.

**THE COMPETITION CAN BE FIERCE OR FUN - WHATEVER YOU WANT TO MAKE IT!**

**Much like other long distance relay events, teams set goals - some based on time, others to win their age group, to beat their hometown friends, or another running club team.** The 2006 overall winners were the "12-WATTS," a team from Colorado, which consisted of 10 high school students, and two adult coaches, who organized fund-raising events to be able to travel to Vermont to participate. Their time of 24:12 was a 7:20 pace for the 200 miles. Although the categories are separated for 12-person versus ultra teams, the ultra teams sure enjoy a boost upon beating a 12-person team to the finish, particularly since the ultra team members are each generally covering twice the distance and running twice as many segments.



**IT'S ALL ABOUT TEAM SPIRIT!**

**Personally I prefer an ultra team.** I get to do more running and spend more time with my team members. The larger teams require two vans and the team is separated. Ultra teams stay together. Our runs were not far enough apart to take time for more than a catnap. We enjoyed more time together. We decorated our van, wore matching team jackets and held team get-togethers before and after the event. Best of all, we made local prime time news and ran for





the camera! We plan to return in 2007 to defend our titles of first women's team, first ultra women's team, first senior women's team, first senior ultra women's team, and women's team course record holders. We call on the women of the running universe to pull together teams to challenge us!

**If you don't run the GMR to compete, run it as an athletic challenge and as a great way to see and experience Vermont. Run it as a social event.** You will find yourself leapfrogging with the same teams at the exchanges and making new friends. The runners will intrigue you - where they come from, why they are here, and the relationships amongst them. In the middle of the night, tired and sore, you will have made new friends simply by sharing this ultra experience and you will have deepened the ties with your teammates. Best of all, you will have lots of stories to share and tell, and memories that will last a lifetime.

#### WHY VERMONT?

**If you run in the Green Mountain Relay, you will run in the heart of Vermont.** The smells, the tastes, the sights will all be at your footsteps and intimately tied to your senses. The GMR takes you beyond a short day's race, into a zone of sore muscles and tired bodies that forces you to be at one with your surroundings. It forces you to set a tempo, one foot at a time moving forward, and to ignore your exhaustion for the ultimate finish line and the satisfaction of getting there as part of a close knit team. At the same time you get in a valuable workout, which will set you up for a successful summer and fall of running.

#### REGISTRATION

**Registration for the Green Mountain Relay is now open and is limited to the first 125 teams. Go to [www.GreenMountainRelay.com](http://www.GreenMountainRelay.com) for information.**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** *Dot Helling has completed over a hundred marathons and many ultra races, and also competes in triathlons and adventure races. When not running she is skiing or biking, and her athletic resume is very impressive. She set an age group record (50-55) at the Mount Washington Road Race, which she runs annually. She won the Vermont 100 in 1997. She has finished the Ironman Triathlon, and recently completed the Coastal Challenge in Costa Rica. She is also a mountain climber, summiting Mt. Kilimanjaro and others. Last month she ran in Patagonia with Andes Adventures.*

*"What an amazing place and experience!!!!!!", she declares. She has run on several competitive relay teams. Dot is a member of the Green Mountain Athletic Assoc (GMAA), as well as the Central Vermont Runners and the Stowe Bie Club. She is a lawyer in Montpelier, Vermont.*

### **CVR Honors Norm Robinson with '06 Spirit of the Club Award**





On Jan. 25, 2007 CVR awarded **Norm Robinson** the annual Spirit of the Club Award. Past winners include Tim Noonan, Darragh Ellerson and Donna Smyers. Below this photo -- a montage of similar photos was presented to Norm on Jan. 25 -- see remarks from Donna Smyers when she presented the award to Norm:

**"He has held every club office -- President (an office which he held for a stint in the 80's and in the 90's and we hope again in the 2000's), Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer -- the only person to have done that (17 years of service as a club officer). He has also been newsletter editor, publicity chair, mailing list coordinator and nominations chair. He organized teams for the Lake Winnepesaukee Relay and other events. He has been a race director for Kids Track Meet, Capital City Stampede, Sub-Ultimate Runner, Berlin Pond Couples Race and the Montpelier Mile. He continues to be a frequent volunteer at many CVR events."**

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**2007 GMAA Race Schedule**

*Click on the race name for more info!!*

Note: all GMAA members receive a \$1 discount at all GMAA races (except \$2 races!)

