



**Hardrock Hundred  
Silverton Colorado  
13 July 2007**

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It has been raining off and on all day in Silverton. It is a very good omen. I love rain runs. I lay down to sleep with a smile on my face and listen to the rhythm of it.

I leave town focused and blind to every one around me. I feel strong and confident. The route from town to the first climb passes uneventful and silent. The climb is long but goes well, not fast, but steady. Nothing notable occurs while going up the long jeep road, the single-track trail over the top, and then the typical high-speed descent into Cunningham. I am ahead of schedule, but only a little. The next climb, no more than a narrow sheep trail, climbs quickly and then tilts even steeper up over rock into a high meadow. This meadow is not the top, but a short respite, and then up again to the top of Green Mountain. Stoney Pass comes soon after and then up to the high traverse leading to the ridge above Little Giant Mine. I speed down off the right side quickly into Maggie. A quick pit stop and then up again. This being one of the shortest climbs, I'm quickly into Pole Creek and running well across this beautiful high valley. Its long but goes uneventfully. Before long, Pole Creek aid station is behind me and I take care to catch the route that goes off trail to climb up to the high lake. Past it, the trail tilts down again, comfortably at first, and then rapidly. The foliage here is so thick you can't see much, but it always seems to be a fun and fast run down into Sherman. So far, I have been staying ahead of my plans, and the trend continues. I pick up my large camelback with flashlight and head back out. The long jeep road up to Burrows Park leads to the start of the trail to Handies. This section always takes

awhile but I seem to be on top of my game today. It's a long haul, but I get it done. I'm over and into American Basin and then back up the other side in due time. I speed into Grouse, well before dark. It's the first time I have ever got here before nightfall. Paul is pacing me from here, so we make good time heading up the long jeep road. Darkness falls before we reach "Oh Point!" so we drop into the tundra in darkness heading down towards Ouray. Past the aid station, we sprint through the darkness on the overhanging Bear Creek trail, across the Highway tunnel and soon after, the Uncompagne River. Ouray in the darkness is always surreal, shadows and inanimate voices. Soon, I'm heading up Camp Bird Road. No need to stop at Governors Basin, and the sun rises just as I see the final three pitches up to Virginius. Snow covers everything, so the whole thing goes well. Mendota blurs past as the landmark preceding the sprint into Telluride. People and voices all blur and blend and then I am back on trail again moving up trail towards the Wasatch Saddle. It's always so breathtakingly pretty followed by the ugliness over Oscar's Point. The steep rocky jeep road leads down hard and fast. Focus shifts to every rock and foot strike, but it all happens fast and then on into Chapman. I am so far ahead of my game, that it doesn't seem real. Everything continues well, so Grant Swamp pass behind me as well, too easy. Into KT and then up to Porcupine. Over the snow covered hump and into big high saddle, I'm now looking at the final summit, Putnam. And now here it is, nothing but downhill from here. The high meadows lean into the very rocky trail, and speed down to Mineral Creek. I wade across, then haul down Nute's Chute, turn at the shrine, and stop at the rock, well before dark.



You getting any sleep, Joyce asks? I'm not sure, but I just finished running the race. Ok, so stop dreaming and get some real sleep.



