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The ultra runners lifeworld: Qualitative dimensions of experience

Jones, Vanessa Maria, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University, 1993

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THE ULTRA RUNNERS LIFEWORLD:
QUALITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF EXPERIENCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Vanessa Maria Jones, B.A., M.S.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1993

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TO MY FAMILY

WITH LOVE
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CHAPTER I

A WAY TO THE QUESTION

Introduction

How strange it must have been for early weekend risers, several decades ago, to look out of their windows and watch a dozen or so, relatively skinny, underdressed people, running through their neighborhood streets. What must they have thought was occurring? Today, in the 1990's, observers of running races can nod with understanding. They, of course, can now understand this type of sporting event; indeed they may have even participated in one or two races themselves. But what is a running race? Is it simply a collection of people who enjoy running together on a weekend morning? Or is it more? What brings the people together to run? Is it the thrill of competition; the planning and training that goes into setting a personal record for a certain distance?

Unfortunately, in the early 1990's, a majority of athletic events are only for the elite athletes, while the rest of us who are not as skilled as the elite, fulfill the role of onlooker and wellwisher. Fortunately, there are still a few athletic contests that cater to the athletes
who are not as well endowed as the elite. The road race event is one such contest. Whether at the novice or elite level, runners can participate together. Regardless of our ability, we share one road, one distance. Although our skills differ, we run one race. The road race sanctions participation for all. The event is organized by volunteers, watched by spectators and the distance covered by the runners; an activity for all. Race volunteers, race spectators and runners all contribute to the staging of the event.

The race volunteers donate their time and energy to the road race event. Pursuing sponsorship from local businesses, selecting the race distance and assuring that the local authorities will provide the race with services, both from a safety and medical standpoint, are just some of the duties of those individuals who volunteer to aid in the staging of the event.

As with the race volunteers, the race spectators have an essential role in the dynamics of the road race. Regardless of whether the spectators have come to encourage one particular runner, they serve a vital role for all the runners. The spectators may serve the dual duty as a valet and a cheerleader. The spectators are needed as a valet to hold the runners outer clothing; especially essential on cold days when runners seldom want to disrobe prior to the
start of the race. The spectators are needed as cheer­leader to encourage runners at strategic places along the race course; especially essential on hot days on long hills. Often just the presence of spectators lining the course is enough to lift the spirits of tiring runners. Runners in The New York Marathon attest to the benefits of spectator involvement. The tremendous cheering by the spectators along First Avenue in New York is enough to raise the spirits of even the most exhausted runners.

The runners perhaps have the simplest role to play in the event. Once underway, the runners' needs are provided for: "all" the runners need to do is appear and run. The race is an entity that requires only the willingness to run.

Certainly there are goals to be obtained and awards to be won, however these are dispensible for the runner. World class racer, Grete Waitz once admitted that the money and the accolades are secondary in her pursuit of running. Waitz stresses that: "...first there is the running." First there is the running, a statement full of embodiment and meaning.

Dr. George Sheehan also views the race environment as unique. For Sheehan: "Racing is the lovemaking of the runner; it's hard to pass up. A runner has few friends and they are always other runners. The place to meet them is at the races."
The road race is a special place, it is like coming home for the runner. The runner who spends countless hours alone on the roads may believe that a road race is a place to meet kindred spirits. Although the who, what, and where of a race are obtained easily in the "morning after" sport section of the newspaper, the essence of the road race is not so easily grasped.

Why do individuals travel miles, (perhaps even thousands of miles), to run a race; a distance that the runners could have run in their neighborhoods? The majority of the individuals will not win the race or even place among the top runners; despite this reality, runners persist in traveling to and entering road races. What do runners find in the dynamics of a road race that they could not, would not, find in running the same distance in their own neighborhoods? Do people view races as a celebration of themselves, their bodies, their essences? What is the race experience for the runners? What about those individuals who do not choose to run in the race but instead choose to participate through their role as race volunteers and race spectators? These individuals also take the opportunity to engage themselves in the race experience. Do these individuals also view the road race as a means for celebrating their physicality? What is the race experience for the race volunteers and spectators? What are the dynamics of the road race experience which compels the volunteers, the
spectators, and the runners to engage themselves in these particular ways?

My Interest in the Study

A question, says Gadamer (1975:326), "opens up as it were, the being of the object." But the question is based on certain presuppositions, so at the same time that it opens up, it also limits, because a question is always asked from a particular perspective. Hence, implicit in the question are the limitations brought by the one who asks the question. This, as van Manen (1984:21), stresses, "puts one in the paradoxical position of having to know what the subject matter would be like 'truly open' in order to know that one's question is appropriate; and of needing appropriate questioning to open the subject matter truly." With this in mind, I present an overview of my experiences as a road race participant - the roots of this study - in order to share with the reader my own perspective.

My interest in running and road racing began with an innocent question posed to my father. In early April of 1977, after reading about the upcoming Boston Marathon, I asked my father to explain it to me. His answer was simple and straightforward, if not slightly misinformed. My father stated that The Boston Marathon is a, "big
celebration that occurs on Patriot's Day, when a few 'out of shape' business people come together to run through the streets of Boston," (an answer that my father and I now find much humor in). My curiosity was satiated temporarily: I, of course, would not pursue an activity that was for "out of shape" business people.

Later that year my family had an opportunity to spend the summer on a remote lake in Maine. Our cabin was surrounded by miles of gravel roads, which seldom saw auto traffic. My parents and I spent countless hours walking these roads. Often, we would leave our cabin early in the morning and return at sunset. It is difficult to calculate the distance we traveled, but I am sure we often walked more than 20 miles.

For some reason that I still cannot comprehend fully, I would feel the need to run the last half mile of our walk. My parents suggested that since I apparently enjoyed running these half mile spurts, perhaps I should try running instead of walking on our frequent outings. I agreed, and began running while they walked the Maine roads. Our different rates of travel caused some worry on the part of my parents. They did not want me to be separated from them by too great a distance. The answer, of course, was for my parents to begin running. They began doing this with gusto finding that they enjoyed running as much as I did.
When we returned home to suburban Philadelphia, at the end of the summer we continued our running. We soon found that other people also shared our interest. As a family we joined a local road runners club. The other club members encouraged us to enter competition. And in the fall of 1977, we entered our first 5km road race. The joy of comraderie we experienced induced us to enter road races on a weekly basis. Traveling many hours and miles to races of various distances in neighboring states, became a frequent family activity.

Throughout the years, each of us has served as a race volunteer, a race spectator and runner. I have found that each mode of participation offers a unique perspective of "the" race experience. It has been my experience that each way of race participation, either as volunteer, spectator, or runner, enables one to partake in a way that does not discriminate among individuals of different abilities. For me, road races epitomize a truly democratic athletic activity. Over the last fourteen years my parents and I have continued our race participation on a regular basis. Our involvement fosters both family "togetherness" and serves as a tremendous form of exercise.

It should be clear that I place tremendous value on running and road race participation. I value running and racing as means to gaining insight into my somatic existence. It is this "insight" that has prompted this
investigation. I began to survey the research literature on running and racing and was overwhelmed by the studies which investigate the physiology and psychology of running. While these approaches are valuable, I believe there is another dimension deserving of study and investigation. The essence of the road race as a means of expression cannot be captured by empirical analysis alone. Traditional forms of research have stressed the objectifying of both the subjects and their experiences. There are other, more "hidden" reasons runners participate in road races.

I believe that the essence of road racing is tied intimately to personal experience. van Manen (1990:5), suggests that since research is a "caring act", we seek to know that what is most essential to being, "And if our love is strong enough, we not only will learn much about life, we also will come face to face with its mystery." I understand van Manen to mean that research that concerns itself with a deep felt need or love, will help us, as researchers, unravel the mystery of our own existence.

Human science research employs a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology. It is based on capturing human experience as lived. Rather than dissecting experience it treats it as a "whole."

Through this present research investigation I wish to offer an alternative to the empirical manner of exploring
human experiences. However, this does not mean that I have selected a hermeneutic-phenomenological approach to research because the method is essential, rather the experiences of road race participants' requires this method:

...it is true as well that the way one articulates certain questions has something to do with the research method that one tends to identify with. So there exists a certain dialectic between question and method. Why then should one adopt one research approach over another? The choice should reflect more than mere whim, preference, taste, or fashion. Rather, the method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator in the first place, (van Manen, 1990:2).

Thus, it is with an eye on the congruous nature of the human science method of investigation and the experience of road race participants that my quest for understanding and insights begins: The lived experience being the pre-reflective experience, that which is personally encountered, undergone, or lived through.
CHAPTER II
THE EXPERIENCE OF RUNNING AND ROAD RACING

Introduction

There are three sources which may provide insight into the experience of ultra running. The first source focuses on phenomenological research that is applied to sport. The second source employs traditional scientific methods to delve into various aspects of the psychology of running. The third source employs experiential description from biographical and autobiographical literature to understand a running experience. The latter source usually takes the form of stories and is oriented to making an individuals' life accessible.

Phenomenological Research

Inoue (1984), sought to return to lived experience in itself. Inoue believes that it is through movement experience that the meaning of sport is found. The uniqueness of a sport experience exists in that which is produced is "only movement itself." Only by moving, can
one experience her/his body and come to know the significance of a sport experience.

The purpose of Inoue's (1984) study was to examine and develop the methodological characteristics of a phenomenological approach in gaining an understanding of a sport experience, and to explore experiential description and analysis as a concrete method. The study concentrated on analyzing several theories and experiential descriptions regarding the significance of a sport experience and clarified their methodological features as well as presented the limitations in employing a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology as a methodology seeks to view humans as subject instead of object, and investigation human concerns such as consciousness, being and body awareness.

Inoue (1984:4), discovered that phenomenological research literature indicates that there are four approaches to deal with the meaning or significance of a sport experience:

1. through body-conception
2. through the aesthetic
3. through description
4. through methodology

A body-conception approach attempts to gain ideas from phenomenology, and adopt the universal ideas about the body
experienced in sport. Inoue classifies this approach into two categories: The metaphysical and the psychological.

The metaphysical is based on the concept of the body/mind from a philosophical perspective. Inoue (1984:12), employs the work of Marcel to present two concepts of the self-experienced body:

1. One's body experienced as oneself rather than something that is employed to accomplish some project and the structured whole of person's mental and substantial properties.

2. One's body as a grasper of knowledge.

Inoue also gains insight from Merleau-Ponty's five concepts of the body:

1. The three orders of the body, the physical, the vital, and the human order.

2. One's body as the integrated human order of the body.

3. Awareness of the self-experienced body via various modes of perception, termed the body image.

4. One's body as primordial form giver which necessarily precedes later conceptualization.

5. Human movement as a temporal-spatial expression, completing a form of an act of consciousness.

Kelly (1970), analyzed her experienced body and proposed the following concepts:

1. One's body as being oneself.

2. One's moving body as being a completion of one's ideas.

3. One's moving body as being in a spatial-temporal relationship with external phenomena.
Kelly (1970), concludes that the self-experienced body or phenomenal body is a structured whole of one's mentality and substantial properties. The self-experienced body functions as a form giver, and as an acquirer of knowledge and the expressive realization of intentional acts of consciousness via the observable, symbolic form of willed movement.

The psychological approach to body-conception is concerned with consciousness in psychology. Maslow's concept of "peak experience" is employed to explain how the sport experience feels to the performer during and immediately after "heightened performance." Maslow's (1971), concept, "lays great stress on starting from experiential knowledge rather than from systems of concepts or abstract categories," (p.9). It utilizes personal, subjective experience as a foundation upon which abstract knowledge is built. There is a concern with the authentic, unique and individual and the need to develop concepts of decision, responsibility, self-creation, autonomy and identity within this concern. Maslow (1971), believes that the importance of peak experience lies not in its psychological implications, but in the nature of the experience. The peak experience is an end rather than a means to something else.

Although occurring in a spatial-temporal setting, the peak experience is characterized by a disorientation in
time and space. "In the creative furor, the poet or artist becomes oblivious of his surroundings and of the passage of time," (Maslow, 1971:80). The same can be said about the athlete. The experience is intrinsically valid, perfect and complete. It is sufficient to itself and needs nothing else. It is felt as being necessary and inevitable. There is an intensity and emotional reaction to a peak-experience that "has a special flavor of wonder, of awe, of reverence, of humility and surrender. One small part of the world is perceived as if it were for the moment all of the world," (Maslow, 1971:81-88).

The individual in a peak-experience can be viewed as free from the past and the future. There is a feeling of uniqueness: "If people are different from each other in principle, they are more purely different in a peak-experience." People in a peak-experience feel that they are complete beings, at the peak of their powers. They are more able to fuse the world: "The creator becomes one with the work being created...the appreciator becomes the music or the painting or the dance..." (Maslow, 1971:104-108).

Inoue (1984:17), characterizes the aesthetic approach as containing two categories: The experiential and the analytical. The experiential approach emphasizes the aesthetic qualities from the performer's perspective.

Thomas (1972), examines the commonalities inherent in both sport and aesthetic experiences in order to provide a
common foundation for considering sport as an aesthetic experience. Thomas proposed seven commonalities:

1. intent and desire for excellence
2. voluntary involvement
3. structures of time and space
4. non-utilitarian and artificial characteristics
5. spontaneity and subjectivity
6. command of technique
7. unique and unified

Thomas also developed specific criteria for developing the experiential sport aesthetic entitled the "perfect moment." These are 1) authenticity of intent, 2) expertise, 3) whole person acting, 4) involvement and relation. Thomas concludes that the perfect moment in sport is established as being synonymous with the aesthetic experience in art and is characterized by an emotional response by the performer achieving the perfect moment. The aesthetic experience is defined broadly as a feeling attributed to an experience in which the sensuous, qualitative aspects are encountered apart from all mediation by ideas, and independently of any determination as to whether or not anything else exists, (Thomas, 1980).

Thomas (1980), explores the performers perception of a dance experience. Thomas relates that until Dewey's focus on pragmatic experience as the basis of truth and French phenomenologists' concern with embodied man and the gestalt
of man and motion, little concern for the experiential domain was evident in the literature of aesthetics. The attempts of Eleanor Metheny (1965), to attach meaning and significance to movement forms initiated a new area of research and discussion ranging from movement as symbolic to movement as intrinsically and experientially validating.

Thomas believes that the perfect moment can be classified as generally Dionysian. It is a highly affective and intense experience. It is considered a "happening" rather than a planned occurrence. Although the acts involved in the perfect moment may require certain decisions, the spontaneity of the situation demands instant action rather than reflection. The reaction stems from the degree of expertise that allows the participant to react and transcend rational reflection, (Thomas, 1980:28). There is a freedom and spontaneity in the perfect moment in which the participants feel free from external restrictions that may inhibit performance.

Because of its experiential foundation and intense affectivity, the perfect moment is characterized by a high degree of subjectivity. The perfect moment within the movement experience is not repeatable in its entirety, (Thomas, 1980:28). This concept is similar to Maslow's suggestion that people are different in their peak-experiences. Each poet, painter, dancer, athlete approaches his or her medium with a unique perception. The
manner that each performer affects the medium cannot be repeated or imitated. Running the same race, covering the same terrain, the runners are essentially performing the same task, yet it is not the task that creates an aesthetic experience. The task is necessary but not sufficient. It is the unity of runner and motion and the juxtapositioning of the runners' personal style and content that creates a "perfect aesthetic experience."

Fetters (1976), examines the nature of an aesthetic experience of the moving body from the performer's point of view called "body aesthetic." Fetters refers to aesthetic experience as a particular quality of consciousness characterized by unity, aesthetic delight and intuitiveness. In her analysis, the quality of unity is described in spatiality and temporality, the uniqueness of aesthetic delight. Intuitiveness is described in the intrinsic, effortless, and immediate sensual experience. Fetters further explored how the body is sensually experienced as a spatially and temporally unified dynamic in sport.

Fetters (1980), stresses that it is not unreasonable to suggest that the sensuous experience of body is not only a necessary feature of the aesthetic experience, but one's body can also in itself be rich and primary source of the aesthetic experience. An experiential body aesthetic is an intensification of bodily experience as it unites; the body
as a qualitative presence, the body as a producer of creative accomplishment, and the body as a significant subject matter for the arts, into one vividly lived presence, (Fetters, 1980:8).

A performer's body is at once the instrument of creation, the object of perception, and the subject who perceives. The performer's body demonstrates one's objective and subjective being. It is a "thing among things", quantitative and visible. It is also a subject who sees and feels and is sensitive in the world. Fetters (1980), believes that the aesthetic experience of the body by the performer is particularly unique and distinct from an experience of other objects.

Fetters (1976), states that an aesthetic experience is a particular quality of consciousness which originates and resides in the sensuous dimension. To appreciate fully the richness of aesthetic experience we must reject the notion that the head has sole domain over awareness. When we state that human consciousness is embodied, we are stating that the entire body is an expression of consciousness.

Aesthetic perception of one's own body is an experience of a spatially living sensuous body; a synthesis of body as art object, with its particular linear qualities, and the body as lived or felt during the movement experience. "Symmetry is felt symmetry; balance is felt balance," (Fetters, 1980:9). Dynamic form is not only
perceived as the changing shape of one's physical body, but also felt as patterns of configurations of one's energy radiating through space. Form is felt form, and aesthetic awareness of one's body can be said to be a consciousness of the full sensual impact of one's athletic energy. In the aesthetic perception of the body in movement the performer does not experience the separation between the body as viewed externally and the body as subjectively lived.

Fetters (1980:9), states that although an aesthetic experience is an intense encounter with the world and is grounded in sensory experience; it is not an exclusively sensuous experience. A phenomenological conception of the unity of mind/body functioning is a metaphysical stance underlying this explication of aesthetic experience.

Fetters (1980), relates that performers' experiences of their bodies as dynamic forms can said to be experiences of "beauty incarnated as they delight in an integral unity of a multitude of sensuous qualities: The firm and muscular with the gentle and sweet; light and free with strong and bound; the sustained with the quick; direct with the indirect," (p.9). A balance of diverse sensuous experiences, a unification of contrasting effort qualities into one reflective movement sequence, becomes a felt image of wholeness.
Ravizza (1980), examines Hatha Yoga and it's potential in affecting the aesthetic experiences of athletes. Ravizza emphasizes the way in which yoga can enable an individual to gain awareness and appreciation of his or her sensual bodily being. A yoga perspective contends that the body is a glorious temple and each person may explore its inner splendor. The body is not used as a means to something else; each yoga posture is an end in itself and should be experienced as such. In Hatha Yoga the focus is on our body and our movement.

Ravizza instructed his students to keep a journal recording their thoughts, feelings, and dreams when they were practicing yoga positions. Students were instructed to concentrate on the movements and become aware of the subtle language of the body. The awareness was facilitated by having the students focus attention on the present movement, move very slowly, and close their eyes so that external distractions could be filtered. Students were encouraged to be non-judgmental and accept themselves as they are at that moment. Ravizza warned that the ego-thinking self, by being too critical, can pull you out of the yoga perspective.

One student succinctly stated:

I'm beginning to understand that you have to love the posture, and if you're going to push it, do it lovingly, tenderly. You must feel and experience what it is doing for you and go with that feeling, savor it, encompass it, (p.5).
Ravizza (1980), states "This savoring of movement in the present moment provides an opportunity to experience completely the movement's rhythm, harmony, and flow," (p.5).

Ravizza found that often yoga postures contain an emotional release. As one student stated:

All I could do was feel a sense of relief flow over my whole being and tears kept rolling down my cheeks. I wasn't crying but this seemed to be a new awareness and feeling of total relief. I had to keep wiping away tears. This seemed so strange as I was not sad but just seemed as though my body was releasing emotional energies in this manner, (p.5).

Ravizza relates that as students utilize the postures to stretch, there is an opening of inner space as well. The openness allows individuals to move with this feeling. "For athletes, it is important to be sensitive to this aspect of their beings, since movements originate from within, where they become alive," (Ravizza, 1980:5). Athletes require a full range of feeling so that they can use the body's total potential.

Ravizza instructed the students to enter the yoga positions slowly, with their awareness focused on the body so they can move to the "edge of their stretch." This ensures that the appropriate muscles are being stretched. The edge of the stretch is where the pain begins. The pain becomes the teacher because it informs students of their
limits. "It is like a torch in the night; it offers direction and guidance for focusing awareness," (p.6).

Students were encouraged to become aware of the pain and to play with it. The following statement by a student summarizes this attitude:

I stretched more than I ever have. I felt pain but I also experienced pleasure. While stretching, on the exhale I lowered my body and bent elbows. While doing this my mind and body were peaceful. Although it was painful I experienced it as part of pleasure. I developed a deeper insight into what pain really is. You can't have one without the other. They are one and the same thing. The only difference is how you perceive it, (p.6).

Ravizza proposes that Hatha Yoga helps athletes concentrate on the present moment. An awareness of "center" is essential in yoga. Ravizza encouraged his students to gather themselves in the "now" moment. The students who entered the centered position placed themselves in a space that they had created. Ravizza states, "So often in daily life we lose that control; for this reason establishing the center is like coming home to the body," (p.6). As one student noted:

I am experiencing more self-acceptance. I look forward to the time that I have to myself in yoga. I value the experience of feeling centered. It feels like my many selves come together, check things out with each other, accept each other, and blend into one whole for a time, (p.6).

Yoga provides students with an opportunity to give themselves the time and attention they deserve.
Ravizza finds that Hatha Yoga provides an integrated approach for appreciating the body and its movements. As students learned the language of their body they experienced subtle dimensions that become part of their movement repertoire. With the awareness and consciousness that is required by Hatha Yoga, athletes can begin to experience new dimensions of aesthetic experience. Ravizza believes that the attitude that the body is a temple has limitless ramifications for those who wish to re-gain a home in their body.

The descriptive approach attempts to describe and express a possible source of meaning which is found by a participant's involvement in the phenomenon of sport in a descriptive manner. This approach is divided into two categories: the personal and generic.

The personal emphasizes sports subjective nature, describing aspects of certain sport activities from a performer's point of view. Stone (1970), attempts to identify and compare the types and sources of meanings found in the acts of surfing and skiing by analyzing written material relating to those experiences. The analyses consists of descriptions of specific encounters with surfing and skiing. Stone's results show the following:

1. The phenomena of the acts of surfing and skiing are apprehended as that of functional concern and intellectual feeling and interest.
2. The sources of meaning in each act are reduced to the phenomena: The performers phenomenal world, the self, competence, risk-taking, and speed.

3. The performer's reflections on the objects and events of each act vary in their conceptual, affective, and emotional content.

4. There are between-individual differences in the components of meaning recognized by performer.

5. The sources of meaning found in the act of surfing are similar to those found in the act of skiing when their origin is within the individual.

Studer (1977), explores the experience of time based on subjective reflection. Studer believes that human temporality is explored and extended in movement experiences, and that the exploration and extension of oneself is an important source for the meaning found in moving. Through her own reflection, the following concepts are described:

1. As a temporal being one lives in the now, in each emergent moment.

2. Temporal experiences are basic to one's consciousness of self-identity.

3. Experiences in movement contribute to and confuse one's perception of time and temporality.

4. Moving provides one with a passionate awareness of personal contingency, in which one feels a moment-to-moment, movement-to-movement awareness of oneself in relation to the environment.

5. Intense involvement in the movement experience provides for a relationship of simultaneity among past, present, and future.
6. While moving, one often becomes so absorbed in the task that duration is interrupted. Studer concludes that time not only designs movement but also is significant to one's understanding of a movement experience.

The Generic approach deals with generalizations about the phenomenon of sport. Metheny (1965), describes a possible source of meaning inherent in movement from an anthropological, phenomenological viewpoint. Metheny characterizes the significance of moving as a possible source of knowledge. By employing the phrases "move to learn" and "only by moving one's body," she describes unique and sensual characteristics of nonverbal movement forms. Metheny views movement as an expressive formulation of ideas, as a way of acquiring ideas of things, as giving identity to vague meaning, as a symbolic formation of human's conception of self in time and space, and as symbolic forms characterized in denotation and connotation. Metheny attempts to delineate the meaning characteristics common to all sport forms.

Slusher (1967), describes the characteristics of sport from an existential viewpoint, focusing on knowledge and existence. Slusher considers human involvement in sport as an opportunity to discover personal meaning in our unique existence in the world. Sport is recognized as a possible source of personal and meaningful experience. Slusher believes that one's self can be known only by active
involvement and relation to the world. He further argues that there is a vibrant relationship between humans and sport that is unified through the existential themes such as embodiment, spatiality, temporality, and community.

Kleinman (1972), proposes a method of phenomenological description and analysis as a way to understand the significance of a sport experience. Experiential description is able to reveal the essence of sport which transcends both quantitative and linguistic analysis. Kleinman also emphasizes the primary experience in sport. Kleinman believes that engagement in sport is essentially a non-intellectual affair. In order to understand fully a sport experience there is no substitute for direct experience.

Conry (1974), presented a philosophical analysis of the lived body. The purpose was to elaborate upon the manner in which the lived body exists as a meaning structure in the "everyday-world-of-being." Conry attempted to reveal the essential structure of consciousness as well as demonstrate how the body, as it is concretely lived and expressed, is an integral unit of this structure. Conry disclosed that the lived body is a human's medium of being. The body is engaged in an ongoing conversation with the world.

Conry (1974:35), believes that in order to understand and describe fully experiences of the lived body elements
beyond the objective properties must be considered. Conry utilized the experience of jogging to demonstrate the limitations of employing a strictly objective approach in understanding an activity. The experience of jogging has both universal and personal characteristics that comprise and design its meaning structure.

Often, only the universal or objective elements are considered when the lived experience is described and analyzed. A traditional analysis might include the following biomechanical or physiological characteristics:

1. how the body responds to the laws of mechanics
2. how the exterior muscles apply force for forward momentum
3. proper angle of the body for increasing forward component of force
4. how speed is increased by shortening levers
5. how a training effect is accomplished and maintained

Conry (1974:35), does believe that these above components of jogging contribute specific knowledge for understanding the movement form. However, they do not comprise the totality of the lived experience of jogging.

The personal or dispositional properties of the individual jogger's experience should be elaborated. Conry (1974), believes that a more comprehensive understanding would enlist "horizons" that circumscribe its meaning structure. Conry stated that a "bone fide" attempt to
disclose some of the horizons of jogging might include an
analysis of the following experiential considerations:

1. What emotions are elicited by this movement experience?

2. How do the movements feel?

3. What components of "being" are expressed in this experience?

4. What rememberences, anticipations, and assumptions do I bring to this lived experience?

5. How do the inner sensations, moods, impressions, feelings become part of my body experience?

6. How do I reflect upon this "silence" once it is incorporated into my past experience?

7. By changing my "perceptions" of jogging am I able to alter the structure of this experience?

8. What happens to my imagination process during this experience? Do I engage in creating and imagining different fantasies?

9. Does this experience usually bring forth pain and muscular tension or do I experience a general state of relaxation or euphoria?

Elaborating upon personal horizons is essential in understanding lived experience.

Research Studies

The research studies which are most relevant to my inquiry are those that deal with the individual runner's road race experience. Unfortunately, due to lack of
research dealing specifically with the road race situation, I was forced to broaden my search for studies to include various investigations that employ the road race event to observe facets of human functioning. Though the following studies deal with portions of the runner's lifeworld, and offer valuable insights; they fail to elucidate experiential aspects of this lifeworld.

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF ROAD RACING

A. COPING STRATEGIES

In an attempt to understand what happens in the minds of runners undertaking distances greater than the marathon, Michael Sachs (1981), obtained permission to question ten runners participating in a 100 mile road race. The race was composed of a series of 2.5 mile laps that the runners were to traverse 40 times. Approximately every three hours the researcher would bicycle alongside the runners, hand them a portable tape recorder, and ask them a series of questions which took approximately nine minutes. The questions asked ranged from rating both emotional and physical wellbeing on a scale of 0-100 to having the runners memorize and then repeat back at a later time a series of six random digits.

The data supported the general conclusion of the researcher during the interviews, that the thought
processes of the runners during the race remained sharp and clear for the first 8-10 hours. The recall of the memory items were excellent, indicating no impairment in short term memory. Attention span, concentration, and immediate memory were also efficient, as indicated by the runner's ability to recall the numbers.

After ten hours, there was no increase in the average response time. Although this increase was not statistically significant, the researcher believes it indicates a trend. Sachs, believes that response time is a subtle indication of mental fatigue, and that the remaining runners began to show some mild deterioration. The runners' performance did not demonstrate a correlation between mental acuity and physical performance. Also no correlation was found between the runners' temperament and physical performance. Although irritability often accompanies physical tiredness, only one runner out of ten was slightly irritable and asked the researcher to leave him alone. The researcher found the other nine runners to be remarkably cooperative and polite throughout the investigation.

In response to the less structured questions about thoughts and feelings, the ultramarathoners volunteered "associative thoughts" about their bodies and their current race situation. William P. Morgan (1977:384), defines associative thinking as occurring when runners focus
primarily on what is necessary to accomplish the race; on their body, on the terrain and on the competition. Conversely, during dissociative thinking, runners focus on the things to distract them from the race; on previous grade school teachers, on Beethoven's symphonies, or complex mathematical formulas. By applying these criteria, the researcher found that the ultramarathoners were not dissociative thinkers. However, the runners indicated that daydreaming did occur during large portions of the race. These daydreams simply "passed through" their minds in a meditative manner without becoming invested with meaning or feeling.

Pain was viewed as a signal of what was going on in their bodies, but was not experienced as an overwhelming, unpleasant sensation or as any reason in itself for stopping. Sachs admitted that, why runners ran and why they ceased running in the race were questions that he did not satisfactorily answer.

B. COMMITMENT AND SELF-IDENTITY

Researchers Paul Joseph and James Robbins (1981), in an attempt to determine what type of activities and experiences that individuals find to be the most important source of self-identity, examined the issue of self-identity in the context of the running/racing movement. The importance of a well defined sense of identity to
psychological wellbeing is known. Given this knowledge the researchers focused on what types of individuals have shifted their self-appraisal of the relative importance of their activities from work to running, making the latter a locus of self-identity.

The researchers were interested primarily in obtaining answers to two questions. First, how does a commitment to running affect the respondents' tendency to report that running activities are a more important source of self-identity than work activities? Second, how does the work ethic and work experience, specifically job satisfaction affect the tendency to rank running as more important than work?

In order to capture both the serious and the less serious runners, the researchers developed a scheme that combined sampling from running clubs, employees at running stores, and weekend road races held in the Boston area. Each subject was given a questionnaire to be returned by mail.

The results of the questionnaires indicate that those individuals that tend to identify themselves through their running rather than through their work role, include the following; a) those more committed to running, b) those who value highly the self-involvement opportunities of work, and c) those experiencing dissatisfaction in the work
place. The researchers indicate that the last two reasons are best thought of as opposite sides of the same coin.

Those individuals associating with the leisure role are either attracted to a particular set of work needs, really a philosophy of work that stresses the cultivation of self; or they are frustrated by their job experience because of its failure to provide for self-development through engagement with external referents. Thus, those whose running identity becomes more important than their work identity tend to place higher values on aspects of their work such as opportunities to escape, for adventure and friendship, or they are disappointed with the opportunities for achievement and mastery provided by their current job.

Four themes emerged from the research. The first is the gradual rejection of the previous social norm that individuals should identify themselves exclusively through their work. The researchers found that those more likely to reject the traditional code make a greater commitment to running and have reoriented their work philosophy by adopting a particular code of work values that stress the self. In this sense running, serves not only as a sport or as an activity that promotes physical fitness but as an arena of individual sustenance.

Running offers an alternative to work, helps to provide a balance between work and leisure, and contains meanings
and significance sufficient to promote self-understanding. Here running represents a quiet but legitimate rebellion against the unwarranted hegemony of work as the primary locus of self-identity.

The second social aspect underlying the search for self-identity is the expansion of leisure time. The researchers indicate that without this historical development, the opportunity to cultivate other aspects of self would not have arisen.

Third, the search for alternative or supplemental arenas of self-understanding in new forms of leisure such as running is not without ambiguity, an ambiguity that is itself socially rooted. If runners are searching for meaning not readily available in existing activities, a search that can take on compulsive and irresponsible features of its own, then running also contains elements of pathos, uncertainty, and insecurity. The addictive aspects of running that are clearly negative serve as only one example, (Morgan, 1979). The researchers hasten to add that this is not to imply that shifting one's locus of self-identity toward running is automatically evidence of individual pathology or social irresponsibility. Indeed, individuals attempting to balance the arenas of self-understanding between leisure and work may evidence higher standards of personal health.
The fourth social aspect concerns work dissatisfaction. The individual who substitutes a concentrated focus on leisure and running for the previous concentration of work has no doubt gained something. The authors of the study indicate that those who have chosen to identify themselves through running because their work lives have been less than satisfactory than they wish may be engaging in a comparatively successful form of compensation.

These findings suggest that the running movement contains layers of social and individual significance that extend deeper than health, self-improvement, personal growth and other aspects traditionally identified with fitness and leisure. In this manner the search for self-identity in running is merely a clue to more pervasive social themes present in our society.

C. POTENTIAL BENEFITS FROM RUNNING

Carole Oglesby (1981), explains how the thrust of her own lifework is to enable women and men to open themselves to the psychological development which can occur through movement participation. Oglesby emphases how running and other sport-as-flow experiences benefit the participants.

Oglesby indicates how John Loy (1978), provides us with a framework by which to understand the meaningfulness that running may engender. Loy illustrates how in sports, similar to running, various expressive and instrumental
functions which participation may fulfill. For example, running may fill expressive needs for play, release, sociability, or may even serve as a condition for the occasional experience of ecstasy. Likewise, when participated in as an institutionalized activity, ie: consistent training, entering races, working toward progressive performance goals. These instrumental values may function for the individual as a socialization into dominant values of American Society.

Another way to view running as a synthesis activity is to see it and other movement activities as potential healers of the deep mind/body dichotomy so prevalent in our thinking processes. Research, (Kostrubala, 1976; Harper, 1979; Buffone, 1980; and Summers, 1982), seems to support the notion that activity and physical competence enhancement is accomplished by positive psychological development. Of the categories of research of this relationship, one uses psychiatric patients, (Kostrubala, 1976), as subjects and employs jogging as an adjunct to psychotherapy. While the other research studies, (Harper, 1979; Buffone, 1980; Summers, 1982), employ "normals" as subjects but only use jogging as one in a myriad of other movement activities.

In a review of literature, Griffin (1978, as cited in Oglesby), found positive results reported in programs that utilized jogging although only three studies were found to
have included female subjects. Griffin concluded that, "The consistency of results and existential reports of increased feelings of psychological wellbeing attributed to the level of participation in activity is difficult to ignore."

An additional and related way of viewing the potential benefit of running is to view it as a flow experience, similar to Timothy Gallwey's (1974), view of "Zen Sport." Games and play, including running, have been identified as potential opportunities for the flow experience. Sachs (1980), has elucidated the following characteristics of the flow experience that are present in a majority of the accounts that have been provided by various runners:

1. In flow there is a merging of action and awareness.
2. In flow there is a centering of attention on the activity.
3. In flow there is a sense of effortless control over self and the environment.
4. In flow there is a coherent, noncontradictory demand for action and clear, unambiguous feedback to action.
5. In flow there is no felt need for extrinsic goals or rewards.