Note: anyone can join the GMAA race day and receive membership rates

Note: due to our insurance policy no rollerblades, baby joggers/strollers, dogs, or headphones are allowed in GMAA races

[Link to the GMAA weather policy](#)

Apr 1 **28th Kaynor's Sap Run** 6.0 miles 12:00 Rogers Road, Westford. Open the season with muddy country roads, cider, and doughnuts. Chapin(802-878-6392) and Donna(802-879-2052) Kaynor. [saprun@gmaa.net](mailto:saprun@gmaa.net) \$5.

Apr 21 **29th Rollin Irish Half Marathon** 9:00 Memorial Hall, Essex Center. Explore the scenic back roads of Essex - mostly dirt and "rolling". Carolyn Bever(802-658-0743) [rollinirish@gmaa.net](mailto:rollinirish@gmaa.net) \$10 pre-registration/\$15 race day.

May 5 **28th Partners Race** 5.0 miles (New distance this year!) 8:30 Jericho Center Green. Male and female partners' times are combined. Bring a partner or get one at the start. Nathan Fields (802-316-2240) [partners@gmaa.net](mailto:partners@gmaa.net) \$5.

Jul 4 **25th Clarence DeMar Road Race** 5K or 10K 8:30 Folsom School, South Hero. 5k is out and back, flat and fast. 10k is a rolling, scenic loop. Barb and Dave Capen (802-372-4993) [demar@gmaa.net](mailto:demar@gmaa.net) \$10 pre-registration/\$13 race day

Aug 11 **15th Scholarship Cross Country Run** 5K 9:00 Red Rocks Park, South Burlington. Cross Country race on the dirt trails in the park. Benefits the GMAA scholarship. Jessica Cover (802-434-5813) [scholarshipxc@gmaa.net](mailto:scholarshipxc@gmaa.net) \$5 pre-registration/\$8 race day.

Aug 25 **28th Round Church Women's Run** 5K or 10K 8:30 Round Church, Richmond. Fast and flat out and back on Cochran Road. Kasie and Eli Enman (802-238-0820) [roundchurch@gmaa.net](mailto:roundchurch@gmaa.net) \$5 pre-registration/\$8 race day (optional women's tank top \$6).

Sep 8 **39th Archie Post 5 Miler** 8:30 Gutterson Field House, UVM. Oldest race in the Vermont! Point to point course entirely on bike paths and cinder trails. Run to the start (3.5m from registration) or take bus (leaves Gutterson at 8:00). Free 1/4 mile kid's race at 9:30am. Mike and Mary Beth Early (802-434-5311) [archiepost@gmaa.net](mailto:archiepost@gmaa.net) \$7 pre-registration/\$10 race day (optional shirt \$6).

Sep 15 **4th Common to Common 30K** 8:30 Memorial Hall, Essex Center. Great marathon or half marathon tune-up or race long without hitting the wall. Scenic run through the farm country of Essex and Westford. Essex common to the Westford common and back. Steve and Cathy Eustis (802-878-4385) [common2common@gmaa.net](mailto:common2common@gmaa.net) \$11 pre-registration/\$15 race day.



Oct 13 **34th Art Tudhope 10K** 9:00 Shelburne Beach. Fast, scenic run through Charlotte apple orchards along Lake Champlain. Free 1/4 mile kid's race at 8:45am. Matt and Emily Gallagher (802-862-6706) [tudhope@gmaa.net](mailto:tudhope@gmaa.net) \$5 pre-registration/\$8 race day.

Oct 20 **37th Green Mountain Marathon** 8:30 Folsom School, South Hero. Run on the colorful shores of Lake Champlain. Marathon only this year. Sandra Dickin (email only) [gmm@gmaa.net](mailto:gmm@gmaa.net) . \$22 until Oct 1. After Oct 1: \$27. No race day registration!