I check in for real at 5:30am, wondering about the dream. For the first time, I have decided to start without my camelback. With only 2 water bottles in hand and my jacket tied around me, it feels good to run this light. Usually I carry too much, but never will I ever run in these mountains without a rain jacket. George and I talk a little and then he pulls ahead. We're part of a long pace line, with no room to pass, on a twisted up single-track. Occasional mud and water holes have us hopping rocks until I finally submerge one of my shoes. This marks the end of my dry feet and clean shoes period. Without further thought, I easily resign myself to plowing through the water. Even had I made it much farther, it is of no matter as Arrastra Creek is wide with no possibility of a dry crossing. Through the cold snowmelt stream, we start our first real climb. I dial in a good comfortable rhythm that seems to hold true. George is just back of me, but many of the strong climbers pull ahead and keep going. This is a good start for me. Better than usual. At the intersection of the trailhead where we leave the road, I stop to take some salt and eat some food. George goes by, as do many others. I get up and follow, but slower now that I have killed my momentum. This slow motion ascent is quite typical for me, not quite like the dream I had. I feel every step and struggle with every breath. I begin to wonder if I have acclimated enough. I did not get the standard fourteen days I usually get, nor did I get near as many of the ascents up to thirteen thousand feet and more. I begin to wonder if it was enough, what I did do. I got seven days and 4 days up to twelve or thirteen thousand. Is it enough? The next two days will tell me if it is. This steep rocky old miner's trail is mostly rock, but also muddy with snowmelt. On top, I get my wind back and begin to run, picking up speed as I cross the thin ridge separating two high valleys. Across the slight rise to the other side and then the steep tundra drop, I look for a route leading down and find none. A few people below me are each taking different routes. I start down with no idea of the intended route but with a good idea of where I need to go. I follow a well worn slide for a bit and when it fades to nothing, I choose a new one, taking a trail for a few seconds and then something else again after that. I am pretty much just falling downhill in the direction that I need to go until I pass through the old mine. As I go past George, I find myself back on the trail again as it begins the top

stage of the multi-stage switchbacks. There's lots of loose rock on the trail. Running with my toes pointed steeply downhill, I slide again and again, but manage to ride each one without losing my balance. I push the pace from top to bottom, wading the creek and entering the Cunningham aid station at about the same time that I always do, just short of 9am.



Joyce meets me and seats me, then hands me the small camelback without water, as we planned. I'll need the carrying capacity later, but won't have access to another of my drop bags until Sherman. She refills one of my bottles with Spiz and the other with water. I eat a small bit of food, change my shirt, and leave. George comes in and sits next to me and then I get out before he does. The climb out of Cunningham is very nasty with nary a flat spot and everything canted towards the cliff. My foot slides most every step, my quads start to whine with every iota of elevation gain, and everybody else seems to be climbing a hell of a lot faster than I am. Oh it's all well and fine with me, standard protocol, but no damn dream either. I'm sweating pretty heavy from all the heavy lifting, and all I'm lifting is me. George walks by along with all the others. Reference to my speed, they all seem to be sprinting. Green Mountain and all her foothills are not such a mean lot, but they always seem to play hell with me. I pass a young guy who is actually moving slower than me. Two snails using a sundial to measure our progress, we turn around to see if anyone is actually behind us. And there is, but it's Mark & Margaret Heaphy who always start together on the back and then pick it up. We top out on Green Mountain together, but I run down the other side onto Stoney Pass alone. The climb up the other side of the road is very slow work even though it's only a hundred yards to the high traverse. My breathing is stunted and my leg muscles don't quite have the push I need to take each step. The Heaphys catch me on the traverse. They are dear friends, so I hook on as best I can across the remainder of the high ridge. They provide the necessary push as well as some very good company. Margaret is once again dealing with stomach problems and Mark remains directly behind her. She always seems to think that I am moving faster than them, so every time I find myself behind her, she stops to let me pass. I do roll ahead of them into Maggie aid station, but not by much.



I refill my bottles, but decide to leave the camelback empty. It's a short trip to Pole Creek and there is no need to fill up until then. Ken Gordon and his family are working the station and they take good care of me, his son buzzing round me until I pack up and head out. Mark and Margaret are again just ahead of me. The climb over into Pole Creek is about the easiest climb on this course, so it doesn't take us too long. Dropping down the other side, we come up behind Mark Blenden and Ray Gruenewald. Again, people seem to be creating their own routes through the scrub and skunk cabbage of the upper valley. We also follow the wrong track for 100 yards, but figure it out quickly and skip over to the correct one. It starts to rain, but its light and comfortable. I have wished for rain many times in this valley, so I am certainly enjoying this, but the valley ahead looks very dark. It must be getting hammered right now. By the time we reach the dark clouds, it's no more than a heavy rain. The ground is littered with hail pellets, so we've missed the worst of it. Approaching Pole Creek aid station in the pouring rain, I begin to think I don't really want to stop right now. I would prefer to keep moving while it's raining. I check my bottles, wondering if I need to refill, but I'm only 2 hours from Maggie and have plenty of fluid in both.



