


Runner's Log:

Before Going Mad
and Retiring as
A Running Monk



By: Tina V. Cabrera

Run Date: Friday 9/6 at 7:39 AM

3.02 mi

13'46" pace

142 avg bpm

41:32 min

Place: E Old Settlers Park

Dear journal, today is the day that I decided to keep a log on running, to record my reflections while running. The writing slump I've been in for weeks now has officially ended.

I started on the southeast side of the lake to end my run opposite the direct glare of the sun and to indulge in the cool breeze while it lasted. I made a beeline across the grass for a post-run stretch near the water's edge to enjoy a peaceful view of a family of turtles atop a log.

My phone was pre-set (as has become habit) to my favorite music mix: ad-free Pandora Trip Hop Radio. Initially, the run was hard going. Last Sunday, I ran my first 10K. Since then, into the second week of the new semester, I've been incredibly busy, so no time for a weekday run; so, I had to push against the stiffness in my legs.

As I turned the corner, I saw a couple walking towards me both wearing hats. I recognized the woman almost immediately—the Filipina who works at Walmart. They both nodded at me with a smile, she knowingly, with recognition. She must live in the neighborhood. They probably walked here, because why wouldn't they if they live close by? I drove here—some five minutes away—rather than run our neighborhood park because Old Settlers is better for a runner like me (I'm a runner, now aren't I?) At Siena park, I'd have to run the trail at least twice to make three or more miles, while at Old Settlers I can make great headway because of its lengthy paths.

Never thought I could love running. Do I really love it? Maybe it's more accurate to say it's a love/hate or like/sometimes loathe relationship. Back to the couple. My last encounter with the Filipina cashier involved me realizing only when I was about to pay that I had brought the wrong purse that did not contain my wallet. She mildly scolded me with her Tagalog-tinged accent, "That's why you should always use the same purse, now go home and get your wallet and I'll hold onto your items." Had she retired from some other career or profession, like a nurse? Dare I say a *real profession*? For I imagine most of the older/elderly WalMart workers are either filling up the void of long days (or nights) left barren by retirement, too old to keep up with the pace of a full-time job, or perhaps so used to the comfort of a regular work routine that they can't bring themselves to enjoy their hard-earned rest. Then again, she could be like the long-time loyal Walmart employee who said she's been working for Walmart for 30 years. "Are they good to you?" I asked one lazy Sunday morning as I made a pet-food and litter run. "Oh yes," she said, though now she only works part time. She said she was 70 and I expressed amazement at the mismatch in age and physical appearance. She still receives benefits even with her reduced hours.

Pony-tailed yoga master: inhale through nose exhale through mouth "HA."

Murakami; Writing novels like running—must have strong focus & determination!
Lives on writing 3-4 hrs. straight running 6mi/day.
Lucky guy you're just jealous. Run you run. Perpetual running.

Jo Koy: My Filipino Mother could be your Filipino Mother, interchangeable with their Louis Reter knock-offs, ha!

Papa, always: Your Mother so pretty, what did she see in me? Spaniard side—real pretty. Dred at Balboa Hospital Filipino nurses and techs but run by white coat doctor son—a-bitch who said straight in her pretty face: "You WILL die from this!"

GRAMATIK CIRKUS STREET
BANGLA makes me wanna run faster faster

CIRCUS
of
TRU



Run Date: Sunday, 9/8 at 6:02 AM
3.01 mi
14'17" pace
43:06 min
135 avg bpm
Place: Siena Community
Music: Pandora Trip Hop Radio



I was woken by My Fitbit alarm this morning, not knowing it was still set for 5:30 from a week ago for the 10K. It turned out fine since I wanted to get up early to beat this heat that just keeps lingering. It was still very dark at 6 a.m. so that more than once I thought I saw *someone* rather than *something*. Like how I thought a stranger was walking towards me only to find the harmless Dog Waste Station upon closer examination. Something I didn't expect to see: A shooting star at around 6:14.