Nov 22 **31st Turkey Trot 5K** 11:00 Gutterson Field House, UVM. Run for fun and charity and make room for your Thanksgiving dinner! Free 1/4 mile kid's race at 10:45am. Anne Treadwell. [turkeytrot@gmaa.net](mailto:turkeytrot@gmaa.net) \$5 (or \$10 per family) or food donation for the Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf.

More central Vermont races can be found on the [Central Vermont Runners](#) web site  
 More southern Vermont races can be found on the [Batten Kill Valley Runners](#) web site  
 More Chittenden County races can be found on the [Shelburne Athletic Club](#) web site

### - STORY TIME -



### THE COASTAL CHALLENGE: ROUTE OF FIRE

Race Date: February 4 - 9, 2007

Length of Race: 6 Days

Distance: 230 Kilometers

Location: The remote and dry Northwestern coast and volcanic regions, through inland lakes, windswept highlands, jungle and tropical dry forest. The course is set in Costa Rica's driest area. The race ends once you've thoroughly explored the breathtaking North Western Coast of Costa Rica, ventured through inland lakes, windswept highlands, cloud forests of Monteverde and crossed the barren, bone-dry tropical forests and volcanic regions and finally come to within spitting distance of the Nicaragua border. We were on the Osa Peninsula in the Corcovado National Park, an area tough to reach and closed to the public except by permit. The beaches are unspoiled and remote. The jungle was alive and is the last region in the world where jaguar run free. One runner saw a jaguar track! It was hot and we had to cross many crocodile and shark infested rivers with the assistance of volunteer river boats.

Terrain: 25% coastal run; 45% highlands trail/cloud forest trail; 30% dirt roadway and rain forest trail

### PURA VIDA COSTA RICA! THE 2005 COASTAL CHALLENGE A 7-DAY 250K RACE

"Take on the distance...Take on the elements...Take on the challenge."

From January 16-23, 2005 I participated in (and completed!) the first Coastal Challenge along the



**Pacific coastline of Costa Rica.** 77 runners began the 7 day event, including 63 individuals and three teams. Only 10% failed to finish all the stages, because of blisters and heat-related problems. The event drew participants from all over the World, as far as South Africa, primarily adventure and ultra runners. We averaged 20+ miles per day over jungle trail, beaches, reefs, farm roads and including many river crossings and nine zip lines through the trees. Our talisman was a sphere symbol seeking favor with the elements.

**The Challenge** kicked off with a Costa Rican buffet in the beach resort of Tamarindo, complete with a bullfight, Tico (Costa Rican) cowboys, and a festival of dance and music. We then camped for the night on a secluded surfer oasis called Los Monos Locos ("the crazy monkeys"). Day One's race (18.8 miles) took off to the beat of bongos from Marbella Beach on the northern Pacific coast. Still recovering from a broken ankle, I found this section very difficult. The terrain was mixed and included many kilometers of crowned sandy beaches and reefs to climb over. We "coasteered" (beach and reef running) at least 10 kilometers that day and ran to Garza where we camped in a school yard. That night the winds howled as our only day with cloud cover was blown out to sea. From here on we would have hot sun and humid days in the 90's. The winds at Garza kept many runners awake, hanging onto tents and gear until our *second day's wakeup call at 4:30 am.*

**Day Two** took us from Garza to the gorgeous beaches of San Miguel where we camped close to shore and slept to the sounds of the Pacific surf. Most days I fell asleep listening to the sea and awoke to a chorus of songbirds. Day Two included more than 31 miles of hilly running on gravel roads and beach. My ankle did well this day because of the terra firma of the gravel roads, and having switched from my aircast to an ace wrap. The beach sections were flat and firm. One of the aid stations was located in the small mountain town of Isilita where many of the houses are brightly painted by a Dutch painter, including some with mirrors set in murals. The winds from the night before kept up for part of the day and rocked the canopies of trees we ran under, whipping up clouds of dust from the dry gravel roads. Each night we were treated to great Costa Rican food, plenty of fresh vegetables, fruits and fish, as well as a slide show of the day's events and some kind of local talent. Few of us stayed up past dinner and, on Day Two, sleep was quick, deep and rewarding. Each day we spotted colorful birds, butterflies, iguanas and monkeys. The howler monkeys growl loudly and can be a frightening sound in the jungle if you are not prepared for it. Some runners wore ear plugs in order to sleep amidst the growling. Costa Rica boasts four species of monkey, the white-faced capuchin, the spider monkey, the squirrel monkey and the endangered howler (called "congo").