Pole Creek aid station is no more than a tarp hanging between 2 trees, with a group of people huddled under it. I run by without stopping, yelling out my number as I pass. Mark Blenden comes out from under the tarp and joins me. He

forgot his rain jacket and needs to keep moving to stay warm. Together, we cross the creek and climb a thin muddy trail up a side valley. Mark Heaphy goes by us, alone, and I send Blenden to hang onto his tail. I figure they're both a lot faster than me. We cross back and forth over the creek a few times, and Blenden trips while crossing, drenching himself even more than he already is. They get smaller and smaller, and then just two tiny dots. Margaret joins me, and the two of us pass John DeWalt. Minutes later, we splash through another creek, then climb to the lake at the high point on this trek. From this point, the trail tilts slightly downhill, so I pull ahead and begin to run and roll. Alone, I chase the twisting trail as it drifts about and down. There is somebody just ahead, but each time I get close, they take off, so I can never quite make out who it is. The trail begins to drop more rapidly, and twist about even more as it drops into a narrow canyon. A rock graveyard leads to a breathtaking waterfall, then a heavily wooded single track to a cascading creek, heavy and loud with snowmelt. I wade the creek a few times and then drop even more quickly. This eventually leads to the final switchbacks just before Sherman. Not a single person do I see on the entire descent, except for a fleeting glimpse of somebody just ahead that refuses to be seen or caught. And then, a pole bridge precedes the metal pedestrian bridge across from the Sherman aid station.



Prohira is just across from where I sit to refresh and reload. We exchange greetings as I eat some Mac & cheese. I also take some avocado with my drink of choice today, ginger ale. It'll be dark before I reach the next station, and I planned for that. So I collect from my drop bag, the big camelback with lights, gloves, hat, and food. Margaret comes in just before I get up to leave, and then I realize that George is sitting in the next tent along with Blenden. Mark and I walk out together while George follows. We make the off road turn after the bridge and start climbing the twisted detour. I can't seem to get my body to respond to the short nasty climb, dragging my heels badly and breathing even worse. George

catches us just as we reach the jeep road, and his legs are spinning much better than mine, so he goes right on by. I suggest to Mark that he go with George, for the same reason as earlier. But, he's feeling a bit done in and chooses to stay with me for now. I'm fine with his company, but know for certain that he's more George's speed. We make descent time, speed walking up the jeep road to Burrows Park, but most of the others do this much faster than us. As I stop by the creek crossing to wet my face, George comes out of the bathroom. He keeps surprising me by coming from behind when I know he's in front. As he starts up the mountain with Robert Andrulis in tow, Blenden then decides to go with. I drop back to the bathroom just as DeWalt and pacer go by. As luck would have it, Margaret comes along just as I start up the mountain. She seems to be having a really tough time, and so am I. We both practically crawl up towards Handies. She's in front for a while, and then I am. We watch as the light fades and the tiny spots of runners well ahead and high up on the face drift over the summit. One step and stop, another step and stop: zombie Olympians trying to run faster than water falling uphill. I can't believe how difficult this is. I suppose that Margaret must feel as bad as I do. Bonked! Crashed! Trashed! Wasted! Used! And still refusing to give in! Slowly, very slowly, we will ourselves up into the high snow, climbing the rocks and loose scree. The final pitch is all loose rock, and impossible to climb without reducing to all fours. And then, we are on top. It's 9pm. The bright red sun fades into the jagged horizon of high mountains as we slip over Handies and start down into the American Basin. We pick up speed and continue without lights for as long as we can. I trip once, and then out with the light, not wanting to make a fatal mistake. Margaret also, has her light out now. I lead through the high steep descent as far as the lake, and then I ask Margaret to lead. My eyes fail me and I stumble about, even with a good light. She never hesitates, but leads continuously over the rough ground, through snow, gurgling creeks, fragments of trail, rock strewn fields, and then back up a skinny goat track towards the next summit. That's the devil of this section: once over the 14-er, we drop into American Basin and then start up over a 13-er, before dropping again to the next aid. It's a butt kicker for certain and hard to get through without complete depletion. And that's where I am, completely depleted. I'm certain that we're dead last and my morbid curiosity makes me look back to see. I'm completely surprised to see some lights well up on the dark mass of Handies, just as we cross the American-Grouse Pass and start down. Having hiked this section just a few days earlier, I have some confidence that I can lead us in. Again I take lead and we roll into the Grouse aid station in short order. Margaret slips off to the tent to get some sleep while I give myself over to my crew. They put me in a chair and proceed to pump me full of kind words and large calories. After so much abuse and silence, this seems surreal. What do I want? I can't speak. How do I feel? Same response. Speaking comes slow and stilted, single syllables, grunts, and moans. Yea, No, Uh, Ah, Oh. That's the entire vocabulary. Neanderthal at best. George is getting the same treatment just 30 yards away.