When nearing my goal of three miles, I thought I saw someone near the basketball court, and this time it was indeed a person, the Filipino man who routinely walks the neighborhood. At least he looks Filipino. Papa had that Pinoy pride, didn't he? He'd point out someone on tv, "Hey, look at that reporter, he's a Filipino," or "Look Baby, Pinoy/Pinay!" And what would I do? I'd roll my eyes. He expressed a peculiar pride for his fellow Filipinos but then turn around and mock his own Filipino-ness: *What did your mother see in me, an ugly flat-nosed Filipino*. He'd allude to the look of the Mestiza as more appealing than that of the full-fledged Filipina. He so admired and desired Mama in part for her Mestiza-ness, brag about her Spanish heritage. I was proud of it too, that I looked like her when she was young. I could see the resemblance in the photos of her before she put on so much weight and got heavier and heavier. And that's why I must run and keep running because I'm the one, as Papa said, who takes most after Mama.

Shooting Star: Neither a star nor shooting. Meteor more like dust or size of sand. Fragments or rock pulled into Earth's atmosphere by Gravity; glowing brightly from frictional heat, particles glowing brightly as they continue to fall and burn.

WAX TAYLOR: 'can't choose who you love.'

Weather Channel says humidity is 91%. Surprise is at 7:10 a.m. and sunset at 7:43 p.m. Can't wait till sun rises earlier so it won't be so dark when I run, at least 4x/week. Will I make it to a half marathon next year? If I work hard and don't get totally sick. This is all going to end someday, you know?

Run Date: Sunday 9/1 at 7:36 AM

6.55 mi

13'47" pace

147 avg bpm

1 hr. 30 min.

I did it—I ran my first 10K! Salado Creek River Run in San Antonio. I never thought I'd enjoy running, let alone complete almost 7 miles in one and a half hours. Another shooting happened. Yeah, that too.

Zen—as I understand it—means accepting things as they are; yet, I feel guilty if I don't respond to each new shooting with despair. Nowadays regular news. It seems the latest killer sets out to outdo the previous, emboldened more than ever before to mow down as many as possible in as little time as possible.

I ran at the fastest pace I could for a new runner.



Monstrosity monstrosity
what is a monster

Another shooting—this time near small Texas town Odessa. Passed through on way to and from San Diego, but have I actually stopped overnight? Don't think so. Can happen anywhere.

Wikipedia: "2019 Shooting" listed third in terms of general information. If Odessa, oh Odessa, has in the past seemed to be a city of insignificance, well, not anymore baby.

Non-run Date: Monday 9/9

I started running seriously this past summer with the Chris Kelley 4th Annual 5K Memorial Run on Saturday, June 15th, a little over a month into summer break. Maybe I decided to run to fill up the time normally taken up with teaching, or maybe out of shame in the face of creative impotence. The first time I ran a 5k was in 2016, a day after Ryan's father died, on a Sunday. It was a memorial run for a boy named Noah Rodriguez who had apparently died at a very young age. The design on the shirt is a rocket inside a circle with the words "Noah's Wings 5K" and the logo includes the phrase "Memorial Scholarship." To be honest, I chose these runs not in memory of someone who is for me a stranger, but because they were convenient.

Not long after my second 5k I got to thinking, why not train for a 10k? I subscribed to Runner's World and found a free 8-week training schedule online. With two trips planned for the summer—one to Prince Edward Island and the other to South Korea to teach for two weeks—my training would be interrupted. I managed to get some running in on the Canada trip, but not on my trip to Korea; the purpose of that trip was to gain experience teaching young ESL students. However, when I got back, I had nearly two weeks left to train for the 10k. I managed to build back up to what was for me a decent pace. Perhaps slow by comparison to other runners, but for someone who used to hate running, I considered that an accomplishment. Besides, I'm not into running for the speed. Why do I run? I surprised myself by falling into infatuation with running; never could I imagine I'd enjoy it, and even when people more fit than me like my older sister who told me about the runner's high, I'd just nod uh-huh, uh-huh and not think much more about it. I've lost over 10 pounds since I started running and eating healthier and I feel most alive when I'm running. Unfortunately, the high lasts only so long and so I keep running to experience the sensation all over again. I don't like working out at the gym. Running is for me a solitary endeavor, except of course for when I join run events. But I tune out others by tuning in to music, which helps me to keep running. I run, even though this too is a repetitious activity, and I end up back where I started. I'm re-reading Murakami's essay on running, and he makes this observation: "it's precisely because people are different from others that they're able to create their own independent selves." He ties running in with what it takes to write a novel. In "Most of What I know About Writing Fiction I learned by Running Every Day," he says that the most important quality a novelist must have is talent, then next is focus—the kind that it takes to faithfully run every day. Then, endurance. In relation to his view on creating an independent, differentiated self, he says, "so the fact that I'm me and no one else is one of my greatest assets...It's precisely my ability to detect some aspects of a scene that other people can't, to feel differently than others and choose words that differ from theirs, that's allowed me to write stories that are mine alone." What a wonderful way to put the self in perspective.