**Day Three** proved to be our most diverse of days. We experienced a variety of travel modes and were amongst a myriad of Costa Rican creatures. Life is everywhere in this remarkable country. The Day 3 run started near San Francisco de Coyote at 5:30 am. Of the 26.4 miles, 50% was on beach and 50% on gravel and dirt roads. When I say roads, these are not dirt roads like we have in Vermont. They are more narrow and extremely rough, with large loose rocks, huge potholes, ruts and crowns, more like a logging trail or poor 4WD road, and very dusty. For the first half of the day, we ran the beach. We were rafted across the Bongo River which was infested with crocodiles and sharks and had a dangerous current and "strainer." Nearing Santa Theresa and Mal Pais, I walked on the very crowned beach for at least half an hour barefoot, feeling the sand massage my feet and the waves and salt water soothe them. We came off the beach at Mal Pais, a surfer paradise, and headed into the hills. We climbed a steep "concrete hill" to cross over the ridge of mountains that separated us from our evening destination of Montezuma. Concrete tracks had been set to enable residents to get to their mountaintop homes. We ran through rolling hills and farmland, with green fields as far as the eye could see, and views all the way to the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Caribbean to the east. We had altitude gains to over 3,000 feet. (The Costa Rican volcanos soar to over 11,000' and some remain active.) We finished Day 3 running at Las Delicias on the edge of the Montezuma canopy from where we took nine zip lines through the tree canopy down to the shore at Cobano, a temporary camp. Then we were to board small boats called Zodiaks which were to ferry us all out to the San Lucas Ferry. The San Lucas Ferry, large enough to carry vehicles and 700 passengers, was anchored about ½ mile off shore waiting to take us across the Golfo Dulce (Dulce Gulf) while we slept. It would be an 11 hour ferry ride to our morning departure from Punta Dominical, another beach point along the Pacific coastline. But Mother Nature had other plans. My friend Jane and I, and eight other runners, walked to the beach to catch the first boat. It was dark and we noticed high seas. The boat nearly capsized coming to shore and then grounded and the engine died. The captain managed to start the engine about 10 minutes later and we all jumped into the boat and headed towards the ferry. No one was asked if they could swim. No life jackets were on board and the vessel had no running lights. We runners turned on our headlamps and prayed. As the boat neared the ferry the seas had eight foot swells with waves crashing over the ferry's bow. We were wet and uneasy. The ferry captain tossed a metal ladder over the side of the ferry, about 8 feet up to a door. Our captain tried to approach the ferry close enough for us to spring onto the ladder. The sea was too wild. Amazingly, his assistant dove into the water and swam to the ferry for a conference. It was all the captain could do to keep our boat afloat. It was like the perfect storm. Waves would raise us into the air and then drop us hard and flat. Finally the assistant swam back to our boat



and we returned to shore to come up with an alternative plan. A bus was hired and we were bussed to a ferry dock in Paquera. We were not able to board the ferry until after midnight. It took the ferry that long to travel against the waves and currents to reach us. Our night on the ferry was momentous as the seas tossed and turned us. Sleep was fleeting.

**Day 4** was to start with small boats taking us to shore at Punta Dominical where we would start our run. This plan had to be beached as well and the ferry went ashore at Quepos instead. Because a special permit was needed to access the ferry dock we were not ashore until noon. By the time we cleared the ferry, ate a much needed lunch and were bussed to Dominical, it was too late to complete that day's scheduled run of 12 miles (a rest day). We then continued on the bus to the northern end of Ventanas Beach and ran the length of the beach (7K) to our campground. It was on this day that we determined that the mileage was underestimated as it took two hours to walk this section of beach. We began calling the mileage "Rodrigo kilometers" or "RK's" after the course designer. At our camp at Playa Ventanas I experienced my first night of bites, hundreds of them, from sand fleas and no see'ums resistant to Deet and every other chemical I tried.