Fueled, rested, and ready to go, Paul leads me out. I feel better but still not very communicative. Head down and headlamp on, we hike up the road into the moonless night. We pass the bathrooms and keep on going. Old friends, we're very comfortable with each other, talking or silent. We don't even see it coming. After a short time, I'm staring at the Animas Forks sign and then it slowly sinks in: We've missed the turn to Engineer and gone down into Animas Forks instead. Damn and to hell. Shit! We turn around and head back, not knowing exactly how far. Turns out, it's all the way back at the bathrooms we passed. We see some lights well ahead and up the mountain. They belong to somebody who was behind us, but are way ahead of us now. It slaps me with the stupidity of my error. We would have been at least that far and probably further. Oh well. Sometimes it's like that. Nothing to be done about it now but to keep going. The diversion seems to have peaked my energy though, so we make good time hiking up the road. We pass Jim Ballard and he says his wife Cathy is up ahead and doing well. So she is the "lights" that went by while we toured Animas Forks. Jim stays just behind us and we repeatedly ask him if he's certain that we're on the correct road. We have already missed one turn and are nervous about missing the "Oh Point" drop-off. It seems like we've already gone far enough and the circumstances have made us a bit nervous. But Jim is right and we find it in good time. We start down alongside Jim and his pacer. Cold at first, we warm quickly as we descend rapidly down through the tundra and soon enough into the Engineer aid station. Time enough for some hot chocolate and coffee.



We continue to roll while Bear Creek thunders on our left. The trail rises and falls but the creek continues to dive lower until it is a hundred feet below us. At Yellow Jacket mine, we wade a wide creek just above a booming waterfall. Soon after, we run the overhanging trail along the cliffs. This section is such a stimulating section because the views are always so dynamic. Sheer rock walls on the right going straight up into the night and sheer rock drops on the left going straight down into darkness below. Grabs your attention, regardless, day or dark. You just know what it is. The trail has changed a good bit from what I remember. A lot of rock must have come down. A few changes surprise me. The glass rock trail has been swept clean, which reduces the musical descent significantly. We roll along the switchbacks quickly and soon are over the tunnel. We drop off the west side of the highway, making our way down to the Umcompagre River and then have to climb back up to the highway again before dropping back down again. We cross the river on a skinny little bridge near the falls, climb over the water pipe and onto the dirt road leading to Ouray. The light of sunrise occurs while on the water pipe road. Paul and I enter Ouray and the aid station without lights. We don't need them for the first time and it's not a warm feeling knowing how far back of the norm I am. Ouray is waking up as we walk down 2<sup>nd</sup> St. The aid station is pretty much abandoned but for a few people who seem to be waiting patiently for me. Again, they feed me and clean me before sending me on my way.



