

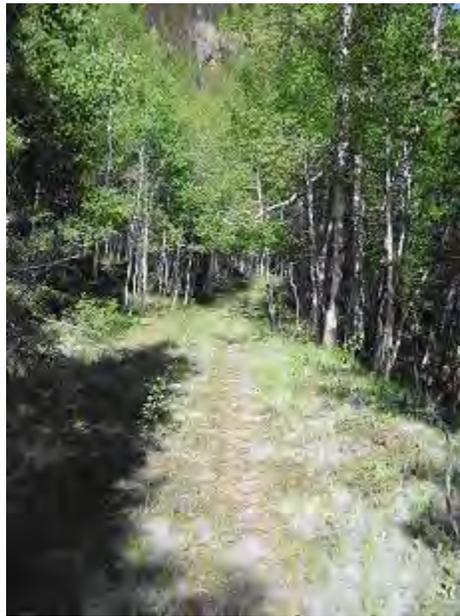


Hardrock 100mi Trail Run
Silverton, Co
14-16 July 2006
Joe Prusaitis

Silverton [9310ft]: 0 mi: Knute's Chute to Mineral Creek, then over Putnam [12600ft] and Porcupine [12230ft]

I make my way to the back of the pack, look around and realize I'm in the front. I'm so confused. The race changes directions every year, and this messes with me in more than a few ways. I don't know if I'm coming or going, but nobody seems to notice my gaffe. I walk through the gathering runners to the real back, where I belong. I am not one for causes usually, but this year's event is an exception. My wife's father and a good friend to me, is dying of cancer. Bill always seems to get excited about my adventures, so I told him that this one was for him. I had no idea how proud this made him feel until it was said, and still I wasn't sure he was going to live long enough for me to get it done. There are times to walk and times to run, but for me, walking out of town has always been the same. And so I walk out of town with Jim and Rollin, stopping only for a moment at the Christ of the Mines and say out loud one more time, "this one's for you Bill, so please help me when you can". We enter Knute's Chute dead last, a few old friends, strolling along without a care. But that is what this is all

about after all: a search for golden moments. Bill would like this instant. My leisurely calm is shocked back into reality at Mineral Creek, where the stinging cold runs up my legs. I had started without socks, carrying them in my pack until after the crossing, just so I'd have dry feet for the bulk of this next climb.



Our rocky ledge route runs up between majestic Grand Turk and Bear Mountains. Enormous rock flows from both mountains spill into the tiny sliver of Bear Creek, well below us. Well up and under a thick stand of tall pines, I stop to help Letha. Her hands and gloves are soaking wet, and she's shaking. I help her remove the wet gloves and put on fresh ones. It doesn't take long and we're both back to hiking up the mountain quickly. We follow Rollin past treeline into the skunk cabbage of upper Putnam Basin. It helps to know and avoid all the 'easy to miss' splits through here, but Rollin and I know the route pretty well, so we stay on course. We go from dirt, to rock, to tundra, and eventually to the summit. The higher we go, the more abundant the wild flowers. Alone on top, I dodge the flowers as I chase the flag markers along the ridge. They bend left and down a steep tundra slope into the saddle. I drop like a rock, losing Rollin and Letha, but adopting Leonard.



The flags attempt to hide in the flowers, so I aim for the next saddle without trying to find them. My vision is fading and I need to wear glasses, but they mess up my depth perception. I seem to run better without them, but I struggle with finding the markers. I'm able to find my way during the day, but after dark, my pacer leads. Sometimes, I run directly at the next flag, but usually, I see them in my peripheral vision, if I see them at all. Leonard follows me across the saddle and into Porcupine, but I cut loose on the rapid descent and lose him. Descending around composite rocks that guard legions of wild flowers, I blow through hairpin turns and ledge drops, as I fall recklessly down to the creek and across. My clean socks get wet and muddy as I sink into Porcupine Creek. A turtle going up the mountain morphs into a rabbit going down. Feels strange to be going fast after being so slow, I can't seem to get my mind around it. My turtle mentality wants to stop and visit while the rabbit just wants to ping-ping-ping down the mountain. I zip through the woods and around the edge of the Twin Sisters Peaks before dropping once again onto the heels of the Heaphys.

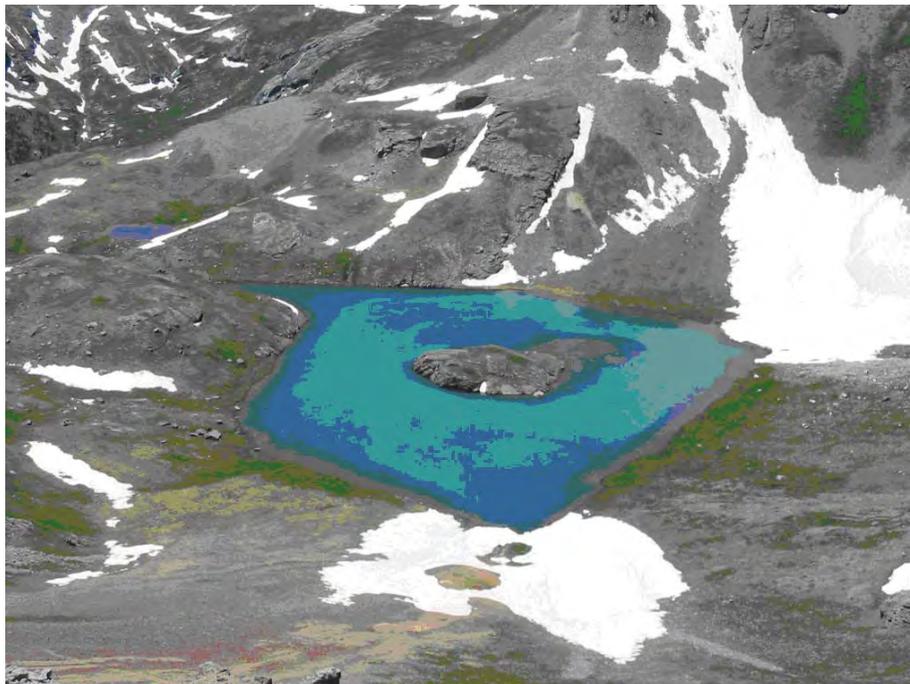
Ducking fall downs, we chase each other down the steep dirt trail, and slide into the muddy wallow at the bottom. Last year, I crossed a raging torrent here, today it's no more than a kids wading pool.