Sachs (1980), states that the experience of flow likely occurs when the challenges of the activity are evenly matched with the participant's skill level. Oglesby
(1981), believes that one of the most important concomitants of running as a flow/synthesis experience is the opportunity it provides for authenticity; in this case the finding of one's own present limits of distance, speed, strength, and endurance.

D. THE RUNNER'S HIGH

Michael Sachs (1980), investigated the characteristics of the elusive phenomenon of the runner's high. The goal of Sachs' research was twofold. First, he attempted to gain a broader understanding of the runner's high; second, to specify characteristics that would differentiate experiences and non-experiences of the runner's high.

Sachs states that due to popular running literature, one may get the impression that every individual who puts on running shoes and runs benefits from a psychological lift: But this is not true! The findings of a number of studies (Lilliefors, 1978; Sachs, 1980), demonstrate that the percentage of runners who claim to have experienced the runner's high, vary between 10-78%. Indeed this is a wide frequency distribution of runners who claim to have experienced a sense of euphoria during their runs. In a prior study of the mental states of runners, Sachs (1980), found that 77% of his subjects interviewed experienced the runner's high. Furthermore, 49% said that the euphoria was occasionally spiritual in nature.
Due to the discrepancy in percentages of runners claiming to experience mental highs while running, Sachs feels that perhaps the problem of differing percentages lays with the inadequate definition of what characterizes a runner's high. Sachs therefore, attempted to construct a descriptive list of phrases that characterize the runner's high. From a survey of 60 runners who had been running for approximately five years and cover at least six miles per day, Sachs compiled the following list, (only partial listing of phrases):

* lift in legs;
* ability to suppress pain or fatigue;
* euphoria;
* feel as though you could run forever;
* gliding through air and only lightly touching down;
* mind/body very alert, and feel acutely aware of environment;
* at peace with being a human animal in the world.

Sachs concedes that the runner's high remains a particularly personal experience, not readily accessible to scrutiny by researchers. When the runner's high is described it is characterized as a very positive experience, enhancing the quality of the run. Whether what most runners term the runner's high is just a generalized feeling of wellbeing or whether it approaches the exalted regions of the peak experience remains to be determined.
The euphoric runner's high can and should be used to increase the benefits of running.

E. MIDDLE-AGED, NON-ELITE MARATHON RUNNERS: A PROFILE

Jeffery Summers, et al. (1982), investigated 363 non-elite middle-aged runners who were attempting a first marathon as to their reasons for attempting a marathon, the perceived outcomes from running a marathon, and their experiences while running.

Summers et al. stresses that there has been recently a tremendous rise in popularity of marathon running among people of all ages and abilities. While the marathon boom has resulted in a proliferation of research, much of the work has been concerned with the physiological aspects of marathoning and directed toward the understanding of the elite runner. However, Summers et al. further conceded that "Marathon Fever" has been particularly prevalent among middle-aged, non-elite runners.

Questionnaires were distributed before and after competing in the 1979 Big M Melbourne Marathon, to a random sample of 500, first time marathoners between the ages of 30-50 years.

The results indicate that a majority of the runners (76%) began running and also entered a marathon for both physical and mental health reasons. When the runners were asked to describe what they derived/gained from the
marathon, 54% stated that they gained a sense of personal achievement and knowledge of self. An addiction-to-running score was derived from several questions dealing with attitudes to running, feelings experienced when a run is missed, and the perceived outcomes from running. On the basis of these questions 17.4% of the runners were classified as evidencing high addiction to running.

When the runners were asked to describe their thought processes when running the marathon, 6% of the runners indicated that they utilized a dissociative mental strategy to cope with the discomfort of the marathon. The most common dissociative technique used by the marathoners was to concentrate on the surrounding environment along with marathon route. Associative mental strategies, such as monitoring leg tiredness, were used by 30.7% of the Melbourne Marathoners.

Summers et al. concludes the investigation by stating that for a majority of runners the marathon is seen as a challenge, a test of the individual's capabilities, both physical and psychological. Overcoming the challenge produced feelings of deep personal awareness and increased self-image that seemed to extend beyond the event itself. Furthermore, many runners perceived positive changes in the attitudes of others towards them as a result of their participation in a marathon.
F. THE EXPERIENCE OF MOOD CHANGES

William J. Tharion et al (1990), investigated mood states, as measured by The Profile of Mood States (POMS), exhibited by ultramarathon finishers and non-finishers of a 100 mile trail race. The researchers stressed that, prior to this study, limited information has been published on the importance of psychological parameters of ultramarathon performance, competitive running of distances longer than 26.2 miles, and recovery from such events. Some ultramarathoners are required to run for 30 or more consecutive hours and have often reported numerous changes in mood states over a course of a race. The researchers hypothesize that given the length of time and the physical stresses that accompany running an ultramarathon, psychological mood states can have a profound effect upon racing performance.

Fourteen male subjects volunteered to complete the POMS prior to, and upon completion of the 1987 Old Dominion 100-mile Trail Race, held in Front Royal, Virginia. Subjects were also given three copies of the POMS during the post-race test session and asked to complete and return by mail at intervals of one week, one month, and three months post-race.

Upon analyzing the questionnaires, the researchers found that there was a notable reduction in vigor along with the elevations of fatigue from pre-race results to
post-race results. Vigor showed a sharp drop from pre-race to immediately post-race and a gradual return to pre-race values after one week to one month post-race. Fatigue showed a significant increase from pre-race to immediate post-race, yet after one week had returned to pre-race values.

The investigators also found that the runners pre-race tension levels were high, this was suggested as possibly due to such psychological factors concerning competition, such as fear of failure. Training for the ultramarathon involves an enormous commitment of time and energy. Elevated pre-race tension can be expected due to the competitive nature of the event and the great personal involvement in preparation. The significant reduction in tension immediately post-race can be attributed to removal of the spector of an extremely demanding physical and psychological effort.

The above six articles deal with some facet of the running and/or racing experience. Although seemingly diverse in their focus to the experiences of individuals involved in running and racing, they do indeed have several factors in common. The first is that they use the running experience, not for the experience itself, but as a means to explore other aspects of human psychological functioning. Thus, they perpetuate the dominant theme of
much of academic research; the portrayal of mind/body duality.

The second, but closely related factor, deals with the manner in which road races are utilized in the investigations. Even those studies that are investigated within the context of the road race, neglect to study the actual event for its own phenomena. The event is thus used as a means to study some type of "discrete" mental human functioning. Therefore, it is with an eye to these problems that I proceed to the biographical and autobiographical section of this literature review. Hopefully, these will reveal experiential characteristics of the running and road racing phenomena that will in turn serve as the basis for my own investigation.

EXPERIENTIAL DESCRIPTIONS

A personal account of a running experience has been written by Mike Spino (1971), in an article entitled, "Running as a Spiritual Experience." Spino wrote of the experience of one training run which, for him, turned into a spiritual experience. Mike Spino, was a distance runner on the 1966 Syracuse University's Track Team. Due to his personal dissatisfaction with the team's track coach, Spino and two other of the team's distance runners decided to forego their scholarships, and run on their own. Through
running on their own, the three former track team members, coached by another ex-team member, renewed their love for sport. The new and rewarding experience of running without the aid of an authoritarian coach, produced exceptional performances for the three distance runners. The following are examples of the text written by Mike Spino after one memorable training run:

Eastern winters linger into spring, but one day the sun shone in a different way. Snow still curbing the road, but the inside pavement, where the black-brown dirt met cement, looked almost bounceable, (p.223).

Spino's perception of the weather was altered, spring was in the air and the pavement looked gentle and soothing to the legs. Due to the scent of spring in the air, Spino, his coach, and a running mate, decided to run a six mile stretch as fast as they possibly could. Spino was the only one who would run the entire distance. The running mate would run the first three miles, and the last mile. The coach would follow them in his car, and sound the horn when the runners passed each mile. From the beginning of the run, Spino felt enchanted, as if he and running were one:

From the first step I felt lighter and looser than ever before. My thin shirt clung to me, and I felt like a skeleton flying down a wind tunnel. My times at the mile and the two mile went so fast that I almost felt I was cheating, or had taken some unfair advantage. It was like getting a new body that no one else had heard about. My mind was so crystal clear I could have held a conversation. The only sensation was the rhythm and the beat; all perfectly natural, all and everything part
of everything else. Marty told me later that he could feel the power I was radiating. He said I was frightening, (p. 224).

Spino's body image was changed, he was a "skeleton flying down a wind tunnel." The "power" that Spino was radiating came from the re-union of his mind and body into a fully functioning soma, that is "perfectly natural, all and everything part of everything else."

As Spino became tired, he initially struggled to remain relaxed: His task only to maintain the rhythm. Suddenly, a "second wind" occurred, and Mike began running as "one":

In the last half mile something happened which may have occurred only one or two times before or since. Furiously I ran. Time lost all semblance of meaning. Distance, time, motion were all one. There were myself, the cement, a vague feeling of legs, and the coming dusk. I tore on, (p. 224).

For Spino, the three existentials of time, space (distance), and body (motion), all came together and merged to form a trinity of running. This trinity of being, enabled Spino to experience running as he only had previously, on rare occasions.

As the run came to a conclusion, Spino was filled with a sense of bewilderment, joy, and sadness:

I came to the side of the road and gazed, with a sort of bewilderment, at my friends. I sat on the side of the road and cried tears of joy and sorrow. Joy at being alive; sorrow for a vague feeling of temporality, and a knowledge of the impossibility of giving this experience to anyone, (p. 225).
The fleetingness of time, indeed life, is what filled Mike Spino with sorrow. The bitter-sweet feeling of experiencing profound exhilaration, but yet being unable to express this feeling in words to any other individual. Yet, Spino did indeed express this experience of joy to his companions, through his own awakening to who and what he was; through an expression of his own, unique art form.

George Sheehan, a medical doctor and also an avid runner and road racer is another individual who has been quite vocal, through his writing, about the spiritual side of running and racing. In his text, *Running and Being* (1978), Sheehan puts forth a prodigious amount of experiential material on how it is to live the life of a runner and racer. He speaks for many runners who enjoy the very activity, Dr. Sheehan has written about so eloquently.

In the forward, of the text *Running and Being*, a friend characterizes George Sheehan as a man who, "...communicates with himself on the roads. Running is his essence. Through it, he has discovered the marvel of his own human spirit. He has become himself. He has fulfilled himself," (p. 10). For Sheehan running creates a solitude that allows a person to reach creative recesses. Sheehan wrote that creativity is a natural outcome of the experience of running:

Running allows creativity to happen.
Creativity must be spontaneous. It cannot be forced. Cannot be produced on demand.
Running frees me from that urgency, that
ambition, those goals. There I can escape from time and passively await the revelation of the way things are, (p. 14).

The spontaneous creative act that arises from the "aloneness" of running, allows Sheehan to express, in written form, the existential characteristics that are an outgrowth of running. Sheehan wrote vividly of the existential characteristics of time, space, body, and community, that he experienced while being engaged fully in running.

According to Sheehan, the Western concept of time, adherence to the clock, stifles us in our quest to develop our potential:

The clock is where it all starts. This mechanical divider of time controls our actions, imposes our work day, and tells us when to eat and sleep. The clock makes every hour just an hour. It makes no distinctions between morning and afternoon. The artist, the runner, the poet, has always know this to be wrong. He knows that time shortens and lengthens, without regard to the minute hand. Knows that we have a beat foreign to this Greenwich metronome. Knows also there is an ebb and flow to the day that escapes the clock, but not us. And realizes that this rhythm, this tempo, is something peculiar to each individual as personal and unchanging as his fingerprints, (p. 17).

When we pay attention only to the ticking of the mechanical seconds we enter into a struggle with boredom, with routine, with the danger of not living life fully, or at all. Life will be reduced to a slow progression of days and weeks and months. Time will be an enemy instead of an ally. Sheehan states that:
When I run, I avoid all this. I enter a world where time stops, where now is a fair sample of eternity. Where I am filled with excitement and joy and delight, even with the intensity and inner force and never-ending search for self. I enter a state that will be man's most congenial environment, (p. 123).

The existential components of time and space, body and community are all present within each road racing situation. Sheehan recalls the race in which he set the United States age-group record for the two-mile run:

You should know that except for that day I have never before or since in my 14 years or so of running gone under 11 minutes for the two-mile. My only real competitor in the race knew it and set his pace accordingly. He ground out 33 second laps on the ten-lap track, hitting exactly 5:30 mile pace as if he had been programmed by a computer. And just three feet back I was in another world. Given a pacemaker who had zeroed in on the perfect pace, I reached a state of blessedness that I have rarely equaled. I was for those minutes completely and utterly relaxed, unconcerned about the outcome, yet completely absorbed in what I was doing. I was in what has been described as a cocoon of concentration, absolutely involved, fully engaged in running. Not racing or winning but simply running. Everything was harmony and grace. Everything was pure. Effort had become effortless. These things are much easier to experience than to describe. And so it went. I felt incredibly fresh the whole race. And later it seemed to have been run without reference to real time or real space. Space and time had narrowed down to him and me and the running. It was almost as if I had taken some hallucinatory drug that altered my perceptions. Then there were only two laps to go. I gunned past him, increasing my lead with every stride and finished still fresh in 10:53. So there it was, my personal best by following the leader.
Letting him do the work. Letting him establish the pace. And all the while letting myself go. Letting myself get inside the running and become the running itself. Letting my body do what it does best, (pp. 174-175).

By the mutual effort of a companion runner, Sheehan was able to reach a level of running seldom experienced. Like Mike Spino, Sheehan also experienced time, space, and body as merging into one. Sheehan just allowed his body to be:

The body does all this. The body which is the stumbling block to the philosophers. The body they have separated and discarded. The body brings the messages, (p. 228).

As Dr. George Sheehan so eloquently expressed his race experiences, I seek to obtain personal experiences of companion runners involved in the race experience. The literature provides some insight into what the experiences of running and racing are. While these accounts are valuable because they express certain facets of the experience, no attempt is made in the research reviewed and in the personal descriptions to study the experience in a systematic manner; to go beneath the surface structures in order to describe patterns and to penetrate the deeper meaning structures; or to transcend the immediately given by bringing forth the nuances and relations in the text.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY: ANALYZING EXPERIENCE

The Nature of the Question

Chapters one and two endeavored to lay the foundation from which the question of this dissertation would reveal itself. The four lifeworld existentials were discussed as to their pervasiveness in the lifeworld of human beings, regardless of the individuals' degree or type of experience. The four existentials were explored in such a manner to show the relationship between the experiences of lifeworld existentials and the experiences of participants in road races. The question then becomes, in what manner do the lifeworld existentials reveal themselves through the experiences of participants in road races? That is what is the nature of the experiences of participants in road races?

In a question about understanding the experiences that are an outgrowth of road race participation, there can be no separation of knowledge of the events from the meaning of the events. "Meaning resides neither in the individual nor in the situation but is a transaction between the two so that the individual both constitutes and is constituted
by the situations," (Benner, 1985:7). The experiences of experiences of the road race participants is one of meaning. It is meaning that requires a suitable method of investigation to illucidate its character. How can we approach this question of meaning, in order to leave its character intact?

One method of investigation could be to create a list of validated existential experiences that have occurred to road race participants, in order to explore the relationship between lifeworld existential experiences and various sociocultural or demographic categories. By doing so, one may then be able to compare the existential experience of older or younger road race participants, race experiences of participants entered in local, national, or international competitions, or experiences of races of various distances, and so forth. Or one could send out a questionnaire to participants of various road races, and compare their responses with a control group of running participants that do not go to road races. But will such "traditional" approaches reveal the character of meaning?

With questions of meaning it is the context, the story, the preunderstanding, which cannot be made fully explicit, nor completely clear and which opens one to possibilities and to conditions for perceptions and action, (Benner, 1985). Acknowledgement that human beings, with language
and culture, are different than objects makes reductionist research less valuable, and indeed, ineffectual in questions of this nature.

Method can only be arrived at dialectically through a questioning responsiveness to the matter being encountered (Smith, 1983:70). The method reveals itself from the question, "In what manner do the existentials of the lifeworld reveal themselves through experiences of road race participants?" Such a question requires the race participants to reveal the meaning of their experience in their own voices. When the participants' "voices" are ignored by various methods of investigation, the researcher is unable to gain access to the full, embodied meaning of race experiences as they are lived through. We need to explore the lifeworld existentials as revealed through the lived race experience.

Decontextualizing race participants' experiences loses the meaning we need to capture. Therefore, we begin to see that the question points to a search for "understanding" rather than "explanation," in a narrower scientific or empirical-analytic sense. For this research a phenomenological approach is used; of which interpretation (hermeneutics) is an integral aspect.
Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a description of human experiences and a discovery of essences. Hermeneutics deals with interpretation of these experiences. The simplicity of the above two explanations contradicts the depth and complexity of the historical roots from which these philosophic methods arise. Phenomenology is associated especially with the foundational writing of philosophers such as, Edmund Husserl (1970, 1977), Martin Heidegger (1962), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964). Others have infused the phenomenological method with a concern for hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1975; Ricoeur, 1973), a concern for hermeneutic epistemology, (Rorty, 1979), power (Foucault, 1975), critical theory (Habermas, 1968), and textuality (Derrida, 1973). These approaches are fundamentally concerned with understanding the lived meaning of the lifeworld:

Phenomenological research edifies the depthful, the personal insight contributing to one's thoughtfulness and one's ability to act toward others, child or adults, with a tact or tactfulness... We might say that phenomenology is a philosophy of the unique, the personal, the individual which we pursue, against the background of an understanding of logos of Other, the Whole, or the Communal, (van Manen, 1984:ii).

The hermeneutic-phenomenological approach of this study (based on the work of van Manen), uses both anecdotal description, which is concerned with the lived experience of road race participants, and hermeneutics, which is the
act of mediation between the interpreter and the interpreted, (Silverman, 1984) as a way to recover the nature of lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

Phenomenological research gives a "direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide," (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:vii). To give direct description is an attempt to produce an accurate narrative of the experience of being-in-the-world. Phenomenology does not attempt to explain, but attempts to understand by identifying the intentional structures of experience from an experiential viewpoint, (Kohak, 1978). In this way life world knowledge is seen as different from other knowledge offering a different function.

Hermeneutics, an essential aspect of the approach used in this study, is concerned with bringing to language that which lies hidden. This is done by an attentiveness to the foundation from which the anecdotal description comes in order to reveal the possibilities of deeper understanding.

The strength of Merleau-Ponty's (1962), approach to phenomenological description is that the describer is embodied and involved in the experiential field which includes "motility, spatiality, gesture, and expression." Embodied in the research in such a way as to develop a deep understanding of the nature of the phenomena, I, as a
researcher, a runner, and a race participant, attempt to describe and interpret both my own race experience and race experiences of other participants through a phenomenological-hermeneutic method of anecdotal description.

I accomplished this through reflection of my own and other's experiences without necessarily offering causal explanations and in doing so, I recognize that my own experiences are the possible experiences of other and that other's experiences are the possible experiences of self (van Manen, 1990). This intersubjective nature of experience can itself be seen as a phenomenological universe, a normal feature of the lifeworld.

Collecting the data: Researching Lived Experience

When we talk about "lived experience" we talk about the experience of being in the world, the world of everyday life, the world as it is experienced. To speak of our lived experience in a strong sense is to go beyond the taken-for-granted. It is to uncover meanings in everyday practice in such a way that they are not destroyed, distorted, decontextualized, trivialized, or sentimentalized (Benner, 1985). It is to explore the manner in which road race participants create and experience lifeworld existentials within the auspices of the race environment.
It is intensified exploration of road race participants own realities; the shape of their own lived experiences. This exploration evolves through ongoing conversations with companion race participants. It is a search for understanding of the experiences of race participants, as they express themselves through the creation of anecdotes.

The Conversations

In order to explore the experience of the road race event as lived by race participants, I engaged in conversations with race participants before and after the actual running of the race. These conversations are one-time conversations. I did not attempt to conduct a series of conversations with any one person, even those who entered several of the races that I selected to study. I attempted to gain a dialogue with diverse individuals, both in running ability and experience. Additionally, I conversed also with race spectators and race volunteers.

The term "conversation" rather than "interview" has been chosen to describe the dialogue process. With each participant I talked about the nature of my interest; that is, to explore the manner in which the lifeworld existentials are present in the experiences that emerge from running road races. With all the race participants, I encouraged them to talk about how the experience is for them, and in doing so to use concrete events as anecdotal
examples. The following questions are given as examples of the ways that I initiated or prompted conversations with the race participants who became the focus of my study:

How long have you been running?

How long after beginning running did you begin to race?

Is your family involved in your racing? If so, do they enter races themselves, or are they involved as either spectators or as volunteers?

How many times per year do you enter races? Do you race year round, or are you more of a seasonal racer, i.e.: only entering races in the spring or fall?

Do (did) you make lifestyle changes to accommodate your racing, i.e.: changes in sleep patterns, eating, adjusting work hours?

Does your enjoyment of the racing situation depend on setting a P.R. (personal record for the distance raced), or winning any type of award?

Do you enjoy the comraderie with other runners in the race experience?
Inoue, (1984), has identified ten categories of lived experience in sport: 1) spatial and temporal awareness, 2) awareness of others, 3) body or self-awareness, 4) oneness with others, 5) transcendence of body, 6) aesthetic feeling, 7) existential meaning, 8) decision making, 9) self-identity, and 10) pursuit of possibility. Though each of these categories should not be understood as mutually exclusive entities, "each category seems to indicate certain characteristics of an individual's vivid experience," (Inoue, 1984:75).

Since these categories are an extension of the previously discussed lifeworld existentials, I drew upon the ten categories to direct my line of questioning. I have created an interview-conversation that is neither strictly structured with standardized questions nor that is entirely non-directive. Instead I focused on the particular event of running road races.

As I conducted my situational interviews, I was alert for a participant that had a special interest in this investigation. I sought to develop a life-history from this participant. This life-history served as another means of investigating lifeworld existentials.

Each conversation employed a tape recorder and written notes. The tape reflected the participant's responses and the written notes reflected my own personal insights. After the conclusion of each race event, the conversations
that had been collected were listened to and "new themes" that emerged were used as conversational prompts in the next series of conversations at the next race event. The atmosphere of the conversations were open and the effort was made to have the participants speak with as much specificity as possible about their own experience to clarify what they meant, use of examples was encouraged.

I attempted to achieve a consciousness of the interaction between each participant and myself, in these conversations. I, along with the other race participants were immersed in the atmosphere of the road race. We decided together if the lifeworld existentials were indeed present in the moments of the road race. At the same time as there is a sharing of a common concern of experience, the mutuality was inevitably skewed by the research intentions.

There needs to be full consciousness of the presuppositions and interests that are brought and there needs to be a recognition that these "common sense preunderstandings, suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge predisposes us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological questions," (van Manen, 1984:9).

Therefore, instead of "bracketing", that is setting aside certain questions and assumptions, I proposed to
question the "taken-for-grantedness" to look at what is truly being said in the conversation. Such questioning allowed new understanding, new possibilities, that went beyond the reality of the present presuppositions. It demanded a critical consciousness from me to acknowledge and attend to my own presuppositions so as to glimpse the depth of the phenomenon.

The Participants

It has been my experience that those individuals that are involved in the race experience as either runners, spectators, or race volunteers, generally are quite vocal about their involvement. I attempted to capture these individuals' vocal proclivity, by exhibiting an open attitude of inquiry. I approached runners, spectators, and volunteers in attempt to start a dialogue. If any one of these individuals did not have the propensity to engage in conversation, the dialogue was not forced and the conversation ended.

Those individuals who participated, did so for their own reasons. Perhaps it was curiosity; perhaps they wanted an opportunity to talk to an interested person about their own experiences; perhaps they wished to learn new ideas or have new insights; or perhaps they wanted to contribute to research in this area. For whatever reasons that these individuals participated, I wish to thank them
for their time, their experiences, their thoughts, and their feelings.

The proposed indeed gave me a limited view of the race experience. However, I believe that each conversation offered a rich and deep wealth of material that demanded further exploration. I do not expect that this study is a conclusive or a final commentary on the experiences of either lifeworld existentials or road races in general. It is one interpretation of the race participants experiences, while recognizing that there is no conclusion for questions of this nature. The quest for deeper understanding is an ongoing journey.

The Anecdotes

The use of anecdotes or stories is a common rhetorical device utilized in phenomenological writing. An anecdote is a story with a point, (van Manen, 1990). Much knowledge has been overlooked in the haste to create "research data" and "information," which to be considered valid must be objective, factual, and replicable. Anecdotal stories, in contrast, are contextualized, personal knowledge, never replicable, and full of life experience which is not explained. Thus, with stories, nothing is forced on the reader, as with "objective analysis." The reader is able
to enter the story in a manner that ties the reader to the story in a personal way.

Benjamin (1969), states that the loss of storytelling as a valued enterprise is related to the changed "face of death" in present society. He says that people are "dry dwellers in eternity" who in their old age are placed away from society in sanatoriums or hospitals, (Benjamin, 1969:94). At one time the wisdom of the aged was transmitted through the use of storytelling, now the isolated approach to aging and death has deprived society of an invaluable resource of knowledge.

The story, however, offers a way to approach human experience. What can be recaptured in storytelling are the images and incidences of everyday lives, in the race participants own words. Storytelling is an interpersonal event with traces of the storyteller present in the narrative, like the handprints of the sculptress on the statue.

From the conversations with race participants the story of each race was developed. Each participant contributed unique insights into the story of each race event. Its authority is heard in the "listening" to the words that infuse the story with meaning, which the "hearers" will interpret in accordance with their own life experiences.

In chapter four, I used the conversations with companion race participants to construct anecdotes that,
hopefully, revealed the essence of each race event. I achieved this by thinking about the substance of each race event and my conversations with other participants, and asking myself; what is the essential nature of the race event? What are the participant's comments about their race experience? How does the nature of the race experience reveal itself through the participants comments? How are the existentials revealed in the participants comments? If the lifeworld existentials are present, how do they manifest themselves in the participants comments? Presented in this manner, the stories introduced each road race event and told the tale of the participants experiences, in a way that reveals the landscape of the race: The situation and context from which the participants words emerge.

With understanding and respectfulness of the complexity of the race participants experiences, and all of human experiences, the story that characterizes a particular race is to be recognized as a simplification of that experience. While the writing of the stories evolved from my reflection on the conversations, the words belong to the race participants. Nothing was fictionalized.

Finding The Themes

When I was in the process of composing the anecdotes of each race event, I began to notice the existentials that
were beginning to emerge. These existentials revealed themselves as the stories were written. Upon reflecting upon each race and each participants unique experience, I began to notice that some experiences are indeed found in common among the stories. These common experiences were and were not related to the existentials. Perhaps these common themes or moments can be used to explore further, human experiences in sport.

Throughout the remainder of this study the word "moments" will be used interchangeably with "themes" or "structures." The use of the word "moment" instead of the words "themes" or "structures" seems to capture more fully the essences of race participation that are highlighted in the stories. These moments are not periods of time, although they occur over time, but are identifiable aspects of experience that interact together to illustrate the nature of the race experience. These moments should be seen as "knots in the webs of our experiences, around which lived experiences are spun, and are experienced as meaningful wholes," (van Manen, 1984:29). Thematic moments are not magically appearing essences, but are useful focal points or commonalities of experience around which hermeneutic interpretation can occur.
Thematic Analysis

There is a large contrast between story and interpretation. The interpretation of the thematic moments that are presented in chapters five and on, represent further hermeneutic work with the text of the "conversation transcripts" by: tracing etymological sources, searching idiomatic phrases, exploring other "race experience" literature and artist sources and by attending to personal experiences, (van Manen, 1990).

Through thematic analysis I explored the participants words to discover forgotten, hidden, mysterious, or ambiguous nature of their experiences. These dimensions of meaning cannot be easily discovered by a researcher utilizing only one source of "data." It is a hermeneutic project; an interaction with the addition of other various texts that discloses meaning. Through the dialectic between various forms of "data" there is a quest for self-reflection, "a deeply reflective activity that involves the totality of our physical and mental being," (van Manen, 1984:28). The quest for phenomenological understanding is an exploration of self, wrought from a self-reflective attitude. I attended to the question of "Who am I"; as a runner, as a race participant, and as one who values play in my life.
Writing and Rewriting

Phenomenological writing is an integral part of this research approach. The writing, as interpretation, strives for a poetic quality in that it attempts to bring to language the thematic moments in such a way that the lived experience or essence, asserts itself. Phenomenological writing and rewriting is the project of interpreting the exposed themes.

To organize the writing, the existential themes of temporality (lived time), corporeality (lived body), spatiality (lived space), and community (lived relationship to others), are woven into the anecdotes which result from the participants' experiences. In addition to the above mentioned format, the effect was made to search for deeper levels of analysis, to vary examples, and to explore the dialogue of other phenomenological writers.

Organization

Chapters one, two and three have developed the foundation from which this study is to be constructed; the question, the approach and the parameters of the study. Chapter four introduces the anecdotal stories of one individual's life-history of running, four memorable runs, and a race profile. Chapters five through eight explore the meaning revealed through thematic analysis and how
these meanings are related to the four lifeworld existentials. In addition, various other "data" such as tracing etymological sources, searching idiomatic phrases, and using other race experiences from literature, are incorporated into the analysis. In chapter nine, as the concluding chapter, I focus attention to my own thoughts of the road race experience, and how I believe that the road race event reflects the four lifeworld existentials.
Chapter IV
RECONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES

Introduction

What is a story? A story is a narrative that links sequences. A story is a structure for time. A story links action over time... A story does not merely connect action to action. It also recounts a struggle, (Novak, 1978:49).

Chapter 4 is composed of three sections. Section A is a Lifehistory of one woman's involvement in road race running. Section B relates the stories of four individuals and their most memorable runs. Section C is a profile of a 50 mile trail race as described by four participants.

Section A
LIFEHISTORY: ONE WOMAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN ROAD RACE RUNNING

Introduction

Chapter four takes one person, a 53 year old woman, Diane Armstrong, as a point of departure and explores how her circumstances and choices have shaped her involvement in road race running. Diane is not profiled to illustrate a particular type of individual, but to show how a particular woman has involved herself in road race running.
Diane Armstrong

Diane Armstrong began running in 1978 at the encouragement of her husband and daughters. A nurse by profession, Diane often worked 12 hour shifts at a local nursing home in suburban Columbus, Ohio. Diane felt that the 12 hour shifts of elderly care nursing, provided her with all the needed exercise an individual requires per week. Despite working five 12 hour shifts during the week, Diane felt restless during the weekends, and a little left out of family activities. Her husband and four daughters, on a regular basis would enter weekend running races.

Finally, Diane decided to join in the activities. Diane decided to accompany her family to races to see "...what the hoopla was all about." She saw the sweat and the pain etched on the runner's faces, and the jubilation and relief upon finishing. Diane was intrigued by the scene, wondering if she too could participate.

Since the road races were held every weekend, at least within one hour's drive time, Diane had a variety of races from which she could select. Fortunately, Diane's husband and daughters were going to run a 4-mile cross country race at a local park. Diane was confident that she could cover the distance if she alternatingly walked and ran the course.

The race morning dawned and Diane realized that she didn't have the proper running shoes. All she had was a
pair of canvas, rubber-soled shoes, without any support or cushioning. Diane asked one of her daughters if she could borrow a pair of shoes. The only athletic-type shoes that had any degree of support or cushioning and that fit were a pair of her daughter's soccer shoes:

At the time I didn't know any better, but I must have looked ridiculous, racing in a pair of old soccer shoes. Also I ran in a pair of jeans, that with every stride would chafe and ride-up. How embarrassing to have to admit this.

Prior to that race, Diane doesn't remember being too apprehensive. Although, she does remember watching several "frail old men" warming-up, and thinking that if they could cover the distance, "certainly a strong woman like myself could do it too!" In particular, Diane remembers one "elderly gentleman" who was doing a few warm-up laps around the parking lot:

This older man went over to his large framed wife, who had plunked herself down in a lawn chair at the starting line. I was so intrigued by the disparity of their sizes, the skinny man and his plus size wife. I realized that, that was exactly why I was running the race. I didn't want to be the fat wife who watched her skinny husband and children run.

At the starting line, Diane looked over the approximately 200 runners lined-up on the grassy slope, and realized that the race was composed of high school cross country runners, some "skinny men and myself!":

I then thought I might be last. I'm a very competitive person and I didn't like the idea of being last. I began so cautiously, everyone else seemed to sprint ahead. My impulse was to sprint
too. But even if I had sprinted, I still would have been last.

Diane was very self-conscious at this time. She felt alienated from the rest of the runners by her inexperience in road race running. Diane's immediate objective was not to run last in the race. She was torn between running the pace she knew she could maintain or attempting to keep up with the crowd so she would not be last. Diane found herself running with the last group of runners:

I don't remember the time at the mile, but I was with four other women, so I was OK. I was so relieved that there were other people running at my pace. I don't remember seeing these other women at the start. I was so happy they were with me now.

Diane stopped focusing on the backs of the individuals ahead of her and started trying to stay with the women around her. Her competitive nature rose to the occasion. Instead of feeling inadequate at being left behind by the other runners, Diane created a race within a race:

I started to think that if I could beat these other women to the finish, I would feel satisfied with my run. Then they started talking as if this were a social occasion. I remember saying under my breath, "come on, this is a race not a coffee klutch!" At least this is how I felt until I began to get tired, then I started to hope that they would talk more.

Two of Diane's companion runners fell off the pace and began to walk. Diane resolved that she would not walk even though she had planned on taking walking breaks when she became fatigued:

I didn't want to start walking now, even though I intended to alternate walking and running in this
race. When the two other women began to walk, I told myself not to dare walk. I was already huffing and puffing and my calves were burning; boy, they hurt! The soccer shoes started to make clacking sounds as the cleats hit the asphalt at about the 2.5 mile mark. I remember saying just keep clacking for 1.5 more miles and you'll be alright.

At the three mile mark the race crossed a dam, and all Diane wanted to do was jump in the water and end her discomfort:

Boy, I was really hurting by the time we got to the dam. All I wanted to do was to jump in the water and start swimming. I always liked swimming anyway. Why in the hell was I running? I could and should be swimming! I couldn't walk anyway. I had to beat this woman who was about three yards behind me. I know because I was making furtive glances over my shoulder, and I was listening to her to hear if she were gasping.

On the last gradual uphill, Diane's competition pulled even with her and suggested that they tie by holding hands across the finish line:

By now, finishing together sounded good to me. All I wanted to do was finish. I could feel my legs turning purple. I just knew that no blood was entering my legs, and they were slowly becoming necrotic. Through my nursing I have seen people with necrotic limbs due to lack of blood flow. I just knew this was happening to me.