**Day 5** consisted of 23.1 miles, "or so," of gravel/dirt road, mud road, mountain trail and farmland. The mountain trail was our first venture into thick jungle. Just about every runner got lost on this day, including the frontrunners early in the race. When the first four men and first woman caught up, I was awed by their speed and dexterity through the jungle trails where I was practically crawling. This was a really tough day for my ankle and I resorted to lots of "Vitamin I" (Ibuprofen). The jungle trail had started outside of Coronado and went straight up, steep, muddy, thick, humid and hot. The trail climbed 900 meters (about 2700') in the first half hour. The jungle is a very loud place, full of activity. It was exciting to know I was in the midst of all this animal and insect life, that they were watching me, and I might never see them. Later this day I observed thousands of leafcutter ants carrying their harvest to their dens. They line up and follow each other for incredible distances, even make trails in the grasses where they regularly travel. When we left the first section of jungle, we were on steep ridge road. I saw a crocodile in a creek in one of the hollows and wild orchids blooming along the sides of the trail. I met up with a Brit from New Orleans named Danny and we travelled together to the Las Nubes farm where we were directed to follow a cowpath until we crossed a river and then we would climb again. The cowpath we followed took us onto the wrong ridge and, from there, we could see the other runners winding their way up a different ridge. Taking the same route back was so far out of the way that we determined to head cross country until we reached a gully of no return. Luckily one of the runners spotted us and directed us to a point where we could work our way back onto the right trail, some 45 minutes later.

**The remainder of Day 5** was primarily along the highest part of the Retinto Range, the highest in the area, with more incredible views as far as the Pacific and the Caribbean. Of course, then we had to run downhill to get back to the coastline where more boats awaited us. The downhill was rough, steep, excruciating to my ankle and much longer than estimated. Once down, we were shuttled into "fast" boats for a one hour trip from Sierpe to Drake's Bay, through inland waterway and into the ocean. En route the skies opened up and we were soaked to the skin and cold. We arrived at the campsite at Drake's Bay to drying conditions and some sun, set up camp and dined in a stick built clubhouse. While we were eating the skies opened up again and torrents of rain turned our path to the campsites into a waist high raging river. During a lull in the storm many of us grabbed our sleeping pads and spent the night on the floor of the clubhouse. In the morning my tent was a flat wet pancake as it had rained 5-6"! We packed up our wet things and climbed back into the fast boats to the Day 6 start at the San Pedrillo Ranger Station for Corcovado National Park. On the way we observed hump back whales along side our boat.

**Day 6** was my favorite of all days. It was tough and long (28 miles) but amazingly beautiful, all jungle trail and beach, full of excitement and activity. We were on the Osa Peninsula in the Corcovado National Park, an area tough to reach and closed to the public except by permit. The beaches are unspoiled and remote. The jungle was alive and is the last region in the world where jaguar run free. One runner saw a jaguar track! It was hot and we had to cross many crocodile and shark infested rivers with the assistance of volunteer river runners and either a duckie, a rowboat or a motorboat. One crossing involved wading through waist high fresh water, as there were also many fresh water inlets coming from the interior. Until one of the Costa Ricans told me I would not be able to survive the bugs at night, I surmised that these beaches were perfect for being shipwrecked. All the resources you needed to survive were in reach with some creativity. The beaches are populated by thousands of crabs, snails and mussels. It was amazing! The crabs were scurrying around as if playing games of hide 'n seek. It was also another good beach for incredible shells. Overhead flew pairs of bright colored scarlet macaws and formations of pelicans. In the jungles the howler monkeys roared. We ended at Carate, a small village with an airstrip, and camped in a grassy area inhabited by thousands of pale grey spiders with blue eyes that got into everything. As we started to eat dinner, the skies opened up again and an estimated 2-3" of rain fell on this night. My tent survived. Thankfully it was warm so that being wet and soggy did not also mean being cold. By this time few runners had any dry shoes, socks or clothes left.