Kamm Traverse [10600ft]: 11.5mi. cross Grant-Swamp Pass [12920ft]

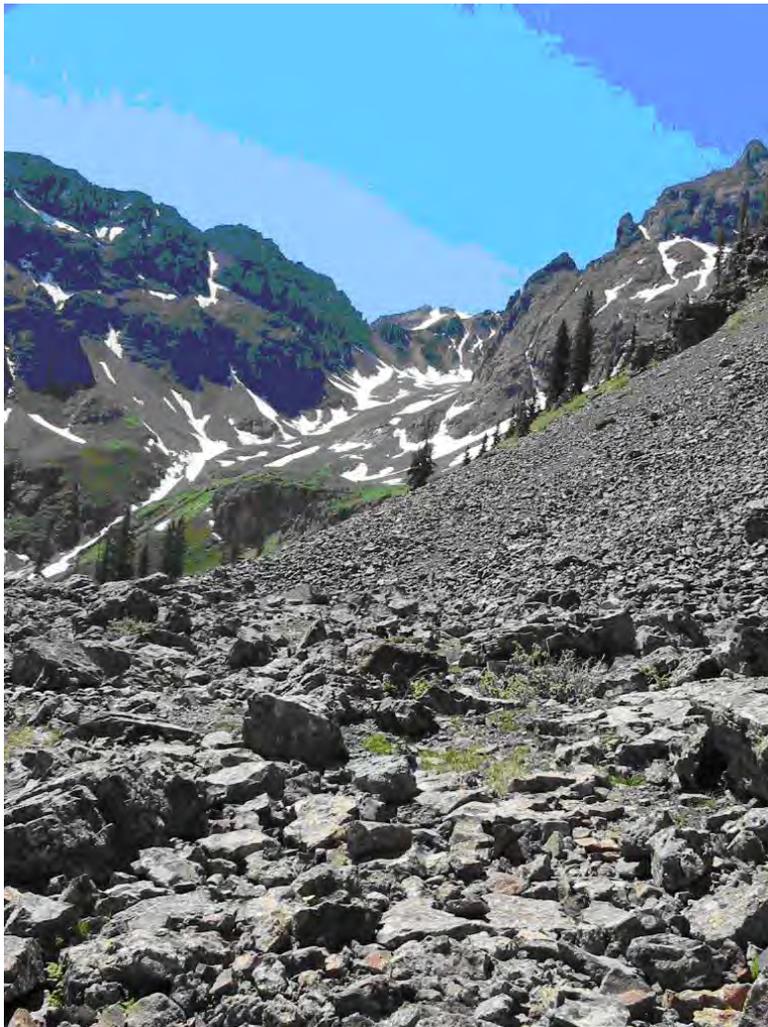
I few flies buzz about me as I hike into KT and a kid asks if I need to be sprayed with bug juice as I pass through. I don't even stop. But the bugs stay with me and are soon joined by others as the swarm grows. I march up Kamm's Traverse wondering how long these little irritants will remain. One good gust of wind and I'm free, but there is none, and the swarm grows. I settle into a leisurely pace, dodge the rocks, and ride the skinny goat trail that hangs well up on the mountainside. Back into the trees, the shade provides cool relief and hides me from the sun, but not the bugs. The trail dips and rolls about, through one idyllic setting after another. I can hear the thundering of the Lower Ice Lake Falls long before I get there. The stream is filled with the timber and stumps of an avalanche. Carefully, I jump from log to log as I balance my way across. The trail leading from the falls to the main Ice lake Trail is short and very steep. Standing upright, my nose is so near the ground I can smell the moist dirt. As much as I try to keep my feet flat on the ground, I'm forced onto my toes and sideways.

Lower Ice lake Basin opens before me, with skunk cabbage down low and runners up high. Our route starts right... towards the black face of a single massive rock, then switches back on itself as it spins left into a high open valley. I follow well after the other lemmings in a slow motion ascent. They disappear as my progress degenerates to a snail's pace. The trail winds round large composite rock formations, following natural chutes, as the route flags pull me higher and deeper into the valley. Twisted metal rails lead out of an old mine tunnel that I cross over. The single large rock in Island Lake seems much larger than usual, drawing my attention with its deep reflective surface that always seems to capture a few clouds. I steal a moment to sit on the rocky trail and watch the clouds swim across her surface. "It don't get much better than this, Bill", I whisper! I'm surprised that the flies stay with me clean to the summit. I had assumed they would abandon me before 13000 ft, but a gust from the other side finally sends them packing just as I pass Joel's plaque. I drop a rock with the others on the adjacent cairn.