Finally Diane was within 100 yards of the finish and the long uphill was over:

I was sorry at this point that I had agreed to tie with this other woman. I felt uplifted now. But we held hands and finished together. Right through the finish line and on through the chute I was planning my next race. The pain of racing is like the pain of childbirth, you forget it immediately once it is over and you see the baby, or in this case feel the accomplishment of finishing the race.
Diane continued to run, often running thirteen miles by herself after her nursing duties at the retirement center were over:

I remember one afternoon, I had just worked a 12 am to a 12 pm shift. I came home and just plopped down in a chair in our family room. I was so tired and so hungry. I just wanted to sink my teeth into an Angel Food Cake we had in our refrigerator. But I told myself, 'NO! You'll feel so much better if you'll get outside, even for 1.5 miles. So that's what I did, I went out for an incredible 1.5 mile run.

Diane was still borrowing running shoes from one of her daughters. She was unwilling to spend money for her own pair of shoes. Diane didn't feel that she was "enough of a runner" to merit her own pair of running shoes. Diane was proud that she was able to "make due" with what shoes were available, "just laying around the house." Diane feels that her frugality was in itself her special reward:

Any shoes that were available, I'd wear. They usually were a size too large. I'm a very frugal person and somehow didn't believe I was enough of a runner to merit my own running shoes.

On this particular afternoon, Diane was to experience a very memorable run. The character of this run would subsequently change her impression of herself as "not a real runner":

I went out and ran this 1.5 mile course around our neighborhood. At the corner I'd pass a service station and I knew the owner. So every time I would run past the station, I'd put on this burst of speed. I wanted the owner and mechanics to think I was a real runner. On this particular afternoon, I think I felt so good to have escaped 'the cake' -- so proud of my willpower, you know.
I just flew around the course. My muscles felt so loose. And my calves, they usually burn when I first began running, until I warm-up. They didn't hurt this day though. I didn't need to increase my pace around the service station, I was already flying. Just gliding along. I felt so powerful. I even entertained the notion of running a marathon. My husband was running 60 miles a week, training for the Revco-Cleveland Marathon in May.

Did Diane's memorable run make her feel like "a real runner?" She laughs at her concept of having to be "a real runner" to earn a pair of her own running shoes. However, even her "incredible run" didn't dissuade Diane from the notion that she was, "just a middle-aged woman getting her exercise":

No, I didn't feel like a real runner; I guess I still don't. Well maybe for that 1.5 miles, I felt like one. A real runner is like Joan Benoit or Grete Waitz, not me. I have very high standards and I often don't meet them in running. It's not that I wasn't encouraged by my family. My husband and daughters always were encouraging, never patronizing. But I was the only woman I knew who was running and in her late thirties. Maybe if I were fast, but I am remarkably slow. A fast run for me is when I break ten minutes per mile.

Diane accompanied her husband to the Revco-Cleveland Marathon in May of 1981. She watched the race intently, cheering her husband on to a 3:14 marathon time:

He was so happy. Just to see the smile on his face was delightful. It was his first marathon and he did do well. I knew I had to run one too. One of our daughters was getting married four days later. I remember I was so envious that he was limping down the aisle. Everyone was asking him why he was walking so stiff-legged. They were so impressed when he said he had just run his first marathon. I was jealous, I wanted to feel such an incredible effort and accomplishment.
Diane continued to run and occasionally walk throughout the next six years. Diane entered various 10km races every now and then, but she still preferred to run on her own:

I would only attend races with my family, and only when they would really almost coerce me. I felt like I should be faster or at least getting somewhat better and I wasn't. I was still running ten minute miles and my race times weren't improving. I would win age group awards only because other women my age weren't participating. If there was competition for me, I would get so nervous, almost sick. I hated to be slow and I hated to be last and I was often last.

Finally Diane's family convinced her, that her ability to run slowly and for a long period of time were perfect talents for a marathon:

They finally convinced me I should run the Columbus Marathon. This was in June of 1987, so I had until October of that year to prepare. Throughout the summer, I ran up to 30 miles in a single run. Even if I wasn't fast, I wanted to more than make sure I could more than go the distance. The 30 miles would take me about eight hours, just like a job.

Diane smiled as she reflected on the "good times" that were experienced while training for the marathon. Diane admitted that the training was as satisfying as running the actual marathon:

I trained at a local park, that had a four mile loop. Back and forth all summer long I would go, just jogging along. I made so many friends just doing this. Everyone wanted to know what I was doing and why. I tried to persuade several women to run the marathon with me. They wouldn't do it. They always had an excuse.

Diane continued to train for the marathon despite realizing she would be running by herself. Her husband
wanted to cheer her on throughout the race. He planned to station himself at strategic points along the marathon route to boost her sagging determination. As marathon day grew closer and closer, Diane's sense of confidence began to wane. Diane's lowest point of confidence came the day before the marathon, at the pre-marathon expo:

I don't really know what happened. Well, yes I do. After a two mile morning run, just to get your legs loose, you know, my husband and I went down to the Hyatt where the expo was. The entire second floor was in chaos. People, skinny people in tights were wandering everywhere. All of a sudden I started to doubt myself. You know the usual stuff. Was I fit enough? Did I start to taper my training at the right time? Funny, I even started worrying about what I was going to wear and the weather on race day. Stuff that seems really stupid now! My husband kept saying that he always has thoughts like that before he races, but he never admits them.

When questioned why she was so ready to admit her pre-race feelings. Diane initially was reluctant to discuss why she was so open with her feelings, although she speculated on her husband's lack of openness:

I know why my husband wouldn't readily admit to jitters. He sees racing as a battle, where the strongest person wins. I mean both mentally and physically. It's so different for me. I want 'compatriots'. Strange word, but you know what I mean. I want other people to be nervous with me. I want to challenge the distance not other people. My husband, although, says he only wants to complete the distance, but I think he really enjoys beating people. I just want to have a good time and not be last.

That night, Diane tossed and turned. As she struggled to get some rest, she scolded herself for becoming so
ridiculously nervous for a "dumb run around Columbus."
After, "probably not 45 minutes of sleep," Diane and her husband arrived at the starting line one hour prior to the race. Diane found that she was unable to look at other runners because they served as a reminder about the endeavor she was about to undertake. Diane became very internally focused, just worrying about herself and how she was feeling. She didn't want to engage anyone in conversation, for that would be both, "energy consuming and nerve wracking":

I'd rather call it a run rather than a race. Maybe if I was better we could call it a race, but I was just running it to finish it. Where I started, in back of the pack, there really is no one to race. The first twenty rows were for the elite male and female runners. After that, they had people holding signs that indicated the pace per mile you were going to run. I lined-up at the 10-10:30 mile pace. I would have felt embarrassed to line-up with the three hour marathoners, even though that would have placed me closer to the starting line. Standing with the five hour marathoners, I was at least 100 yards from the start. I was mad that I had to run 100 yards farther than the faster runners. They were probably better equipped to run 100 more yards than I was. This really did make me angry, I felt like I was a member of a caste system. I was penalized for running so slowly.

Diane also became perturbed when the race director announced that they would dismantle the aid/water stations after those runners maintaining a ten minute mile pace had passed:

I was livid. First of all why advertise this race as a peoples' race when you cater to only the faster runners. Although I trained for a ten minute mile pace, this didn't give me much of a
leeway when I got tired. I paid my entry fee just as all the other runners. The elite runners are able to get money for running because sponsors know that the race attracts the mass of runners, who are not professional runners. The middle and back-of-the-packers are who the sponsors want to attract. Second, they had advertised that the race course would be open for 5:30 hours. That is definitely more than a ten minute per mile pace. It was terrible that they would not provide water or Exceed or any medical attention for us slower runners. We're probably the ones that need it more anyway.

As the race started, Diane's nervousness and need for internal focus disappeared. Her anger also left her as it became crucial that she focus on the task that lay directly ahead:

Dissipated is the proper word. The nerves and the anger just slowly disintegrated into little parts, just like bubbles and they slowly rose and emptied from my pores. That's really what I felt like. I felt all my anxiety exit my body, I was very loose, my calves weren't even tense. My calves are where I carry my tension. I felt good, I could finally show my stuff. No more talking about running the marathon; now just doing it.

Diane was impatient that it took her three minutes and forty-five seconds to cross the starting line after the gun was fired:

Everyone around was just jogging in place after the race began. We couldn't go anywhere. So many people were being funneled through the small opening near the Nationwide and Hyatt Buildings. The street narrows there, and people were running on the sidewalk just to avoid the jam. When I saw so many people becoming so agitated at the slow start, I became calm. I just needed someone to validate my feelings.

Diane ran the first mile surrounded on all sides by people trying to gain someplace to run freely. There was
much laughter as the runners jostled one another to find running room. Some runners, not wishing to spend undue energy, were still walking, waiting to have some leg room. Diane found the situation to be comforting, with so many people laughing as they inadvertently elbowed each other, she did not experience the feelings of "being left behind":

I was so used to being left at the start, what a surprise to be in the middle of such a pack of people. It was such a treat. I momentarily longed for some running room. Then I realized that I don't often run races, because I was afraid of running alone. I had gotten my wish, to run surrounded by lots of people. I might as well take advantage of this opportunity to run with other people. I started to talk to women running at my pace. I asked them where they were from, how much they trained and what finish time they hoped for. Sometimes they answered, sometimes they gave the impression they only wanted to keep concentrating on running.

For several miles, Diane continued running at a pace that she describes as halting. Diane found it very easy to become caught-up in a faster pace. She had to discipline herself to run at the pre-determined ten minute per mile pace. Diane felt herself surging ahead with the crowd and then holding herself back:

My pace could only be described as halting. It was exhausting to experience all this tension that I had in trying to control my pace when I actually felt like running at a faster pace. If this hadn't been my first marathon, I would have run how I felt, but everyone told me that you must not run too fast in the first half of the marathon. Everyone says the marathon doesn't really begin until the last six miles.
Diane continued to run her pre-determined pace throughout the first 6.2 miles. At this point, the distance Diane had yet to run became very evident through the cheers of the spectators:

I avoided thinking about the distance I had yet to run, as each mile passed. I was fine, just concentrating on the mile that I was immediately running. That was until I ran past the 10km mark and then some obnoxious spectator shouted, 'just 20 miles left to run, ha-ha!' That made me livid. What a thing to tell a runner struggling through her first marathon. How insensitive!

The spectator's comment annoyed Diane and made her aware of her endeavor:

I started to think about the distance and how suddenly chilly it had become. We must have been running straight into the west wind. I was comfortable, perspiring well, but not becoming too wet; it was evaporating. That is until the wind hit my wet turtleneck, chilling me through the skin. I must have been very tense after that because the next two miles were miserable. I felt so heavy, I was struggling just to maintain my ten minute per mile pace. I touched my legs and they were tense; they were steel pins that hurt when touched.

Diane's positive attitude was interrupted by the comments of the spectator. Until then, Diane had maintained a quiet, non-judgmental focus on her running. This attitude, once broken was extremely hard for Diane to recapture:

At eight miles I received a lift. The course turns east on Lane Avenue by the Pizza Hut. It's downhill from there to the OSU Campus and you get a view of Columbus off to the south. I relaxed and started telling myself to enjoy the view and the people around me. I started to become more confident that I could maintain the ten minute per
mile pace throughout the rest of the race. There were also more spectators as we ran closer to campus; that always helps. Well, that is unless they're making obnoxious comments.

Diane found herself catching individuals that had started at a faster pace than they could maintain comfortably throughout the race. Diane's confidence in her running ability increased as she realized that she would be able to maintain "her pace" throughout the 26.2 miles:

Such a feeling of strength comes from passing people who had started too quickly. It boosts your confidence to know that you have selected the proper pace for yourself. My competitive nature surfaced when I began passing others.

From the Ohio State Campus area, runners continued south toward downtown. Diane focused on the tall buildings that could be seen as the runners approached town:

I knew my pace was strong, and I could maintain it, but I was getting impatient. When I was still a few miles from town, I could see the tall buildings. The buildings which we started in front of, were very visible. I kept telling myself how far I had come, how far I had yet to go. I was impatient to get to town. The fifteen mile mark was downtown and I knew my husband would be waiting there. I wanted to be able to give him the thumbs-up sign. Besides my husband, there were other spectators. I could almost hear them yelling encouragement, even though I was still two miles away at the thirteen mile mark. With every runner I passed, I was gaining confidence. I stopped listening to the mile times, I was so sure my pace was very steady.

Diane's confidence continued to increase as she neared downtown Columbus. She had developed a rhythm to her running that made listening to the called-out times at the various mile markers irrelevant:
At the fourteen mile mark, just as we were about to enter the downtown area, I increased my pace. I was feeling so strong, so happy. I know it sounds trite, but I was happy to be alive and moving. I started pitying the spectators and the volunteers. Those poor people couldn't run in this great race! They were missing life and I was sailing.

Diane looked down at her hands, laughed, shook her head, and sighed. Remembering her "novice mistake" in increasing her pace because she was wowed by the spectators, causes Diane much amusement upon reflection:

If I were writing a novel I would include an element of foreshadowing here. I made a crucial mistake in the downtown area. I was impatient and increased my pace just to impress people. What a big mistake, yah, a big mistake. After I saw my husband and impressed him with my pace, I didn't pull back as I should have. I continued on, I shouldn't have. I should have slowed and composed myself and began running ten minute miles again. You know, I don't even know how fast I was running when I was running fast, it was just that, a feeling. I was breathing heavier, my legs started to feel very heavy. I noticed that instead of my shoes making gentle sounds when they hit the pavement, you know the 'proper' way to run, outside heel hitting, then gently moving through the entire foot and rolling off the toes; I was literally pounding the pavement. My entire foot was slamming into the ground, flat like a board; there was no flexibility in the ball of the foot. No push-off from the big-toe meant I wasn't carrying any momentum. With every stride I was literally putting on the brakes.

Diane demonstrated this situation by allowing her foot to slam into the ground in a flat position, without the flexibility to provide the roll-through needed to gain forward momentum:

I knew what I was doing but I had difficulty in stopping it. I slowed my pace but felt just awful, as if I were still running quickly. It was
terrible, I was back to a ten-plus pace, but felt pained as if I were running sub-eights. Although never having run sub-eights, I'm not sure how pained that would be? Well anyway, I was only at the sixteen mile mark, I had ten miles more to run, well 10.2 more miles. I didn't know if I had hit 'the wall' or what! The change in my attitude happened from one stride to the next, I'm not kidding. I was sailing along, I waved to my husband, said Hi! to some friends; then as I was climbing a small hill, boom it hit me. Right before I entered town I felt like the world was — well --- the word I'm looking for is something like growing. Yah, the world was expanding, uh huh, increasing, well, when I hit 'the wall' I'll call it that, although I'm not sure that is what it was. Well, then I felt like the world was shrinking. Shrinking in on me.

Diane was indeed experiencing what most marathoners term "the wall." Diane's attention turned from the cheering spectators to her "pained body":

I ran over the cobblestones in German Village, and I wasn't sure if I could lift my legs from one to the other. The spectators were pretty thick in the village. Before, I could distinctly hear, it seemed like, each and every spectator. Now, I knew they were cheering, but it was garbled noise with no meaning. I felt alone, even though I was with more people than ever. I still was steadily passing people, but I didn't care, I only wanted to get to the finish.

Even though Diane was experiencing the fatigue that is associated with "hitting the wall", she was aware of how she might appear to the spectators:

At eighteen miles, or eighteen-point-five, I'm sure it was eighteen-point-five that we entered town again. Running over highway 70 I remember trying to collect myself. I attempted to run a little taller, increase my stride, you know, look better for my husband. He was standing by the Greyhound Bus Station, cheering me on. I remember the buses, because they were announcing a bus to Toledo. I felt like catching a ride, anything to stop this
stupid running. My husband was cheering me on and saying, 'lookin good honey, only eight more miles, twice around the park.' At first I wanted to hit him. How annoying to hear that you look good, when you know that you look anything but good! Then I started to think, you know, he's right only twice around the park and I'll be done. The park, my husband was talking about is a local park that I trained at. The running path is a four mile loop. I did a lot of loops in training. So it really was a good way to encourage me. It made the remaining eight miles seem familiar, and that felt good, real good!

Diane concentrated on various sights along the course and upon reflection clearly remembers the fleeting impressions that she held:

I remember turning right on Town Street by a Quality Inn. I remember a restaurant most, because I couldn't believe people were actually hungry at a time like this. I was anything but hungry, and I couldn't believe anyone else would be hungry either. I remember the wind, why was the wind coming from the east? I don't know. I was hungry and chilly and every noise from the spectators was just meaningless -- except for my husband that is -- but I remember seeing everything with, well, you know, with acuity. Everything was sharp. I remember the sky was cloudy, but everything was bright. I don't mean sunshine, happy bright, but like winter-white, very harsh, very disturbing, upsetting, I guess you could say unpleasant.

Diane's fatigue and pain seemed to punctuate her surroundings, allowing her to remember sights with a sharpness that she didn't believe she had in the earlier miles of the marathon:

I was taking water at every aid/water station now. At the twenty mile mark I was grabbing water with two hands, really I was. I wanted to stop and drink more but I knew that if I would stop it would be really hard to start running again. At the twenty mile mark we
entered Bexley. I had looked forward to running through all the gorgeous homes along the course. HA! I was hardly looking up anymore, my eyes were on the ground, right in front of me. I wasn't passing anyone now and no one was passing me. I just wanted to finish. There were water stations at every mile now. Maybe there had been water and aid stations all along, at every mile, but I was just noticing them now, because I was using them now. At the water stations I would stop running and just shuffle along while I drank, just so my legs would keep in motion. It was funny looking. Of course, now my running was funny looking, like someone who is just standing still but really pumping their arms thinking they'll get someplace. That's what I was doing.

Even though Diane expressed her growing fatigue, she was still able to be concerned with her appearance and how others might perceive her struggle to finish:

At this point, I was even too tired to notice the houses. I ran past my obstetrician's house and I started to think about the pain of having my daughters, but how quickly it is forgotten; the joy takes it away. I was sincerely hoping that's how I would feel once this was over. My blisters broke exactly at the 23 mile mark, that, I remember really clearly. It's so funny, I didn't even know I had blisters, until they popped. They were on the balls of each foot. When they broke there was an audible sound, and this awful stinging feeling. I made this funny pained noise, because the woman running next to me, looked over and said in a real sympathetic tone, 'blisters broke, huh!' I guess at this stage we all know the feeling.

The commonness of the discomfort that the runners experience often is a type of bond; transcending any type of competitiveness that might exist:

I was so happy, overjoyed shall we say, to turn right on Broad Street, the last, oh, about 2.4 to 2.5 miles. Before the race I was confident that I could pick-up the pace over the last stretch. I didn't count on the wind gusts, I
felt as though they were coming at me at 60 miles per hour. Looking back, I'm sure the wind wasn't that bad, probably there weren't any gusts, probably just some breeze. But it did, then, really feel strong. It's also all uphill, the last stretch on Broad Street; that, I'm sure of. It's a gentle grade. Probably about 1% at that; maybe not even that. But that day, boy, did it feel massive.

Marathon runners report that while they are experiencing "the wall", they often have perceptions that the road had "suddenly" become extremely hilly. Exercise physiology suggests that this feeling of fatigue is due to the build-up of lactic acid in the large "mover muscles." The fatigued runners then perceive the discomfort as being due to the increase in the grade of the road. Later when the runners are rested and see the actual grade of the road, they find that there is often a discrepancy between their perceptions of the "hill" and the actual grade of the road:

I just remembered something. I didn't think about this before, but my attitude toward other runners changed from the beginning of the race to the end. When the race began, I remember keeping account of all the women runners around me. Every time I would pass a woman or be passed by one, I would keep a mental list. I wanted to know where all the women were around me. I know that there were maybe a couple of hundred of women ahead of me, but I wasn't concerned with those women. It was only the women in my immediate vicinity that I was in competition with. It was like a traveling bubble, when a woman entered this bubble then she was in competition with me, when she was fast enough to move ahead of me, out of my area, I was no longer concerned with her. In the first, oh, ten or so miles people frequently entered and exited this bubble, my bubble. I've noticed this is true in races of
all lengths, even 5km's. It takes awhile for you to find your place in the race. If a man entered my area I was aware of him, but I wasn't concerned because I wasn't competing with him. I was really aware if a woman in my age group entered my area. I was on the lookout for any women who had grey hair. When I was feelin' good I was really aware of who entered and left this traveling bubble. When I grew tired though, boy, I didn't care. Those last miles, I was aware of the women around me, and the men, I guess. But I was not in competition with them, I was running with them and not against them. I guess we all came together, to endure together. Maybe this is only my way of thinking, I don't know. But it would be really interesting to see if other runners feel this way too.

Diane attempted to create a "race within a race."

While Diane admittedly could not hope to keep pace with the leaders of the race, she established her own race. A race that existed within a "traveling bubble", where runners entered and exited at their own will. Diane, by creating her "traveling bubble" was always at the center of her own race. This was a way that she could feel in control of herself and her surroundings. When Diane encountered fatigue in the last few miles, she realized that her companion runners were now her allies and not her competitors. She felt encouraged by their presence in her "bubble"; they seemed to be helping her to the finish line:

The last coupla' miles, of course, were a struggle. When we crossed over highway '71', I could see the finish line. That's when I started to get really emotional. No kidding, it really is a lump in your throat. I was trying not to cry, but I ended up wheezing. I told myself, 'dummy, unless you stop this, you're not going to finish, then you really will cry.' I couldn't wait until I got the
finishers medal around my neck and to get the
cellophane wrap they give you to keep warm. I
crossed the finish line. Jeez, what a
feelin'. I sound like a Toyota commercial
don't I. I was so excited, I forgot to stop my
watch. My husband was so excited he forgot to
get my time too. I had to wait till the
results booklet came out to get my place and
time.

Diane's final time and place of finish held little
relevance for her when she completed the marathon. Her
goal of finishing had been accomplished, the elapsed time
was a secondary concern, and would only serve to confirm
what she already knew. Diane had finished her first
marathon:

What an incredible feeling. It was a chilly
day, about 37 degrees, so before I could walk
back to our car, I wanted to put on my sweat­
pants. I was leaning on my husband and laugh­
ing; I couldn't get my leg high enough to put
it in my pant leg. My legs, especially my
'quads' were so sore, really painful to
touch. I've always thought my legs were too
skinny, without any shape. I've always wanted
muscular legs and now I had them. Standing
there, they looked so defined. Twenty-six
miles of running does wonderful things to your
legs. They were so sore, but, yet they looked
so good, funny huh!

Diane experienced pride in her accomplishment, and her
legs were a badge of honor. Their muscularity had allowed
her to travel 26.2 miles, and Diane was proud of their
newly defined shape:

We finally made it to the car. It took us
about thirty minutes to walk a half mile. I
still had my finishers medal around my neck, so
most people that we passed would congratulate
me. They all must have seen how proud I was.
There were so many of us hobbling around. We
all were wrapped in cellophane. Someone, I
don't remember if they were a runner or not, said we looked like baked potatoes. Even without the cellophane and finishers medal you could still see that we had run a marathon. We were all searching for the wheelchair ramps, so we didn't have to lift ourselves up the curbs. No one could get their legs up any higher.

Diane found herself enjoying the company of many companion runners, who were feeling the effects of the race just as she was too. Even the remark about the runners looking as if they were baked potatoes, when they were wrapped in cellophane, seemed to bond the finishers together:

I guess the strangest part of my recovery, well, I guess there were two strange parts, was that the next day I was melancholy, not as incredibly happy as I thought I'd might be. Well, I guess I was happy in my achievement, but at the same time very sad that it was over. I had been thinking about the marathon for a very long time, never mind the actual time I spent training and planning. I was going to kinda' miss it. The other really weird thing was that it became incredibly important to me, that other people know that I had just finished a marathon. I was surprised that they didn't know just by looking at me. No kidding, I really felt as though I had changed, and other people must be able to tell just by seeing me. I could understand strangers not realizing my accomplishment, but jeez, my closest friends, if they would really 'see' me would know. I had to tell them, boy, was I crushed.

Diane experienced a change in herself after completing the race. She needed others to see this change also. Although she felt very proud of her accomplishment, she needed someone else to say, "WOW! That's super! You really ran all that way": 
I enjoyed eating, well, really pigging-out, the week after the marathon. I don't really have to watch my weight, but I like to stay away from salty and greasy foods. But after the marathon I gave myself one week to treat myself, eating anything I wanted. You know, to replenish all the energy I had lost. This was my reward for completing the marathon.

Diane had kept a very healthy diet all throughout her training. When she was tempted to eat any type of "junk" food, she would tell herself that after the marathon was completed she could eat anything she craved, no matter what it's nutritional value:

Since the marathon, boy, that's been over four years now, my husband and I do two marathons a year. We have a rivalry going on, since we both now run the marathon in about 4 to 4.5 hours. We train together, but on race day, at the starting line, we line up on different sides of the street. We often pass each other in the race, we jockey back and forth. Who really finishes first depends on who is having the best day, we are so evenly matched in our running ability. Our daughters and sons-in-law sometimes are concerned that our rivalry isn't healthy. But I think that they don't understand what a neat part of our relationship our marathon rivalry is: It keeps us going. We've been married 34 years. The running, oh, I don't know, I guess it brings zest to our relationship. I'll tell you this, if it's the last miles in the marathon, and I see my husband ahead, I'll try my damnedest to beat him; and he would do the same to me. We settle our arguments on race day.
The following are conversations, that appear in the text, 
And Then the Vulture Eats You, Edited by John Parker.

Tom Hart

Tom Hart is a 37 year old male, who upon his 37th birthday decided to undertake a run of 37 miles to celebrate his age. The run was around suburban Boston, a route with which Tom was thoroughly familiar. Prior to beginning the birthday run, Tom planned both his route and also his refreshment breaks. Tom believed that this was his own birthday present to himself; a birthday celebration that only he could throw for himself:

As I finished the 14-mile suburban loop, I could see Boston's glossy skyscrapers, the Pru and the John Hancock Building. It was about noon of a wonderfully unseasonably early winter running day, temperatures climbing through the 40's. The 14-plus mile suburban loop was behind me now. Only a little over 22 to go, and still reasonably close to schedule. My 37 mile run on my 37th birthday was progressing satisfactorily. The only detail that remained slightly fuzzy as I set out, the only question to which I couldn't fire back a fast answer, was surely the most interesting one. Why was I doing this? It seemed like a good idea at the time, would have been a valid answer as any, I suppose, (p. 121).

Tom was extremely proud that he had conceived of the idea of "the best birthday present I could give myself".
As the run progressed Tom had plenty of time to reflect on his "birthday present":

In the first place, 37 miles on my 37th birthday was a project that had the kind of quirky numerical logic to which a great many runners, myself included, are addicted. A large part of running's charm, after all, is that it generates such a wealth of precise numbers, numbers we can squirrel away in our logs as fastest, farthest, and other personal treasures. I also, was strongly drawn to the novelty of the experience. I'd never run farther than the marathon distance, which meant that this journey would take me through 10 miles of unexplored territory. I can't believe that there are many runners who haven't wondered what would happen if they got out there five, 10 or more miles beyond their previous longest run. I hadn't extended my horizons so precipitously since my first marathon, over five years earlier. Finally, I decided that a run was a perfect birthday present to myself. A fine extravagant one it was too; a gift of a day, set aside for only this run of ridiculous and glorious length, (p.122).

Tom set aside the precious gift of a run for his "present of a run to myself." Two elements of his birthday run intrigued Tom. The first was the "numerical logic" of running 37 miles on his 37th birthday. Tom, an engineer by profession, admits he is interested in "reducing his world into numerical representations, what could represent my birthday better than 37 miles for 37 years?" The second fact was that Tom wanted to stretch himself beyond the "marathon barrier". What lay beyond the 26.2 mile point? Tom knew that his birthday run would answer this question:

I started out at about 7:45 or so pace, more than half a minute per mile slower than I usually train, and every three or four miles
I'd walk for about five minutes. The plan was to run easily throughout, and to be finished in roughly six hours, (p. 122).

Tom had planned precisely all his rest and refreshment breaks. The planning of these breaks gave Tom confidence in the face of uncertain distance. Tom stressed that this was to be a joyful and enlightening day, "not at all like a hard marathon, I want to remember every aspect of the day":

I was in decent shape for the birthday run. A month earlier I had run my fastest marathon a little under 2:45. I had not done any hard running since, but I'd kept plugging along at 55 to 60 miles a week. I felt quite confident about going the full distance, even though I couldn't really imagine what those last five or ten miles would feel like, (p.123).

Tom's extremely fast marathon personal record buoyed his confidence. Tom believed that if he had been able to run 26.2 miles at a 6:20 pace per mile, he certainly could run 37 miles by averaging a 9:15 pace. These thoughts of his past performance mitigated the unease he felt in facing those extra eleven miles:

Heading home after the first 14 miles, I passed an old fashioned iron direction post on a little circle at the place the road split. Reading its' mileages -- Concord 7, Stoneham 8, Lowell 16, Boston 12 -- and knowing I was going to run farther than any of these had given me a fine feeling of freedom, (p.123).

The distance of the towns mentioned on the iron direction post gave Tom a momentary escape from the convention of 1990's existence. In these days of rapid, mass transit Tom was traveling the 37 miles by his own initiative. Tom supposed the freedom that he experienced
was due to the simplicity of "just running like we were initially meant to do":

I felt good -- and yet below the surface somewhere, a rankling feeling of unfulfilled expectation. Aside from that brief flash at the signpost, these two-plus hours hadn't quite achieved the specialness I'd hoped for. The epic quality of the run hadn't made itself felt and I was impatient, looking for something -- well new, (p.123).

Tom admitted that he had high expectations for his birthday run. He needed something to "cleanse the cobwebs and renew my spirits." Unfortunately, these expectations had not yet been met after two plus hours on the road. Tom felt that he was still "just running, just like any other long run":

I took a break at the 16 mile mark to exchange a pair of overly large gift socks. Just entering the store was a come-down: It seemed tiny and dark after a morning spent in the sunny expanses of my journey, (p.124).

The store appeared practical to Tom; an experience that he might have on any ordinary day. Tom certainly did not want anything ordinary or practical to interfere with his one day of "freedom from conventionality":

Dealing with people after two and a half hours on the road, in the middle of a long run, is not unlike dealing with people right after you have become a parent. You're extremely alert, even speedy. You expect everyone to recognize instinctively a special quality about you and treat you with tremendous consideration, (p.124).
Tom felt his anger rise from the impatience he felt at the store clerk's inability to recognize the "specialness" that Tom felt "must certainly radiate off of me":

Although I hadn't gone into a new distance range yet, I was on the edge of running for a longer time than ever before. With well over two hours still ahead, I was getting my first glimpse of the size of the task I'd taken on. I began to see that one element in the new equation I was creating as I ran was a certain undercurrent, not altogether undesirable of fear. I had now almost covered the marathon distance, about four and a quarter hours after starting out. I was entering what I envisioned as the third and last stage of my trip. I was tired now, but here I would find my reward, here each mile would surely be special, (p.125).

As the run progressed, Tom experienced some "free floating anxiety," which he later identified as the fear he had about the upcoming unknown distance. He was confident that the fear would disintegrate once he entered the "unknown distance": Then certainly the fear would become a feeling of "specialness of the promises yet to be revealed:"

Runners generally have some route on which they feel most comfortable, some course they consider their running home. Fresh Pond was certainly mine, and arriving there gave this fading novice ultra-runner a much needed psychological lift, (p.126).

Tom had planned the route so that much of the "unknown distance" would be traveled along a familiar route. Tom did not want the anxiety of a "new route" to be coupled with the fear of the "unknown distance." Tom believed that the combination of the two "unknowns" would be "too much":
My 37 mile run had seemed possible, even easy, and I'd decided the key was to approach it with a light-hearted attitude, with no rigidly set goal for the time it would take, (p.126).

Tom tried to relax and maintain his "pre-determined, light-hearted attitude" as he traversed the route along Fresh Pond:

I'd imagine myself stopping occasionally throughout the day to gaze at pleasant vistas along the river, thinking great thoughts while surges of wellbeing and accomplishment filled me. All who would see me would intuitively understand the magnitude of my achievement. Instead here I was, struggling along in total anonymity, no doubt the most mundane seeming of pedestrians. Never had I been so aware of the essential privacy of the running experience. Instead of runner's high, I was experiencing what might be called 'the incognito effect', (p.127).

Tom discovered his aloneness, and the inability to share either his feelings of accomplishment or the essence of his long run. Tom was saddened that his specialness did not enter the awareness of the "other" pedestrians. In the same vein, Tom was also unaware of the specialness that was present in the "other" pedestrians:

Everything since leaving my apartment that morning had taken on a double hue. There was what I knew I was doing, and then there was what anyone observing me might have thought I was doing. The longer I ran, the wider the gulf between the two became. That much of life operates under this same principle was little comfort to my aching tendons. Was it for this meager insight that I had set aside the day? It was continuously, if mildly irritating to see other runners, none of whom -- naturally enough -- stopped to inquire or marvel at what I was doing. I mean, the wisdom of a few hours' distance had allowed me to see the foolishness of having expected any kind of understanding
from that clothing store clerk, but surely these runners ought to pay more respectful attention? Instead, they were ignoring me. Worse, they were passing me! (p.127).

The aloneness of the task continued to bother Tom. Although Tom, understood that the aloneness was the "price" of being an individual, he was saddened to realize how many "noble deeds" that are being performed on a daily basis, by the individual, were essentially unknowable. "Must it always be this way," Tom wondered:

Losing speed, it was difficult not to be obsessed with finishing this thing. My vision narrowed, my thoughts shrunk. No vistas, no glimpses of far-off buildings, no sociological speculations, not even a psychological breakthrough. My view closed down mile by mile. As I circled the pond, the beautiful reservoir was on my right constantly, woods or a golf course on my left; these became the blacktop stretching ahead, then just the path directly in front of me. The leather toe reinforcement between black rubber sole and blue nylon shoe upper revealed a fascinating texture to which I'd clearly never paid enough attention, (pp. 127-128).

Fatigue reduced Tom's thoughts to the essential aspect of surviving to the finish of the 37 mile run. The surface of his shoes served as a fascinating diversion for Tom as he shuffled around the perimeter of Fresh Pond:

I began to imagine slowing, slowing until I finally stopped, terminally absorbed in some minute pebble pattern in the path's surface invisible to anyone else. The appeal of such cessation grew dangerously, (p.128).

When fatigue intervened, Tom gradually slowed his running to a self-described crawl. Tom now needed to consciously direct his legs to maintain forward motion.
No longer did Tom have the energy to "think big, expansive thoughts. It took all my energy to just keep my momentum." Tom was now not able to direct any of his attention to vistas, pleasant or otherwise:

The final circuit of the pond was comparatively easy. Knowing that it was almost over had restored some of the run's elusive magic. Fears of not being able to finish disappeared as the end beckoned just two miles, then one, then less, away. The joy that began to make itself felt was suddenly somewhat tempered by regret that soon I'd be leaving this little world of the run to rejoin the real one. The world of others, of obligations, (pp. 128-129).

The joy of finally completing the run was tempered by the realization, by Tom, that his special day was coming to a conclusion. How long would the memories of this special day last?

Having that day for my own purposes, and making something satisfying of it was, to me at least, reward enough. If others might not see it the way I did...well that was the lesson of the incognito effect, wasn't it? It can't hurt sometimes to be reminded of the necessity of making one's own satisfactions, and the futility of expecting anyone else to understand them. The gulf between what we feel we are doing and what others perceive us to be doing will remain the most ultra of all distances, one that no amount of miles, or words, can finally bridge, (pp. 129-130).