Fred Fletcher & I walk up Camp Bird Road together, him talking a mile a minute, and me saying very little. Fred has paced me before and really wanted to go again. So here he is wearing a large smile and a deep well of energy. His enthusiasm is infectious and before long, my stride extends. The road is a hard pack jeep road that tilts constantly uphill. Bear Creek runs alongside us as well and talks as much as Fred does, the booming voice soothing in an odd sort of way. I love the sound of a mountain stream, cascading full of snow melt, rushing, sparkling, full of power and energy. Well, Fred can't compete with Bear Creek, but he's a pretty good talker, so there is little need for me to actually say anything. I do thoroughly enjoy Fred's company. There seems to be some sort of power in good company. My lazy walk turns into a power walk that carries me for mile after mile up the old mountain road. We pass under rock overhangs and abandoned silver mines, but always within sight and sound of Bear Creek.



We pull into Governor's Basin aid station and sit for a slice of melon and some ginger ale. Fred chats it up with the volunteers and their dogs. The main tourist jeep road ends here as we cross a low bridge and start up a more rugged road. A car pulls over to let some hikers out at the creek crossing. They speak to Fred, so he stops to explain. Their chins drop and their eyes bug out as they look past me for this amazing athlete who plans to do this amazing deed. Fred has some fun with it while I wade the creek and keep moving. I don't have the subtlety to carry on with the amount of bullshit he's dishing out right now, but I can certainly smile about it. We laugh about it for 10 minutes when we get out of sight of them. But then the road diverts our attention as it gets noticeably steeper, rockier, and more wet with snow and muck. We traverse a wide snow back climbing to a higher road and then up to the metal plate just under the first pitch of Virginus. I tell Fred that I know this route well and also, I know how to climb the snow, so I lead. A snow climb goes so much easier than rock, and I climb quicker than I have in a while. The snow steps are pretty good but not perfect, so I toe into every one with force, driving my toe in and down. The steps are not even, some too low, others too high, and some are smashed out. Regardless, it

all seems so easy. I climb the first pitch quickly, enjoying the exertion and feel of it. I stop on top to look back and check on Fred. A smile hangs under his nose. He seems to be really getting into it. We work our way across deep snow to the next climb. Snow for only half of the climb and then rock. Fred leads us up the scree and large loose rock to the second level. We sit to study the final climb. Two routes: one leads up the side, the other directly up the chute. My thinking process must be subliminal now. I have not come to any conclusion or made a decision, yet I ride with the body that moves directly up the gut. Fred seems to be enjoying this as much as I am. We go up fast, without hesitation, and as we reach the loose end of the rope, we avoid it, pushing past it into the Virginius aid station. The rope is here to help people up the steep climb.



It's a tiny notch in the mountains at 13000ft. Lawn chairs, tents, a camp stove, and some small bit of food for the runners. Blenden is there with Drew as we climb in. We sit for a moment only, enough time for Mark & Drew to get down the scree. I go over the top and slide down quickly, yelling back to Fred to dig his heels in. He's new to surfing the scree, but adjusts quickly. We sprint down the large sharp rocks that cut to the bone, skimming through, and slide past Mark & Drew. Picking up speed, we fly through Mendota Saddle and down the moonscape beyond. Once past the rocks and onto the endless dirt switchbacks, we let it unwind. My legs reach out to their full stride, grabbing more real estate than a land baron. I turn loose of the brakes and let it ride. We fly past Cathy and a few others, until Fred pulls in front and tells me to slow down. Lets run for 4 and rest for 1, he says. You're going to need some of this energy for the next section. So we pull up and go easy every 4 minutes and this too seems to work well. We slow as we go past Roger, who seems torqued up sideways, then sprint the rest of the way into the Telluride aid station.