I search for a route between the butt sliders going down the scree then descend quickly, surfing past Dale Perry and the others.

The stunned look on their faces tells me they had not thought to simply run down. I stop at the base to empty the rocks from my shoes. This crease in a field of rocks is as rough and rugged a single track as there is, and the path that I follow. A fall here would cut, break, or cripple, and it seems easier if served quickly. Each time I slow down, I stumble, so I increase my speed to stay upright. The moonscape rock garden continues for a good distance but stops suddenly at the trees. A sheep herder's campsite begins a pine covered ridge down into the basin. I must be dawdling because Dale passes me at the creek. He cuts through the water while I take the side trail over some logs to land in Chapman.

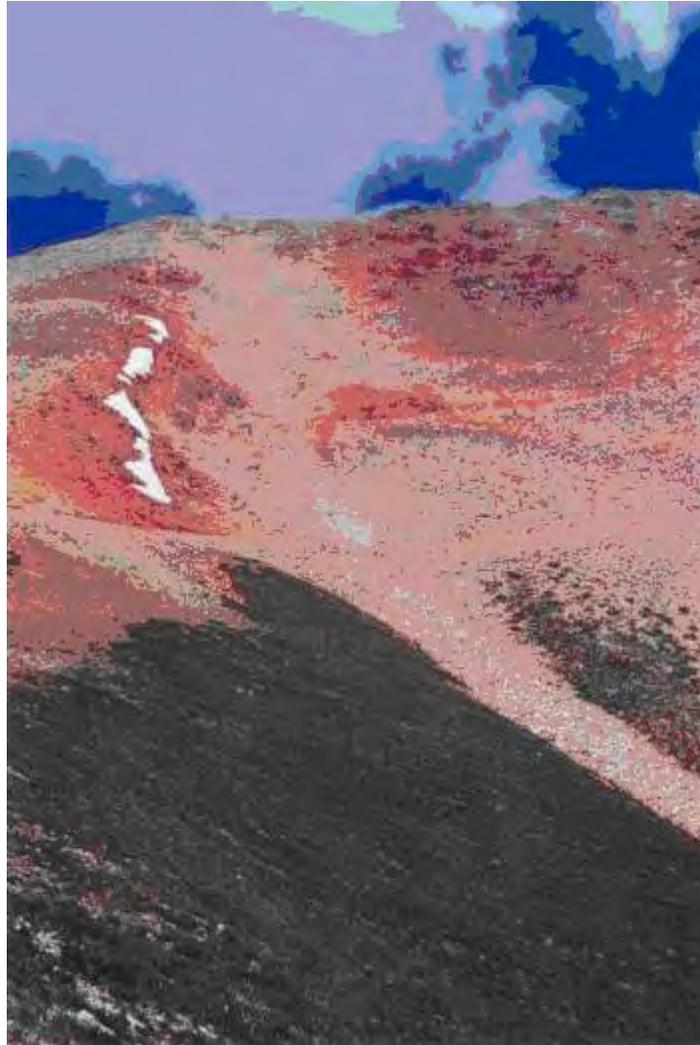


I expect no support here but instead get the very best care possible. Shan and Barbara take me under their wing and the shady side of

the tent for care and feeding. What an unexpected and wonderful surprise. A coke and a smile topped with a hug. Last thing they do is spray me down with bug juice before sending me out

Chapman Gulch [10190ft]: 18.4mi: cross over Oscar's Pass [13140ft]

I have some dread for what lies immediately ahead: Oscar's Pass Road in the heat is one nasty climb. I put my head down and march ahead, to get started, and get done. Immediately, a swarm of flies surround me. I move slowly up the steep rock infested jeep road, silently raising one foot after the other, while the bastards bounce off my face and shoulders. A young woman I don't know is a few paces ahead of me on our solemn death ascent of the mountain, and the barren slope above us reveals many others sharing our misery. Grapes rotting on the vine, we shrivel up and drop off, one at a time. I pass a body sprawling in a rare shady spot, then another. I sit on a rock and take my pleasure by slapping my hands together just to kill a few dozen of the biting bastards: a worthless waste of time and energy. I pass the young woman, who is bent over puking, and nod to her, but say nothing. There is no need. We both understood each other's pain. We take turns passing, sitting, and puking as we climb. As we near the summit, she speaks for the first time, apologizing for having said nothing. I tell her, 'twas the best conversation I had all morning'. It's the last time I see her. I reach the summit alone and as seems to be the pattern, I leave the swarm of flies behind.



