

Word Count: 1307

Pulling Out Some of the Stops with This One

This year's addition of the *Hardrock-100* Ultra Endurance Mountain run came with a slightly different slant to it. A fellow employee of mine with the Town of Silverton Parks-n-Rec. Dept. managed to get into the 2024 race. Quite the achievement in and of itself since you've got to win a lottery slot. This is akin to getting bitten by a shark when you happen to live in the flatlands of Nebraska. Possible, but only if you decide to use your field tractor to transport yourself during that next visit to the coast.

This employee has a similar humorous, but very eccentric perspective on life as yours truly, and when he first told us he'd gotten into the race my drug-free, but active mind, immediately started envisioning scenarios. What would, and should happen when he comes barreling down the street and crosses that finish line to, "*Kiss the Rock*" as they say in *Hardrock-100* circles?

How can we make this year's race special for him? Make it something he'll remember all those years from now when he's sitting on that front porch in his rocking chair and yelling at the local kids to, "*Get off my Lawn!!*" Since I'm much closer to this, "*Get Off the Lawn*" phase of life than him, I've got the wisdom, resources, posse the technology, and I'm quite capable of coming up with all sorts of ways to make the occasion special for everyone concerned.

What if we hire a Crop Duster air-plane to write something across the sky? Then again, cost is a major factor preventing

this from happening. If the crop-duster is affiliated in any way with the Boeing corporation, they'll surely want a kickback to cover all their legal expenses. I immediately blotted the idea out of my mind.

What about all of us in the cheering section marking the occasion by wearing costumes as we're screaming words of congratulations on the sidelines? Possible, but I don't have contacts in the costume industry to supply us with the uniforms. Cost is also a limiting factor in this scenario.

How about a full-fledged Rock-n-Roll group to play a rousing rendition of Queen's, "*We are The Champions of the World?*". Running the electrical cords to power up their instruments could be a bit of a problem. In addition, the Hardrock-100 finish line is on an unpaved dirt road next to the school gymnasium, just off Reese Street. Yet another conundrum we're being forced to overcome if we kick up some dust, or it happens to get muddy on Snowden.

Wait a sec.? Who says it has to be a full-blown Rock-n-Roll Band? Let's simplify the process, (Duh-What a concept?). Why not get a single person to play some sort of instrument as my buddy is shuffling down Reese St. to kiss that rock? Maybe this'll work? For one, you eliminate the electrical cord problem which is your first obstacle. Not having the Rock-n-Roll band scenario also eliminates the hassle of moving all that equipment out onto the street in a moment notice. One person playing their instrument sure seems so much easier.

My buddy's girlfriend plays the upright cello, so right there we've got a potential solution? Then again, her being out on the street playing a chamber music song on the upright could be a real hassle she'll have to overcome. Add to that, her boyfriend got into the race so she probably doesn't have much time to practice, let alone perform Beethoven's 97th concerto in

Z minor when her man comes sprinting down Reese. "Sprint" being a relative term in this instance. Let's shelve that idea and go with some sort of horn being played instead?

The *Silverton Brass Band* has become a much smaller outfit than it used to be. Unfortunately, their numbers have dwindled down to a few hardy souls and there aren't too many members left. Fortunately, another good friend of mine happens to be one of those hardy souls and he's also amenable to participating in all sorts of whack-job schemes I keep coming up with. I mentioned my horn idea to him and he immediately experienced a brain lapse and jumped on board. The guy plays trumpet, so plans were hastily set in motion.

Keeping this whole horn playing thing secret from my colleague wasn't so easy. On numerous occasions at work and while socializing with folks in our inner-circle of friends, I had to catch myself from slipping up and spilling the beans with him in attendance. In one situation, I was even forced to tell myself to, "*Zip it Swanson*" when I almost screwed up and told him about the imminent trumpet serenade. Once again, I've got this dementia factor to avoid. Not to mention my milk bill has recently taken a major upswing through the roof because I'm heating up all that cow's juice every night before going to bed.

Then the beginning of the race happened. By the way, going to the start of the Hardrock-100 is well worth it. The excitement level with the crowd is incredible, and I've never seen so many people in such a pumped-up mood at 5:30 am in the morning. Business really ticks up for the two coffee shops in town right after the start too. Hardrock-100 start is something everyone around here should experience more than a few times in their life.

I'm really dating myself on this one. I love the entire philosophy of the Hardrock-100 and I quite enjoy telling tourists that doing the race is like climbing Mount Everest from sea level-then turning around and running back down. This makes me think that I would've liked to try this ultra-distance running thing all those years ago. Back in my day we only had what I often referred to as, "*The Big-4*"; The Kendall Mountain Run here in Silverton, Kennebec Pass in the La Plata's, Pikes Peak Marathon in Colorado Springs, and the Imogene Pass Run (Ouray to Telluride).

Unfortunately, ultra-racing hadn't even been invented yet when I reached the twilight of my running career. I knew it was close to the end when I crossed the finish line of Imogene the last time I did it, looked at my total running time, and realized it was an hour slower than my fastest clocking ten years previously. I hate it when those sorts of things happen.

Writing this essay happened in two parts. Most of it taking place prior to the race itself, but the final installment on a Sunday afternoon after things had slowed down. My friend had an incredible race and kissed that rock in 4th place. Quite the achievement for one of Silverton's own.

For me, I'll have to admit the best part happened right at the end when a huge group of family, friends, and locals cheered him on at the finish. The sheriff escorted him with flashing lights and a siren parade down Snowden, and everyone in attendance went wild. The only disappointment? My other buddy's trumpet serenade got drowned out by all that clapping and cheers. A small price to pay for this one.

When I've reached that, "Get Off My lawn" stage of life (sooner than I want it to happen...), I'll look back on the Summer 2024-version of the Hardrock-100 with a big smile on my face. What an incredible set of memories and well worth all the hassles it took to pull it off.

David G. Swanson is a resident of Silverton and former distance runner. For all you people out there wondering if he'll ever pick up the sport of distance running again in his life, it's essential to know that the emphasis in that first sentence is on the word, "former". For David G., yoga rules these dazes..