The downhill run was good for me. I feel good and bask in the warm feelings of everybody here. Lots of smiling faces, hand shakes, and best wishes. I wonder what it is that always makes this aid station feel this way. As good as I feel, the mental process that requires rational thought is still out of order. Misery waits for me though, as soon as I leave these comfortable confines. The sun is up and it starts the slow bake as soon as I walk out with Paul. I pull my hat down low to block the sun. I have yet to start climbing and already the sweat runs down my face. The tourist trail out of Telluride up to the waterfall may be very nice for the locals, but I have never cared much for it. A chimp in the zoo, examined by everyone who passes, dragging my carcass much slower than what may seem normal to these fine folk. I feel fat, bloated, overheated, and outmatched by the mountain elements. Paul leads me from one island of shade to the next. Tunnel vision sets in, or maybe just a severe lack of motivation to even turn my head. Unless it's directly in front of me, I can't see it. This road can't be that long but we've traveled a long damn way. Paul is well aware of the distress I'm in long before we get to the waterfall. He leads me to a large shade tree where we sit and have a few grapes. From somewhere deep inside my stupor, I note the unbelievably beauty of this setting: the waterfall, the mountain river, flowers everywhere. Only minutes, no more, and we are again up and moving up the trail. Escaping the zoo usually raises me to a new level, but still I remain in a funk. At the first water crossing, Paul has me give him my shirt, which he promptly dunks in the snowmelt and then hands back. Put it on, he says! Damn, but it's cold. Gives me the heebie-jeebies for a few seconds but seems to slap my awake if nothing else. I can't feel the difference, but Paul seems to think I am moving better now. I know it's just his positive motivation he's applying to my wounded psyche but hell, I can't speak, let alone argue, nor do I want to. I continue to stumble forward. Margaret walks past me rapidly, or so it seems. Paul stops to talk to a big guy who is talking about turning back. Another and another are going back the other way. What do they know that I don't know? The heat is kicking all of us equally I suppose. I deal with my demons and they deal

with theirs. We sit on the cliff side hiking bridge next to the cascading rapids for another break. This section of course goes through a series of ever higher meadows, and this meadow is but a short respite from the climb. We reach a shallow creek that's flowing pretty fast. Too wide to jump and no obvious way across, I step in and plant my foot. I shift my weight so that I can plant the other foot, and then again until I am across. Must have been a snow bridge here when they marked this, because that was not pleasant or safe. The switchbacks start anew at the water's edge. Entire herds of Columbines and Indian Paint Brush border the trail by the thousands. The trail is very steep so my face is very close to the brilliant blues and reds. They fill my vision and capture my mind for a time. Then again, I am moving so slow that maybe I'm staring at the same bouquet for hours. We stop at the top of the next level to look back. Paul scoops up some snow and hands it to me to eat. There seems to be quite a few people behind us but only one is gaining. When Mahoney finally gets to us, he does not go by, but hooks in with us. Or maybe I finally start to go faster. After all, we have finished the worst of the switchbacks and are now in the high meadows. Still, it's a long way to the top. We stop one last time where we can still see well behind and note that the fields and trails are all empty. Where have they gone? I turn and follow in Paul's wake. Mahoney also remains with us. It's still very hot and I'm still eating snow and moving slow as we head for the Wasatch Saddle. Paul surges to the top while Mahoney and I ascend at one-quarter speed. Standing atop Wasatch Saddle is so anticlimactic as we still have many miles to go. We glissade three separate tracks down a large snow mass to the rocks below, then hike across a hundred yards of snow and rock to Oscar's. The three of us start down the rocky road together, but Paul and I pick up momentum and separate from Matt. The rocks are all size, and stacked one atop of the other such that I never know if one is gonna roll when I step on it. I have to be light on my feet and ready to go with the roll. I search for any flat surface for each foot plant but sometimes there is none, so I take what ever I can get. After all, my momentum carries me forward regardless if I have a good foot strike or not. We ride the rocks for a while and then the birm of the road, but it's all steep and tough on the toes. Back and forth down the rough rocky road until we finally pass into the shade of the trees. Hard to believe how fast I'm moving now after the miserable mess I made of the entire climb up to Oscar's. Two completely different worlds: going up and coming down. We run into Chapman to find it almost empty. Pretty much just Joyce and Barbara. Hey, what's Barbara doing here? Have you seen George she asks? Uh oh! He must have gone off course. Paul and I make ready for the final section with the help of Joyce and then George comes rolling in with Crownover. They were certainly lost but have managed to find their way back. Mahoney comes in and leaves before we manage to get out of the tent.