No more than a road of rocks, Oscar's Pass Road leads me down one hundred yards, before turning left to climb a snow bank to the landmark wooden post on Wasatch Saddle. I stop for a moment and find the Heaphys right behind me yet again. They run past me, but when I fall in behind them, they move over and insist that I pass. I had hoped to steal their energy, but now I feel obligated to generate my own. I keep checking to see if I'm slowing them down but to my surprise, I pull ahead. The upper meadows of the Wasatch Trail are unbelievably lush and beautiful, with a wide color variety of flowers, cascading waterfalls, and snow bridges. High above the valley full of color, I find Jeff Heasley looking rather worn and colorless. I ask if he needs

anything and he replies, "I'd love a Sprite on ice". It's one of those at once, both funny but serious things people say. Well, I don't have a Sprite but I do have a bottle of ice, so I give it to him. Jeff's running buddy Scott is waiting on him, but it looks like Jeff is done, so I suggest he keep going if he wants to finish. The trail drops quickly. But not near as fast as Bear Creek, which is now 100ft below us. I pass the old Nellie Mine and some solid old wooden bridges that hug the rock walls well above Bear Creek. Bear Creek Falls appears just before I land on the main tourist road. I make a left and I keep running towards town. Scott joins me for the final quarter mile into Telluride.

As George climbs out of his chair, I sit in it. Paul waits on me, hand and foot, feeding me pizza and coke while he checks and repairs my feet. Paul offers up a fresh clean shirt and then I change my shorts also.

Telluride [8750ft]: 27.6mi. up to Mendota Saddle [12560ft] and Virginius [13100ft]

The road out of Telluride is as steep as any road I have ever been on. The trail leading from it is the same, and the road above it is equal to a high dive platform. I slowly slide my way further up and into the mountain, my pace slow and methodical. A halting lock step with a second or two delay between each stride. I don't pass anyone nor does anyone pass me, except for one fellow coming back down who has given up. Saying, "I've had enough", as he passes. I don't know what he had enough of, as there are plenty of choices: the flies, the heat, the climb, or a dozen other possibilities. John DeWalt is sitting on a log above treeline, so I sit next to him. Two old friends, feeling used up, too tired to say much, and too hard headed to quit. I get up and wish John well, knowing I'll see him again before too long. Deb Pero is not much further ahead, sitting on a rock. She hooks on and stays with me through the Mendota Saddle into Bridal Veil Basin. The entire valley is in shadows, with the sun's rays beaming through the

Virginus slot. Deb and I talk about getting through Virginus and down all three pitches on the other side before we lose the light: a mini goal that provides enough impetus to push us a bit. The guys working the station at Virginus actually have steps cut into the scree on the steepest pitch. It's a pleasant surprise and a great bit of help. We stop for a sip of hot chocolate and then quickly down the other side.

Virginus [13100ft]: 32.7mi. down to Governor's Basin [10780ft]

We follow a zigzag dirt and rock path down one side and then surf the scree to the bottom of the first pitch. The second pitch rolls around the left side of a large boulder where we jump from ledge to snow and then run down into the slot that begins the final pitch. A swath of snow on the left goes from top to bottom but looks to be icy, so we avoid it, and surf the rock as we did the first pitch.

We stop to sit on a large metal platform and remove the loose rock we've picked up in our shoes. Deb offers up a warm can of coke which reminds me about my bottle full of ice. We're aware enough to combine the two for a wonderfully ice cold drink of coke. Life is good! The road from here is quite runnable and a volunteer leaving Virginus demonstrates this by sprinting past us. I try to hang on but lose Deb in the process and pass the Heaphys also.

Governor's Basin [10780ft]: 35.2mi. all down to Ouray [7870ft]

Anything I put in my stomach at Governors will get tossed about mightily on the long hard road to Ouray, so I spin on by. Surrounded by darkness and the booming sound of Bear Creek, I can neither hear nor see anything, except the bleached white caliche road in front of me. It absorbs the green light, changing its appearance to that of snow or ice. It's disorienting but does little to slow me down. I don't see anyone on the long road besides the four kids sitting on a roadside bench stargazing. They applaud when I

run past. The heavenly beacons of Ouray appear below, and as I near the turnoff, a parade of light bearing souls float out of town, each of them sounding joyous and wishing me a safe journey of my own.



Ouray [7870ft]: 4.3.9mi. up to Engineer [11800ft]

I wind my way down to good friend and pacer, Paul Schmidt at the pedestrian bridge. He escorts me to a chair where he has our gear. Sitting down, I'm immediately surrounded and blinded. One person has a headlight in my eyes, while a cacophony of voices begin to ask questions too numerous for me to separate or comprehend. It is too much and Paul shoos them away. Sitting before me are various plates of food and drink, which I attempt to consume. It is too much, but still I try. I understand the need for calories and I have a long night ahead. Having sweated though everything I have on, it is time to change clothes again. Doug has been asleep here for three hours and I most likely won't come back

out. It is rare to do so. George had also taken an hour nap but has escaped just in front of me. Others have stopped here, giving it up for various reasons, each as good as the other. Bodies lay here and there, wrapped in blankets and sleeping bags.

