



'A Visit with Doug Jones' By Phyllis Tillinghast

Doug Jones is a longtime family friend. When I learned he was one of the founders of CVR, I was surprised! He never mentioned it. My husband is an avid hunter and sought out Doug for his taxidermy skills. He also mentored our son through the years as well. So I decided to interview him. It has been a few years since we visited with him. After two attempts of calling his home and being met with busy signals, I am worried. So I decided to visit him.

Driving up Doug's driveway, Sun dapples my car through a haze of warm orange leaves. I am relieved to see Doug sitting on his stone deck with slices of apples and

a glass of water on a nearby table. He looks dapper in his plaid shirt, with neatly cut gray hair and a beard. I wave and he waves back. I greet him and I tell him who I am, who my husband and son are. He nods but looks confused. I sit down on his front stoop and give him more clues of my identity. I hear a woman's voice behind me and for a moment I think it's Ginny, Doug's wife of so many years, one of the kindest people I knew. But it's someone I don't recognize and I jump up to introduce myself. I ask her if Ginny is around, instantly wishing I hadn't asked. She beckons me to come inside and now dread pricks at me. She tells me Ginny passed away about a year ago and Doug has severe Alzheimer's. Ah, I understand now. She tells me not to mention Ginny, he stopped asking about her months ago and she didn't want to upset or confuse him.

His home health nurse is Kathy and it is clear to me after 5 minutes of talking with her that she thinks it would be great to interview Doug. I also texted his son and asked if this interview was okay with him.

Thanks to Bob Murphy, here is what I could glean from limited information. CVR began with the "Gang of Four". Bob Murphy, Doug Jones, Darragh Ellerson and Paschal "Pat" DeBlasio. These four were members of the North Country Athletic Club (NCAC) primarily based in Littleton NH. According to Bob, "Doug was an enthusiastic supporter of the idea of a Vermont club". So the Central Vermont Runners club was born. The logo that graces our shirts, hats, jackets etc. was designed by Doug. I hadn't realized that Doug was quite the artist, and while I was visiting I had the opportunity to see his paintings and illustrations. My husband said that Doug once told him that he took pictures of the fish he preserved so he could paint their coloring as realistically as he could. I also saw running trophies. It appeared that Doug ran in the 70's and into the early 80's. It looked like he was a middle distance runner, preferring 10K and half marathons. Bob said that after looking at indexed newsletters that Doug wasn't active with the club after 1982.

When I asked Doug what he remembered of his time at CVR, after contemplating, a grin spread on his face and he said, "Those damn meetings!" I can't help but to laugh out loud, for a moment I catch a glimpse of the Doug that I once knew, dry humor, witty, no filter, his truth. My next question is, "How did you train for a race?" He considers this and simply says, "I just went out there and ran!" I asked Doug about women in the club. Were there many? After all women weren't allowed to run a marathon until the early 70's, Doug answered enthusiastically, "Oh yes! There were quite a few!" I rest my questions because I can see he is trying hard to remember and I don't want to add to his frustration.

As I am walking away, I hear him ask Kathy something and she responds, "Phyllis Tillinghast the lady from CVR, She wants to interview you". He has already forgotten or maybe he never quite recognized me. This makes me feel bittersweet.

Alzheimer's marched into Doug's life and snatched up his memories and unceremoniously flung them into the wind. Yet, I realize, a soft breeze carrying lost memories swirl back around Doug, whispering. And he knowingly smiles because at that moment he knows those memories are still there.