Police struck and killed. Sister was struck by car and no one woke me. Never saw Babe cry when his Pop died. Didn't surprise at all heart oversized drank too much died alone. Shuffling sound in ear - beat of heart - tiny dancer or devil scream - whispering in sync with my heartbeat. May go mad from consistency of sound like when one nostril is clogged, can't sleep can't breathe oh help me help me please. Pulsatile Tinnitus; "the sensation of hearing a rhythmic noise, such as a heartbeat, swooshing or whooshing from no external source." Internal combustion can be caused by a number of conditions according to .com: ruptured eardrum, abnormal capillaries, turbulent blood flow, narrowed neck arteries, head or neck tumors that press against a vein. Mama said, "Why not?" And I said Nothing. "I won't" make it to the millennium! she said some time in 1997 and she didn't.

It's not that I don't agree with him, but not everyone is as privileged as he is to be able to devote 3 to 4 hours every day to writing, or to run 6 miles a day. Are any of us with independent selves really all that unique and different from anyone else? I wonder often, who am I really? When I get together with friends who share similar interests such as Star Wars or Lord of the Rings or some other geeky thing, we name names in the industry and those who we admire the most, people who influence our way of seeing things and our own creativity. Every writer, even Murakami, has been influenced by other writers or artists.

We tell the same stories repeatedly because we are compelled to. The essential framework is the same. We ask the same questions and find the same answers. So, am I all that unique and different in my creations? What we call "new" ways of seeing things, are they really all that new or different? We all arrive at the same destination, and that is without a clear understanding of who or why we are.

So why do I write? When asked this question recently by a fellow writer/poet, a question I dread, I felt put on the spot to remember with perfect recall something I don't consciously think about when writing or when reading. *It's because it's who I am*— cliché answer. *Because I must. Because it's cathartic?* Why do you want to be published? When I finally have a book manuscript published, will it be as satisfying as it seems to be for others? Will I finally be satisfied, my desire to say something meaningful and to be heard completely quenched? I often fall into a creative slump, but each time it happens, it feels especially disappointing and frustrating, even though in the back of my mind I know I've overcome it and will again. Even with consumption, I am often a failure. I've quit reading the last few books I attempted to engage with: *Emily of New Moon*, which I picked up at one of the Anne of Green Gables sites in PEI; *Gentleman Jack*, which I ordered right after finishing the Netflix original series based on the book; *Infinite Jest*, even though it was during one of my long summer breaks. Do I lose interest because my mind perceives that each narrative essentially tells the same story, ones that are all too familiar? I'm onto them like some jaded detective for whom the thrill of the game has lost its appeal. I have a job many on the academic job market would envy, a tenure track Assistant Professorship at a community college, gained after years of adjuncting. Yet I seek other jobs, another outlet for work because what I do for work is not everything, and though I'm told I'm such a good teacher and I've been teaching for more than half of my lifetime so far, maybe teaching as a career really isn't my Ideal. What is ideal? Can't I do more than one thing in the whole of my lifetime, whatever that may end up being?

Sister sobbed, her voice scratchy and weak. "You'll be okay," I disingenuously predicted even after the death sentence diagnosis of stage IV Lung Cancer. "She turned white" brother said. "If I got the news," he said, "I'd ask 'What should I do next?'"

To be awakened, the Mind cannot observe itself. Nonaction. The past is fixed, the future just out of reach, only the present, and yet it too slips infinitely into the past.

I wake up who am I I am
Do I say this because it's true or because I've trained myself to accept it as true?
Look in the mirror - no drastic changes in appearance I feel yes, I'm still me. Even if I compare me to day with photo of me 10 years ago when I was thinner, no grays, skin smoother, is that me? Mirror I of now answers with conviction Yes! If there is

no stable consistent Self as Buddhism
Taoism oh so true why am I
sure I am Me and not someone
else or no self at all —
Objet petit a Objet petit a
the repetitions games children play,
from a divine/nature/God/
world perspective, as borrowed
from Alan Watts by GOD
do you have even one
original thought? for
essentially stopping time,
reduced to "a single
wondrous instant" let
me borrow that, I love
this

Run Date: Tuesday 9/10 at 6:26 AM

2.01 mi

14'05" pace

137 avg. bpm

28:23 min

25 minutes cardio, peak 154

206 calories burned

4,280 steps

+29 of 30 active minutes

It was still dark at 6:20 when I started my run, but by the end it was nearly sunrise. I decided to forego music so I could tune in to my environment. What are things I might have otherwise missed if I plugged my ears with music instead?