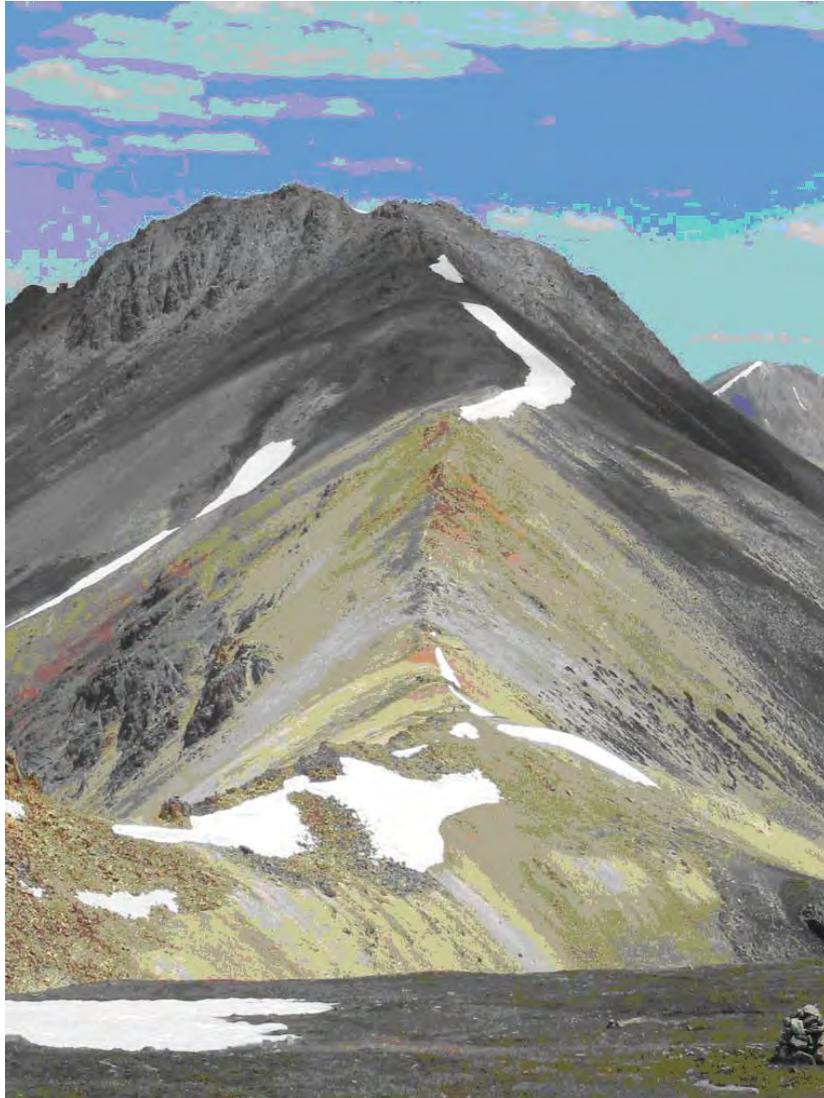
Paul and I escape the morgue and drift out of Ouray. I have eaten too much and need some time for it all to settle, so we walk. Past the Ice Park and the water pipe, over the river, up to the highway, and back to the river, before arriving at the tunnel. Still, my tummy roils, a brick bouncing around inside. We start up but slowly and it just seems to get worse. Time flies by as I drag along, getting sleepy now as well. My eyes struggle to stay open as my stride becomes erratic and shaky. Time and again, Paul grabs my shoulder to keep me on the trail. I sit down once and again, falling asleep on the trail. John DeWalt, back from the dead, passes me while I lie on my back and watch him go bye. For the first time, I begin to get cold, my depressingly slow crawl generating very little heat. And so it continues up past Grizzly Bear and Yellow Jacket mines, and then Engineer aid station. Paul peeks into the cave at Grizzly Bear to see somebody peeking back. A cave man had only stopped to catch a nap.



Engineer [11800ft]: 51.9mi. up to Engineer Pass [12910ft] then down to Grouse [10710ft]

More bodies lay about Engineer, some in bags, some sitting round the fire. We get some coffee and hot chocolate and then leave along with the Heaphys. The cave man goes past us as well as one of the bodies from a sleeping bag. Engineer Pass is a long time coming, but eventually I roll across and onto the road. The sun rises on us well before the final pitch, so we put our lights away. I want to check my feet for hot spots but the wind cuts through us on top, so we put off the foot inspection until Grouse. Sunrise awakens me, it seems. I'm moving better and more alert. Still, with such a debilitating night, Paul suggests we not rush to resurrect my body from the dead. So we amble down the road with a powerwalk of sorts, stopping at the bathroom only to repair some chafing that needs attention. I can see the Grouse aid station long before we arrive. It looks deserted, with only 3 cars parked along side, and nobody visibly busy about the place. I suspect that we have missed the cutoff, taking so very long to get here from Ouray. I half hope that I have, so that I can finally lie down and escape. What would I say to Bill, I wonder? I gave it my best, but just didn't have it today. It sounds pretty cheap as it rolls around in my head.

I see Liz Hodges when I arrive and get the (good?) news that we still have time. DeWalt is just leaving while we sit down for some breakfast. I'm in a foul mood of my own doing and just want to escape, but I do realize that I need to eat. My emotions and my body are on high speed spin and I've got plenty of quarters to keep it going. Just as I get up to leave, Doug comes strolling in with Shan. It looks like resurrection is in the air this morning. There seems to be more than a few people hanging on against all odds.



Grouse Gulch [10710ft]: 5.8 mi; up over Grouse-American [13020ft] and Handies [14048ft] then down to Burrows Park [10590ft] and Sherman [9640ft]

The climb out of Grouse is a long one and I get after it, dialing in a good comfortable pace. The switchbacks go quickly, then the climbing fields, and finally the upper table to the Grouse-American Pass. It all seems too easy, but still there is much more waiting ahead. We run down into the American Basin and start up Handies! The day is getting hot already, so Paul scoops some snow for me and himself. I eat a few snow cones and crave even more as it seems to hit the spot. We wet our bandanas in snowmelt streams and I begin to wonder if this day will be as bad as yesterday. The

switchbacks leading up to Handies come and go easily and I wonder if I just might be getting my mojo back. We don't even stop on top, but keep rolling across and down the other side. Mark Heaphy catches up and joins us followed quickly by Doug. Our foursome quickly rushes down through Grizzly Basin to Burrows Park and then down the road. A short rain shower douses us and departs as quickly while we march down the jeep road into Sherman.