* * * * *

James E. Shapiro

James Shapiro related a race that he traveled to England to participate in. The race was not of the usual variety, since it would require six days to complete. This
was Shapiro's first six day race, thus he entered with much
trepidation and left with a memorable experience which he
enjoyed tremendously in relating in the following text:

Sixteen of us lined up, fresh as unwrinkled
peas, about to be sent whirling around the
track by the crack of the gun. Circling round
and round a 400 meter track, caught in a dream
of our own choosing -- a nightmare some might
call it -- because for the next 144 hours we
would have nothing to do but devote ourselves
to staying in motion as long as we could, (p.1).

James had to keep reminding himself that his current
situation was one of his own choosing. He had wanted to
participate in a six-day race for "at least 5 years."
James was seeking a running adventure that he could "share"
with other participants. Over the years, James had found
himself becoming increasingly cynical and disgruntled with
the "common running experiences of 10km and marathon
races." James felt that the essential experiences of
racing were often ignored in favor of competition between
the runners:

We were entered in a six-day track race, or a
'go as you please' event. There is really no
other way to run them; you must be able to run
and walk for as long as you want and come off
the track at will for periods of rest, eating,
sleeping, and massage. Most of us would be on
the track 16 to 18 hours a day. Some would
sleep in a trackside tent that swarmed with
activity; others like myself would dash off to
nearby hotels for a few hours of troubled
sleep, tormented by burning feet, sore joints
and over-tired bodies, (p. 1).

The six-day race was a suitable, non-competitive
environment for James. Although the distance covered by
each participant would be recorded and their relative
placement tabulated; each participant would struggle only
with himself or herself and their own ability to complete
the six-day event:

You can't go through something like that
halfway and you don't really go through it
alone. We'd be on a short piece of track in a
community of other runners, all sharing just
one thing in common: Fascination with
distance, (p. 2).

Little or no competitive intent was evident among the
participants. Each runner had a goal, both highly personal
and unique:

Also going the distance, in their own way, were
trackside officials, lap-counters, local towns-
hfolk, wives, handlers, relatives, as well as
the fellow in the electric wheelchair out every
morning saying, 'Come on now.' Finally there
were the odd souls, at first moved by simple
curiosity and then increasingly fascinated,
who were irrevocably drawn back night after
night, coming straight from their jobs, as
their friendships with specific runners
intensified. However, such sweetness and
release can only taste the way they do after
one deserves them. This temporary community
had not yet begun to establish itself, (p. 2).

An establishment of a sense of community requires both
the possession of a common goal between participants and
enough time to pursue the common goal. The community of
six-day participants had begun to form, the common goal was
present, all now that was needed was the passage of time:

This was it, the great beginning that commenced
as all ultras must, with the squirreling away
of inches, feet, yards, a handful of miles
until much later someone would end the dream
and tell you how far we went. The 17 of us ran
on, wedded to the track and to one another for what might as well have been forever, (p.3).

James was aware of his ability to select his own pace and the mileage that he would travel around the track each day. However, once the race had begun and the participants were engaged fully, James felt incapable of choosing whether he continued to run each day. The race seemed to have a collective conscious of its own, and this consciousness seemed to make it impossible for the runners to drop-out of the race. If a runner dropped-out, then the race would seem to be "less"; compromised in some irreparable way:

The handler is thrown into an intimate relationship with the runner. This is a physical sport about bodies and pain and tension. It's got to do with loyalties and knowing when to say no and when to take advice. Your feet get massaged, your clothing washed, your bath is run, your meals cooked, drinks prepared, wet rain gear exchanged for dry, the position of the enemy is whispered in your ear. All these are needed, as is that hug you need when you think you just can't go on without a human embrace because your joints are on fire, (p.7)

The personal handler becomes in essence the guardian for the long distance runner. The handler becomes the care-giver during the runner's darkest hours of fatigue. The handler must be readily able to dispense emotional and physical support when the runner requires them:

Morning was not the most sociable part of the day in the world, the day stretching out with no foreseeable surprises, not close to lunch, too bright for sleeping; no reason at all for a break. By now, familiar enough with each other, we could tell by the sound who was
coming up behind, yet the almost automatic cheering-on kind of comment we so constantly doled out to one another was, by common and unspoken consent, withheld for a while, (p. 11).

James, in his "normal daily existence" cherished the morning hours, and generally looked forward to their "renewing quality." However, during the six-day race he dreaded the morning. The morning was a reminder of another day to be spent around the "monotonous track." All the participants appeared to feel this way, since encouraging comments were temporarily suspended in favor of "silent acknowledgements":

It would be a grey world for two hours, a world of work while you backed off from the mental calculations because they couldn't soften your mood; hard to tell where such hours went or what they felt like. They felt like sensation, like arms moving, chilly wind making part of your face feel alive as you rounded the bend; hours like houses coming into view, then vanishing, leaving trees again, now the signboard, and then the growing awareness of the tongue that signals thirst, the discussion in the mind of when to get a drink and what kind of drink to get and whether it should be sugar- ed or not, and all the while the world continued to slither through and you slid into the world so the hours didn't bring boredom to contend with, rather they brought difficulties that sought attention then faded only to return again, (p. 11-12).

James remembers the discomforts of the run with clarity: They created an experience in which he could relate. Even though the race situation was unfamiliar, the pain and physical sensations that arose from the fatigue of running many miles were familiar. The familiarity of the
pain, and general discomfort, were reassuring and comforting:

Different parts of the body chafed, burned, begged in some way or another for release; so many needs for toilet, food, sleep, even for friendliness. These demands didn't so much interrupt the work as become part of the work. The sacredness of these small preoccupations was understood by others, (p. 12).

The participants' simple needs craved attention from the handlers. Yet, neither the runners nor the handlers were bothered by either the frequency or the urgency of the needs. The handlers were performing their appointed duties: The reason that they were present at the track and the medical tent. The runners instead of feeling perturbed by the "annoying necessities of ultra running", found that they accepted the demands as an inherent part of the "ultra experience":

'Do you need more ice for your foot?' someone asked, while I was lying in the medical tent. Ice meant release from pain, the chance to work again, the chance to nurse my hurting self a bit farther. Ice -- it was almost an embodiment of the personal respect others bore us for the effort. None of the helpers ever asked us, 'Why are you doing it', everyone took it for granted that it was important work, (p. 12).

Little things took on expanded meanings. Ice relieved the swelling of inflamed muscles, which in turn permitted the runners to return to the "world of the track":

'You feel as if you want to help the runners achieve their goals,' a woman handler said. Then she went on to say something that was so clear, so illuminating that I thought I would not forget the exact way she phrased it. It
was something of an expression of wondering that people like herself, who came along to run with the runners, to bring them a little company and cheer, people who worked without pay such long hours doing such seemingly mundane things as counting laps, became so caught up in it. 'Why?' I asked. 'Because you become part of their effort,' she said, which to me meant we become you and you become us, and there is no better feeling than that, (p. 13).

The combined effort of the runners and the handlers would produce a successful six-day event. The event would not exist without the full engagement of both the handlers and the runners. Each group was essential for the survival of the other; there were no extraneous elements in the "six-day":

As the days progressed we began to look older. Hook lines near the bottom of the nose slanted down past the mouth on unshaven faces; I felt a softening of the boundaries between myself and other people, (p. 13).

With each lap around the track, the runners found themselves engaged in the "process of fatigue." As they surrendered to the exhaustion, inherent in their task, the runners also discovered that they were surrendering to each other as well. The borders between individuals dissolved as the runners circled the track; slowly unwinding the barriers:

The big medical tent became the village common, the floating community, the tribal lodge house in which everything was tended to within a few square feet. I remembered one night, don't remember any more which it was, maybe the last. I lay on my back with my legs elevated on a chair, a plastic bag of melting ice dripping over my ankle, a wool cap pulled down to my eyebrows, arms resting on my chest. Such
a simple thing: The way your arms fold and the warmth and pressure of them. They were on vacation, not obliged to move. A rest in this tired space seemed like a sweet little meadow way up on the snowy heights of the mountain I was trying to scale. I remember looking up at the yellow skin of the tent overhead, at the delicacy with which the lines of its rippled surface fanned away from the center pole. Twenty voices chattered; as if spinning a radio dial, I could pick up one band of energy at a time, (pp. 16-17).

Respite for the runners, from the "endless track", was found in the "yellow medical tent." Runners entered the tent for their needs to be attended; to be comforted, even perhaps to momentarily catch their breath. The runners found relief from their maladies in the simpliest remedies. Ice and hot chicken soup became essential, if not invaluable commodities in the world of ultra distance runners:

The handlers kept us going throughout the long, cold night. The moon that last night came up early, rose right out of a distant sidewalk, a great perfect orange wafer so enormous that the other runners' voices cracked with glee in welcoming it. Far below tiny men continued on their own endlessly circular way. It became cold at such hours, so all you could do was zip up your parka, sling your hands in your pockets and stump along, heedless of everything except going on without hope, without resentment, without desire, (p. 18).

Just as the runners endlessly circled the track, the earth was involved in its own "circular journey." The runners found that they began to newly appreciate the process of the revolving earth. Just as they continued to run through all hours of the day and night, in all types of
weather, the earth endlessly rotated on its axis and revolved around the sun. The earth's process is often forgotten until an individual is required to be awake for extended periods of time and forced to ponder the daily cycles of nature:

The handlers verbally hugged us with encouragement every time we came around, 'Number 17 coming up, fifty-four miles done, fantastic... great going...keep going!' I started to want to come around, to please them, to please myself. Then, with the tent behind me, while with me were the long, cold backstretch, the damp wind, the wasted winter whiteness of the moon, strange thoughts entered and exited, the hope that everyone else would die off and just I alone were winning, the ultimate competitive fantasy. But after some time elapsed, fantasy always fell away, leaving the sore legs, the grinding need for a drink, the foggy bad patch where I got down on my mental knees and started counting minutes, talking myself through, fighting the urge to quit, to give into the desire to sit down, to do something human. But that wasn't what the six days were about, (pp. 18-19).

The handlers encouragement along the homestretch of the track, gave the runners a much needed boost. However, the boost was fleeting as the runners entered the lonely, barren backstretch, they realized that they were alone in the task. With each trip to the backstretch, James felt the innate aloneness of being human increasingly overwhelming:

Here we were, just as we had to be, finding ourselves alive and moving on the last day of the race. One thing that hadn't changed in the hundred years since six day races were at their zenith -- those who run them suffer. In the abuse of the flesh was evidence of determination, (p. 19).
As the days passed, James felt increasingly bound to his task. James' pain and discomfort seemed to grow concurrently with his determination. With each passing lap, James wasn't sure if he was "winding-up" or "winding-down." James found himself so thoroughly engaged in the process of the run that he didn't know when the event had begun or when it would finally end:

One runner, a 29 year old, fireman, ran with his eyes closed for long stretches and carried his elongated frame with a sense of compression too, as if engaged in a battle with fear. He seemed in a constant state of wincing, as if waiting for the idea of all that distance and time to crush him. Yet on the last day he covered 100 miles, loping past, elbows working, his pale complexion flushed, the hissing sound of his breathing communicating an excitement, a growing joy and a certainty that YES, he was rallying. To run for so long, to reach down so deep and discover it possible after all, almost easy in a way, with each successive lap -- that's the feeling that kept igniting 'the jaded carbon heap of body into flesh fire,' (p.20).

"Other" runners seemed to discover the joy that emerges when an individual is able to reach deep within himself or herself and emerge with energies they did not believe that they held:

It's a mode of living in which energies flow and I learn and I'm aware. They say, what do you think about? But thoughts cycle. They're boring and the mind comes to a stop here and there, or thoughts are spacing out, and I'm getting a very bright retinal charge like an acid trip. Sometimes you feel really bad, and then suddenly it's quite pleasant really. All these energies that come from going right through the night, day after day like that! (p. 21).
Conventional living does not usually require individuals to engage themselves fully in various endeavors. When a person performs any extraordinary deed, a type of joy is released that permits new insights to be discovered:

It was nice encountering those school kids. The first couple of days they're a little puzzled. They soon find out they love you and introduce you to the other kids. You run all night and you'll be there in the morning for them. As they got to know me, I got to know them. I'm a 40 year old adult and I don't have any children of my own. As you get older you seem to lose your ability to love -- suddenly here it is the same as it's always been -- open and vulnerable. Seems like a huge sort of present, (p. 21).

James found himself becoming renewed, and with this renewal came a vulnerability. He was able to accept and return the love that was offered by the children, gathered at the track each day. The children, "similar to characters in a Dickens novel", would greet the runners at sunrise and return to again cheer at the end of each school day. Their efforts of encouragement were initially overlooked by the runners in the early days of the race. However, the children's tenacity in returning daily to cheer, gradually endeared them to the participants. The love that was so abundantly given by the children was accepted and returned two-fold by the runners:

Ten miles to go seemed like it was still a year away. Only when it was six laps away did I feel I could do it. I always felt I would not get there. On the very last lap I had no
stomach. It was just gone, and in its place — free lift, amazing, no tiredness, as if shackles had been taken off, as if I were just starting off. The instant I crossed the finish line it was like Christmas, birthday, and New Year's and every conceivable good thing. When they landed on the moon — I know you can't compare this with 'that' — but it's what I imagine they felt, (p. 23).

The joy that James experienced upon completing his six-day race was unparalleled to anything that he had ever experienced before. Great achievements of history were called to mind, as James grappled with his accomplishments:

It was painful in a way to run the homestretch past the grandstand. The applause and attention seemed too much; it broke upon us too late. All that external stuff of record breaking, the tears, the arms around each other as we formed twos and threes and fives and tramped round together -- that was fine for us, but the world didn't really know about everything that came before. It was still a private event, (p. 23).

The world was able to see the "external" accomplishment of the "six-day deed well done." However, the "real" celebration was maintained within each runner as they came to accept that their six-day travail was indeed completed with success:

I don't know why it was so amazing -- amazing to feel so tired, so jaded, so bitter. What are you supposed to do when you are free again? I went away from everyone and lay on my back and looked up at the sky. We were in heaven now and they had to confirm it by all manner of speeches and handshaking. The mayor is due at any moment in his fancy car, but this is better than anything, just lying there looking up at the sky as open and tranquil as if it had been six days before, (p. 24).
The final release from the event was an intensely private moment. Speeches by the mayor of the town and awards given seemed to cheapen the essence of the experiences of each runner:

I remember one woman who paced me through several miles, chattered about birds for awhile, especially the Chimney Swift. The woman said that the Swifts are always in flight, they even mate on the wing, sleep on the wing, eat on the wing -- do everything while they fly, even give birth that way. She had heard of a Swift that fell down a chimney and when they examined it they found it was 17 years old. It was the first time in it's life it had probably ever been on the ground. I remember the funny way she talked of Swifts; like Swifts we too were assigned a tremendous task, (p. 12).

* * * * *

Ed Ayres

Ed Ayres is a 51 year old magazine publisher who has been running for more than twenty years. In the summer of 1990, Ed made a decision to run the Western States 100 Mile, through the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range in Northern California. At the time Ed was going through a period of great personal strife, and saw this extraordinary event as a "means to setting things right." For Ed, this would be no lighthearted frolic in the wilderness, "no middle-aged reliving of Boy Scout adventures." It was to be a wild gamble against improbable odds.

Ed was well prepared; it was only an extension of what he had already learned in years of marathons and shorter
races. For Ed, running Western States would be like "sitting in a war room directing the logistics of a military campaign." Keep hydrated to within three percent of starting weight. Load on 10,000 calories between the start and mile 80. Reflect direct sunlight from the head in open areas, while optimizing evaporative and convective cooling in the shade, and so on and on. Ed knew this would be a test of moral fiber as well as physical; that he would be confronted by threats more insidious than exhaustion and dehydration:

We started out at 5:00 am, running straight toward the moon. The first few seconds were surrealistic, as an ABC TV helicopter droned overhead and a huge bank of strobe lights lit us up for the cameras. Then we were out into the pre-dawn darkness and the business of settling into a comfortable place, (p. 104).

In 1986 a film crew from ABC's Wide World of Sports began to televise the Western States Race to a national audience. The coverage drew an increase in participants throughout the next few years. However, since 1990, the race director has started a stringent selection process. Entrants have to demonstrate an ability to successfully complete a 100 mile race either by finishing a 100 mile trail race in the previous year or running a 50 mile race in under seven hours.

It is therefore the elite of the ultra running community that gather in the Sierras on a late July morning. These are committed ultra runners, who run in
excess of 90 plus miles a week and focus on their training, often to the exclusion of other activities. For some, families and other social obligations are given secondary importance, training for the Western States becomes the central focus in their lives. Training has to be the central focus, 100 miles through rugged, mountain terrain isn't done on a whim:

Time began to telescope. The ascent into Emigrant Pass was so easy as to be almost dreamlike. The sun broke across the mountain as we were crossing the snowfield approaching the peak, bathing the single file of runners' backs ahead of me with golden light. There had been no gradual transition from night to morning; the light had washed across the mountain like a wave. The only other time I had ever seen a sunrise so sudden was during a plane flight across the Atlantic. I was sleepily gazing out of the window when the sun just 'popped' out of the dark horizon, bringing a round of applause from the passengers. When the sun struck the snowfields of Emigrant Pass, there was no applause, the runners were not spectators to the event but part of it, (p. 104).

The run had begun with 200 highly skilled ultra runners starting the climb from the bottom of Squaw Valley at 6,200 feet. There is a large sense of "we" among the ultra runners. No one runs 100 miles alone, no one can. Throughout the long miles ahead, the community of runners would talk many of its members through extremely trying time, encouraging them to maintain their enthusiasm so that they could continue on.

Similar to the feeling of community among the runners, is the experience of being connected intimately with
nature. Ed believed he was not observing nature in a detached manner, but witnessing the phenomena as if it were part of himself:

I concentrated on efficiency, resisting any urge to rush. Shortly after passing the top, my watch beeped to signify that an hour had passed. We crossed Granite Chief Wilderness, gradually descending through fields of purple flowers. At Hodgson's Cabin the watch beeped again; and as the day progressed and we passed from cool morning to hot midday and afternoon, the beeping became itself a kind of rhythm, (p. 104-105).

Ed knew that one of the most difficult aspects of the 100 mile trek, for him, would be maintaining a high level of patience. The art of patience, perhaps is one of the most difficult lessons for an ultra distance runner to learn, particularly an American living in a world of fast-track lifestyles and rapidly diminishing attention spans. Ed felt that it was perhaps even more difficult for him; for someone whose personal circumstances, as well as culture, impose a sense of urgency:

At the trail briefing the day before the race, I looked around at the runners. They looked like a typical group of rugged outdoors people; people you would see bicycling or backpacking on any given Saturday afternoon throughout the U.S. They were lean, tanned, weathered, and looked relaxed, good-natured, and thoughtful. A majority of the men and women had squint marks around their eyes. I wondered, were they as laid back as they seemed. Didn't they realize that they were about to embark upon a 100 mile adventure? I do not believe that people run 100 miles across the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range on impulse. I did not inquire into the motives of these runners, but I would
guess that many had very more much at stake
than their laid-back demeanors would have
suggested, (p. 105).

Friends of Ed often tell him that his insanely high
stress lifestyle, is one of his own choice. Ed smiles and
relates that perhaps this is true, but that doesn't
necessarily mean that he is glad of his choice. Ed
believes that training for and participating in the Western
States 100 Mile was a way to remedy his choice. The 100
mile was a way to regain some of the zest for life that Ed
remembers having some "14 odd years before", when both his
publishing business and his running were "going strong."
Ed's energy at that time seemed limitless. He played
editor, publisher, writer, circulation manager, production
manager, secretary and errand boy for his "infant"
publishing company. At the same time doing the best
running of his life.

In November of 1977, Ed ran the JFK 50 Mile, at that
time the country's largest ultramarathon with about 450
runners, and finished first. Ed was 36 years old and felt
as though his life was just beginning. Then the problems
seemed to hit all at one time. Ed discovered that one of
his company's accountants was embezzling thousands, opening
his own account in a Maryland bank. Concurrently, at the
birth of Ed and wife, Sharon's, first child, Sharon was
suddenly afflicted with a severe illness. Ed's running
crashed to an all time low, when Ed was diagnosed with
Hypothyroidism. All this was too much, Ed knew something had to be done. What he did was begin a slow recovery process that restored strength through progressive increases in training and racing distance.

Western States was to be the ultimate test of Ed's return to "wholeness." The Western States race is the toughest major footrace in the world. To finish it was the most uncompromising test of endurance there was, and Ed felt that he needed to pass that test:

Loping down the rocky trail from Red Star Ridge to Duncan Canyon at 24 miles, I felt light and free, like a butterfly released from its cocoon. I had trained well for the distance, completing at least 30 runs of 30 miles or longer in the preceding eight months. A short distance beyond Duncan Canyon, I commented to another runner that we had just completed a marathon. He responded with the chuckle of a runner who feels good now but has 74 miles to go. Myself, I felt fine except for the noticeable tiredness in my quadriceps. After 2500 foot climb to Emigrant Pass we had completed over 2 hours of downhill running, some of it quite steep, and I wasn't used to putting on the brakes so much, (pp. 113-114).

As the race progressed through the first 26 miles, Ed noticed that his anxiety was beginning to rise. The anxiety was generated through a deep need to hurry, to hasten the pace, to finish and finally feel the release that is granted by a great accomplishment:

My biggest concern was with keeping adequately hydrated and fueled. The logistics of food and water are unusually difficult at Western States because of the inaccessibility of the terrain. At the trail briefing the day before, I learned that the 30 mile point would be the first point
in the course where support crews had access by car. The road was so full of switchbacks that it took most vehicles 3.5 hours from the start to reach the 30 mile point, (p. 114).

Running takes on an added meaning when ultra distances are challenged. Caloric intake and hydration take on upmost importance, if adequately supplied, their presence allows the runner to continue on. On the Western States course, the crews that supply the runners with their fuel had almost as difficult a time as the runners in maneuvering through the mountains. The crews therefore had to be committed to the goal of their runner. The runners' needs must take precedence over the crews' needs. The runner must be allowed to concentrate solely on running, while the crew worries about the necessities of food, water and encouragement:

With no official water stops in the first 29 miles, every runner had to carry water. Most runners wore water belts, I had selected to use 'Hanteens', which are plastic containers shaped like heavy hands that can carry 12 oz. of water each. We'd been warned about the heat. It was surprising to me that there could be any place in North America where you could go through snow and 100 degree heat in the same run. In the canyons we had been warned it would be around 110 degrees, (pp. 114-115).

Since running the Western States Race is of epic proportions, stories have been developed concerning the race. Some of the stories contain elements of truth, others are just "plain ridiculous." One story that is related, concerns the extreme high heat that is experienced in the canyons.
The story revolves around one young man, who had suffered a bout of flu in the week prior to the race. He entered the race despite being severely dehydrated, and proceeded to run the first 30 miles without ingesting any fluids. When he entered an area appropriately called Hell's Canyon, due to its 100 plus degree heat, he experienced nausea and heard a squeaking sound that seemed to emanate from his muscles. A race official discovered the man deliriously wandering miles away from the course many hours later.

Taken to an area hospital, it was discovered that the squeaking noises were due to severe muscle dehydration. The muscles were so dry that the individual filaments had become similar to piano wire. With each step they had rubbed against each other creating a squeaking type of noise. The young man eventually recovered, and never again became so severely dehydrated. Certainly no one hearing this story will ever again take the problem of dehydration lightly. The story serves its purpose to educate Western States participants:

My worst nightmare was that I'd be medically disqualified due to dehydration. My body is not shy about sweating. In the pre-race briefing, one of the race officials had noted that runners often take an 'adversarial' attitude toward doctors. She urged us to understand that the doctors were really out there to help us, not impede us, and would work with us to get through. I was conscious of their support at each of the aid stations. At the 24-mile checkpoint, a doctor exhorted us to
'tank-up now, so you'll be ready for the first major medical in six miles!' By now we were in the heat of the day. I was nervous about the weight check as I came into Robinson Flats and was hustled onto the scale. Amazingly, my starting weight was exactly what I weighed-in at 30 miles, (pp. 115-116).

Ed was conscious of his potential dehydration problem. Ed knew his limitations and his history of losing a high percentage of his body weight on long, hot runs. He ingested Coke in a "defizzed" form, believing that the sugar would slow the absorption, therefore, staying longer in his body.

The medical doctors at each aid station would ensure that no runners that had lost more than 3% of their starting body weight would be allowed to continue. Runners often grumble at what they view as an unnecessary intervention, impinging on their right to participate in the race. Ed was not pleased at the paternalistic attitude taken by the race directors. He believed that the race directors only wanted medical supervision in order to prevent any type of a lawsuit:

From the stories I had heard about the 100 degree temperatures in the canyons, I had envisioned deep chasms of sunblasted rock, like narrow cousins of the Grand Canyon. Much to my surprise, I found Deadwood Canyon to be heavily forested, and the temperature no higher than 90 degrees. But the trail descended steeply in a series of precipitous switchbacks, and in less than 10 minutes I had gone beyond any downhill in my experience. After 20 minutes, I became acutely aware of my toes; they were smashing into the fronts of my shoes, and I was beginning to stub them with painful regularity. My quadriceps, unaccustomed to
such continuous braking, were beginning to ache. I moved slower and slower, feeling as though I was running barefoot on shards of glass. It took me an hour to reach the bottom, at which point the trail crossed a small footbridge over a stream, and I started to climb. As I began the ascent, I felt suddenly overwhelmed. I was dizzy -- whether from heat or altitude I don't know -- and my quads were shot. As I struggled upward, I talked with another runner who had stopped briefly to sit on a rock. He said the next canyon was just as bad. At the top of the canyon, a place called Devil's Thumb, there was a weigh-in. I had lost four pounds in four miles, (pp. 116-117).

After thirty miles Ed noticed his tiredness increasing with every mile. On a downhill portion of Deadwood Canyon the fleeting feeling of tiredness became a reality; the toes were the first to "mention pain."

The thirty-five mile point in the course is often the toughest section: Well beyond the marathon distance, yet approximately 65 miles left to run. Ed experienced an overwhelming sensation, which he attributed to the heat and/or altitude. However, it could have been that he found himself in the midst of an incredible project and only a third finished. To have run thirty-five miles and know that you have sixty-five miles yet to travel, most of it without the company of other humans, must be an overpowering sensation:

The truth is that I don't remember the next canyon, Eldorado, quite as clearly. Whatever it was that happened to me, happened in Deadwood Canyon. The rest of the way down to Eldorado and back up to Michigan Bluff, I was preoccupied with what I would say to my loved ones, to all the people I had told I was going to run this race, if I decided to quit, (p. 117).
In Deadwood Canyon, Ed decided that to continue on was a mistake. In retrospect, Ed thinks that the mistake was to commit to dropping-out while in the throes of a painful moment:

It's amazing how much difference in attitude a little sugar in the brain can make, as I discovered a few hours later -- a few hours too late. In retrospect, coming into Michigan Bluff might have been cause for celebration, or at least for hope. It was just after six pm: I had been running for 13 hours and had gotten through the toughest part of the course. I was still on schedule for a 24 hour finish, and that had been my goal; to win the coveted silver belt buckle awarded to all who finish in 24 hours or less. I had been three hours ahead of the cut-off pace. My quads were dead, but I wouldn't have needed them for several hours. But that was the perspective that came later. What I did at the time was to walk over to an official and say, 'I'm dropping out.' I held out my right arm, the one with the medical wristband which must be surrendered if you leave the race. As the official clipped off the wristband with her scissors, too late I thought, 'Oh no!' (pp. 117-118).

Ed admits to being a perfectionist, which in some situations is more of a hindrance than a blessing. Ed had created a plan for the race, that he thought he had to follow exactly. When he began to become tired before he had specified in his pre-race plan, Ed became discouraged. Once Ed deviated from the plan, he felt as though he had failed. Ed was so preoccupied with his failure to stay with the plan, that he forgot he was still involved in a race. Instead of relishing the beauty of the surrounding environment, and taking a logical look at his
present situation, he concentrated on what he had failed to do:

I remember one finisher, a San Francisco attorney, who finished in 28:45:25 stated that, 'Runners can get through the weary and lonely hours only if they are at peace with themselves.' On a sunny afternoon in the high Sierras of California, I lost sight of a larger picture, a significant experience. I became so distressed about the condition of the downhill running muscles of my upper legs that I lost touch with the fundamental soundness of the rest of my body. I also lost touch with my primary objective: to finish the race. I still wonder what might have happened if I had eaten and rested for half an hour, then walked out of Michigan Bluff in no hurry, content to wait until I felt ready to break into a jog, (pp. 118-119).

Ed's ultimate error was one of impatience. Throughout his long day in the Sierra Nevada Range, he successfully avoided all entanglements of competition. Ed had moved easily, conserved energy successfully, and describes time passing like "a mountain breeze." Facing exhaustion at Michigan Bluff, Ed became impatient to resolve "the agony of the race":

Later at the award ceremony I heard a happy story. Tom O'Neil of Butte, Montana ran most of the 100 miles with a wrenched left knee. O'Neil who finished in 29:10:54, said at one point he was sitting in a medical tent next to a young man who had taken a bad fall and dislocated his shoulder. The shoulder was heavily bandaged, and the young man felt hopelessly immobilized. O'Neil remembers that the man was about to have his wristband cut off, when O'Neil cautioned him to wait awhile and think it over, 'you have plenty of time'. The man waited and later saw O'Neil at the finish line. The young man had gotten through. The
advice from O'Neil had been taken to heart. Patience is what the young man had and it made my impatience even more striking, (pp. 119-120).

* * * * *

Mark Will-Weber

The 1992 Tour of Tameside, sponsored and promoted by Ron Hill Sports was billed in the race brochure as "The toughest challenge in British Athletics." The "Tour" consists of six races over a seven day span. Famed British Marathoner, Ron Hill conceived of the race in 1981 and modeled it after the "Tour de France" bicycle race, with races of various distances and terrains. The Tour of Tameside adds up to a double marathon (52 miles), and final places are determined by accumulated time.

Mark Will-Weber and his wife, Sally, decided to take a running vacation, with Mark running and Sally at the wheel of the Rent-a-Car. The week prior to leaving for England, Mark found himself in his office cubicle, daydreaming about racing strategies for various parts of the course:

What I loved most, though, was the promise of impending adventure. Just me, racing in England. Me, striding smoothly through quaint stone villages and the green countryside. Me, hoisting a few pints of ale in post-race comraderie with the local lads at 'Ye Old Town Pub', that's what I envisioned, (p. 132).

Once in England, Sally and Mike drove from London to Hyde, a working class town of factories and shops. Stopping at a pub in Buxton, a village in the rugged Peak District of Derbyshire, Mike met Billy. Billy reminisced
about running the tour in 1984, when he weighed "a few stones less, mind you." Mark focused on one phrase Billy used in reply to Mark's question of the tour's difficulty, "Tough? Why its bloody hell!" Later, when Mark picked up his racing bib number at Ron Hill's Running Wild Athletics shop in Hyde, he questioned his luck for his racing bib number was number 13, "how lucky can you get?"

Everyone who stands on the starting line for a stage race has some type of story, and this was Mark Will-Weber's. Journalist, lured by a trip to England, running chiefly to observe, and experience. His primary goal; finish. His secondary goal; avoid serious injury and/or embarrassment.

Nearly 600 runners ran the Tour of Tameside, (so named because the River Tame runs through the region). On day one the runners gathered at a big stone building, Hyde's Town Hall, to sign-in. Mark signed his name next to number 13 on a big sheet of white cardboard. Five empty places to sign remained, each representing a race to be run. A race volunteer at the table smiled, "Later in the week, when runners get more and more tired, you can hardly read their writing."

So it began. Britain in a grip of a heat wave, (high 80's) and a full tour ahead, for Mark it seemed logical to start conservatively. Mark learned on "day one" that logical people don't sign-up for the tour. The pack
blasted off right from the opening gun. Mark hit two miles faster than he wished, about 10:20, and he estimated he was barely in the top fifty:

I latched onto a steady, fast moving pack and bingo it hit me. This was the way to run the entire 'tour': Start controlled, hook up with an aggressive but sane group that appeared to be moving up and simply feast on the foolishly ambitious; just like sharks, (p. 135).

Mark's pack included a pony-tailed master runner (40+), named Rob Taylor who constantly exhorted Mark to run faster by calling to him, "all the way, USA!" Rob and Mark shared some water, then worked together for the rest of the run. All the way up the last 2 mile hill, the duo worked together, pacing each other to a top 20 finish for the 11 mile course. After the race Mark and Rob wandered over to receive a rub down from the tour masseur:

You could tell the runners who'd done the tour before because they always made a bee-line for the massage table. When I got off the table, I felt brand new. Joyful runners crammed in the Mosley Clubhouse, and more than a few thirsty participants knocked back pints of stout and ale. Stage one was done, and celebration reigned. It was a lot like I dreamed it would be, and I felt, well euphoric. I could race the tour, and maybe crack the top ten, (p. 136).

Feeling exuberant, Mark left the pub, only to meet Ron Hill. Hill was both directing and running in the tour. Hill promised the next day's run would be tough and that he broke his wrist on the bottom of the hill on the course last year. Mark was stunned:
Not what I wanted to hear. On the tour too much knowledge can hold you back. Ignorance, on the other hand, now there was something that could get you to the finish line, (p. 136).

Day two of the tour dawned in usual English fashion, cloudy, misty, and generally damp. The runners would negotiate an extremely hilly 6 mile course, that was considered to be more uphill than downhill:

How splendid we looked, lined up in our multicolored shorts and singlets, dashing madly between lines of spectators each day, toasting our exploits by night, and then waking to do it again. It could pump you up, and sweep you away too. You couldn't think about the race too much, or you might come to your senses and neglect to sign-in, (p. 137).

The runners lined up on a bridge in the middle of a reservoir. With a 7:30 am start, the sun had not yet emerged from behind the clouds. The leaders, "blitzed into high gear", seemingly oblivious to what awaited. Mark ran his first mile in 4:50, which barely put him in the top 20. Then they turned up, "all the way up into the clouds." Legs that felt "good" after day one, now rapidly felt "raced in":

One glance at the climbing, winding road, one listen to the wheezing pack, and you knew it would only get worse. I forced myself to pass runners all the way to the top of Hobson Moor, knowing full well I'd need a cushion on the way down. At the top I ran in a dream state through an expanse of rock and thistle that was Hobson Moor. Spectators clustered along the top of the Moor, their cheers sounding fuzzy and far away. Suddenly a British gent, wearing the traditional flatcap, leaned toward me and gruffed in my ear, 'Come on lad! Grind 'em out! Grind 'em out!' The way he said 'Gr'
made me think of a garbage truck changing rusty gears. You could no more ignore him than you could ignore pain itself, though certainly he meant well. Still, his exhortations irritated me. 'Grind 'em out!' What the hell did he mean? Grind out the miles? Grind out the competition? Fatigue and anger make a poor parachute. I whipped around a small marker at the top, and then plunged over the edge of the 'fell'. Suddenly, all anger was gone, swept out the back door, and there was only fatigue, quads, as useless as burned out brakes and a shooting electric current of fear. Real fear. Fear of falling, fear that the runner behind or ahead of me might fall, fear of shattered limbs or skulls. My concerns reflected on the faces of race volunteers, posted on the mountainside, hands held high and ready to pluck out any would be 'humpty-dumpties', (p. 138).

