

Perrier Run was personal and group experience

By Jerry Trently

Editor's note: The following is a narrative of a trip to the Perrier 10 kilometer run in Central Park, New York. The story takes the point of view of the trip as it relates to the author and to the group.

Amidst a maze of towering structures and concrete roadways is New York's Central Park, a beautiful park with its winding sidewalks and trellises, and itself a part of the New York experience. On March 27, about 15 faculty and students from the Hazleton Campus went there to compete in the Perrier 10 kilometer run.

Needless to say, the architecture, people, and overall environment were much different than Hazleton, and we all enjoyed the change of scenery. It was not long that we were in New York that we met Stuart Erwin, who had gone down earlier to reserve our places in the run. He joined us, and we headed for the park.

The park was full of runners stretching, jogging, and talking of the race while we drove around looking for a parking place. Parking spaces in New York City are harder to find than clocks in the Classroom Building. I'm glad that Dr. Jerry Covert was driving and not myself.

As soon as I got out of the van, I was certain that we had made a wrong turn and had gone to Anchorage, Alaska, or should I say Hazleton, Pennsylvania? The climate seemed similar to that spring snowstorm weather that closed the campus a couple of weeks ago.



Photo by Jackie Covert

New York City's freezing cold weather was not enough to stop Penn State's runners.

At any rate, we became accustomed to the temperature, which according to a bank clock/thermometer was 27 degrees F. They have bank clock/thermometers in New York too.

As race time was nearing, we set out, to take care of necessary obligations. The portable toilets were lined up, about one dozen of them in a row. The trick was determining which ones were being used and which ones were not. We beat the system by finding two that were unoccupied, and lined up near them.

Before the race, the theme from "Chariots of Fire" was played over speakers in the park, and someone, that none of us could see, did his own version of the Richard Simmons show. I never liked Richard Simmons, but every runner should warm up before a race, and if this is the way that New York runners do it, more power

to them.

Next, it was time to line up at the starting line. We Hazleton runners tended to be conservative, and stayed back in the pack a little bit in fear of being trampled to death once the race actually began. The start went off rather smoothly, considering there were over 5,000 runners involved.

As spectators watched from all areas, we ran through the park, past the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and on over the winding course. At the end of the race, some of us, myself included, realized that we were not in the shape that we should have been in for the race. But, Stu Erwin, for example, set his personal best time.

After the race, we headed for Greenwich Village, and it was here that we split into two groups. About six of us decided to go back through New York to Chinatown. Of course, this meant that we had to ride

the New York subway. The ride was fun, at least I thought so, but apparently Kim Long did not. She sat close by us and watched for would-be muggers.

Once off the subway, we encountered a man demonstrating a card game on a street corner near Macy's department store. A few of us kept walking, but one of our group became intrigued by the card shark. About three minutes later, he was out of twenty dollars and the man had disappeared into the crowd. I guess our street-wise acting was not too good.

We strolled through Macy's, and then through Chinatown to Madison Square Garden, the round building. Anyway, after passing three Chinamen, a beggar, and a shopping bag lady, we got back on the subway and headed back to Greenwich Village.

Meanwhile, while we were spending time looking at nothing in particular at Macy's, the rest of our troop went to the World Trade Center. Perhaps their trip was a bit more exciting, for up there with them in one of the world's

tallest buildings was Woody Allen. They did not get his autograph, but at least they got his gum wrapper.

Our whole group reunited back at Greenwich Village, and went for something to eat. Six of us at one table glanced over the menu. Included with our meal was what looked to be pea pods. No peas, just the pods. We later learned from Dr. Covert they were "snow peas," and are considered a delicacy. Kim called them "no peas."

After supper, our evening was not yet over. Not far from where we were was the erotic bakery. Some of us had seen a story of this bakery on NBC's Real People show, and the bakery lived up to its X-rated reputation when we were there.

Soon after that we boarded the van again and headed back to Hazleton. The race itself was run, competitive, and probably one of the most exciting races I will ever run. New York was as interesting as can be imagined, and combined with the run, the Perrier 10 kilometer run trip was as much a personal as it was a group experience.

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