Sherman [9640ft]: 71.9mi up to Cataract-Pole Divide [12200ft] ... and approx 6mi at 12000ft.

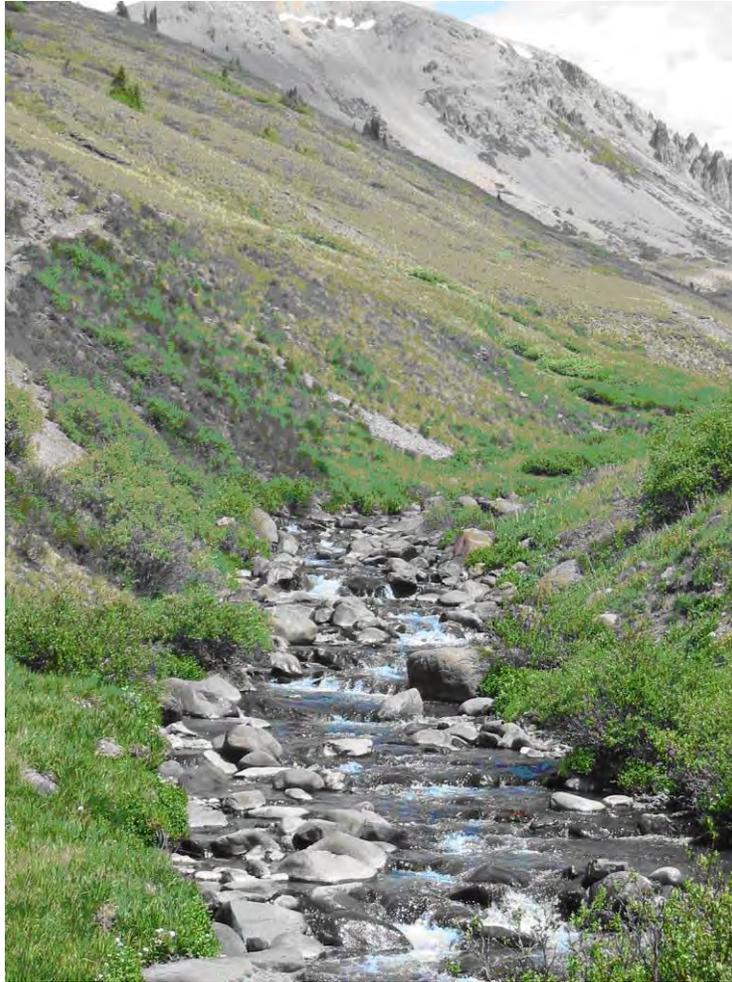
We seem to surprise the aid station folks when the four of us walk in. They immediately jump into action while we sit down. It's a long way before we get back to any of our own support crews and drop bags, so we carefully go through our bags for flashlights, clothes, and supplements. Paul checks my feet and puts on a number of patches to cover hot spots, then applies Desiten to all the toes prior to putting my socks back on. The wraps on my shins seem to be holding up and keep me from kicking myself bloody.



Mark starts out first with the rest of us a few minutes back. We cross the footbridge over Cottonwood Creek and then up the very clean pine needle coated tourist trail. A loud cascading creek crashes to our right, offering contrasting combinations of white waterfalls and dark rocks. Brilliant blue and white Columbine flowers in one natural bouquet after another line the trail. Breathtaking views at every turn: Columbines, waterfalls, distant summits. Simply beautiful! The climb goes on for a long ways

such that the deafening crash of the falling water eventually becomes no more than white noise. We cross over the creek just below a major fall and then again just above it. Hot from the climb and the sun, we stop to soak our bandanas in the refreshingly cold water. We cross yet again just before the field of busted rocks at treeline. In the upper meadows, one plateau leads to another, and a single trail cuts down the middle. With a line of mountains on either side, our path maintains a relatively flat course near to 12000 ft that goes on like this for miles. Paul offers me a turkey and cheese sandwich which I eat, and then he hands me a salt cap. I stuff the cap in my mouth and promptly blow chunks, doubling down onto my knees. Takes me a few minutes to recover, but it doesn't seem to slow me down. Making pretty good time, we pass Cataract Lake and then the Continental Divide Lake before beginning our descent.