Experienced "fell" runners zipped by on Mark's left and right. Still, he also passed people, not by design but merely by letting gravity have its way. Far down the hill, Mark saw a soccer field, lush, green and flat and also the finish:

Then both suddenly and finally, I was there. Half mile to go, sprinting between a friendly gauntlet of spectators who bombarded us with cheers and claps. I tumbled in 12th, collapsed in the chute, muttered 'never again', then trudged off to find a massage, (p. 139).

Mark relates that when British runners recall their races they often talk about bad patches, that time in the race when things look bleakest. Mark's struggle at the top of Hobson Moor on day two was a bad patch. Mark wondered how long does a bad patch last. Mark found on the tour that sometimes bad patches last a whole race. Day three was Mark's self described darkest hour on the tour:
There was little solace in the knowledge that virtually everyone else felt just as bad. On the tour, you're usually around the same group of runners each day. If you begin to see runners you don't recognize from previous days, you're either racing better or worse than ever. I saw a lot of new backs on day three. Runners zoomed by me, and it was like having one of those bad dreams where you run in place and get absolutely nowhere. My quads, pounded to smithereens on the slopes of the fell, ached with each downhill stride. I winced with every step. I had this twisted image stuck in my brain; Yankee in the RAF, coaxing his bullet ridden Spitfire back to base for an emergency landing. My base was the massage table. I compounded my worst race on the tour by failing to get immediately in-line for a rub-down, more proof of my misfiring mind. By the time I flopped down on the table, the street lights were on in front of the Hyde Town Hall, (p. 140).

Day four was the tour runners day off, and a welcome day it was:

Our day off arrived with all the fanfare of a one day pass to rally some friendly village; kinda' like being in a war. Everyday you peek over the top of the trench and the war's still there. Everyday you weigh your losses and how much ammunition you have left. But we'd be back at the front soon enough. The next day's half-marathon hung over our heads like advance orders from high command. The temptation was to lounge around the hotel, alternating naps, hot whirlpools, and megadoses of aspirin, (p. 141).

What Mike and Sally did was to journey to Wales. Sally suggested that Mike needed to forget about the tour, and riding through cobble-stoned villages might somehow help. As Sally drove, all Mike could think about was the "tour being bloody hell":

I decided that running the tour was only half the hell, thinking about each upcoming race was the other half. That's the problem with a day
off you have too much time to think. Dropping out was one thought, but not really an option. For one thing, it made way too much sense. For me logic didn't have a whole lot to do with the tour. The tour is about being British and keeping a stiff upper lip, (p. 141).

Mark was eager for day five and the half-marathon to begin. He was restless for he had taken a complete day off on day four, "I didn't even want to walk much." Mark wanted to stretch his legs and inhale the salty English air:

Like a renewed barrage it began again. Apparently regenerated from the day off, the leaders hammered through the opening miles. The 2-loop, 13 mile course was relatively flat with a finish on the track. I lagged in the third or fourth cluster of runners, partly by design and partly because I couldn't run any faster. For three miles, I felt like an unoiled Tin Man, my stride all stiff and clanky. It took all my concentration just to stay with the pack. Then something happened that I really didn't count on; I gradually got 'loose'. It felt weird, and I didn't quite trust it to be true. I traded some pulls at the front of our pack. Other runners began to come back to us, and each catch seemed to fuel our advance. By five miles, we were sharks locked into a feeding frenzy. Our group didn't break up until the final 5km. A spectator on the infield leaned in and implored us to, 'Come on, stick 'em! Stick 'em!' (p. 142-143).

From Ron Hill came the good news, and Mark was ready for some good news. Hill stated that once a runner gets through the half-marathon, the last two days are a "breeze." Mark clearly remembers Hill stating that if you enjoyed the previous four races the last two races would be terrific:
Enjoy? There were times when I was absolutely astounded by the sheer absurdity of it all. But damned if the tour didn't radiate some old magic, the gladiator's simplistic glory in the ancient arena. It could suck you in. The tour had a challenge and a comraderie you could cling to, and once or twice, I caught myself thinking, 'next year, I'll really train for this.' Then reality kicked in, 'Nope. Never again, man. This is once and done,' (p.143).

Day six arrived and a 6.3 mile cross-country race awaited Mark and his companion runners. Mark was anxious to regain the momentum that he had established in the previous days' half-marathon:

Of course, there was still the cross country race, and you could bet a few English pounds that the fifth stage wouldn't be any soft jaunt on the manicured fairways of the country club golf course. Not to worry. The 6.3 mile race at Ashton-u-Lyne was tailored made for a groundhog. Sharp, little hills, lots of ruts, a big ditch or two. A sideways duck through a small opening in a thick hedge. The course was, more or less, three roller-coaster loops over a dirt path. Great huh!? Still, with the half-marathon behind us, our esprit de corps were high. Gathering for the start, the officials couldn't get us behind the line; not even close and it took Ron Hill himself to move us back. Hill screamed at us, 'If you move up any closer, lads, you'll be halfway to the bloody mile marker!' We bolted off, with the extra incentive to get to the hedge opening before 'rush hour'. I found myself racing alongside a fast Bulgarian runner, Petko. I got scared and backed off, thinking I was out too fast. He'd been far ahead of me in all the previous stages. Later, of course, I'd wish I'd stuck with him, as Petko weaved his way up to 6th place on the bump-and-grind circuit. I settled for 11th, which turned out to be my highest finish in any stage of the tour. The disaster of my third race seemed in the distant past, and I knew I could muster one more racing effort. The tour can beat you up. After five races, looking at another pulverized runner,
sore and sullen, was a lot like looking in a mirror, (pp. 144-145).

Before each stage of the tour, race officials provided the results of the previous day's race, plus the cumulative standings. Therefore, going into the final race, every runner knew where he or she stood. The real question seemed to be who could muster the energy for the last stage. The final race began at 2 pm at the top of Mossley Village, where the runners would plunge down to the canal and then run the narrow towpath back to the finish at Hyde Town Square. This was the only day it rained:

My place? Me? I sat 13th overall, mimicking my bib number, more than 30 seconds behind 12th and about 1 minute ahead of 14th. Only a dream race; or a totally disastrous one, could change my overall place. By the time we hit the towpath, the rain had stopped, but the footing was slick. I thought this race, at least, might be easy. But no! The course had low bridges to duck under the cobblestone ramps to charge up that were as slippery as bars of bathsoap. The temptation was simply to run training pace. After all, a little voice reasoned, why kill yourself? But I put my head down, lifted stony legs and scratched and clawed for every position, every second, every stride. It seemed silly, but somehow I thought anything less than a racing effort would taint my performance; my tour, and it didn't matter that I'd be the only one to realize it. In the middle, my shoelace came loose, and I was irate about losing time when I stopped to tie it. In the last mile, the sun broke out and the air grew hot and muggy along the waterway. We burst from behind a brick factory onto a road and began the final charge to the finish. I remember the sweet sting of sweat in my eyes, the tangy salt taste in my mouth, and the crowd at Hyde Town Square cheering us in. I finished 16th in the last stage, and 13th overall. Rob Taylor, the master's winner, sprinted in right after me, and when we came through the chute, he said, 'Splendid tour, Mark, splendid tour!' Just him saying that meant a helluva lot more to me than
the engraved finishers medal, even though I like the medal a lot! I staggered around, half-dead, half-happy. Finishers everywhere shook hands, slapped backs, congratulated each other on finishing, fighting the tour to a draw. You can't really 'beat' the Tour of Tameside. The best you can hope for is to break even, (pp. 146-147).

After limping back to the Hyde Inn, Mark took a lingering bath, savoring his victory. The award ceremony was to be held later that evening at the Hyde Town Hall. Mark had conflicting feelings about coming to the end of the stage race; he was relieved that the pain and discomfort of racing were behind him, but he was going to miss the excitement and the fellowship he experienced on the course:

At the award ceremony at Hyde Town Hall, tour announcer, Dickie Hughes, had to calm everybody down a bit, especially the blokes in the balcony, 'Keep your pints off the railing, lads, we don't want any accidents,' he pleaded. Imagine that. You survive the tour, then get bonked on the head by a falling pint of English Stout! In the middle of the celebration, a lady master's runner, named Pauline Smith limped across the finish line. She'd torn some ligaments in the cross country race but wouldn't quit. Pauline had hobbled it all the way down the canal towpath, her knee tightly wrapped just to finish the tour. Pauline explained her tenacity, 'I couldn't miss the champagne!' This is a perfect way to end this story of the race -- well I guess my race. Admirst the clapping and cheering and clanking of pint glasses, I knew why I had done it. The struggle was the 'reason why' enough. It was that clear, that simple, and I felt a sudden sadness that the tour was over, and worse, that I'd probably never go back! (p. 148).
The Santa Barbara Nine Trails is a tough, but beautiful 50 mile race in the foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. All this beauty is tempered by the relentless roller-coaster nature of the course, that has frustrated many an ultra runner. Only in its second year of existence, the race attracts 169 runners from all over North America.

The "Nine Trails" is named for the number of looping trails that the runners traverse in the course of the 50 mile race. Santa Barbara has an extensive network of trails in the hills adjacent to the city. Most of these trails lead 3,000-4,000 feet up to the crest of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Consequently, this course is a "quad burner." Renowned for destroying runners quadricep muscles due to the number of downhills and frequent muddy sections. The loops of "Nine Trails" are much harder than most of the ultra runners expect. The course's difficulty has induced many runners to quip, "Western States 100 Mile, is good training for the Nine Trails 50 Mile."

The notoriety of the Nine Trails course lead to its selection as the "profile" race. The Nine Trails racers, volunteers, and crew personal were extremely open and giving with their race experience and perceptions. The
following profile is composed of four Nine Trails race participants' experiences and perceptions that occurred along the trail. Two racers, an aid station volunteer, and a crew pacing member, compose the group of four participants. Though all four individuals offer insights into one 50 mile race, each captures certain unique elements in the race.

Michael McCumber

Michael McCumber entered the Santa Barbara 50 miles, at the encouragement of his son. Even though Michael runs the mountain trails on a regular basis, he hesitated to enter this race. When he is running on his own, Michael knows that he will be able to run and walk as he wishes. Racing would place time and pace demands on Michael's running. As an account executive at a Santa Barbara bank, Michael believes that his running should allow him some relaxation from his demanding job schedule. Michael doesn't want his running to evolve into a competitive endeavor, for "I get enough competition in my work environment."

Michael's son, Sam, used a persuasive tactic to induce his father to race. Sam thought that the race would allow his father to spend some "quality time" working on their father and son relationship. Michael laughed as he related, "Oh sure, I run and Sam watches. Besides I'm not so sure we would only be spending quality time together;
sounds more like quantity time." Another inducement to participate in Nine Trails is that Michael's good friend, Patsy Dorsey, is the race director:

This was a strangely satisfying run. I think maybe I don't take my body so much for granted as perhaps I once did; or better know its limits. It wasn't the euphoria like the first time I ran a really good 10km. That was so unexpected, and I had just the right amount of anticipation and suspense. I wanted it intensely and yet of course had no idea if I could. Nor was it like my first/last competitive marathon. That was the satisfaction of a goal completed. But this was more a process engaged. Euphoria is the right word, but the wrong flavor. It's a kind of deep satisfaction, happiness. Not a goal where I assume I'll get better and better. Better seems almost irrelevant. I entered thinking I didn't know what to expect, and I was right.

Michael found himself engaged fully in the process of the run. He found himself focused on the "here and now." Michael was focused on each step as it happened. Michael held an open attitude toward the experience that he encountered as the race unfolded:

The Nine Trails is the hobby/habit/obsession of Patsy Dorsey, one of the people for whom running changed everything. Over the last half decade, ultra running has become a true love. Last year she put on the first Nine Trails: a roughly 50 mile run up and down the mountainside of the Santa Ynez Range, as they face Santa Barbara. Wait I don't want to exaggerate. There's a section at the start/finish of nearly two miles where you're really only in the foothills, plus there's a level section, I guess thirty yards, at least around mile 23. Patsy lost a bundle last year, but resolved to press on again this year. She succeeded, despite some bizarre bureaucratic hurdles from the forest service. Among other things, she
had to show that there wouldn't be any gambling at the rest stops!

Patsy Dorsey, the race director, tackles race production as though she is running in an actual race. The obstacles that Patsy encounters along the way are seen as, "mud to be sloshed through, nothing more, nothing less." Patsy knew that she would produce a race, it was just a matter of time and overcoming temporary problems:

We started at 6:30 am, about as early as possible to still get minimum safe light on the trail. Everyone went out carefully, and the glide up the back of Jesusita to Inspiration Point seemed easy. Note use of word glide, you wouldn't be hearing it again. We headed down to the first aid station, where I picked up my carefully prepared fanny pack. Cheerful volunteers, who had carried 40 gallons of water a mile up the trail, greeted us as we arrived at 7:10 am. My son, Sam, was there with his friend, Jethro, calling out our race numbers, for the monitors to record. Art Sylvester, with whom I worked this same station last year, reminded me that, as I must know, 'This is completely insane.' How could I disagree? But every time I volunteer for an event, I end up wishing I was in it.

Even though Michael was uncomfortable, "and only 40 minutes into the run," he was glad he was running this year rather than dispensing aid to the runners. Insanity aside, Michael was having fun:

Tunnel Trail, which has some of the most spectacular views and some of the worst footing on the entire course, went much faster than I expected. I continued down Rattlesnake to the Gibraltar connector, and on up the road, and about two miles of road running, the only asphalt, down to the next aid station.
The Santa Barbara Nine Trails, is composed of a series of interlocking trails, confusing at first glance. However, a majority of the 169 runners entered in the trail race, had previously "scouted-out" the course and were confident that they could "navigate" the course, barring mishap. If the unforeseeable did indeed happen, the aid station volunteers would be on the lookout for any, "stray runners that happen to wander by":

The volunteers here are candidates for saint-hood. It was still early morning and cold. The Galbralter aid station was situated at a saddle heading one of the longest open canyon spurs of the mountains, so the wind, more or less strong on other parts of the course, was here cutting into the volunteers' faces at twenty miles per hour. They looked miserable. But they seemed unmindful of the cold, even if their chattering teeth didn't, as they encouraged and fed us. On down the west fork of Cold Springs.

Volunteers cheer, encourage, exhort, and generally serve as motivators for the weary runners. The volunteers at the aid stations placed in the later miles of the course, have a large responsibility to make sure that the runners stay on course, even in their most weary moments:

By this point, my fanny pack had become solely a burden. A fellow participant kindly informed me of the right sort of pack to wear, which once known, was obvious by the fact that all of the experienced ultra runners were wearing them. The right kind of pack is the kind that doesn't bounce. The kind I had, while quite luxurious in some ways, was not a runner's pack. It bounced so much that I carried it in my hands from about mile five on, and remember I had only picked it up at mile four. I wasn't thinking quick enough to drop it at Gibralter,
but after a good deal of more descent, really quite a lot of descent, one really scary hairpin, and a brief period of mild confusion as to the trail, Rest Stop Three, I dumped the pack.

As the race progresses, runners may notice that they are annoyed by the tiniest occurrences. Michael's "fanny pack" was beginning to bother him. In a fifty mile race a small bother, like a small blister, can escalate into a large problem. In Michael's pack were the "necessities", that he felt uncomfortable running without. Despite the aid stations having any and all the necessities that runners may need, from vaseline to Pepto Bismol, Michael wasn't sure if he would feel comfortable dumping his pack. The pack was a safety net, that could be counted on between aid stations. When Michael made the decision to dump his pack, he knew that he had to trust himself not to become ill, "at least not between aid stations":

A word about hydration and calorie intake. I had heard from a number of people how important it was to eat. One hard core ultra runner had told me years ago that eating on the run was, for her, the hardest aspect of ultra running. It made an impression, but I hate to eat and run. So I decided to depend on Exceed that the volunteers were handing out. Dropping the pack, I kept my two water bottles, and during the course of the run, I drank so much Exceed that I needed a relief stop every fifteen minutes. The wages of wild, uninhibited caution.

Caution was indeed the word to describe Michael's run. Except for the "dropping the pack", Michael was proceeding as he had planned. Michael felt that he had adequately prepared himself to face the unexpected. As
Michael ran, he found that he was open to any, "situation that may just pop-up":

It was during this stretch that I ran with the eventual women's winner and course record setter, Melinda Creel. Ultra runners are great to talk to. They act so normal. First we discussed her asthma. Melinda says on a course like this her asthma doesn't bother her at all. Now the Western States that's different, because of the altitude. Around 85 miles, she really starts getting tired because she can't breath well. So that's why people get tired after running 80 miles over the top of the Sierra. Then we talked about training. She said she never ran on the roads because that made bursitis in her knee act up. This is what you do when you have bursitis in your knee? As we ran down a steep, rocky trail. 'Oh, it'll swell up a little bit after this, I suppose. I'll just ice it, no big deal.'

Michael met the women's leader, Melinda Creel, in a section that he described as a "bad patch." As they ran along together and began a conversation, Michael learned that Melinda was also enduring some discomfort. In comparison to Melinda's worries, Michael's problems of fatigue and thirst seemed inconsequential. Melinda had to deal with both the possibility of an asthma attack and impending bursitis. Michael was in awe, "Besides being fast, Melinda had all these health risks to deal with. WOW! The strength of the ultra runners continues to impress me!":

Boy, was I glad to see the turn-around. A sign of how fast one gets into the ultra state of mind, I thought, gee, only three and a half hours and I'm really kind of finding my rhythm here. More wonderful, cheering volunteers, and back we go, starting with a long steep uphill
out of Romero Canyon, and then some rolling ups and downs back to mile 22/28 aid station.

On any other day three and a half hours of running, "would be more than enough," for Michael. But today three and a half hours seemed like just a warm-up, as Michael cruised through the 25 mile halfway point:

Remember that long descent? Now it was time to go back up. At one point, some idiot had moved the course markers to a side trail. I almost ran past, then stopped. It didn't look right to me, but I didn't trust my memory. So, after slipping and falling, I followed the markers, running the trail for about five to eight minutes, becoming more and more convinced I was going the wrong way. I turned and went back, and followed the correct trail, but whoever had moved the markers had also moved the confirmation ribbons Patsy had every few hundred yards. I ran for ten minutes, didn't see any markers or any other runners, and turned around. Back at the mismarked junction again I met a couple of fellow participants, so we discussed it, went down the wrong trail again, finally rejected it, and set off again on the right one. The only good thing about this unfortunate interlude, apparently we were the only ones fooled, and no one else wasted their time.

The unforeseeable had indeed occurred; course markers had been moved, confusing the runners. Michael approached the situation with an open mind. Every event in this race was looked upon as an experience by Michael. Although Michael resented the time and energy that was expended in searching for the correct course, he vowed that he would not allow this mishap to interfere with his enjoyment of the rest of the run:

The next extended section, an uphill, was by far the hardest section for me. I couldn't
even walk fast, let alone run, and it seemed to
go on and on. Every time I looked up, the
ridge seemed vastly high above me. I felt such
a long way from the finish, and I was
struggling just to keep moving. I was so glad
to see the Gibralter aid station.

An unexpected "thing" happened to Michael when he hit
the 28 mile mark. Michael started to run fast and feel
extra-ordinarily well. Michael parallels this experience
with a "really good training run." The type of run that
might "cap-off" a wonderfully productive day; in which you
seemed to flow from success to success:

I didn't understand it, but I rode it for all
it was worth. I ran up to Inspiration from
Tunnel, and the very best I had been hoping for
an hour before was a slow, painful shuffle. I
flew down the back of Inspiration, I think
faster than I ever had, and I've run this trail
at least thirty times. The energy surge gave
out with a half mile to go, but by then my
mental momentum was so strong that I ran it
through, even with a few short steep sections,
and I sailed through the finish line, hearing
the same sweet and generous applause that
greeted all the finishers. Ahh...Well, it was
great.

The last 22 miles were an event of a lifetime. Michael
had never run so well for so long. The feeling defied
explanation, and Michael didn't wish to probe his
experience too closely:

Those ultra runners, the kind of people, one
and all, you'd pick to be with in any sort of
situation that demands modesty, steadfastness,
levelheadedness, and courage. Maybe this is
overdoing it, but I felt an unusual humility
from members of the group. Maybe ultra runners
are especially aware of how accidental is the
shaping of life; maybe it's so obviously fool­
ish in an ultra to try to force the flow.
Taoist running.
Markus Bosch

Markus Bosch, is a thirty-two year old Civil Rights Attorney in the Santa Barbara chapter of the ACLU. Tired and frustrated after many daily hours of "head banging against a bureaucratic system," Markus appreciates his long hours on the trail, "where he only has to worry about himself." Having run four ultras of 50 or more miles in the last year, Markus is looking forward to some time off after Nine Trails. "Oh, I wouldn't stop running, I'll just stop running so far," stated Markus.

Markus is a competitive ultra runner, who seeks to beat opponents as well as to improve his time for the distance. Markus believes that he has "advanced" beyond "merely" wanting to finish the distance. However, despite his competitive attitude, Markus also appreciates the beauty along the "ultra route." Markus has discovered that beauty resides both in the interpersonal dynamics between runners as well as in the surrounding natural environment. "Some of the conversations that I've had along the trail, with myself and others, are completely insane," laughed Markus. Markus readily agreed to share his "race story" in this interview.

Markus was initially concerned that he could not provide the conversation with a continuous perspective of the race from start to finish. He then decided that this
perspective wasn't necessarily the correct one for the race. Markus thought that "race fragments" would be much more interesting to weave together into a coherent "race story":

Every race is a collection of fragments. Here are some of mine:

Even with my limited experience, I know that ultras are as much a psychological event as a physical one. There was one person I wanted to beat this year. He had finished directly in front of me the past two years. So I told 'my friend', before the race that this order of finish was unacceptable. Apparently it was unacceptable to him, too, as he caught me around 40 miles. I wanted to do something about it, like speed up, knock him out with a rock or whatever, but I couldn't. This is one of the frustrating aspects of ultras. Call it theory versus practice, goal readjustment, your body rebelling, the mind getting soft, but sometimes it's difficult to do a seemingly simple thing like speed up, or pick up a rock.

Prior to the race, Markus was convinced that this was the year that he could finally beat his friend to the finish line. Markus focused his training around his goal of "beating" his running mate. Close away from a race course; Markus and his friend become rivals once a starting gun is fired. Once Markus determined that his goal of running faster than his friend was slipping away, he fantasized about literally beating his friend. Markus admitted that in his darkest hours of fatigue, he wanted to see his friend, "slip, trip, or run off the course." He was very frustrated that despite training so hard, for so long, he was able to be beaten at the 40 mile mark. "I
just couldn't respond to his challenge," lamented Markus. Markus said he will remain depressed for a few hours, then he'll go out and have some beers with, "his rival, his friend":

The excuse here is there's always next year or next race. Everyone had bad races; you can DNF (did not finish) or get injured or just have a bad day. At any rate, it's better than having an off day in a sport like boxing or cliff-diving.

Markus regrets that he couldn't present an adequate challenge for his friend. "It's not so much that I lost, it's more like I didn't push as I should. On a good day I could lambaste him," Markus stated. Markus does believe that as long as an individual gives her/his best, he/she will always win. Markus doesn't believe he gave his best, and this is what he regrets; not losing to his friend:

For the nominal Nine Trails entry fee you can expect to ruin your shoes. This year was the second out of two times that what were good shoes at the beginning turned into ratty, rotten, throw-away shoes by the end. This year, uppers that were nicely molded to my feet and not torn, gradually developed big rips in the front of both shoes. The previous year had seen the rubber piece on my heel come off, seams burst, and other rips. Even if this doesn't happen, the stinking mud sections assure that you'll never get them clean again.

After venting his feelings about his competitive effort, Markus is now free to discuss the "natural aspects" of the course. "Mud" is to be the topic of discussion. Mud is a tangible adversary; its effects are felt immediately. Less tangible are the concepts that are regularly
encountered by Markus in his law practice. Mud was a refreshing challenge for Markus. Markus knew, "what was impeding my progress on the course. I could see it."

In his practice, very often Markus doesn't see what is impeding his progress in the quest for others' rights. Markus finds working for the rights of others is often an exhausting, thankless, and an all-consuming process. Markus loves his occupation, but finds the challenge of ultra running extremely refreshing. Markus knows that he has discovered a suitable advocation to complement his vocation:

This is one of the attractions of Nine Trails stinking mud. I had heard that this was the best condition the course had ever been in. Judging from the past two years, during which the course had ranged from the sun-baked, hard-as-concrete clay to water mixed with dirt, clay, and grass, this was probably true. But there was still a long section of stinking mud near Spirit Mountain. Since this is a loop course, unless you drop-out half-way, you get to run through this decaying vegetation and stagnant odiferous section sixteen times. It is this Santa Barbara mud, I believe, that ruins yours shoes.

One of the difficulties of the Nine Trails is that the course is unpredictable. In the "muddy years" great leg strength is needed to maneuver through the "swamp-like terrain." In its "dry years" the runners are able to glide over trails that are cushioned with pine needles. Though generally all ultra courses offer their runners challenges by virtue of their length; Nine Trails is in a class by
itself. Not only does the Nine Trails course change obstacles on a yearly basis, but the consistency of the terrain can change from one loop to the next. The fluctuating temperatures on the Santa Barbara mountain-sides can deluge the runners with snow on one loop and then provide them with glaring sun on the next.

Because of the challenges of both the distance and terrain, Nine Trails draws runners from all over North America. With 169 runners, Nine Trails is one of the largest ultra races in the United States. Markus states adamently that the popularity of Nine Trails stems from its "stinking, sucking mud." "We're a perverse group; we ultra runners," concluded Markus:

Sometimes I wonder if I suffer from exercise-induced amnesia. For example, why am I always surprised at how difficult the course really is? It seems like five minutes after the race I have completely forgotten about the slanting switchbacks, the roots and rock sections, the power-lines, the section where I was so hot I wanted to vomit, the time I became a less-than-civil runner to be with, and so on. Why?

Because this is fun. I'm finally getting use to this concept. Trashing your body for 50 miles in the woods is fun. You get to meet other people who also think this is fun. In the age of the ultra-whiner professional athlete, it is life-affirming to meet people who trash their bodies for pleasure, and pay for the privilege of doing so.

Markus believes that it is the tangibility of both the mud and the pain, that draws runners to Nine Trails. When a runner is bogged down in mud and fatigue to the point of pain, he/she has to accept responsibility for their own
predicament. "No one else is to blame: There is no one else responsible, you must accept the pain," stated Markus, "And this is the appeal":

Ultras ultimately distill down to how you feel you did. Obviously, we're not all going to win or do well. In my first ultra, after arriving at the start some 40 minutes late, among other extenuating circumstances, I finished last, but felt elated. I felt I had done something. This was so much better than beating my head against the three-hour marathon mark with 3:01's and 3:03's etc... I was glad I had finally tried an ultra. This time I was satisfied with how fast I ran the downhills--the uphills are another story. I received numerous comments on this, both during and after the race. It's nice to be acknowledged this way.

Though Markus was less than satisfied with his overall 50 mile performance, he was able to reflect on sections that were especially pleasing. Markus felt "vindicated" by his strong, downhill running performance. He trained for the downhills by doing sprints down any hills that he could find while out running. Markus gloated on his one "perceived" success in the race. His success was especially sweet since, his downhill expertise was recognized by other ultra runners:

And that brings me to the people. Overall, we have a great group; friendly, supportive, of above-average intelligence, dissimilar in many ways, but united in that we do ultras. Not many people can say that.
Roseanna Heil

Roseanna Heil had stationed herself at the first/last aid station. The runners passed the station at the three mile mark and then again at the forty-seven mile mark. Roseanna wanted to be at the aid station where the runners would need the most encouragement. At the first aid station at three miles, the runners often need "sage advice" to calm them in the face of the remaining forty-seven miles. The volunteers at the last aid station at forty-seven miles, would serve to bolster the runner's tired spirits. Roseanna remembered how one volunteer in the New York City Marathon (NYC), two years ago, had given her words of encouragement that had helped her through the last four miles. Roseanna wanted to repay "the gift"; to restore another runner's exhausted body and saging desire.

Roseanna initially hesitated to be involved in a conversation. Only after being assured that the conversation wouldn't interfere with her volunteer duties, did Roseanna agree to tell her story:

I remember wandering into Santa Barbara's Hendrickson Park on the Saturday after Thanksgiving two years ago. It was a very special time for me; my body was finally recovered, but my ego was still swollen from finishing my first ever marathon. The thought that I had run a marathon simply overwhelmed me; I was one of those non-athletic, introverted women who had always watched sports on TV with secret envy before finally working up the courage to sneak into the Park and stumble through those
first humiliating laps alone, under cover of
dark and a very baggy sweatsuit. From the very
first step I took, my intention was to run a
marathon just once in my life, just to see if I
could do it, and so I went from zero to 26
miles in eight months, driven by nothing more
than what had started as a whim.

Roseanna envied women athletes who seemed so
wonderfully fit and confident. Roseanna was torn between
wanting to begin a conditioning program and her
embarrassment at beginning when she was so "horribly out-
of-shape." Running was the answer, she could do it alone,
under the cover of darkness, with no prying eyes of her
neighbors to watch her. By her own admittance, Roseanna
felt "discombobulated" during her first several runs. It
was almost as though she was rusty after all those years
of inactivity:

I was a loner; I'd always felt too foolish and
inadequate to venture beyond one and one-half
mile loops around the local running club based
in the park. I trained, planned, ached,
fantasized, and obsessed over the marathon all
by myself, and so when I did conquer NYC in
four hours and twenty minutes, I had only
myself to judge by. I was thoroughly
impressed.

Roseanna had achieved, what she considered at that
time, her highest goal. A goal that she had accomplished
on her own; and this felt "doubly good":

And then, as I said, I wandered into Hendrick-
son Park in late November, 1989, for a leisure-
ly stroll. I found 'No Biking-Race in
Progress' signs all over, plus barricades and
orange tape and a thin, scattered line of dis-
heveled looking runners climbing the trails.
One of them, a man with frosted breath and
salty face, told me I was 'the most beautiful thing' he
had ever seen. Something told me this was not a typical road race.

Curious about who was using "her park", Roseanna watched the other runners with wonder. Roseanna watched runners who seemed so similar to herself. The runners, for the most part, were using a shuffle gait to travel the 50 miles. Roseanna was astounded to witness so many runners using a gait "so like her own." Often embarrassed that her running style was not like the elite runners, Roseanna trained under the cover of darkness. Now she felt vindicated, some other people had her running style, and they weren't ashamed to use it:

I circled the lake, watching the passing runners out of the corner of my eye. Some ran with straight backs and pumping legs, others slouched and seemed merely to fall forward. They all looked stiffened and in varying degrees of pain. Something in me resented them; they were in my park, the park I had earned by virtue of my endless numbing loops I had run, by myself, preparing for NYC. Who were they, to invade the most private territory of a marathoner?

Astonishment turned to resentment as Roseanna realized that these "strange runners" were infringing on her territory. This was Roseanna's park, even, perhaps her own mountain-side. This was the park that had helped her accomplish the New York City Marathon in four hours and twenty minutes. This was the park that had been her solace in Roseanna's hours of fatigue and deepest doubt:

I approached the park administration building and saw several shivering people sitting behind a table covered with cups of water, cola, and
Exceed. There were coolers and lawn chairs, and a tent set up nearby. I paused at the table and asked the people there, what was the race? They answered, 'The Nine Trails 50 Miler.' I felt my heartbeat shudder, and then resume with a dull, heavy thudding. Fifty miles? This is a fifty mile race? 'Yes.' When did they start? 'Six-thirty this morning.'

Resentment changed back to astonishment as Roseanna learned that these strange runners shuffling past, were running 50 miles. Roseanna had difficulty comprehending any distance longer than 26.2 miles; never mind almost a double marathon. Roseanna had been snuggled, safely in bed at 6:30 am, when these runners had begun their 50 mile journey:

I had stopped wearing a watch when I first began running. I didn't want to take it too seriously, with times and splits and all; but I knew from the darkening, chilly sky, it was later afternoon. A runner passed, an older woman with a tight, scurrying gait and ratty gloves. She was wearing shorts despite the chill and her legs were marbled red, pink and yellow. We looked straight at each other for half a minute; I could see in her eyes that she hadn't really seen me. Wow, I murmured, backed away from the table, and slowly walked along the path back to my car, stopping to turn and watch the runners as they went past, legs and arms endlessly moving in slow, small, mechanical arcs.

Roseanna had encountered a woman very much like herself. Roseanna had been very self-conscious the way her legs became "splotchy" when she ran in the cold. But this woman runner didn't seem to mind her appearance, she was focused solely on her running. This older woman inspired Roseanna. Could Roseanna run fifty miles? Perhaps
Roseanna was not yet ready for a 50 miler: But maybe in the future she would be. Maybe she could even join the running club that sponsored the race. All these thoughts churned in Roseanna as she watched the runners shuffle by:

Thank God for the so-called crazy people, because they push the limits of reality and force the rest of us to reconsider our perspective. When I left the Park that day, I left behind all traces of budding arrogance I'd picked up with my NYC Marathon Finishers Medal in Central Park. There is most definitely something beyond a marathon, and there is always someone better than me to prove it.

Roseanna left the park that day knowing that she had not achieved her highest goals. At this time Roseanna wasn't quite sure what goals she did want to pursue, but there was something that inspired her in those strange runners.

Their "simple act" of running 50 miles, opened many possibilities for future goals in Roseanna's mind. The goals seem to extend well beyond the boundaries of a long distance run. For Roseanna, her potential in all areas of life seemed boundless:

Today I watched the Nine Trails 50 Mile, this time as a member of host Santa Barbara Running Club. I've run three additional marathons in the interim, logged lots of shorter distances, and found my niche within an inspiring group of running friends. Yet I sat there and stared, again with secret envy, at the small group of seemingly ordinary people who were doing something that I'm still struggling to comprehend; enduring for nearly twice the greatest distance most of us will ever attempt. The standard comment is, 'You've got to be crazy to try something like that.' Indeed, and the world's got to have such crazy people, or something will never be.
Martha Cederstrom

Martha Cederstrom and her husband are veteran ultra runners. They each have completed eleven 100 mile races and numerous other races of 50 miles or more. Martha is the fastest of the husband and wife team. Her speed coupled with her years as an ultra runner place her in great demand as a "pacer" for other runners. A pacer's job is to run the last miles with a runner entered in an ultra race. The pacer is usually allowed no more than 30 miles with their designated runner. The pacer provides the "racer" with encouragement and, most importantly, "a fatigue free thought process."