**Day 7** was a loop from and back to Carate, estimated to be just 10K, but more like 8-10 miles. It included a riverbed, then gravel road, and several kilometers on the beach running south to north. We chided that this opposite



direction with the beach crown to our right would balance us after six days of running south. When we finished the runners were loaded into cattle cars. The busses had not been able to get through because of the rains. We rode like cattle or refugees for two hours, then loaded the busses and returned to Playa Ventanas for the finish celebration. Except for more bug bites, it was a wonderful venue. Playa Ventanas has rock formations that pass through from the beach to the sea, which you can wander through when the tides are right. Ventanas is Spanish for windows, Playa for beach, therefore the "Beach of the Windows."

**Our last night** we feasted with beer and cerviche, a Costa Rican fish specialty, and lots of music. The awards ceremony took place on the beach with torches and more beer and dancing. The venue offered good showers, flat tent sites and an opportunity to reflect on the days of running and experiencing Costa Rica. I have never experienced a country of so much beauty, resources and people of wonderful spirit. I learned more about staying in the moment and enabling myself to take in every morsel of the experience around me. Even when my ankle hurt, or I felt hot, hungry, thirsty or tired, I could look around and see, smell and marvel at what was around me. The country is beautiful. It is clean. It has amazing fruits, vegetables, fish, free range chicken, fresh eggs. It is colorful in its flora, its people, its personality. It has music, dance and a sense of time, Tico Time, which transcends what we are and have become in America. Costa Rica is rich, but not monetarily or by hierarchy. It is rich in character and substance. It is known as the country that contains "no artificial ingredients." Costa Rica has a 96% literacy rate, 6% unemployment and no Army. It takes care of its sick and its poor, including the many healthy and mellow domestic dogs which are an everyday part of its culture.

**The overall race winners were awarded prize money at our celebration feast.** The top three women were Beverly Anderson-Abbs (40) of California, Stefanie Jackenthal (38) of New York and Ann Hall (37) of California. The top men were Charles Bedley (31) of Canada, Juan Carlos of Costa Rica and Charlie Engle (42) of North Carolina. The oldest male competitor, Jay Norman (66) of Texas completed all but two stages, having struggled with terrible blisters. My friend Jane Kellogg (57) of New Hampshire was the oldest female and completed all the stages. The youngest competitor, Rory Fuerst (20) of California, also completed the entire event. Everyone was excited to have a Costa Rican win money, and Juan Carlos was a gem of a person.

**In the days before the race,** Jane and I were able to visit the mountain region of Monteverde, run in the Santa Elena Rain Forest and see the Arenal Volcano. We drove the roads of Costa Rica which are truly the worst, and very slow, but one reason why Costa Rica has preserved its simple ways of life and beauty. The Pan American Highway is no wider than Vermont Route 100 and without shoulders, with enormous potholes that will eat your vehicle. One native chimed that the U.S. Highway transportation system should be deemed the 8th Great Wonder of the World. Imagine that, when all Americans do is complain about our roads.

**After the event,** Jane, our new friend Kim and I returned to the beach town of Mal Pais for some respite under a full moon and for time with the locals. The surf in Mal Pais is some of the best in the world. We spent time watching surfers catch great waves. The Pacific waters there are as warm as a bathtub. We ditched our plans to return to the volcano region and to visit the Caribbean side on this visit. We needed a rest. Also, the Caribbean side had been struck by major rains and flooding within the past two weeks and many bridges and roads were out. After the event and our quiet time in Mal Pais, returning home was bittersweet. Costa Rica lives on in my heart and soul as an eternal blessing when confronted with our American realities. I could move to Costa Rica in a New York minute with the right offer. I ENCOURAGE EACH OF YOU TO VISIT AND REVISIT THE COUNTRY BEFORE IT IS FULLY DISCOVERED AND SPOILED.

PURA VIDA!

DOT HELLING, FEBRUARY 3, 2005

**Postscript** For items to publish for the newsletter, comments and suggestions please send them to me at [nansue\\_2000@yahoo.com](mailto:nansue_2000@yahoo.com) (note that is an underscore between nansue and 2000). The next newsletter will be published shortly before the November 1st meeting, which will be held at Donna Smyer's and Erik Ryca's in Adamant.