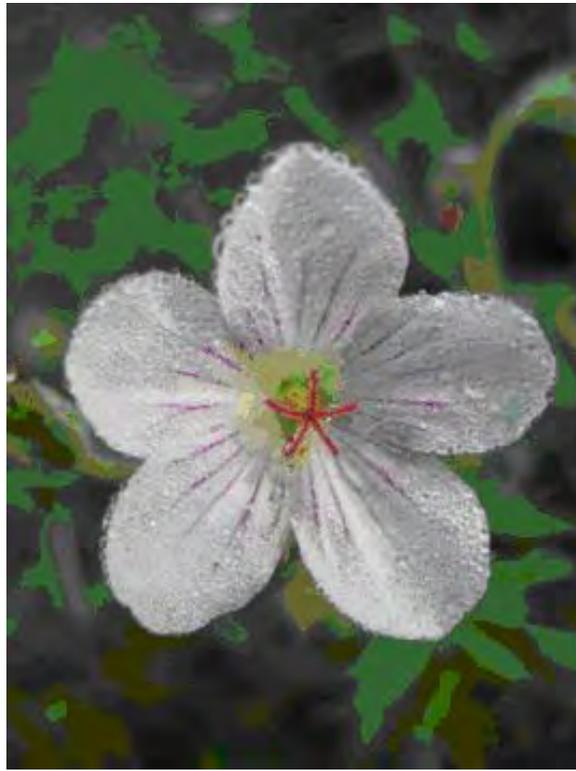
Doug extracts his laminated course card and tells us that we need to reach the Pole Creek Station within the next 15mins to be on the 48 hour pace. I think about it for a few minutes, and that pretty much ends our comfortably peaceful second day. I'm certain we won't reach the station until 30 or 40 minutes later. So it's beginning to look like we won't finish in time after all. I tell Doug that he needs to stop waiting on me, and get after it, if he wants to finish, as this is the only pace I got right now. Minutes later, I can see him way off in the distance, running very strong. Pole Creek is plenty wet with creek crossings, mud bogs, and spongy wet grasses, such that my feet are sopping wet when I stumble into Pole Creek.



Pole Creek [11460ft]: 80.9mi; another 4mi at 12000ft before going over Maggio-Pole Pass [12530ft]

Doug is still in Pole Creek when we arrive. I'm not feeling well but do manage a single cup of soup. Paul gets to talking ham radio with the crew while Doug and I quickly escape and continue down the trail. Doug takes off again, running ahead, while I struggle along, intermittently looking over my shoulder for Paul. I begin to wonder if he knows that I've gone. The trail rides the right side of the valley for a mile and then drops to cross over the other side. Doug's a tiny spec in the distance when Paul finally catches up to me. Paul's been thinking about the cutoffs and has an entirely different perspective that Doug and I. He seems to think we're doing just fine, while Doug and I believe we're behind the curve with a high possibility of failure. I also learn there are only two

people behind us: Mahoney and Ackerman. The sun slips behind the mountains, leaving us in shadow, but not darkness. As we near the end of Pole Creek, I can see the escape summit over into Maggie Gulch. I point to it and tell Paul, I'd like to be up there before the sun goes down. He thinks it's possible but I have my doubts, which is where we both seem to be living right now: he so full of confidence while I am full of doubt. Last thing Doug said was, we really need to be at Maggie by 8:30pm to get back on the 48 hour pace. He seems to have planted his goal in my mind. Paul's having a few bouts with coughing: edema maybe? While he's struggling with his breathing, I pull ahead. I feel unusually strong, increasing my turnover, and churning up the mountain trail. I power over a few creeks and a bit of snow and mud, until I take the summit and sit down to wait for Paul. It's 8:20pm. Paul asks me how far to Maggie when he arrives. It's just over the rise: 20mins max. Doug should be there by now and mighty pleased with himself. I began to think that just maybe I can finish this thing after all.



Maggie Gulch [11640ft]: 85.3mi: up to Buffalo Boy Pass [13060ft] down to Stony Pass Rd [12580ft] then up to Green

Mountain Pass [12980ft] and down to Cunningham [10380ft]

As we run down off the mountain into Maggie, Doug flashes us with his green flashlight as he leaves the other side. We're back on the 48 hour pace, but we still have a few mountains to get over. A bit of hot chocolate with coffee then out again. We make it across the creek just as darkness falls. I no longer can find the flags, so Paul takes the lead. With flashlight in hand and moving strait uphill through the tundra and scrub, we pass an old rusty set of bedsprings. Another problem I'm having is that my perception of the route and the reality of it are not the same. My recollection seems to be off skew on numerous occasions. Even after passing the cornice near the summit, my memory fails me. I provide false information to Paul a few more times before slipping into silence. As much as I tried to memorize this section, my recall of the terrain is worthless. My jacket comes off and goes back on again and again. I'm cold without it and hot with it on. Is it the weather or is it me? Finally, I put it away and deal with the cold. Paul's edema is building up, interfering with his breathing. He has to stop often and pukes a few times. We're really struggling with our route finding, but Paul never seems to slow. We traverse around the side of Canby for a surprisingly long time, then drop down to the Stony Pass jeep road.

Crossing the road, we head for the darkness in front of us, which should be Green Mountain. We're just chasing flags now anyway, which is pretty much what everybody else is doing too. Across the mountain, tiny streams of light move back and forth in short arcs, each one searching, for the next flag. This is the new route, full of rock and snow, but there is no trail. Tufts of tundra and piles of rock is all there is. We catch one of the lights lying on the ground and discover DeWalt again. He's taking a break while his pacer looks for the next flag. Our group spreads out to find the way but Paul and I are going faster so we move ahead. But then we overshoot the turn and drop down too far. The flag is well above us

and on our left, perched on an overhang, laughing at us for the extra bit of climbing we must do to reach it. Each shelf leads to another until finally we take the top of Green Mountain Pass. We both sit down and then we both puke. We move away from each other as we seem to be making each other sick by the sound of our own spew. We need to get down lower, and then there is but one last mountain to climb.