The last contribution is perhaps the most important factor for allowing the racer to complete the ultra course unscathed. When a racer has been traveling over mountainous trails for five plus hours, he/she often becomes "trail giddy"; fatigued to the point of becoming disoriented. A disoriented runner on a mountain trail is involved in a potentially dangerous situation. The pacer can lend a "clear head" to aid the runner in maneuvering through complex trail routes.

Martha is an extremely gregarious woman, who in the Nine Trails race would be pacing her training partner and best friend, Carol Hewitt. The plan was to run with Carol after she had completed half of the race's 50 miles:
Now this is the way to participate in a 50-miler, snuggled under the covers and knowing that people are out there running around in circles! Forget those crack-of-dawn starting times. After a leisurely morning of coffee and danish, we set off to see how my 'pacee' was doing.

A twenty-five mile run through the Santa Barbara Mountains is a relaxing stroll for Martha; a simple Sunday run. However, even if the 25 miles that she planned to run with Carol was considered easy, Martha didn't take her task of being a pacer lightly. Martha was concerned that Carol would suffer from dehydration: A chronic problem for Carol. Martha had brought every type of replacement fluid that she thought might be palatable for Carol. "I could set-up a refreshment stand," joked Martha, "I have everything from Exceed, to Coke, Gatorade, even water." As long as Carol remained hydrated, Martha believed that she would have completed her mission. "We're so close, it's like I'm running. That's why I bring everything that I would need if I were racing," Martha stated:

A rather unique feature of Nine Trails is that the course is entirely within the boundaries of Hendrickson Park, inaccessible to vehicles. The runners met at the park entrance at 6:00 am sharp to ensure a ride to the starting line. Oversleep and your 50-miler suddenly turns into a 53-miler. In fact one latecomer decided it was easier just to drive home.

Martha knew how the latecomer must have felt. She and her husband have been late to many ultra races. Although
Martha believes that starting late is often "very psychologically defeating," the latecomer must "forge ahead" and run. Martha thinks that "all" true ultra runners run regardless what time they begin the race:

As crew, we chose the shortest route in, according to the map. Bundled-up for the cold, equipped with a cooler, food and even more clothes we set off running uphill. Somehow my partners, even carrying the cooler, managed to leave me in the dust. Of course I was carrying everyone's top layers, discarded after the first half-mile.

Always a competitor, Martha felt rebuffed at being "left on the trail" by her crew partners. Martha said she felt like a "pack mule" ambling up the trail, well behind everyone else. Martha had done all the planning and packing of the "essentials" for her crew. They now were showing her "no respect" by racing up the trail well ahead of her:

As we climbed up and up we were beginning to suspect our easy two-and-a-half-mile route was turning into one of those 'famous shortcuts!' But we finally arrived at the race to find the usual well-stocked aid station and a staffed data table.

After a "long" short-cut, Martha and crew arrived at the lake that served as the starting/finishing area for the race. Despite all the joking and comraderie among the runners and crews, running fifty miles is a serious endeavor. Many "things" can happen to an individual running for five plus hours. The weather can take its toll, regardless of whether the sun is shining or the snow
is falling. The seriousness of the distance was apparent on the faces of the volunteers, as they observed closely all the runners as they shuffled by their aid stations. Paramedics were also on-call, in case any of the runners needed assistance:

My training partner 'extraordinare', Carol Hewitt, had chosen Nine Trails as a Western States qualifier, just hoping to break the allotted seven hours. I fully expected an hour of leisure before beginning my second half pacing duties. But NO! Within five minutes Carol arrived, leading the women's race, having already completed eight loops of the sixteen loop course. We were off in a cloud of torn paper. Not wild about a loop course, Carol had devised a unique counting system: After each lap she gleefully tore up a numbered card with Saddam Hussein's picture on it.

Carol's ingenious lap-counting system provided her with a bit of diversion from the tedium of a multi-looped course. Instead of focusing on the numerous laps she had to complete, Carol could look forward with zeal to "destroying the face of a murderer." Carol's brother was one of the casualties of Desert Storm. She had dedicated the race to her brother, whose death had forever changed her view of life. "I now view life as something to be indulged," Carol stated, "My brother was so upbeat, with a try anything attitude. I want to be like that, so I began ultra running for his memory and for me."

Martha was the one who first suggested that Carol try ultra running. Martha thought that their friendship would be strengthened by spending many hours on the trails
together. Carol literally sprinted their early distance workouts together. Martha marvels at how good Carol has become in less than five months of ultra running. Before becoming training partners, Martha and Carol had spent their free time together at Santa Barbara shopping malls. Now they were proud of the many "productive" hours spent together on the Santa Barbara Trails:

My first loop with Carol was at a hectic pace. I figured, no problem, she's bound to slow down as the miles add-up. But NO! She ran amazingly strong and consistent throughout the rest of the race. Only on the last two laps did she condescend to walk the steepest parts of the hills. Even after she had lapped the second place woman, she didn't ease up. I was hoping that would let us relax a little, but no! Carol ran a great race finishing in 6:54, good for sixth overall.

Carol had bettered Martha's best 50 mile time by over thirty minutes. Although pleased for her friend's performance, Martha also realized that she must now train "harder than ever" to equal Carol's time. If Carol and Martha ever would enter a race as competitors, they both agree that their friendship would have a "wait for them at the finish line":

It was a perfect day for running, sunny and crisp. As always, the run was a quality event, with lots of trophies and bottles of wine for the winners and great hooded sweatshirts for all participants. It's a fun course because you get to see the other runners as you circle and circle, and that aid station is miraculously there every three miles. Perhaps the only drawback is seeing people that already finished, knowing you still have laps to go. The men's winner looked comfy, having broken the course record, as we cruised by with a
couple more laps ahead of us. Carol's win made the downhill run back to the car a breeze. I'd do another 50-miler like this any day.
CHAPTER V
CORPORALITY: A BODY SPEAKS

Introduction

My experience is one of engagement in a world of projects. My projects receive their significance through an expression of my body. The lived body is a mode of orientation: My orientation in the world. My body is not greater than the sum of my projects: My body is my project.

The self-referential quality of a lived body is most directly disclosed in my experience of my body as "that" which individualizes me. The body confers upon me my existential identity. A lived body is not something I have rather it signifies who I am. I am my body or I exist as body. Gabriel Marcel (1952), formulated the following:

I do not make use of my body, I am my body. In other words, there is something in me that denies the implication that is to be found in the purely instrumentalist notion of the body that my body is external to itself, (p. 333).

The individual is not related to his/her body in an external way. The body is not a possession which is held and used. The body makes use of the tools in the world,
but is not a tool in itself. The body is who I am in my lived world. It is who I am, and indicates the manner in which I am. The lived body is my personal manner of existing, and composed of my meanings of existence.

The construction of a house is the work of the engineer, which is an expression of human creativity and human ingenuity. A body, likewise, is a creation of an engineer: The engineer is me. It is through my body that personal meanings are established and expressed.

Karl Jaspers (1947:329), defined humans as ones who make use of their hands. Jaspers stated that one of the fundamental errors of philosophy is the separation of human doing and thinking, "...it is through the activities of the hand that the activities of thought are expressed," (p. 329).

With this proclamation, I now turn to the activities of the ultra runners who expressed who they are through the creativity of their actions. Their bodily being in the world describes its essence through the simultaneous expression of thought and action which are united as their presentation to the world.

Distinguishing between Fatigue and Pain

A phenomenological concept of the body is regarded as a lived body or an embodied consciousness through perception, (Inoue, 1984:55). Through their lived actions, the ultra
runners are confronted with perceptions of fatigue and pain. The ultra runner must learn to distinguish between fatigue and pain. The extreme weariness that results from prolonged exertion or stress must be distinguished from the incapacitating result of an injury if a runner is to continue on with his/her endeavor. Fatigue can be "run through" and is indeed an integral part of the activity of running. Pain alerts the runner that the activity must stop. Pain is not considered to be a by-product of extreme running.

The ultra runners who served as participants in the conversations all established that they were in pain throughout their respective runs. Ultra runners distinguish between two types of pain. There is pain that can be run through and is indeed seen as an extension of fatigue. The other type of pain serves as a notice of impending injury, and alerts the runner that the activity should cease. While the ability to distinguish between fatigue and the various levels of pain is essential for all runners; ultra runners must be especially attuned to the degrees of discomfort they experience.

To finish a race of twenty-six or more miles is a lesson in eternal vigilance. Sachs (1981), found that ultra runners are not dissociative thinkers. When the ultra runners encountered pain, they viewed it as a signal
of what was going on in their bodies. Pain was not experienced as an overwhelming, unpleasant sensation.

**Distinguishing between Various Levels of Pain**

Pain brings reflection to the body. During her first race, Diane Armstrong became acutely aware of her pained limbs. The discomfort was so severe that she believed that they were becoming necrotic and about to "come off." The pain that Ed Ayres experienced in his quadriceps on the downhill portions of the Western States course, caused him to cease running and leave the race.

The intensity of their pain caused both of these individuals to forego their pre-race objectives. Diane allowed herself to "tie" with another woman competitor. Diane soon regreted her choice, once the pain in her legs had abated. Ed withdrew from the race, which he found was a mistake once he received some "sugar for his body."

The intensity of the pain distracted both Diane and Ed from their engagements in the everyday lifeworld and focused their attention on their bodies. Both were confident of achieving their goals until they found that the pain emanating from their bodies had become an obstacle. When the body is in pain our attention is redirected onto our own transparency. Thus we can no longer "extend through it without attending to embodiment itself," (Rawlinson, 1982:75). The body is subsequently
experienced as integrated. Thoughts and goals are not accomplished apart from the body. The goal of running an ultra marathon is just an abstract matter, until the body produces the effort.

When the body becomes transparent, it is thought of and experienced differently. The individual becomes more aware of his/her physical state. There is a heightened sensitivity to bodily discomforts. The ultra runners' physical state determines what activities he/she can pursue. Listening to the body is a way of tending it and caring for it.

The Body Speaks about Pain

Our attention is redirected toward our bodies in pain, we realize that our bodies are no longer enabling. Our thoughts are preoccupied with the travail that our bodies are currently experiencing. If the body is pushed beyond its immediate capacity it simply ceases the activity. Diane felt as though she was just "pumping her arms", hoping that her legs would follow during the last miles of the marathon.

Diane also experienced the occurrence of painful blisters, that she didn't know she had until they "just popped." Tom Hart, toward the end of his thirty-seven mile birthday run, felt as though he would slowly "wind-down", absorbed in some minute detail of the landscape. In order
to avoid ceasing running altogether, the pained ultra runner begins to listen consciously to his/her body and respond accordingly.

Sartre, (1956), utilized the following example to explain how the body in pain is brought into awareness by the individual:

My eyes are hurting but I should finish reading a philosophical work this evening. I am reading. The object of my consciousness is the book...The body is in no way apprehended for itself; it is a point of view, a point of departure, (p.436).

This is similar to the ultra runner, who finds his quadricep muscles in pain after many miles of running. The ultra runner has a goal to finish the distance run but the pain has now become unbearable. In the running, the body is given implicitly. When the ultra runner discovers his/her quadriceps in pain; consciousness exists in the pain. Pain contains information about itself. While engaged in running the individual apprehends pain not from a reflective point of view; pain is for the runner and not for others.

Sartre, (1956:438), stated that pain does not exist anywhere among the actual objects of the universe. Pain is neither found in space nor is it in objective time. Pain creates its own time; it temporalizes itself, and it is in and through this temporalization that the time of the world can appear. Pure pain, as lived pain cannot be reached;
"it belongs to the category of indefinables and indescribables which are what they are," (Sartre, 1956:438).

The ultra runner ceases to run and is now absorbed in apprehending the pain. The pain is being apprehended through "reflective consciousness." Sartre, (1956), stated that reflection is:

Total grasp without a point of view; it is a knowledge which overflows itself and which tends to be objectivized, to project the known at a distance so as to be able to contemplate it and to think it, (p.440).

Pain is apprehended as "pain-as-object" and then transcends the pure quality of consciousness.

Pain as Friend:Pain as Foe

For many ultra runners, the pain of racing is just the intensification of the fatigue experienced during training. James E. Shapiro discovered that the pain of his six-day race gave him comfort. The familiarity of his pain, and general level of discomfort, was reassuring and comforting. They were "friends" from his training sessions, "only a little bit more intense."

Diane had prepared herself well for her first marathon, running numerous thirty milers in training to prepare herself for the pain of the distance. Tom experienced fear when he was uncertain of what the eleven miles after the marathon distance would "feel like." As Tom entered the
"unknown distance," he realized that the fatigue was familiar, "nothing unusual about it."

Pain has a protective or self-preserving value since it serves an important role in the body's survival. Norman Cousins, (1981:107) refers to pain as a "gift." Without this gift of pain, our bodies could be subjected to severe physical harm as our capacity to endure would extend beyond the point where it would be impossible to maintain the body's integrity. How often do we characterize pain as a gift? Pain is more commonly regarded as a polar opposite of pleasure. We normally believe pain is to be avoided, while pleasure is to be sought. Pain is regarded as a negative and negating element in human experience and conduct.

Pain implies a negation, since it underscores our vulnerability and the transience of life. This is exemplified by Mark Will-Weber's feelings and perceptions about his pain, "...and there was only fatigue, quads, as useless as burned out brakes and a shooting electric current of fear. Real fear." Could Mark have been experiencing the fear of total disintegration: The fear of death?

Tom also had fleeting feelings of fear, "An oncoming insurgence of fear, in the face of an unknown distance." Tom's fear dissipated as the pain of the thirty-seven miles proved to be no "worse" than the pain of a marathon. The
pain that Tom experienced in his thirty-seven mile run was not more intense than any other pain he had ever experienced before on any long run. Tom had only to endure the pain for a longer period of time.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE: Throughout their runs, ultra runners must confront not only pain but also their fear of it.

Coping with the Voice of Pain

The appearance of pain alerts the runner that now thoughts must be focused on maintaining body integrity. The hunger and thirst that is experienced by the ultra runners are both components of pain. Many ultra runners believe that if they monitor both levels of caloric consumption and hydration, they can hold their pain in abeyance. Ed Ayres' biggest concern was "keeping adequately hydrated and fueled." If Ed could achieve this, then he knew he would be doing all he could to "starve off any pain." Likewise Tom Hart pre-planned refreshment breaks to rejuvenate himself throughout his thirty-seven mile birthday run.

Although meeting the ultra runners needs of food and water cannot eliminate the feelings of pain entirely: It can mitigate the situation. Attention shifts from the activity which the ultra runners in engaged, to his/her
body. The pained body now places limits on the runners pre-race goals.

Leonard (1974), states that we know very little about pain. It may seem mechanical and yet it is highly subjective and cannot be easily quantified. It can be reduced by the use of anesthesia or hypnosis. The perception of pain can be increased by anticipation or dread. "If you fight it or shrink from it, that only makes it worse. Pain is a judgement. It is not a fixed quantity," (p.88). Rather than being a substance that contains dimensions in the material world, pain is actually information about relationships.

The real meaning of the pain may not be apparent immediately. The ultra runner may experience confusion as to why the pain appeared. Is it due to inadequate training? Am I eating and drinking enough? Am I inordinately tense? All these ideas may circulate through the runners thoughts, as attention is focused inward. The ultra runner becomes preoccupied with ways to alleviate the pain. Diane experienced her world as "shrinking in" on herself when she encountered fatigue.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO: Pain disrupts the ultra runners engagement in the world and forces him/her to focus on the body which can no longer be taken for granted.
The ultra runners seemed to have developed methods of coping with the pain they experienced throughout their runs. Diane recalled her experience with childbirth; and her ability to handle the pain as a means to ally her fears of the pain in racing. Diane recalled that the childbirth pain was transient and immediately forgotten once the child was seen, "the joy takes it away." Diane knew that upon finishing the race, the accomplishment would also take the pain away.

Tom looked back upon his successful sub 2:45 marathon run, and his consistent 55-60 miles per week as a way to temper his anxiety about his impending thirty-seven mile birthday run. When Michael McCumber became weary on the Santa Barbara Nine Trail course he "flashed" to the many training runs he had taken on the loop trails. Michael's son, Sam, also aided Michael's 50 mile run. Michael knew that he couldn't succumb to the pain, "I couldn't lose face with my son."

Martha Cederstrom was prepared to "talk" her training partner, Carol Hewitt, through any difficult stretches on the Santa Barbara Nine Trails course. "I came equipped with all sorts of games that Carol and I could play on the trail," laughed Martha.

Once the runner recognizes his/her pain and discovers ways to cope with the pain so that they can continue on with their journey, they only have a momentary respite.
The body's re-emergence as an integrated entity begins with the pain experience and is further enhanced by tiredness. Tiredness occurs when the pain and tension have been endured for such an extended period of time that the ultra runner loses focus on means to cope with the pain: They just feel it. The pain is no longer something to be dealt with: It exists and must be accepted if the run is to continue.

The runner who pushes soon hears the voice of pain. "At first it is only a whisper, a gentle reminder that certain limits of what is comfortable and customary are being reached," (Leonard, 1974:172). If the runner continues past those limits, the voice asks loudly: "Why go on?" The dedicated runner pays no attention to this question, instead speed and effort are increased. The voice of pain returns: "Why today? This isn't a good day to push yourself. Save yourself today and you'll run faster another time." The runner will not be seduced; the pace increases. Pain becomes more threatening now. It plays on fears of body damage. The runner summons strength and will, pushes past all reasonable fears. "But now the voice becomes the scream of a tortured child," (p. 172).

At this point, the voice takes on a new quality. For the runner who knows how to go beyond the normal limits, the pain and fear are still there, but somehow no longer important. Something new has entered the dialogue,
something very large; the space in which the dialogue is taking place is enormous. Everything is new and yet familiar. Words are no longer possible or needed, yet the interaction is intense. "The runner is not going to die, but death is present," (Leonard, 1974:173).

James E. Shapiro knew that to complete his six-day journey he must accept the pain; recognizing it as part and parcel of the ultra experience. James related that if he tried to mitigate his pain in any manner, he would not experience fully the ultra run, "You can't go through something like this halfway." The experience of pain was exactly why James had journeyed to England to run the "six-day."

Mark Will-Weber recalled that "thinking about the pain of the Tour of Tameside was actually much worse than running over the fells." As the first few races of the Tour were experienced, Mark attempted to block the "pain of such racing." Then the realization dawned, Mark must not block the pain if he was to participate fully in the Tour. "I must do as the locals say: I must grind it out!" stated Mark.

To play like this with pain that is unbearable yet is being borne, to summon the presence of death itself, is to become a "high-wire artist at some lofty place in human existence, one who balances precariously and triumphantly at the edge of unknown possibilities," (Leonard, 1974:173).
A day without such intense interplay is incomplete.
Leonard believes that without pain of endurance, ordinary human intercourse seems dull and mundane. "There is that high large place, so easy to reach, so hard to bear, so fascinating," (p. 173).

Ed Ayres journeyed to the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range to purge himself of his personal strife by enduring pain as "means to setting things right." Ed entered Western States with no plan to "reduce" his pain by means of any type of coping skill. Ed wanted pain, indeed perhaps required pain, in order to feel that he had returned to "wholeness." Western States served as a vehicle for Ed to eliminate his feelings of "hopelessness." Ed needed to achieve something, indeed anything that would alleviate his personal turmoil. Ed admitted that, "Perhaps if I had been a mountaineer, I would have traveled to Tibet to climb Mount Everest."

Mark Bosch, a competitor in the infamous Santa Barbara Nine Trails, believes that the appeal of the course is the mud. The mud and various other difficulties encountered along the course, causes the runners to suffer. In this suffering the ultra runners must confront pain "head on." Responsibility for the ultra runners predicament cannot be shifted to anyone else. The suffering is of the ultra runners own selection, and the pain defines this choice.
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE: Ultra runners have many ways of coping with the pain of running. However, they must accept the pain as part of their bodily response to distance running.

**Selecting the Proper Pace**

The act of running, so plain and pure offers us surprising complexities and subtle choices. There is the basic issue of human freedom. Freedom to continue or the freedom to cease running once discomfort is sensed. If a runner selects to continue, then there is the additional responsibility of pace selection.

It is similar to Sartre's story about the tortured prisoner. There is no loss of freedom, even for the prisoner who is being tortured. He is free. He has a choice, at any instant, of continuing to be tortured or of surrendering. It is the same with running. At any moment we are free to cease running and stop the pain. We are also free to continue running. There are speeds and distances that are beyond our abilities: But it is a runner who determines his/her abilities by determining the moment when he/she will slow or cease running.

How does the ultra runner know the proper pace to maintain, in order to complete the desired distance? Diane had selected a pre-determined pace of ten minutes per mile. This was based on the pace that she had felt
comfortable maintaining throughout her training runs. A ten minute per mile pace felt "right." Diane's legs, arms, feet, lungs, heart, etc... told her that the pace was correct.

When Diane sensed that she was running "too fast" in the middle miles of the marathon, she did not use any "outside device" to alert her of this potential problem. Diane stated that the feeling that she was running fast, "...was just that, a feeling." Diane remembers that, "I was breathing heavier, my legs started to feel very heavy." Diane's own body alerted her to her own experience. No mechanical implements were needed to caution Diane: Diane had all the knowledge contained within herself.

Mark Will-Weber's quadricep muscles that were "pounded to smithereens" told him to back off the pace during day three of the Tour. James E. Shapiro decided that he would adhere to the philosophy of the six-day race as a "go as you please" event. James would heed his body and run and walk, eat and drink and rest "as his body pleased." "The patience to be cautious, is what is required in a six-day event," related James.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR: Selection of proper pace for the distance requires the ultra runner to utilize body intelligence.
Coping with Impatience

Ed Ayres found that his impatience to "right his problems" translated into his impatience to "end the agony of the race." The potential for impatience perhaps is inherent in the ultra distance activity. Depending on the proclivity of the individual runners, they either seek the ultra distances as a process to be enjoyed or a goal to be achieved. Certainly there are shades of both views in each of the participant's stories. But there is a primary direction to each story.

Diane Armstrong was focused on the achievement and accomplishment that she felt would come from completing a marathon. Diane first became aware of the marathon's potential to bestow feelings of accomplishment as her husband was limping down the aisle at their daughter's wedding, after his first marathon.

Diane then trained with this idea; that finishing a marathon would grant her a "great feeling of success." Throughout her race, Diane mentioned feelings of impatience. Diane's "novice mistake" was indeed one of impatience. Diane stated that, "I was impatient and increased my pace." Diane was impatient to taste the accolades of success. Her legs and lungs ultimately alerted Diane that her impatience was "a big mistake."
Tom Hart wanted his run to be similar to a birthday party. A day set aside exclusively for running would be the best present Tom could grant himself. A celebration that would last for thirty-seven miles; a representation of Tom's being in the world for thirty-seven years.

What better way to celebrate one's being than to engage oneself fully for thirty-seven miles? Tom was not impatient to finish his run. Throughout his thirty-seven miles, Tom created a magical world that he relished with every step and regretted leaving:

The joy that began to make itself felt was suddenly somewhat tempered by regret that I'd soon be leaving this little world of the run to rejoin the real one, (p. 129).

Finally, the run was over and Tom was left to contemplate how long the "wonders learned on the run" would last.

Running the Santa Barbara Nine Trails 50 miles is quite a strenuous activity under the best of circumstances. When the 50 mile run is also fraught with confusion about which trails to run, there is a potential for the runners to undergo great amounts of impatience. Michael McCumber did find himself aggrevated at the undue expenditure of time and energy, he vowed that the trail confusion would not interfere with his overall pleasure in the run. Michael avoided becoming impatient with himself, "I just wanted to enjoy my own movements. Why should a missed trail interfere with how I felt running?" Michael was enjoying the
process of the run; his finishing time and place weren't important.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE: Ultra runners must confront and deal with feelings of impatience toward their own way of being during an ultra run.
Chapter VI
SOCIALITY: A COMMUNITY OF RUNNERS

Introduction

Not only is my lived body apprehended as uniquely my own, but my body is also lived in such a manner that it is apprehended by the other. I apprehend my body in a communal context in which other selves are disclosed as already being there. The communal context of the body enables one to glimpse another aspect of my body in its lived reality. A phenomenological analysis of the body discloses awareness as containing two moments. The apprehension of the body of the other as known by me, and the reapprehension of my body as known by the other. Calvin O. Schrag (1988), states:

The experience of my body as mine is always coextensive with my experience of the body of the other and the consequent reappraisal of myself as existing in the world of the other, (p. 112).

For the purpose of understanding, these two moments of consciousness are separated, but are in fact given simultaneously in immediate experience. I seek to realize the projects of my lived body through a continuing encounter with the body of the other. Sartre (1956:382), 178
stated that the other is encountered through my engagement in the world. The other arises in my world either as an obstacle to be overcome or as an instrument that I can use. Sartre (1956:346), entitled the former as coefficient of adversity, and the latter as coefficient of utility.

The lived body in reference to the other involves the simultaneous apprehension of the other by me and my apprehension can produce two possible existential qualifications; alienation and communion. Alienation occurs when the other is either objectified or apprehended solely as an instrument which can be used and manipulated for personal gains. Through alienation, the other is deprived his/her unique existential freedom.

Sartre (1956:346), clarified alienation as being a result of "The Look." The other enters my world through "The Look" and deprives me of my freedom by transforming me into a "being as an object" or a "being as seen by another."

Sartre denied that there can be a situation in which one can be in authentic communication with the other. However, the existential attitude of the ultra runners would indicate that there can be authentic communication between my body and a body of another.

Marcel (1947:315), has created a philosophy in which authentic communication is a central focus. Marcel stated that when the other is known as an "nonobjectivized
presence", then there is a communion between me and she/he. True communication is contained within the auspices of communion.

Communion is possible only when the presence of the other is acknowledged as a co-presence, as a subject, in such a manner that our individual integrity is realized. True communication is understood as a project of a body. Through projection the body engages the other in communication. The lived body is an act of communication. I do not mean to say that the body is a conduit through which communication flows. Rather communication is present in our every motion; our every action. Merleau-Ponty (1962:214), stated that we contain meaning in our every gesture and expression. These are modes of communication that disclose meaning fashioned by our lived experience with the world.

I will now turn to the experience of sociality among the ultra runners. The ultra runners are indeed a fine example of the communication that can evolve from a sense of communion.

James E. Shapiro was touched by the caring which the handlers bestowed upon him and the other runners. James related that the handlers "are thrown into an intimate relationship with the runner." Not only do the runners sense this relationship, but the handlers also feel the communion with the runners. One woman handler stated that,
"you feel as if you want to help the runners achieve their goals." Upon being questioned as to why she spent so much time doing "such seemingly mundane things" as counting laps, the woman handler said that, "we become part of the runners effort." James E. Shapiro interpreted this to mean that the runners become part of the handlers and the handlers become part of the runners. The staging of an ultra event requires the total engagement of both runners and handlers which in turn produces a relationship between the runners themselves and the runners and handlers.

Forming a Community of Ultra Runners

James E. Shapiro felt an immediate connection with the other runners entered in the six-day event. Throughout our conversation he refers not only to himself, but to "we." James spoke of the collective when he stated that the race began with, "Sixteen of us lined-up, fresh as unwrinkled peas..." Again when he captured the non-competitive aspects of the six-day, he spoke of the relationship among runners:

You can't go through something like this alone. We'd be on a short track in the company of other runners all sharing one thing in common: Fascination with the distance, (p. 2).
A Softening of the Barriers

As James and his colleagues circled the track, endlessly, day after day, James noticed that the barriers between individuals seemed to dissolve. James experienced a "softening of boundaries between myself and other people." As the runners surrendered to their exhaustion, they also discovered that they were surrendering to each other as well. The energy that is required to keep other individuals at a distance, is no longer available. The runners become essentially ego-less, responding to each other in an open and non-competitive manner. Marcel (1947), states that "oneness" with the other can only be achieved when the other is experienced as a co-presence. James experienced the others as co-presences that permitted communication to be established.

Becoming Sensitized to Each Others Needs

The runners in the six-day event also became so sensitized to each others needs that during "bad patches" of the race, the community of runners would be aware of the travail that one of their members was going through. For James the morning hours were his time of "personal strife." The community seemed to sense this also. James is unsure of whether all the runners circling the track were similarly affected by "dawn" as he was, or that they were sensitive to his "bad patch" and acted out of empathy
for him. Regardless, James felt the empathy flowing from the community, the usual "cheering-on" comments were suspended in favor of "silent acknowledgements."

Diane Armstrong also experienced the empathy of companion runners during her marathon run. When her blisters broke in the later stages of the marathon, one of Diane's running companions grimaced in sympathy. Diane felt that at that moment, all the runners "knew the feeling."

**Sharing of Experiences**

Competitive running tends to distance the competitors from one another. Certainly their presence is required in order to have a truly competitive experience, but sharing on an intimate level, is usually not achieved. Diane admits freely that she is an extremely competitive person in every facet of her life. Despite her competitive nature, Diane has shared some extremely close moments with her companion runners.

In Diane's first race, a local 4-mile cross country run, she tied with another woman. The other woman was initially a competitor to be "beaten" and surpassed on some level. However, throughout the course of the run, these two women shared parts of themselves with each other. They grunted and moaned through their fatigue and pain, more similar in their responses to the stress of the race than
different. This is what drew them together, their similarity.

Likewise, competitive intent aside, all the runners with whom I held conversations, experienced a sense of community with their companion runners. Is it the distance that draws competitors together? Perhaps the similarity of human responses to the stress of the distance, draws the competitors together? Or maybe it is some combination of both. James E. Shapiro stated that, "you can't go through something like that halfway and you don't really go through it alone."

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE: As ultra runners together undergo the stresses of distance running, their personal boundaries disappear: They become sensitized to each others needs.

A Traveling Bubble

Diane Armstrong has evolved an unique means to stay competitive, even in later stages of the marathon when exhaustion "settles in." Diane has invented a traveling bubble, in which she is always in the center of her own race. The bubble allows Diane to remain very competitive with other runners in her immediate vicinity. Then as the runner exits the "bubble", Diane forgets about her/him. They no longer exist for Diane, they are free to run their
own race. Diane's unique technique enables her to deal with her self-described slowness. Diane does not feel "left behind" by the elite runners as she runs minutes, perhaps hours behind the race leaders. Staying competitive in running is important for Diane.

Dealing with Others

Diane is very "other" centered, she is quite aware of the "others eyes upon her." Diane judges and constantly compares herself with "others" at all times. The "others" serve as a measure against which Diane can compare herself. Diane during her first race found herself alienated from others by her own inexperience.

Diane compared herself with the other runners lined-up on the grassy slope. Through her comparison with others, Diane discovered that the race was composed of high school runners, some "skinny men and myself." Diane was an outsider to these groups; both by her inexperience and also by her appearance. Diane had borrowed a pair of one of her daughters soccer shoes, and a pair of jeans. In this outfit she stated, "I must have looked ridiculous." The experience of being ridiculous requires comparison with others. One does not feel ridiculous in a vacuum.

"The look" of competition often becomes an obstacle to the ultra runners and removes them from their projects.
The ultra runner becomes alienated from his/her possibilities, (Sartre, 1966). By the mere appearance of the other, in the form of competition, the runner becomes an object of evaluation and judgement.

Competition may cause the runner to focus on his/her deficits; competition lifts them from the background and displays them at the very moment when the runner is on the verge of becoming absorbed in a task. The ultra runner's attention now shifts from the project to an awareness of him/herself. If the runner continues in the task, it does not engage him/her fully. The runner is poised somewhere between the task and an awareness of him/herself; the intervention of competition effectively precludes full engagement in a presently intended venture and creates a "gnawing fundamental insecurity about themselves," (Shapiro, 1985:173).

Diane continued to compare herself with the other runners throughout the ensuing years. Diane was reluctant to buy herself a pair of running shoes. Instead she persisted in borrowing shoes from her daughters. Diane stated that she would own her own pair of shoes when she became a "real runner."

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO: Competition among ultra runners provides a ground in which comparison with others
is able to reach fruition. The ultra runners then become very other centered.

**Imparting a Sense of Specialness**

Tom Hart, although not engaged in a competitive run, found himself involved with others. During his solo run, Tom decided to take a rest break and return a pair of gift socks. Tom expected the store clerk to recognize the "specialness" that Tom was certain was emanating off of him. No specialness was sensed, Tom was treated with the same consideration as any other "normal" customer. Anger rose in Tom, "certainly if the clerk had been paying attention, he would have known that I was doing something special."

Diane paralleled her expected happiness with giving birth to her daughters. Tom also called upon memories of "new" fatherhood, to explain how alert and quick he was after several hours on the road. Tom related that, as he had after becoming a parent, he expected everyone to, "recognize instinctively a special quality about you and treat you with tremendous consideration."

In the later stages of his 37 mile run, Tom noticed that no one was paying attention to "his shuffling along." "I was struggling along in total anonymity," recalled Tom. Tom was indistinguishable from any other pedestrian, out for an afternoon stroll. Tom knew he was
engaged in an unique endeavor, yet apart from verbally
telling others, no one would know his deed. Likewise, Tom
was unaware of the private deeds of the other pedestrians.

Diane also found herself "alone" in her marathon
accomplishment. Diane had expected that her friends would
"see" the change in her demeanor. Unfortunately, her
friends did not see Diane. They had to be "told" of her
run, and this angered Diane. Other marathoners of course
could identify each other as they were wandering around
after the marathon, with telltale limps and giving one
another "knowing glances."

When Diane returned to work she was not surrounded by
"other marathoners", she was surrounded by "other ordinary
people", who may not have known or even cared that a
marathon had taken place the day before. Diane felt the
other peoples glances upon her and knew that they detected
no "special or distinctive aura around her." Diane then
believed that she was very alone in her accomplishment,
which could be understood only by other marathoners.

Conry (1974), questions, "How is it that I come to
understand another individual's lived experience? What
discrepancies occur in the interpretative processes when I
focus on another's experience as opposed to my own lived
experiences?" (p. 65). Conry states that the fact that
another exists in the world as an embodied being is what
enables me to knowingly observe and glimpse another's experience.

By the soma of another, I am able to obtain at least a partial understanding of her/his experiences. Because another lives his/her experiences in and through her/his soma, and because I also experience the world in and through my soma, we are able to engage in genuine and meaningful dialogue. The fruition of this dialogue often involves verbal and/or nonverbal manners of existing. Unfortunately, Diane and Tom found that in order to achieve an informed conversation with other individuals; the others must be engaged in similar manners of existing as the ultra runners.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE: The ultra runner's discovered that it was impossible to impart their sense of accomplishment about the specialness of their run to others.

Other Ultra Runners as Support

Ed Ayres experienced the bond that can be established between persons undergoing an ordeal together. The ultra runners entered in the Western States Race discovered a large sense of support among their community. Ed remembers a large sense of "we" among members of the Western States runners. One hundred miles is an exceedingly long
distance, in which each member of the community of runners is relied upon for both solace and support. Throughout the run, Ed was confronted by many a companion runner, who wished to see Ed "get through" as much as they themselves wanted to "get through."

Inoue (1984), states that often one comes to a state where one is unified with the other while experiencing movement activity. One is likely to have a sense of unity with other in the lived movement, if the other is viewed as support. One feels a part of the whole in one's encounter with the world.

