

My 100-Mile Quest

By Tracey Cohen

Run 100 miles?

Ask me 10 years ago and my answer would have been a definitive "No." Not because I thought it crazy or unfathomable, but because as much as I love to run, I had no interest in the distance.

But as life has proven over and again, things change.

Somewhere in the time I learned such goals were set and achieved, I began to see logic in training for said distance. It wasn't the lure of the coveted belt buckle finisher award, bragging rights, peer pressure or bucket list phenomenon.

Since running my first ultramarathon in Africa during my Peace Corps service 2004, I slowly developed interest in training for and achieving challenges beyond 26.2 miles. Personal success fueled the fire, delivering me to the 2015 Run Woodstock Hallucination 100 Mile start line.

But not without challenges along the way; first and foremost — commitment.

"What are you waiting for?" was the push I needed from a friend who knows how I waiver to "jump into the deep end" despite being ready to go. From there I trained hard and consistently, as much as life would allow. My methods, outside the box for some, were tai-



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Tracey Cohen competes in the Run Woodstock Hallucination 100 Mile.

lored to fit my life and mine alone. Despite a cranky hip coordinating its arrival with family health issues, I arrived at Hell Creek Ranch in Pinckney Friday, Sept. 11, with "Woodstock or bust," thoughts wavering between "I got this" and "What the @#! am I thinking?"

Thinking is overrated. "Just do it" became my motto. I decided not to consider miles endured or remaining, but simply to count the loops, six equating to 100-mile victory.

Whether inspired by my autism or otherwise, I thought it a privilege to be outside on the trail, my only responsibility putting one foot in front of the other fast enough to make the 30-hour cutoff.

What a privilege it was, despite a few obstacles: a trusted headlamp which became oh-so-untrustworthy despite three battery changes; feet that screamed "Enough!" far too soon; poor decision making resulting in the kindness of another runner literally giving me the shirt off his back.

All woes were forgiven and forgotten upon the exhilarating sights and sounds of the finish line, where I was given the royal treatment by race crew, volunteers, spectators and foes in the form of friends, the ultrarunner M.O.

The party burned electric and exhaustion was overruled. My trusty Honda delivered me to my door step, devoted Labrador, Bailey Kennedy, soap and sleep.

Morning came quickly, Bailey aware only of her basic needs: food first, our walk thereafter.

Those first steps were painful, most perplexing for my loyal girl, looking at me with amusement as if to say, "Really? C'mon, let's go!" Patience is neither of our strong suits.

Progress, a blessing in disguise, continued thereafter — so much so I already have a 100-mile race wish list despite knowing caution to be a virtue. Dream big, dream often, dream dreams you never thought to dream before. The world is our playground; hidden treasures wait to be unearthed.

- MR -

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"Bailey Kennedy"

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