No trail here and nothing but pitch black below, we slide down the steep dirt and tundra in the direction of the one flag we see. We go past it and then scan left and right for the next with no luck. I would think that it's strait ahead but Paul espies it on our left. Covering as much distance sideways as we do strait ahead, we go in a bumbling gait: left, right, stop, start, and ahead, but always down. We shoot about with our lights as eyes, searching for the next flag, and paying dangerous little attention to where we put our feet. Paul almost breaks his leg when he postholes into a marmot den. I'm reminded of my last time up here in the dark and I'm so glad that we don't see any sheep this year. With each flag, we gain a few more feet of descent in our mad keystone cop escape off the mountain. At the confluence of two creeks, we find better ground that provides a faster pace. My emotions are as wrecked as my body by now and for some inexplicable reason I feel everything welling up in my face. I'm not certain if I'm going to cry or scream. Paul would think I've gone nuts if I start crying so instead I start to yell. "You ok Joe" He asks me? Hell no, I say. I'm a flippin mess, but I'm getting off this rock and we're going to get this thing done. Good thing we can't see each other. Anyway, I think Paul's getting worried about me because he sure as heck picks up the pace. We positively fly down the nasty old sheep trail.

We drop very steeply down and left, the ground sliding away under us. We're on a canted trail that slopes off a very tall cliff with nothing but darkness under us. The tall grass makes it difficult to see the ground that's littered with rock and rarely flat or strait.

We're close now but still a good bit of very rough scrambling to gain the floor where the final aid station awaits us. I can tell by the lights in front of us that there are a few others on this ghost of a trail, and they're all descending slowly. We of course, are less intelligent, so we scream down with blind faith and panache. We pass one after another, until we catch Doug, who hooks on and prays, I suppose. The final slip and slide down into the rock and weed garden is a nasty obstacle course of broken ankles and damaged toes that deposits us onto the Cunningham Road. As it is, we walk into Cunningham alongside Doug.



Cunningham Gulch [10380ft]: 92.1mi: over Dives-Little Giant [13000ft] into Anastro Gulch

We're fortunate to receive the personal attention of both Charlie Thorn and Rollin Perry when we arrive. Charlie offers up his hamburger, but a single bite is all I can manage. My tummy is wrecked, so I stick with hot chocolate and coffee. Paul dumps a load of his gear, including his jacket, while I still fear the mountains and refuse to go on without mine. Still, it's hot for midnight in the mountains. Doug and Shan are still busy with their gear when we leave, but our yo-yo charm seems to keep bringing us back together so I suspect this will continue.

My dry feet get soaking wet and damn cold yet again as we cross Cunningham Creek and the delta of small streams at the base of the waterfall. It is of small consequence at this point as our focus is now on the final climb. Paul again takes lead and with the same aggressive pace he had coming down the last mountain, he starts up this one. I hang on, enjoying the ride and the idea of getting over this beast as quickly as possible. We can see groups of lights ahead of us, further up, and we take one after another quickly. Paul is relentless and I stay on his heel, even when he stops now and again to puke. Initially, it's all short switchbacks, and then it becomes longer strait-a-ways that are very steep. A woman is lying on the trail and we have no choice but to climb over her. Past the mine and onto tundra, Paul is really struggling, stopping to puke, trying to clear his breath. Oddly, I'm taken by a sneezing fit that lasts for 15 minutes about the same time that Doug and Shan catch us. I climb wide legged as I blow snot between my legs into the tundra. We go back and forth with a silent big fellow and his pacer while we make the final ascent. Doug and Shan roll on over the top while Paul and I both stop to puke again on our final summit.



It seems much colder so I put my jacket back on, but I suspect that it's probably just me. My thermostat must be completely out of whack. We catch up to Doug and Shan and I pass them going down the rough scree, but Paul drops his water bottle and has to chase it down the side of the mountain. Doug ends up with me while our pacers follow behind. The steep rough trail becomes a maze of rocks and twisted turns as it leads to the road. The road is nastier than I recall: hard and rocky enough to beat the hell out of our feet. Doug and Shan take off while I'm taken by another knee dropping puke. The road is at least 3 miles of misery in which Paul and I follow. I can see a tunnel of light well ahead now and again, but it's a long haul. We end up ahead of them for a time and then together again by the time we reach the turn across Arrastra Creek.

The final 3 mile journey along the Animas River is not strait or flat, but then again, it's no mountain either. All of it under the trees, a few rocky jeep roads, a tricky u-turn, numerous streams to cross, a few mud holes, a beaver pond or two, then a house, a mill, and a ski lodge. We find the Heaphys, visit for a moment and let

them slip behind. Paul wants a shower bad and drives us to push on in. He keeps yelling back at us as he splashes through each stream. Eventually we find the ski lodge and the road into town. We slow to a walk for a few moments but I insist that we run it in: not for the time, but just because we're finishing the race. So the four of us struggle on in with Doug and I kissing the rock on opposite corners at the same time. The last thing I do is thank Paul for believing in me and for always keeping me going. A better pacer I could not have had. Paulie is the simply the best!



Ok Bill, it is done. It was one heck of a ride, as tough as it was beautiful. I told you that this one was for you and I meant it. You were in my thoughts for so much of the run that I found myself talking to you throughout. I'm not sure that it helped but it certainly kept everyone else at a distance. Sleep well. I know that I will.