Sadly, Ed left the course at approximately 35 miles, feeling that he was too beaten to venture any further. As his wrist band was being removed, Ed remembers a collective sigh of disappointment, both from him and all of his companion runners. "One more of the community was not going to make it," recalled Ed. "I had let down myself and all of the other runners," lamented Ed. When questioned as to whether he feels the support of runners in other races such as 5KMs or 10KMs, Ed stated, "No, it must be the distance that produces the support."

Ford (1987), states that her experiences with post heart attack patients indicates that they experience caring when the other is "with" them rather than merely next to them. The heart attack survivor discovers caring in the patience which the other demonstrates. Being patient and
giving time and space. More accurately it is being with and for another.

Mark Will-Weber experienced another aspect of community support in his "Tour of Tameside." The six races over seven days was a highly competitive event. Although the runners did not like to see one another "fall by the wayside", they would not think twice about grinding each other to dust on an extremely hot and hilly section of the course. Mark recalled that the runners delighted in proclaiming how difficult the next day's race was to be. One bloke, in answer to Mark's question of the Tours difficulty grunted, "Tough? Why it's bloody hell!"

Mark shared in the competitive spirit of the Tour by visualizing himself as a hungry shark, waiting cautiously, until the fast starting, foolishly ambitious runners, started to slow; then he would simply feast on their remains. Mark's vivid and extremely aggressive imaginary continued throughout the six races.

Mark repeatedly made references to his race strategy as if he were a military commander "planning and preparing logistics for a war." Mark also envisioned his tired and pain wracked body as though it were a "bullet ridden Spitfire", that he had to coax "back to base." During an unbearable 13 mile race, Mark saw himself as an "unoiled tin man", his stride "all stiff and clanky."
Ford (1987), states that when the body of the heart attack survivor fails, then the social consequences can be increased subjectively (care) or increased objectification (stare). When an individual is in noticeable pain, he/she may become an object to be stared upon. The ultra runner in pain may become an object for the other, and the other's look makes him/her aware of him/herself as an object. "If someone looks at me, I am conscious of being an object," (Sartre, 1956:363). The ultra runner has lost her/his vitality; the runner is embarrassed. The runner can no longer maintain the pace, and becomes an object to be stared upon.

Mark's opponents were a similarly crusty bunch, who held no sympathy for the once fallen. The six races required speed, tenacity, and daring; and only those racers who could provide such qualities could finish. As a race spectator implored Mark to "stick 'em" to the competition, he recalled feeling as though he were a Roman Gladiator engaged in battle.

Mark denies that any of these aggressive images were aimed at other competitors. Rather, the images were induced by the difficulty of the course. Mark believed that the ultimate struggle of the Tour was not with other racers, but with the course. Mark recalled that the race held a "challenge and comraderie that you could cling to, and the struggle with the course was the reason why."
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR: A sense of community is produced by the difficulty of the ultra run. Regardless of the competitive intensity of the ultra run the presence of a community pervades in the event.

Glimpsing Qualities of Other Ultra Runners

Inoue (1984), states that during performance, one is aware of the other in an entirely different way. These others demonstrate a lived and moving existence for the participant. The Santa Barbara Nine Trails provided an opportunity for Michael McCumber to become acquainted with a companion ultra runner. Michael entered the 50 mile run, as an enjoyable Sunday outing. Therefore, he was looking for some conversation on the trail. When Melinda Creel came upon Michael, he was ready for some serious conversing.

Michael was duly impressed to learn that Melinda has frequent bouts of both asthma and bursitis. All these "problems" are despite being among the top ultra runners in the country. Michael's discomforts in comparison seemed "inconsequential." Michael used his conversation with Melinda to bolster his own confidence concerning the adversity that he might encounter along the 50 mile route.

Michael during "our" conversation also related the story of Nine Trails Race Director, Patsy Dorsey. Patsy
had to overcome tremendous odds in putting together "Nine Trails." Patsy had to deal with bureaucratic demands as well as "leery" sponsors. The Forest Service required that Patsy delineate clearly the route of the race, as well as the exact number of people that would be using Hendrickson Park. The race sponsors tried to renege on their offer to supply food and beverages, claiming the recession was to blame. Patsy handled all this with finesse, and produced a splendid race.

Ford (1987), states that when the post heart attack patient experiences his/her spouse's caring attitude this may become an occasion for discovering "qualities" in their spouse that were oblivious before. The heart attack survivor often is overpowered by their spouse's strength. It is often so comforting that the patient experiences a stabilizing force in what may be a rapidly changing world. The spouse's strength empowers the patient; it can give them the "wherewithal to muster his/her forces," (p. 176).

Michael kept Patsy's travails and ultimate success, close to his heart as he labored over the trails. After all the determination and stamina that Patsy had shown in the face of adversity, the least Michael felt he could do was finish the race. "The strength of Melinda and Patsy kept me going today," related Michael. Michael reflected that he "only" had to run 50 miles, but Patsy and Melinda
had to do much more. Conry (1974), states that the "...somatic encounter between another and me plays a significant role in the mutual understanding and discovery of self and other," (p. 65).

In coming together, the ultra runners see the other in a different light. The coming together, as it were, illuminates. It seems as though distance makes the runners more sensitive to the other. At the same time that the runner experiences caring for the other; the runner also experiences the other in a different way. The runner discovers qualities of the other that were not apparent before. Michael McCumber discovered strength in both Melinda and Patsy.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE: The distance of the ultra run provides an opportunity for the ultra runners to come together. In this coming together the ultra runners glimpse previously undiscovered qualities of the other.

Competition with Other Ultra Runners

While Michael was marveling at the tenacity of Melinda and Patsy, Markus Bosch was wishing his "running mate" would "trip off the trail." Markus agrees that he is an extremely competitive racer. Disappointed that he was unable to do well and remain competitive in the shorter
distance races, Markus turned to ultra running. Believing that his "turtle-like muscle fibers" would be an asset, Markus entered his first 50 mile race, confident that he would win.

Beaten and sadly mistaken about the ease of running ultras, Markus "ended-up last." This is when Markus sought the advice of a veteran ultra runner. Through training and racing they became both friends and rivals. It was this "friendly rival" that Markus wanted to hit with a rock. "What else was I suppose to do? He was beating me," wondered Markus.

Markus was upset that he could not provide a better challenge to his friend. By his inability to answer his friends faster pace, Markus believed that he had been rude to his friend. Markus felt as though his friend had purposely sought him out for help on the course. "It was as though I slammed the phone down on his call," lamented Markus. Markus had entered the 50 mile race, knowing that if he and his friend ran competitively throughout the course, they would be unbeatable. Markus was unable to keep his end of the bargain. Therefore, he believed that he failed his friend and most importantly himself.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC SIX: Competitive running requires a partnership between participants. In order for this partnership to be successful, each runner is
required to remain fully committed to the partnership goal.

Developing a Bond with Handlers and Crew

As a race can produce a sense of community among the runners, so too can the runners and their handlers or crew form a very intimate bond. James E. Shapiro related that the bond that developed between himself and his handler, was intimately special. James also experienced a bond between himself and the small children from the local village. The children came daily to aid the runners in any way possible. The children, although not part of the "official" handler group, lent their support in their own innocent and giving way.

Initially, James had difficulty in accepting the love that was a present to him, given by the children. As the days passed and the miles grew, James discovered a vulnerability in himself that was lodged deep within his 40 year old being. The vulnerability that James discovered within himself, allowed him to glimpse the children's "unselfish gift of love." James now found that he could return that love, in an equally open manner. The children now become daughters and sons of James and for the children, James became their father.
A six-day race although requiring diligence from the handlers is not as difficult as trying to "crew" a trail race similar to the Western States 100 mile. The six-day race is of a fixed period of time and in a fixed place. The handlers know that they will have easy access to the runners. If aid is needed, all the six-day runners have to do is to step off the track and enter the "large, yellow medical tent."

The Western States crew, and indeed any trail crew, has to navigate through and set-up their aid stations in extremely difficult terrain. This difficulty alone, demands that the crew be as committed to the runners goals as the runners themselves. The Western States crew has particularly difficult terrain to traverse. Often the crew needs as much time to cover the distance between aid stations, as the runners themselves. The crew prepares for their duties, by scouting-out the course weeks in advance of the race to make certain that no mishaps occur.

The strict race rules laid down by the medical staff at the Western States also has its own challenges. To enable a runner to maintain his approximate starting weight, requires eternal vigilance by the crews. Even if the runner refuses to eat or drink at the aid stations, the crew must induce him/her to do so. Shouting matches often erupt as crew and runner find themselves at odds with one
another over what are the best techniques for survival in the 100 mile run.

The pre-race goals of the runners are foremost in the thoughts of the crew. Barring serious injury, the crew must see that the trail weary runner meets these goals. Unfortunately, Ed Ayres and his crew did not develop a clear set of pre-race goals. Ed knew that he wanted to complete 100 miles, but he did not elaborate upon the process that would enable him to run through the finish line. "I just told them to feed and water me. I didn't warn them that I might quit at the first sign of discomfort," stated Ed. The crew did not realize that they should encourage a trail weary Ed to continue running through discomfort. When Ed stated that he was leaving the race, his crew did not challenge his decision. Ed left the race and almost immediately regreted his "rash decision."

Ford (1987), discovered that when an individual undergoes a crisis, if there is a history of a good relationship with another, the crisis becomes "their crisis" rather than solely the individual's. As "their" misfortune it unites them in their desire to deal with the matter. Their energies are channelled in the same direction. In their closeness they do not lose their separate identities; it is not the merging of identities. The strength lies in their ability to be at once separate and together. Closeness is not to be confused with dependence. Their capacity for
closeness is rooted in their capacity to be independent. The closeness is a fusion of an awareness and an affirmation of the other as a separate human being; at the same time there is an ability to reach out to each other and to bridge the gap between them.

Roseanna Heil positioned herself at critical aid stations along the Santa Barbara Nine Trails course. Roseanna wanted to make sure that what happened to Ed Ayres would not happen to "her" runners. Although not crewing any one particular runner, Roseanna believed that all the participants in the Nine Trails were her runners. Roseanna vowed that she would see all the runners through the course, offering encouragement wherever and to whomever required it.

When Roseanna first discovered the 50 mile race she was just recovering from her first marathon. The Nine Trails was being held on part of the course on which Roseanna had trained for the New York City Marathon. She found herself filled with resentment, wondering who all these "strange people" were running around "her" park. This was her park, the park in which she ran around and around the lake, too timid to venture onto the trails of the Santa Ynez mountain range.

An interesting phenomena occurred as Roseanna watched the runners shuffle by, she was filled with awe. Roseanna had been so proud of her marathon triumph, now
here were ordinary people traveling twice as far. As she continued to watch, fascinated by the steady stream of runners; she noticed their ordinariness. A woman ran by with "cold-splotched purple legs." Another man seemed almost bent-in-two as he shuffled by. Yes, they were shuffling, a nine minute per mile pace would have been considered quite fast. Roseanna could do this too: At least with time she could.

Until then Roseanna could participate in this strange world by being a race volunteer. Roseanna considers herself ordinary, and an ordinary person could certainly aid other ordinary people to run 50 miles. Roseanna's objective was to aid the Nine Trails ultra runners, giving to them as much of herself as the runners were giving of themselves to the course. The Nine Trails race was also going to be an opportunity for Martha Cederstrom to pace her dear friend and training partner. Martha prepared for her pacing duties as if she herself were racing in the Nine Trails.

Support is liberating, and it also creates an atmosphere of trust. It fosters one's existence as an independent agent with the ability to interact with the world on one's own terms. "Trusting the other is to let go; it includes an element of risk and a leap into the unknown both of which take courage," (Mayerof, 1972:21).
The racer places all her hopes and ambitions at the feet of the pacer. During the later parts of an ultra race, when the pacer's duties are allowed to be employed, the pacer has total responsibility for the racer's safety. It is usually for safety, rather than helping the racer maintain her pace, that a pacer is used.

Mountain trails are difficult enough to travel across in the daylight hours. The situation becomes dangerous at night when the racer is in an exhausted condition after many hours of running. A bond develops between the racer and pacer. The pacer runs with the racer through many miles of wrenching exhaustion. The pacer sees her partner in her "fatigued soaked worst." The racer must place all her faith in a partner, when rational decision making is gone, and she is in a vulnerable condition. It is little wonder that after hours spent together on the mountain trails that the racer and pacer become "family."

The relationship was even more intense for Martha and Carol. They were close friends prior to Martha's assuming duty as Carol's pacer, now they seemed to be as one. Martha the more rested of the two women, stated that after the race:

I now know what every flinch and grimace of Carol means. We no longer have to use words to communicate. Out on the trail, she would just look at me, and I would know what she wanted or needed.
Martha was anxious to see if Carol and she would remain in this type of "intimate connectedness"; or would they just become "plain friends" again?

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC SEVEN: A successful ultra run includes the dedication of the handlers and crew personnel to the goals of the run. An intimate connectedness can also develop between runner and handler/crew personnel as they go through the process of the run together.
Chapter VII
TEMPORALITY: CREATING TIME THROUGH EVENTS

Introduction

Spatiality and temporality are disclosed by phenomenology as being simultaneously lived by a body. An occurrence of a body is within the complex of lived time and lived space. Edmund Husserl (1970:211), stressed that the body is revealed as coming from a past and moving into a future. Husserl categorized this temporal directionality in terms of a retentional protentional axis. A retentional mode is a lived body that is qualified by its past. A lived body is constituted by its past. A body is its past. The past which constitutes a body is never gone as long as a body exists. Certainly, the past no longer objectively exists, but the past remains subjectively real. According to Calvin O. Schrag (1988:116), "The lived body is not an objectivised instant within an objectively measured time." Human time is qualitatively unique.

The lived body contains time within itself. The lived body is not an element in time; it constitutes time. All of the body's projects are ripe with temporality.
Temporality of a body is both retentional and protentional. The lived body is retentional in that at every moment it is a union of its past performances influenced both by environmental and social factors. Sartre (1956:173), saw this as the facticity of human existence modified by pastness.

The body is also modified by futurity. The lived body is protentional in that it gathers the past and transforms it into future existential possibilities. Calvin O. Schrag (1988) stated:

The phenomenon of the lived body thus shows itself in immediate experience as a body qualified by temporality — qualified retentionally in that it is a body which has already become that which it is, defined by itself, its environment and other selves; but it is also qualified protentionally in that it is a body which has not lived out its projects. It is protented into a future and confronted with the task of appraising the meaning of its past as this past is translated into possibility, (p. 117).

The past dictates what is done in the present. No one lives this motto better than the ultra distance runner. The training and preparation that is undergone prior to the ultra marathon, imposes how the ultra marathon is run.

Diane Armstrong insured that she was prepared adequately for her first marathon. When Diane decided to run the Columbus Marathon, she had four months to prepare. Diane put those four months to very good use. At a local park, Diane often ran 30 miles in a single run. Diane wanted
"to more than make sure I could more than go the distance." Diane related that even if she wasn't fast, she wanted to be trained adequately for any circumstance that might arise in the marathon. "I just want to keep shuffling along, through any problems," stated Diane. Diane found enjoyment in the actual training, "I knew that I was making the most of my time."

Two Types of Ultra Runs

Ultra runs are of two types. There are races held for time with distance being a secondary factor. James E. Shapiro entered this type of race when he participated in a six-day race. Then there are races run over a set distance with time being a secondary factor. These types of races include the Western States race, participated in by Ed Ayres. The Nine Trails race in Santa Barbara is another example. The Tour of Tameside although run over six-days, was in fact a series of races over a set distance with time being a secondary factor.

Each type of race has a standard by which the participants rate themselves. Races that occur over a set period of time, such as a six-day event, require that the participants measure themselves according to the distance that they covered. Conversely, races that are held over a
specific distance, hold time as a standard by which the participants can compare themselves.

For the participants in this investigation completion of the ultra, whatever its requirements, was the primary goal. The participants gauged their performances against personal standards; likely having little to do with overall placing in the race. The exception to this was, Mark Will-Weber who placed himself in a daily battle with the other Tour participants in order to improve his final placing.

The Urgency of Running with Time

Ed Ayres was running Western States primarily to finish 100 miles, and thereby jar "himself right with the world." Pondering his past and the events that lead-up to his feelings of despair, Ed realized that he had lost his "youthful zest." The personal setbacks of his wife's illness and the collapse of his publishing business took "too much" out of him. The one activity that had seen him through many other difficult times was now almost impossible to engage in due to his thyroid problems. "The more I put on the pounds due to my medication, the less I ran, the heavier I became," lamented Ed.

The past lives in memory and is accessible by reflection. Reflection, as Marcel (1950) notes:

occurs when, life coming up against a certain obstacle, or again being checked by
a certain break in continuity of experience, it becomes necessary to pass from one level to another, and to recover on this higher plane the unity which had been lost in the lower one, (p.x).

Through reflection the past is brought into the present. The past becomes significant in the present. What has happened "receives its significance and value from its temporal position in the individual's life history," (Wessman and Gorman, 1977:43). The present is experienced as meaningfully connected with the past.

Ed's personal problems became an occasion for taking the time to reassess his life, to identify what is important to him. Marcel (1950), states that to speak of life is to ask one's self "what point it has" and maybe "even whether it points in any direction at all," (p.172).

With his personal history seared into his being, Ed trained for Western States. Ed proceeded cautiously, even patiently, not wanting to overextend himself by rushing his fitness along. Patient in training, Ed was certainly not patient in the race. Ed was eager to place both his personal turmoil and the "agony of the race" behind him. For Ed, everything would be alright as soon as he finished the 100 miler. The feeling of accomplishment upon completing Western States would take away all his personal distress. Ed's mistake was concentrating on the future and neglecting to see his immediate surroundings. In essence, Ed was "counting his chickens before they hatched."
This type of impatience is fraught with "danger", as Ed counted on finishing the race while forgetting what it would take to achieve its completion. As Ed ran the first few miles of the race he noticed that he perceived time beginning to shorten. "Time began to telescope," Ed recalled. Never before had Ed run with the feeling that hours were flying by like microseconds. Ed supposed that he was so involved in the initial stages of the race that time held little relevance for him.

During the "early miles", Ed cautioned himself to remain patient; every trail experience would come at its own rate. Ed must not allow himself to become involved in his "own personal sense of urgency." Ed didn't want the "here and now" to escape him, while he focused on his past troubles or his future accomplishments. At the pre-race briefing, Ed wondered if the other race participants were also running for highly personal reasons. Ed guessed that the answer would be; yes. A 100 mile run is not undertaken on a whim; many months of arduous preparation are required.

Ed began to feel anxious after approximately 26 miles had been run. The anxiety resulted from a need to hasten the pace and finish, so that the desired "release" would be granted. Ignoring his pre-race vow to himself, Ed began to rush. He was impatient to "get it over with"; Ed wanted to surpass time itself. Ed's pledge to remain patient was
broken. With this break came the experience that time was
dragging "forever on."

The ultra runner after a perceived failure may be less
prepared to tempt fate. Ed's future ultra runs will be
guided by the past, "the past," which van den Berg (1974)
says, "provides the conditions for what is going to happen
in life," (p.86).

It is ironic that Ed's self-described, "ultimate error"
was one of impatience. Patience is the virtue that Ed had
coached himself in most during his pre-race preparation.
The night before the start of the Western States race, Ed
had written himself a note: "Run with the sun, not with
the shooting stars." Ed supposed that his most blatant
error, was the belief that he could make up nine years of
"falling behind" in one grand run; that he would be able to
cleanse the "bad blood of all my anxieties" with one day of
clean high Sierra air.

Ford (1987), states that dwelling in the past may exact
a price as the individual may become estranged from his/her
authentic possibilities. The individual must live in such
a manner that they are not estranged from their
possibilities. The ultra runners all wanted to maximize
their potential for living life fully. Their interest
extended beyond the proper functioning of their bodies.
They want to live life more intensely.
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE: The ultra runner must learn patience if their goals are to come to fruition. The ultra runners must be patient and confident in order for their training to take effect.

Establishing Pace while Running with Time

Diane Armstrong also found herself losing patience during her marathon. Diane's impatience to get to the "cheering crowds", caused her to run at a faster pace than she had planned. Although able to regain her composure and restore her patience, the faster pace did indeed take its toll on Diane in the final stages of the marathon. Diane does not believe she would have "hit the wall" so early in her run, if she had been able to maintain her patience and predetermined pace.

Despite all the patience Diane had shown in running her 30 mile training runs, she found herself in a constant battle to remain poised and calm as a member of the community of runners. Indeed all the marathon runners seemed to be undergoing similar distress. Diane remembers very distinctly how in the early miles of the Columbus Marathon, people were running "to and fro." The runners were wandering from one side of the road to another in an attempt to find some running room. They were apparently not content to wait until the crowd dispersed further down the road.
The runners want to run at their own pace, and they wished to establish it immediately.

When confronted with a crisis it is, as Marcel (1950) says, "as if the ground were crumbling under his feet," (p.153). Little by little pieces begin to emerge as the runner takes stock of her/his situation. What emerges in taking stock are fragments out of the past. Marcel (1950), states that in recalling the past:

> we are given certain luminous fragments out of the past, the mind...has to work hard to rebuild the rest of the past around them... rebuilding of the past is really a new building...modified more or less on the former edifice...but not identical with it, (p.156).

Diane could sympathize with the other marathoners' agitation. Diane remembered how in her first race she had had similar feelings. When Diane started her first race she was torn between running the pace she knew she could maintain or attempting to keep up with the crowd so that she would not be last. Diane decided that she would maintain her pre-determined pace, running with the last group of runners. This was the pace for which she trained, hence this was the pace that Diane would maintain.

Maintaining the same view of her running in the marathon was not as easy. In her first race, Diane had to worry about only her anxiety about running last. In the marathon, Diane discovered that there were imposed regulations that would hinder her from running "too slowly." The
race director told the gathered marathoners that the aid stations would begin to be dismantled after those runners maintaining a 10:00 minute per mile pace had gone by. Now Diane had to deal with the "time pressure." Not only would she have to confront her disappointment if she failed to maintain her goal pace, but the race would also "impose sanctions" if she ran "too slowly."

Tom Hart, although not involved in a race against others over a set distance, was concerned about finishing his 37 miles in an "appropriate time." Appropriate time for Tom, meant running 37 miles in roughly six hours. Six hours was the time that Tom had set aside for the activity that he loved dearly. From past experience Tom knew that he had completed a marathon by averaging a 6:20 minute per mile pace. Therefore, he should be able to run 37 miles at a 9:15 minute per mile pace.

Six hours on the road, alone, was indeed a foreboding thought. In order to combat these thoughts, Tom was using his past performances to buoy his fears about future endeavors. In recalling the past we usually contrast it, "with the present and thereby gain a new perspective on the past," (Wessman and Gorman, 1977:42). The past can be reconstructed in the present so as to make sense of it and to give meaning to the present.

Mark Will-Weber's primary goal was to complete the Tour of Tameside's daily distances. However, Mark was not above
being concerned with his overall elapsed time. Mark recorded his mile times for each mile in each race. Mark knew that he was 10:20 at the two mile mark in the first race. Mark's competitive intent caused him to focus exclusively on his time per mile compared to his placing among the runners.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO: The ultra runners depend on their past running performances to gauge their pace per mile during their ultra run.

**Challenging Time and Pace Demands in Runs with Time**

The Santa Barbara Nine Trails offers another opportunity for ultra runners to test their endurance ability over a specific distance. Michael McCumber stated that he hesitated to become involved in a 50 mile race. Though Michael knew that his training was adequate to complete a 50 mile run, he did not wish to be involved with the entanglements of competition. Michael wanted his running time to be a period to relax and unwind from his bank duties.

Michael was persuaded by his son, Sam, to run the race, so that father and son could spend some quality time together. Sam was a volunteer at one of the aid stations, so that he could cheer on his father. Michael was doubtful whether his running 50 miles would constitute "quality
time" with his son. However, Michael did succumb to his son's wishes and ran the Nine Trails.

Michael really hadn't wanted to race because of the time and pace demands the race would place on his running. Michael finally decided that one more race, with its time pressure, would not do "too much harm." As the Nine Trails unfolded, Michael began to question what are the attributes in a race that cause the individual to believe that they have had a "good day?" Most often runners judge their performance solely on whether they believe they have had run the course in a "good time."

A good time is one that is fastest for the distance. In judging a race in this manner, individuals often overlook the events that evolve in the race. There are a tremendous amount of experiences that should be savored within the race itself. These experiences have little to do with the "goodness" of a runner's elapsed time. Indeed the runners that spend the most time on the course should have richer and more varied experiences than the faster runners who are "consumed with racing the clock."

One's beliefs may be one way of making sense of a situation. But is there another way of viewing causality? Is it possible that one's sense of causality may be related to one's notion of time? Cottle (1977), suggests that there are two perceptions of time; the Gestalt and the Atomistic. In the former, "the present passes continuously
into the future as the past flowed continuously into the present," (p.175). In the latter, "the time zones are distinct...they are separated from each other," (p.175).

We hold both notions of time simultaneously. Cottle continues:

If this is true, then one's sense of causality, which develops in great measure from conceptions of time, is affected by these fundamental styles of thought: Persons who tend to see parts within a particular whole as being disconnected should be less capable of perceiving relationships between parts. The Gestaltist perceiver, therefore, should see not only relationships between time zones but ways in which one time zone affects events in other time zones, (p. 175).

Hence the Gestaltist perceiver may be more capable of reconstructing the past to understand the strain of ultra running. The atomistic perceiver is not able to make the connection because she/he cannot see the relationship of the parts to the whole, the past to the present.

Michael believed that the Nine Trails was a race where he would not assume he would get "better and better." For Michael "better and better" seemed almost irrelevant. It was the euphoria of experience that caused Michael's excitement concerning Nine Trails. The euphoria that arose from his deep involvement in the race, caused Michael to look upon elapsed time from a new perspective. Michael remembered that at the halfway point he thought to himself,
"...gee only three and a half hours and I'm really finding my rhythm here."

Elapsed time was put in perspective of the race distance. van den Berg (1974) notes, "To understand something one has to comprehend its origins," (p.86). The ultra runner can only apprehend the event by returning to the past; the present cannot be understood from the present since, "events fit into the continuous narratives of our life histories," (Wessman and Gorman, 1977:40). Our experience of time lies in events so we must return to the events if we wish to comprehend the present situation.

Usually when an individual is halfway completed an arduous task, it is time for renewed hope. They have already completed the distance that yet remains. "Halfway done" is considered a milestone of sorts. Michael realized that he had only approximately 3.5 hours yet to run. Since he had already run 3.5 hours, he most assuredly could run 3.5 hours more. Even when Michael was confused as to which of the many looping trails to take, he relaxed and greeted this sense of confusion as another experience. "Oh I guess I could have worried about lost time and all. But I didn't lose time, I was still aware," related Michael.

Indeed, when people speak of "time lost", they likely mean that they have not been spending time in a "productive manner." "Wasted time" is what people dread: Time not spent pursuing personal goals. But is any time wasted? Is
not any time that we are experiencing the world, in fact productive time? Michael came to this realization, as he savored his 50 mile run.

Experiences are the conditions that result from living life in an aware manner. Michael concluded that, "Maybe ultra runners are especially aware of how accidental life is, and how foolish it is to force this flow." By compartmentalizing the flow of life into discrete units of mechanical time, we are indeed stifling the flow.

van den Berg (1974) speaks eloquently: "The past is not primarily significant at the time it was taking place. The past is significant now....The past that is significant is the present past," (p.80). Furthermore, "The past cannot be recaptured except in fragments," (Marcel, 1950:155). These fragments are removed from their background and examined in detail. The whole is lost in the process, thus the events take on a different dimension. Recalling the past, then, is like looking through a pair of binoculars where certain elements are enlarged and others fade into the background. The events are isolated from their content and deprived of their meaning, (van den Berg, 1970:15). Recalling the past is the basis for perceiving time and for anticipating the future.

Roseanna Heil seemed to know intuitively how damaging it would be to force her own flow of running. Roseanna refused to wear a watch while running, "I didn't want to
take it too seriously." Roseanna wanted her running to be an oasis, where time constraints were not evident. Wearing a watch for Roseanna meant that she had conceded to the demands of running and racing.

Living with an awareness of what comes first means that an ultra runner selects certain situations over others, that she/he is aware of her/his options which are in accordance with rethinking of her/his goals, and that she/he responsibly owns and enacts certain commitments. There is a will to live, not just to exist, this to a large extent determines the manner in which one does live. Marcel (1950) suggests, one's life "is articulated on a reality which gives it a meaning and a trend, and as it were justifies it," (p. xiii).

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE: When an ultra runner engages in a race they must decide how they will deal with the pressure of time.

Running for Distance

James E. Shapiro involved himself in an unique race, a race over six days in which the individuals total distance covered would determine their overall place among the competitors. The six day race or "go as you please event" developed out of the pedestrian races of the late 1800's. Then wagers were placed on which "ped" would be able to
walk the farthest. Today's six day event offers runners a much less stressful environment than the races of old. Money is no longer wagered, and the participants can truly "go as they please."

The runners create their own schedule for the six day race. They decide when they will walk and run, eat and sleep. The individual is who decides how far he/she will run each day and how much effort that he/she will expend to travel the distance. Instead of the overall distance determining the individual's pace per mile, the seconds, minutes, hours and days of the race do. The runner's primary concern is not with distance covered, but elapsed time.

James found himself partitioning the race not in segments of distance but in increments of time. The half-way point in the race was not measured in terms of distance, but in terms of days; three days. Within a temporal structure, the individual apprehends both a daily agenda (the present) and an historical perspective (the past). The present, "usually contains some anticipation, however vague and uncertain, of what is to come," (Wessman and Gorman, 1977:39).

James remembered an extremely large, white-faced, black-handed clock that was placed just to the inside of the track at the start/finish line. The clock claimed control of the race, it was the entity that would signal
when the runners would finally be released from their task. James remembers the clock "reigning supreme", while the officials, volunteers and runners relied on its percision to tell them how they were doing. "I used the clock to tell me how I was doing as I completed each lap," recalled James. The clock held an authority that no one else could match. The race was for six days, 144 hours, and only the clock could give the ultra runners permission to end their journey.

The morning hours were particularly unpleasant for the ultra runners. The dawn brought another day to be endured around the "monotonous track." The clock was always there; steady in its rhythm. Unaware and undisturbed by either the runners elation or anguish. "Here we were and the clock was so aloof: Remote in its task," lamented James.

The clock was an integral part of the race's technical aspects yet uninvolved in the essence of the race. The clock, indeed time, was in the experience of the race participants, but the reverse was not true. How can a rhythmically beating object be given so much authority and allowed to impose such degree of structure over our lives?

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR: The authority given to mechanical clock-time imposes boundaries on the lives of the race participants.
Bergson (1910), believes that there are two different
dimensions of time, clock time and time as duration. He
eloquently explains these two characteristics of time by
the following example:

When I follow with my eyes on the dial of a
clock the movement of the hand corresponds
to the oscillation of the pendulum, I do
not measure duration, as it seems to be
thought; I merely count simultaneous.
Outside of me in space, there is never more
than a single position of the hand and the
pendulum, for nothing is left of the past
positions. Within myself a process of
organization of conscious state is going on
which constitutes true duration. It is
because I endure in this way that I picture
to myself what I call the past oscillations
of the pendulum at the time as I perceive
the present oscillation, (p. 107-108).

Therefore, clock-time is objective time consuming space,
having no duration. Conversely, time as duration is not
spatially located and contains duration within itself.
This is subjective or lived time.

James recalled that after a while the clock time became
lived time:

When hours felt like sensations, like arms
moving, chilly wind making part of your
face feel alive as you rounded the bend;
hours like houses coming into view, then
vanishing leaving trees again, now the
signboard, and then the growing awareness
of the tongue that signals thirst...and all
the while the world continued to slither
through and you slid into the world so the
hours didn't bring boredom to contend with,
rather they brought difficulties that
sought attention then faded only to return
again, (pp. 11-12).
Like the clock hand's cyclical journey, the runners too were involved in an event that would take them round and round the face of the track. The journey also obeying its own cycles, saw the difficulties of the runners appear, disappear, and then reappear. This itself became a measure of time. James was able to measure time by the size of his growing blister at the bottom of his right heel. "After the first day my blister was the size of a dime, the next day a penny, and the next a nickel. When it spread to my instep, I knew the race was almost over," recalled James.

As the days of the race progressed, the runners became tuned to their own unique manner of keeping time. They became hungry and tired at regular intervals, the clock became a secondary concern for it was no longer relied upon to tell the runners their needs. The ultra runners began to listen to themselves, and their bodies responded loud and clear with their requirements.

The large infield clock which initially had taken the runners attention, overwhelming them by its mere presence, became redundant in the later stages of the race. The clock only verified what the runners had begun to attend to; the lived time of their somas.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE: When the ultra runner is thoroughly engaged in their task, the mechanical clock-time becomes the lived time of the participants.
The world of nature also began to punctuate the runners personal time keeping. James recalls instances when the moon and sun seemed to be intimately connected with the journey of the ultra runners. Nature seemed to be putting on a spectacular show for the runners, as if also to say, "we too are involved in a journey of time":

The moon that last night came up early, rose right out of a distant sidewalk, a great perfect orange wafer so enormous that the other runners' voices cracked with glee welcoming it, (p. 18).

Ed Ayres also found himself involved in a journey with nature as he commenced his ultra run. Ed found himself to be one with nature, not just a spectator to its beauty. The beeping of Ed's watch corresponded to the day's progression from "cool morning to hot midday and afternoon." The beeping became tuned with the rhythm of the natural cycle.

The locus of time is in dynamic interplay between the individual and her/his environment. Merleau-Ponty (1962) expresses: "Time is, therefore, not a real process, not an actual succession that I am content to record. It arises from my relation to things," (p.412).

For the six-day runners, the sun would crack through the overcast, English sky approximately every day at 11:00 AM, "just as we needed a lift," recalled James. As though
the sun was conscious of overheating the runners, it would disappear behind clouds at approximately 2:00 PM. A brief rain shower would usually ensue, cooling the runners. The sun would make another brief appearance before nightfall. "It was as though nature was working in conjunction with us," expoused James.

The ultra runners set their daily schedule to the sun's appearance. When the rain showers came, this served as a signal for the runners to take a brief time away from the track: A time to eat and rest. When the glow from the sun reappeared on the track's puddled surface, the runners again proceeded to circle the track.

To an observer of the six day event, there would seem to be an unique relationship between the runners and the natural environment, the runners responded to the ebb and flow of nature's time. The clock stood alone day after day, beating out the seconds, minutes and hours; aloof from the affairs on the track.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC SIX: The ultra runners discovered that there is cyclical time in nature.
Chapter VIII

SPATIALITY: CREATING ONE'S OWN ATMOSPHERE

Introduction

A lived body and space are inextricably intertwined. The conception of space is that it is an observable entity which can be objectively defined. The spatiality which is inherent in the lived body is not objective space. Merleau-Ponty (1962), called human space, "espace oriente":

Espace oriente is the space in which I apprehend my lived body is articulated in and through my practical personal projects, and as such must be consistently contrasted with the quantitative and measurable space which defines my objective world as an extensive continuum, (p. 116).