Paul and I start up the trail and then George comes out and goes past us, then his pacer a few minutes later. Paul and I make good time going up, but the darkness closes on us by treeline. The route through the rocks becomes much more difficult to navigate, and we struggle to find any flags. There are no lights in front or behind so we have but our wits to work out the general route. I have a good idea which direction to go but the darkness of the moonless night leaves us scanning back and forth. Slowly we move forward, but now our speed is limited by the darkness, not my disabilities. But we are closer than we think and soon find ourselves just below the dark face of Grant-Swamp. Paul starts up first and I follow his lead. He starts a right traverse, then zigzags, but still drifting right. We're only 100 yards below the pass but can't see it. We can't see which way to go. Nothing but blackness above and no idea. Paul finds a large rock mass and again stays right of it. He goes up a bit more and tells me its now too steep. I go to the left side and use the rock face to assist me to continue climbing. Each time I reach a threshold, there seems to be more. I finally see the standard crossover point and its still way to my left. It's a good way across to traverse and I think I might be able to get up by going around to the right. I try it, and climb through a slot to the top of a large rock. I look over and realize I am just above the trail. I am on top and revel in it. I'm on top and can hardly believe it. In this darkness, everything is coming as a big surprise. But now I need to lead Paul up. I talk him through the route I just came up. Soon, we are both on top and just as quickly dropping off the other side. I go down fast, slipping and sliding in my typical scree surfing manner. Paul seems to be struggling, but still we make good time dropping quickly down through the upper tundra and then the upper Ice Lake Basin. Having been here many times in the past and knowing the route pretty well, I lead. We're moving pretty well now, and with an hour to get to the KT station, feel pretty safe. We take the turn I know so well down to the water crossing. It's as steep as I remember but not long enough to do any real damage. When we reach the creek, we're both shocked by what we see. It's about

midnight, no moon, pitch dark, with nothing but my light. It looks like a bomb has gone off. Must be about 50 yards across and a lot of white water. There is a large waterfall about 30 yards to the right and another about that far to the left. Quite a few downed trees from an avalanche jumbled up in a pile, helter-skelter. The snow is gone, but the remains look like hell. There are NO markings anywhere. Paul and I both automatically assume we have made a wrong turn. We hike back up the mountain to the last flag, about a 100 yards strait up. The same steep beast we just slid down, but much more difficult going up. The flags at the last turn direct us this way, so we hike back down. This time we search more diligently. Still, no flags. We had to have missed it, so we hike back up again, same result. This is the right way. I have run this race six times and helped mark it as many more. A man almost died here last year during the course marking, and it is on my mind. Another friend of mine who has just recently drowned is also on my mind. Paul tells me, it's not worth my life. Time to bail out. But we don't want to climb that damn hill any more. It's insane. The course has gone thru here in the past, but it has always been marked so you could find the route. Once, they had us go around and above the waterfall. It's not wise to explore this area in the darkness, but we're stuck. I wade out into the stream, then climb a tree stump, crawl across a few trees that are hanging over some white water. I climb an upturned tree root, and crawl a few more. The trees are not stable or bound together. They move as I crawl over, with some pretty dangerous water underneath. If I fall, it'll be bad. I just can't see what's next. Finally, I make it to the far bank, and Paul follows my lead. We are finally across but it cost us 45 minutes. We run as fast as we can, adrenalin pumping. I'm excited, scared, angry, and I know I cannot make the next cutoff in time. We roll into KT about 3 or 4 minutes past the cutoff.



They've already radioed in that we have miss the cut and out of the race. It makes no difference how much. We missed it for sure. Everything is working, I'm finally running strong, and I'm done. After so many successes here, I wonder how easy it will be to write my first Hardrock DNF story, full of silly little mistakes, but no regrets. I still had one hell of an adventure. Oh, and sometimes a dream is just a dream.



All pictures taken by Joyce & Joe Prusaitis just days  
before the run.