Merleau-Ponty (1962:116), goes on to state that the dimensions of oriented space have different values relative to the situation in which the lived body fulfills its projects. Merleau-Ponty distinguished between spatiality of position and spatiality of situations. The former characterizes the abstract space of mathematics, the later the concrete oriented space of the lived body. Therefore, the body is not something that is "in space", but something that "lives space." Human space is intimately connected with the projects of human concern.
The relationship to space is extremely relevant for the runner: An integral part of their activity. Although all individuals deal with space on a moment to moment basis, runners contemplate the process of traveling through space as a means of pursuing their activity. To run means to travel in space. The ultra runner has a very intense relationship in space. The ultra runner by the very nature of their activity must ponder the means of traveling across great distances.

Confronting an Unknown Distance on a Familiar Route

We are always involved in a place (Benswanger, 1979). Places have meaning. How does an ultra runner experience that space that is present as he/she is engaged in a run? What does the space speak to?

Tom Hart, traveling 37 miles to celebrate his birthday, was to delve into a distance 11 miles greater than his previous longest run. In order to temper his trepidation about traveling the 11 miles of "unknown space", Tom planned his run along a suburban Boston Route. This route was thoroughly familiar to Tom. The first 14 miles of the run were around Boston's busy suburban streets. Tom wished to travel through busy streets in order to primarily assure himself that if he had "trouble", he could readily find help.
The suburban sprawl of Boston is well equipped with restrooms, fast food restaurants, telephones and shelter. Tom wanted to have access to all these conveniences, "just in case something went haywire." "I could have run 37 miles in the country, but that would have been too scary," related Tom. An unknown distance combined with an unknown area, would have been more than Tom had planned. Tom made sure that his pace throughout the distance would be relatively slow and steady. Tom wanted to be relaxed and fresh all throughout the run. Tom had pre-determined his rest/refreshment breaks, as an attempt to establish control on a day which he was uncertain of the outcome.

Ford (1987), found that every place contains its own mood and atmosphere, and this is coupled with certain expectations. This determines an individual's expectations of that space. Places have meaning, and an individual responds accordingly.

When questioned as to if he planned all his runs with such detailed precision, Tom answered, "No, never, I just usually go out my front door and run." Tom related that usually he doesn't even pre-select the distance he is going to run. Tom just judges his route and distance by how he feels, after the "first quarter mile or so."

Living in a more authentic way means constructing a place in which one feels secure and in control, a place in which one is able to realize one's potential, (Marcquarrie,
1973). Tom claims to have over 143 different running routes, all very intricate, around his suburban neighborhood. "The shortest route is only two miles and the longest is 21.3 miles," related Tom. All the routes, Tom has measured precisely with both his bicycle and car. Tom begins to think about how far he will run each day, while he is still at work:

By lunchtime I have a general idea about the distance I want to go. Then I select the appropriate route to match the distance. Only rarely do I select to run a particular distance because I like the route.

The distance that Tom wishes to run dictates the route that Tom will select to take.

Tom considers all the 143 different running routes, home courses. Hence, there is no need to make special preparations for "unknown occurrences." Tom is confident that he can successfully complete each of his "home routes", as long as he does not go beyond 21.3 miles.

A run beyond 21.3 miles requires special planning. The distance of 21.3 miles is at the end of Tom's comfort zone. Any steps beyond this comfort zone are venturing into a seldom run distance. Tom wants to keep it this way, so that ultra distances never lose any of their mystique. How then does Tom conceive of 11 miles past the marathon distance? Tom could not imagine what the unexplored territory would hold for him.
After the initial 14 mile suburban loop, Tom headed for home for a refreshment break. Passing a signpost close to home, with the names of towns and corresponding distances, gave Tom a boost. He found comfort in the names of each town and the familiarity of their distances. The first 14 miles hadn't brought on any strange occurrences. The signpost further strengthened Tom's conception that he was on home territory.

Tom was also feeling the expectation that something certainly incredible, would occur in the unknown territory of the last 11 miles. The first 14 miles had not achieved the specialness that Tom had hoped to experience. The "epic quality" of the run had not, yet established itself.

Tom thought, that perhaps in his quest to bring the distance into control, by breaking 37 miles into manageable units, he had lost the essence of the "whole run." I was just concentrating on 14 miles here, 7 miles there etc...I neglected to look at the run in its entirety," lamented Tom. Tom believed that he may have disregarded the specialness of his run in his haste to calm his anxiety.

As Tom was about to embark into the "unknown territory", he arrived at Fresh Pond. This was Tom's favorite running area. Of all of his 143 routes, Fresh Pond was the most comforting: It was home.
Diane Armstrong felt her confidence increase as her husband urged her on by paralleling the remaining 8 miles of the marathon with a run around a local park:

The park my husband was talking about is a local park that I trained at. The running path is a four mile loop. I did a lot of loops in training. So it really was a good way to encourage me. It made the remaining 8 miles seem familiar, and that felt good, real good!

When Diane connected the remaining 8 miles with her familiar training loops, the distance yet to run ceased to be intimidating.

Although the specialness of Tom's run was likely mitigated by it being run in a "safe space"; Tom was certain that he had correctly planned his route. Tom would derive the specialness that he longed for, simply by completing 37 miles. The "great thoughts" and "expanding vistas" would have to wait for another run. Tom was happy just to be going beyond the marathon barrier. The specialness was to be found in Tom's ability to run farther than the marathon distance.

To live authentically, an ultra runner has to be in touch with their own situation. An ultra runner has to be aware of the manner one exists in the world. Human existence, Marcel (1950) states, is not something that we "passively suffer but actively live," (p. 144). To achieve this an ultra runner must create his/her own world; a runner must carve a niche for him/herself, where he/she can
realize his/her dreams and create new possibilities. An ultra runner is not isolated from her/his surroundings since one is always in a situation. Being in a situation does not mean that we are an "autonomous whole." Rather "such a being is open....One might even say that such a being is permeable," (p.145).

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE: There are certain places that ultra runners may consider their home territory. When they are running in these places they feel in control of their experiences.

Arbitrariness of Traditional Racing Distances

Most runners approach the "marathon barrier" as if it were a tangible obstacle decreed to be unable to be sur­passed. These runners do not realize how arbitrary 26.2 miles truly is. Indeed all of the racing distances are arbitrary. What is so sacred about the distances of a 5KM, a 10KM, or a 42KM? Like a child's experience of lived space in early childhood, which Benswanger (1979) studied, spatial experiences unfold in a setting that others arrange and structure for an ultra runner.

Ultra runners have destroyed running society's pre­conceived notions about the "marathon barrier." Although ultra runners also adhere to arbitrary race distances. They generally exercise their creativity to run ultras of
various distances. Some annual ultra races change the distance of their run each year.

The race director of "The Knee Knackering Trail Ultra" in Vancouver B.C. Canada, decides each year's race distance by literally pulling the distance out of a computer. The race director has a computer that allows her to access distances from 26.3 miles to 100.99 miles.

Only in its fourth year of existence "The Knee Knackering" has held races of 28 miles, 33.1 miles, 41.8 miles and 53.4 miles in length. "The Knee Knackering" prevents runners from becoming too comfortable with set distances. The variety of distances provides the ultra community with training challenges as well, as the distance of the event isn't determined until the week before the race.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO: Ultra runners are confronting barriers of human existence.

Confronting a Familiar Distance on an Unknown Route

Ed Ayres had entered a "traditional" 100 mile race. The Western States 100 mile trail run is to ultra runners, what the Boston Marathon is to marathoners; a race to aspire toward. Ed was using the Sierra Nevada course as a "proving ground" in order to re-establish his faith in his "personal strength."
Ed was both intrigued and apprehensive about traveling 100 miles over rugged mountain territory. Ed was confident that he would be able to run 100 miles, but on a flat, rural road. Ed's training was accomplished mostly around his Maryland, countryside house. The terrain is rolling, but certainly not hilly. All of Ed's running had also been done on an asphalt surface. The terrain of Ed's training was nothing to compare with what he would experience on the Western States course. Western States was to be an attempt to run a familiar distance over very unfamiliar terrain. Ed was unable to select his ultra route as Tom had done. Tom had pondered the figurative "unknown territory" of the distance of his run. Ed pondered the literal "unknown territory" of the terrain of the Western States course.

Ed remembers how two nights prior to the start of the Western States run, his wife, Sharon, woke suddenly to an incongruous sound. The sound, Sharon thought she recognized as traffic. A sound with which the Ayres were familiar, from their days living in an apartment next to an interstate highway. But how could there be traffic noises at 7,000 feet, in a valley surrounded by a wall of mountains in the Sierra Nevada Range? Ed agreed it sounded like a roar of trucks, and then thought perhaps it could be the wind.

The next morning, the Ayres' went for a pre-race jog and discovered the source of the noise. A great rush of
water was pouring off the mountain. Its source was a vast snowfield succumbing to the power of the sun. Ed remembers that it did indeed sound like the rush of eighteen wheelers. Ed lamented that the trick of perception should have been a warning to him about what he was about to experience in the next 24 hours:

For those of us who live in the suburbs and cities, it's an easy mistake to trivialize nature: To try to explain the larger forces of the universe in terms of our own limited experiences, (p. 97).

Ed was in a new territory and was attempting to explain its mysteries and calm his anxieties by calling upon his experiences with his familiar territory of Maryland.

Ed knew that he was well trained for the distance, completing 30 runs of at least 30 miles in the preceding eight months. However, Ed had not trained for the terrain of the course as well, and would have to gauge his performance by a trail 50 mile run he had completed fourteen years before.

The first 26 miles of the race were very comfortable. Ed had run numerous marathons and was extremely comfortable with this distance. Ed commented to another runner that they "only" had 74 miles left to run. Ed and the runner chuckled in a cautious manner; unsure of what experiences the next 74 miles would bring them.

As Tom had partitioned his 37 miles into discrete sections, so too had the race director of Western States
provided aid stations every 30 miles along the course. The runners found themselves concentrating on the 30 mile segments, instead of the entire 100 miles. Ed believed that the race was composed of three 30 mile runs and a 10 mile warm-down.

The first 30 miles passed without too much undue stress for Ed. He was coping quite well with the unfamiliar terrain of the course. The only problem was the unfamiliarity of the downhill sections of the course. The next 30 miles would have the downhill sections in abundance and Ed's quadricep muscles knew that they would be unable to sustain too much more pounding.

Even when an ultra runner feels constricted in or by a certain space there is a choice. "Even when there seems to be only one possibility," an individual "can always choose for or against that possibility," (Luijpen and Koren, 1983:129). Ed's choice was to discontinue the run due to the course terrain.

Ed lamented that a 100 mile run on a road course, although not easy, would have been able to be handled. But by no means given the severity and unfamiliarity of the mountain trails, could Ed continue this 100 mile run. Ed learned that ultra runners must prepare as well for the terrain of the run, as they prepare for the distance of the run.
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE: Ultra runners must prepare as well for the terrain of the race as well as the distance.

The Atmosphere of the Race

Diane Armstrong was confident of both the marathon distance and the race route. Diane was only anxious to see how the marathon would unfold, and who her running companions would be. Diane knew that she was more than prepared to run the marathon distance. Diane's 30 mile training runs would insure that she could comfortably run 26.2 miles.

The marathon route was also thoroughly familiar to Diane. Diane and her husband had on numerous occasions trained over various sections of the course. They had made sure that every section of the course was known to Diane. Diane had knowledge of every uphill, down-hill and flat section of the course. Diane was also well aware of the sections of the course that faced directly into the wind, and the sections where the wind would be at her back.

Diane's first race had been a 4 mile cross country course held on grassy slopes around a park. The race had had a lighter mood; a frolic through the countryside. The Columbus Marathon however, was serious. Starting in the downtown business center and wandering through the suburban neighborhoods, gave the marathon an aura of legitimacy.
The streets were blocked to auto traffic, so that the runners had control of the roadways. Water and aid stations were available along the course. Ambulances were even stationed periodically along the course. All these elements let the runners know that they were involved in a "large event." The Columbus Marathon was a vast difference from Diane's first race; not only in distance but also in atmosphere.

The distance and the course were familiar to Diane. However, now a new element had been added to the equation, the race atmosphere. Tom Hart had not had to deal with an unique atmosphere on his birthday run. Tom had created a personal journey. Although vast in its scope, it was not heralded by others as special. Tom had made certain that the 37 mile run was through familiar neighborhood streets. The Western States race of Ed Ayres was also vastly different from the atmosphere of Diane's race. Western States is quite remote with few "live" spectators.

Once the race had begun, Diane had momentary flashes of various parts of the landscape of the course, as a means to distract herself temporarily from her endeavor. The view of Columbus from the 8 mile mark, provided Diane with a means to relax as she concentrated on the tall buildings. The buildings of Columbus marked the 15 mile mark of the race, and the presence of spectators. Diane's husband was
also waiting for her at the 15 mile mark. Diane continued to focus on the downtown buildings, that now seemed to draw her with a magnetic force.

Still 2 miles away from the buildings, Diane increased her pace in her excitement to reach the cheering crowds. When she finally reached the downtown area, Diane felt safe and loved. The buildings with their strength and height seemed to protect her.

Too quickly, Diane was thrust from the downtown area and was once more running through suburban neighborhoods. The Greyhound Bus Station seemed like an escape route, as Diane contemplated catching a bus to Toledo. Then the loneliness of the suburbs and "the wall" overtook her. Diane's previously "expanding world" of cheering spectators and tall city buildings, now became a "shrinking world"; in this world Diane felt alone.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR: The ultra runner must deal with both the tangible and intangible components of a race atmosphere.

**Six Days Around a 400 Meter Track**

Diane's marathon world was spread over a vast distance of 26.2 miles. Likewise Ed Ayres had to travel over 100 miles of mountain trails. Neither of these runners would travel over any section of their respective courses more
than once. Diane's and Ed's running world offered new physical surroundings with every step. If there was a particularly windy or hilly section of the course, they knew that once they had conquered that section they would never have to face it again. What must it have then been like for James E. Shapiro to travel for six days around a 400 meter track?

When James had first considered the event, he had pictured himself endlessly circling a 400 meter rutted, cinder track of "days gone by." A track that was not conducive to long runs and prone to flooding after rain showers. James was prepared for the condition of the track to be one of the event's challenges.

He was pleasantly surprised to discover that the track was of the "all-weather" variety. Similar to any spongy red-surfaced track found in major stadiums world wide. The track would present an even surface to run upon. There was no need to worry about flooding after England's frequent showers. James admitted to being a trifle disappointed. He had been looking forward to the extra challenge of the condition of the track.

When the environment is experienced as an obstacle, an ultra runner may pause to reflect upon the situation; and in doing so, becomes more in touch with her/himself and her/his surroundings and discovers previously unknown capabilities. An ultra runner is able to enter the depths
of being which means as Marcel (1950) elaborates, "fundamentally to get out of oneself, and since there can be... no question of our having two objectively separate selves... the return is not identical with what was given before," (p. 132). An individual is not the same person that she/he was before the self-examination took place.

As the days progressed, James found himself believing that the track was in fact a friendly ally. James and the track had entered into a mutual relationship. The track was enabling James to reach his goal of running for six days. James was fulfilling the purpose of the track as an area specifically set aside for running.

As the relationship between James and the track increased, James began to personify the track. "I wasn't going nutty. The other runners were doing it too!", laughed James. The track's infield contained no football goal posts, or remnants of any other sport. This further intensified James' belief that the track was created specifically for the six day runners.

James also noticed that since the event was taking place in such a safe environment with no worries of traffic or losing his way, he was able to focus exclusively on running. Usually when he is running on the open streets, James cannot give 100% to running. His attention must be concerned with traffic, dogs, obnoxious people, and even sidewalk curbs. Often when James finds himself in such
tense situations he feels as though his running has taken
on an element of "chaotic fleeing from society":

Instead of relaxing and enjoying myself running, I find myself trying to outrun one unpleasant situation after another. That is why the six day race around a safe, protected place like a 400 meter track was so enjoyable. I didn't find it monotonous to any undue extent. There were always pleasant things to ponder, and enjoyable people to talk with. Maybe I should start taking my daily runs around the high school track.

James found himself content with the pleasures of simply moving around a track in the fresh air. James did not wish to contend with the challenges that often occur to those who run the open road or the open trail.

The Appeal of Changing Terrain

The thrill of the open trail intrigued the entrants in the Santa Barbara Nine Trails 50 mile run. The Nine Trails course is notorious for its extremely mountainous terrain and frequent muddy sections. Ultra runners are extremely proud to say that they have completed this most difficult of courses.

Markus Bosch was drawn to the Nine Trails course by its difficult "quad burning, shoe destroying" muddy sections. The competition with the natural aspects of the Nine Trails course is as stiff as the competition between participants.

"Mud" was the topic that Markus wanted to discuss. Even the word "Mud" causes an individual to roll her/his
eyes. For a majority of adults or the otherwise "conventionally mature" individuals, mud is the bane of existence. Mud hinders forward progression, causes one to become dirty: To be stuck to the earth. Indeed stuck in our own corporeal existence. For the child and the "conventionally immature", mud is a "thing" to be relished.

Mud sticks to us; reminds us that we are intimately connected with nature. Humans are not greater than nature: We are nature. Mud engages us, creates a situation where we literally are stuck to the earth. Markus was involved in a love/hate relationship with the Santa Barbara mud. Markus loves the mud as a tangible adversary. Markus hates the mud's ability to hinder his progression through the 50 mile course:

It was as though the mud had a will of its own. At first, in the first 10 miles, its fun: People laugh and become filthy. Then, you want to say 'OK, enough's enough, I want to run now.' But the mud refuses. It only lets us go when its ready.

Markus situated himself in his surroundings and responded to what Benswanger (1979) called a "spatial meaning." Markus engaged his immediate environment in a new way, and this was rooted in an awareness of himself and his relationship to his surroundings. Markus moved out to explore new perspectives, and like the children Benswanger studied, he "grows in the midst of an existing world he discerns and elaborates," (p.115).
In the manner than an ultra runner discovers and rediscovers his/her world, a runner's experience is similar to that of a child. As James E. Shapiro had personified the 400 meter track during his event, Markus was doing likewise to the mud found on the Nine Trails course. The mud had taken on a greater meaning than just dirt and water. The mud had reached mythic proportions.

The Nine Trails course is known for its changeable trail conditions. Not only do these conditions change on a yearly basis, they even change during the race depending on the weather conditions. A trail that was muddy during the runners first pass through, might be "bone dry" on the runners next trip through. Both the sun and the rain are intense at the altitude of the Santa Ynez Mountains. These potential changing course conditions lend an unknown quality to the race. It is apparent that this "unknown quality" makes the Nine Trails so popular in the ultra running community.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE: Ultra runners may find themselves in an intimate relationship with the ultra course terrain. The connectedness could lead the runners to personify particular elements of the terrain.
CHAPTER IX

REFLECTIONS: POSSIBILITIES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Introduction

In this final chapter I will address two questions. First, what are the implications for Somatic Educators from what has been learned about the lifeworld of ultra running. Second, what are some of the implications derived from the mode of research employed in this study.

Implications for Somatic Educators

This study began with a quest for insights and understanding into the lifeworld of ultra running. The focus has centered on elucidating the participants' experiences for the sake of creating possibilities for Somatic Educators.

Somatic Education is a term that is applied to several disciplines developed in recent years in Europe and America. The field that comprised these methods has been entitled Somatics by philosopher Thomas Hanna. Philosopher Don Johnson also has stimulated understanding of the basic
principles of Somatics. Johnson has stated the following, (as cited in Murphy, 1992):

Somatics is characterized as a field because its many methods share a common focus on the relationships between the body and cognition, emotion, volition, and other dimensions of the self. Somatic practices explore the body in relationship to an individual's entire experience. A second characteristic which unites the field is a shared assumption that therapy or healing derives from fundamental transformations of experience and the cultivation of new capacities, (p. 386).

A particular somatic method can be identified by its concentration on the interrelationship of body systems. The methods developed by F. M. Alexander and Moshe Feldenkrais focus on the neuromuscular-skeletal systems. Rolfing explores the manner in which the organization of connective tissue affects thought, perception and emotion. In a different manner, Elsa Gindler and Charlotte Selver have examined sensory awareness in conjunction with perceptual abilities.

The conversations with the nine participants revealed that while participating in ultra running the body, the other, time and space are experienced in an unique manner. It is through the participants awareness of themselves, others, and their surroundings which are experienced in an unique manner, that the experiential characteristics were identified. On the basis of these experiential characteristics, I will construct composites
of the participants characteristics. These composites are organized according to the participants' experiences of body, other, time and space. Immediately following each composite will be implications for somatic practitioners.

The Body

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE:
Throughout their runs, ultra runners must confront not only pain, but their fear of it.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO:
Pain disrupts the ultra runners engagement in the world and forces him/her to focus on the body which can no longer be taken for granted.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE:
Ultra runners have many ways of coping with the pain of running. However, they must accept the pain as part of their bodily response to distance running.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR:
Selection of proper pace for the distance requires the ultra runner to utilize body intelligence.
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE: *

Ultra runners must confront and deal with feelings of impatience toward their own way of being during an ultra run.

The ultra runner must learn to distinguish between fatigue and pain if their activity is to be pursued successfully. Fatigue can be run through and is considered an integral part of distance running. Pain alerts the runner that an incapacitating injury may be impending and the activity must cease. The ultra runners view fatigue and pain as being on a continuum. The participants in this study referred to their "bodies being in pain." They viewed their experiences of pain to be just to the right of center; entering the domain of pain.

FATIGUE --------------------------------X---------------PAIN

When pain is experienced by the ultra runner, the body is no longer given implicitly. The ultra runner focuses on apprehending the pain. Apprehension occurs as the ultra runner finds that they must cope not only with their pain but also their fear of pain. The ultra runner must establish whether they are willing to proceed with pain. Once this decision has been made, the ultra runner needs to select a proper pace through body intelligence. Furthermore, the ultra runner may discover that they have feelings
of impatience as they listen to their bodies and forego their pre-race expectations.

**Implications**

* The Somatic Educator should encourage the athletes to find their own fatigue-pain comfort zone. As the athletes begin to listen to their bodies, they can take charge of the own somatic education. When the athletes realize that they contain their own knowledge base; the Somatic Educator, in conjunction with the athlete, can pursue the athletes' goals. Foremost for the Somatic Educator should be the need to determine the meaning and significance of the situation for the athlete.

* As the athletes learn to listen to their bodies, they should be encouraged to share their feelings with the Somatic Educator. Likewise, Somatic Educators should share their knowledge with the athletes. This kind of sharing would be facilitated by an encounter of dialogue rather than by a didactic approach. There is an integration of personal and professional knowing that can contribute greatly to training of athletes.

**Others**

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE:

As ultra runners together undergo the stresses of
distance running, their personal boundaries disappear: they become sensitized to each other's needs.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO:

Competition among ultra runners provides a ground in which comparison with others is able to reach fruition. The ultra runners become very other centered.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE:

The ultra runners discovered that it was impossible to impart their sense of accomplishment about the specialness of their run to others.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR:

A sense of community is produced by the difficulty of the ultra run. Regardless of the competitive intensity of the ultra run the presence of a community pervades in the event.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE:

The distance of the ultra run provides an opportunity for the ultra runners to come together. In this coming together the ultra runners glimpse previously undiscovered qualities of the other.
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC SIX:
Competitive running requires a partnership between participants. In order for this partnership to be successful, each runner is required to remain fully committed to the partnership goal.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC SEVEN:
A successful ultra run includes the dedication of the handlers and crew personnel to the goals of the run. An intimate connectedness can also develop between runner and handler/crew personnel as they go through the process of the run together.

The mutual effort of ultra runners and handlers and crew personnel are required to create an ultra event. A community is established as these individuals come together to fulfill each others goals. As the ultra runners run with pain they experience the softening of barriers. The ultra runners become sensitized to each others pain. The fatigue and pain allow the runners to share themselves with the ultra community. Through this sharing, ultra runners obtain rare glimpses of the other. Unfortunately, the ultra community's shared experience do not translate onto others, outside of the ultra community. The ultra runners discover the "incognito
effect" as they attempt to impart their feelings of "specialness" to others, outside of their community.

Implications

* Somatic Educators should encourage their athletes to appreciate the sense of community that often occurs between team members pursuing a common goal. The bonding that occurs between athletes sharing a common goal is essential for the creation of a "successful" team. An athletic team that is imbued with a sense of community is able to offer individual members a forum from which they can share their feelings of "specialness." Additionally, through a sense of team community, the individual athlete is able to appreciate other team members as both a source of intra-team competition and intra-team support.

Time

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE:
The ultra runner must learn patience if their goals are to be achieved. The ultra runners must be patient and confident in order for their training to take effect.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO:
The ultra runners depend on their past running performances to gauge their pace per mile during their ultra run.
EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS THREE:
When an ultra runner engages in a race they must decide how they will deal with the pressure of time.

EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR:
The authority given to mechanical clock-time imposes boundaries on the lives of the race participants.

EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE:
When the ultra runner is thoroughly engaged in their task, the mechanical clock-time becomes the lived time of the participants.

EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC SIX:
The ultra runners discovered that there is cyclical time in nature.

The ultra runners employ their past running performances in order to predict how they will run in a future ultra race. The past that is recollected however, is not the past that was lived through; yet it is truly the past so recollected that is significant in the interpretation and experience of the present. The past lives in the present, insofar as the ultra runner employs the past to predict the future.
The measurement of time is an integral component of ultra running. As the ultra runners pursue their activity, they may notice that mechanical clock time is superceded by somatically lived time. Furthermore, the extended periods of time that ultra runners spend on their task, allows the cyclical time of nature to become apparent.

**Implications**
* Being attentive to the athletes' past performances may enhance the Somatic Educators ability to gain insightful understanding into the athletes present performance.
* The athletic event may be a freeing experience. It may aid the athletes in understanding their own goals and expectations.
* Through the experience of somatically lived time, the athlete may come to realize that the "athletic event" is loaded with potential for gaining self-knowledge.

**Space**

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC ONE:

There are certain places that ultra runners may consider their home territory. When they are running in these places they feel in control of their experiences.
* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC TWO:
Ultra runners are confronting barriers of human existence.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC THREE:
Ultra runners must prepare as well for the terrain of the race as well as the distance.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FOUR:
The ultra runner must deal with both the tangible and intangible components of a race atmosphere.

* EXPERIENTIAL CHARACTERISTIC FIVE:
Ultra runners may find themselves in an intimate relationship with the ultra course terrain. The connectedness could lead the runners to personify particular elements of the terrain.

While some ultra runners may seek a variety of new and challenging experiences through their participation in ultra running; they may also seek to mitigate the full experience by maintaining an element of control over their experiences. This element of control may take the form of familiarizing oneself with the running route, running terrain and even preparing oneself for the race atmosphere.
Regardless of preparation, the ultra runner may experience unforeseeable environmental obstacles during their event. When the environment is seen as an obstacle, it may simultaneously challenge and frustrate the ultra runner. When the ultra runner finds him/herself with these emotions, they may reflect upon the situation and in doing so they may become more in touch with themselves and their surroundings and discover their abilities or limitations.

Implications
* The Somatic Educator should not disregard the loss of control that athletes may feel in an unknown environment. Athletes usually feel more comfortable and are able to reach their athletic potential in familiar surroundings. The Somatic Educator should be attuned to their athletes' strengths and weaknesses in dealing with changing environments. The Somatic Educator should then prepare their athletes for not only their specific athletic endeavor, but also the athletic atmosphere.
* If the athletes feel loss of control, they may utilize one of the two following manners of coping: At one extreme the athletes may rebel by exhibiting noncompliance to the team goals; at the other extreme, the feelings of loss of control may express themselves as bewilderment and passivity.
Reflections on the Way of Research and Its Place in Somatic Education

In this research the focus has been on the lived experiences of persons who engage in ultra running. I now will offer some reflections about the approach that I employed and why I believe this approach to be particularly suited to researching lived experience. After I have done this, I shall consider the type of knowledge yielded from it, and place this in the context of fundamental patterns of knowing.

The Way of Research in this Study

As a researcher, I entered into a dialogue with each participant. The dialogue focused on what it means to be an individual engaged in ultra running. I listened, reflected and shared my insights. Without a questionnaire to bind the dialogue and distance me from the participants, the conversation evolved without constraints. Our dialogue however, was not without focus. We oriented to the question of what it means to the individual to be involved in ultra running. The conversations were held with various objectives; creating a lifehistory, relating memorable
runs, and profiling an ultra race. Our dialogue centered around experiences gained through ultra run participation.

Together, we explored the question of this study as fully as possible. As the participants related their stories, they began to reflect on their experiences as they searched for examples to clarify a point. In their reflection, they gained insights which they shared with me.

The insights that were gained through this process of reflective dialogue would have been stifled within the context of a structured way of inquiry. The dialogue allowed me to attend to each participant as an unique individual. I was permitted to explore fully each individual's situation. I was also able to hear the peculiarities of each participant's experiences. The way of the dialogue allowed me to form a partnership with each participant. A partnership that allowed an open exchange of ideas and experiences of ultra running.

Questions, when appropriate, were phrased in forms of the individual's unique experience. This is unlike a formal research questionnaire where the phrasing for each question is uniform for each participant. Through our way of dialogue, I was able to construct an unique narrative for each participant that enabled me to understand the "whole" of each participant's experiences.

What is it like to live an ultra running experience? This is the question which guided my inquiry. Phrased in
this manner it becomes a question about lived experience, something that an individual has lived through or will continue to live through as they continue to participate in ultra running.

Gadamer's (1975), thoughts on the asking of a question, focuses our attention on what is taken-for-granted when we ask a question:

> It is the essence of the question to have sense. Now sense involves direction. Hence the sense of the question is the direction in which alone the answer can be given if it is to be meaningful. A question places that which is questioned within a particular perspective... In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, (p. 326).

Being able to elucidate the athletes experience is integral to Somatic Education if the goal of Somatic Education is to access an individual's experience. However, the question remains, how do we access the experience of the other? I struggled with this question throughout my investigation. It is a question that for me, still remains complex.

I discovered that there was a tendency for the participants in this investigation to recall facts. Although the participants expressed stories rich in factual detail, they had difficulty in elaborating upon lived experience. While the participants could readily state when they had run, where they had run, and how far they had run, they had difficulty in expressing in words their somatic
experiences. Perhaps the reason is that words often do not capture fully the experiences of the soma. Words seem to fail when the participants are attempting to explain somatic experiences. Unfortunately, it is largely through words that we are able to access the other's experiences. There is a tendency for the participants to say, "That's too hard to explain."

In order to more fully explicate the ultra runners experiences, I had focused conversations with participants. This yielded a vast amount of material. I discovered that in order to understand fully the various experiences of ultra runners, I needed to limit the number of participants. I found that nine participants meant a more manageable amount of material. Most importantly, conversing with nine runners enabled me to stay very close to first-hand reports in developing the text for this thesis.

This study has allowed me to glimpse one way of researching lived experience. It represents a beginning of a quest. This research project has raised a question of how to access appropriately an individual's lived experience. Although the participants in this project did have initial difficulty in revealing, in words, their somatic experiences; they eventually allowed me to glimpse their somatic world. It would seem reasonable to devote future research into devising ways of gaining access into the
lived somatic experiences of others, in a manner that is
more suited to the somatic process.

I have gleaned the following insights from this study
that are relevant to me as a Somatic Educator, interested
in athletic coaching:
* Impatience exhibited by the athletes may arise from the
athletes' frustration when they, as a soma, do not live-up
to previous expectations and/or goals. As the athletes
learn to listen to their soma's; the somatic messages may
be in conflict with the training that their coaches have
prescribed. With encouragement and time the athletes will
re-learn to trust their soma's as a way of knowing.
* The sense of community that can be the result of shared
athletic goals, is essential if the athlete is to derive
both a sense of competition and support from teammates. A
sense of community enables the athletes to overcome the
"incognito effect" of athletic achievement. The community
offers a forum in which the athletes can share their feel-
ings of "specialness."
* Once involved in an athletic event, the athlete exchanges
mechanical clock time for somatically lived time. The
athlete may live time in terms of their aches and pains,
their achievements or "bad patches."
* Feelings of being in control are related to how the
athlete may experience space. The athlete should be
prepared to face changing space that generally accompanies athletic endeavors.

Limitations

Nine ultra runners cannot be considered to be representative of the general population of individual's who participate in ultra running. Hence it is not the intention of this study to generalize the "findings."

The purpose of this study is not to generate predictive statements, but to shed light on the meaning of participating in ultra running. I have attempted to elucidate the participant's experiences through description and interpretation and to capture the focal points in the experiential characteristics. The experiential characteristics should not be taken out of context. The experiential characteristics should be understood in the context of the whole story from which the meaning emerges. It is the context which gives meaning to the experiences.

Eight of the stories of the nine participants, deal with individuals who have reached successfully their ultra run goals. Ed Ayres aborted his ultra run after listening to a body that stated that it had had enough. There are other stories of other individuals who have had the same experience as Ed Ayres. These stories did not surface in this study. The stories that were revealed, deal with
individuals who were fortunate to accomplish their pre-determined ultra running goals.

**Fundamental Patterns of Knowing in Somatic Education**

The experiential characteristics are meant to provide insightful understanding into the experience of ultra marathon running. According to Gadamer (1975):

> Understanding is always interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding...Understanding always involves something like the application of the text to be understood to the present situation of interpretation, (p.274).

Understanding, interpretation, and application comprise "one unified process," (p. 275). An awareness of the experiential characteristics allows the Somatic Educator to be of service to the student. The experiential characteristics reflect one of the fundamental patterns of knowing in traditional Physical Education; specifically aesthetics. The other major pattern of knowing in Physical Education is through the application of Exercise Science. Somatic Education provides the possibility of uniting these previously discretely comprehended specializations of Physical Education.

Traditional Physical Education has focused mainly on the Science of Physical Education. The aesthetic pattern of knowing in Physical Education has not received the same
amount of attention, except as to ambiguously associate it with the manual and technical skills which are involved in athletic competition. The aesthetic pattern of knowing is more amenable to the human science approach than the traditional scientific method. The scientific method has been developed in order to explain specific phenomena rather than to promote understanding of the meaning of the experience for the individual.

Somatic Education sees the individual as a particular person with a particular point of view of the world. Somatic Education goes beyond the labeling of the individual as student and/or athlete. The Somatic Educator sees the individual as a person, situated in time, in a particular place, and interacting with others. It is through reflection that the Somatic Educator must strive to gain understanding of the "entire presence" of the individual. Benner (1985:7), states that this understanding resides neither solely within the individual nor within the situation, "but in the transaction between the two, so that the individual both constitutes and is constituted by the situation."

It is through the reflection and thoughtfulness of the Somatic Educator, that the individual is understood as a whole person. van Manen (1984:11), states that "it is from the auspices of thoughtfulness, that we are able to act with tact and tactfulness." Our ability to understand
thoughtfulness is based in "being sensitive to the uniqueness of a particular person in a particular situation," (van Manen, p.5). The need is to clarify the person's experience of the situation. Somatic Education is a way of seeing and illuminating human experience as it is lived. A way of seeing that yields insights and understanding into the art of being human.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