- A frog hopping from the sidewalk to the grass where the—what—escarpment? Levy? begins.
- A man and woman walking their two dogs (I assume they are a couple and the dogs are theirs as this is Suburbia after all).
- A person wearing a fluorescent long-sleeved shirt. She swung her arms and walked rapidly (Did she have a hard time seeing in the dark. I'm probably reading way too much into it. How could I ever truly know what another person is thinking?)
- Amplified, nearly deafening, sound of crickets and locusts chirping.
- Several rabbits hopping across front yards and houses under construction. They froze when I got closer, wiggled their noses, then darted into the unseen underneath fences and bushes.
- Rhythmic movement of sprinkler systems spouting water, some trickling onto parts of sidewalks, will burn off before long.

Mental tape plays on planning, thinking of what I might want to write in my runner's log. Wondering what readers might perceive in what is left unsaid.

Google + you get storm drain; small residential. Wikipedia: "This article is about tunnels that carry runoff from urban streets."

Oh Holly you have such a hard body. you really care about us coach, don't you? Oh yes—with a passion. what is Zen?

Suzuki's book on Zen way; Don't know what distinguishes Zen from other Buddhism's.

I just want peace.

"I'm okay with not everything being black and white" Brother said, big Brother when I left Ju's. "You've broken your vow to Jehovah!" But I was only 14. what is baptism besides getting dunked in water and plunging your nose? Still searching. Reading Tao again; read every morning in Korea to give me spiritual focus for the day. Zen and Tao. Do by not doing, all you have is the present. And yet I keep running.

Run Date: Friday 9/13 at 7:11 AM
2.14 mi.
13'46" pace
137 avg. bpm
@ Siena Park

Ryan jogged with Mei Mei while I ran on ahead. I cancelled the doctor's appointment I had scheduled yesterday for the rash on my side and whooshing sound in my right ear because the rash seems to be subsiding; hopefully the medicine the doc prescribed for me last May works. I had missed Temple College's graduation ceremony that day because I broke out in hives all over my torso. There was a new breakout of Chicken Pox, so I worried that this might be it. But the doc said it didn't look like Chicken Pox and that as far as he knew, there were no cases in Texas. It appeared to be an allergic reaction and so he prescribed me a drug that should clear it up in no time. I still had some of the prescription left, so I took it. It made me so drowsy that at the Downton Abbey movie preview/fashion show this past Wednesday, I nearly fell asleep during the movie. When I showed the rash to my co-worker, she thought it looked like Shingles. It could also be contact dermatitis or several other skin conditions including a flare-up of my Eczema.

I almost skipped running around the soccer field and basketball court at the park because the sprinkler system was on and flooded the sidewalks, but I wanted to get in at least two miles, so I kept on. The toes of my Asics shoes got wet but almost immediately dried from the heat. The Filipino-looking man passed me again and this time he looked east Indian. Why do I characterize people by their ethnicity? I don't know. That's how I identify people on the most basic level. That and whether they seem friendly. Like the kids walking towards the school bus every morning at the same time. They have earbuds on and evade eye contact. So, I dismiss them as typical self-involved teenagers, for whom it's all about scrolling and texting, Instagramming and Snapchatting. I smelled cigarette smoke as I turned the corner to our street.

Never pick ears again no not
even when inner ear itches
never over again reach in
with pointer finger pinky
any finger clean ears with
ear wax cleaner once a
week preferably on weekend

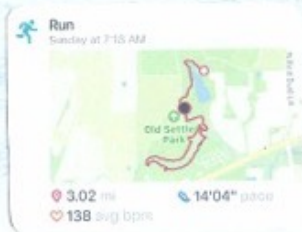
chirp chirp chirp chirp
Don't judge

chirp chirp chirp this is
good

chirp chirp chirp chirp

Nothing

chirp



Run Date: Sunday 9/15 at 7:18 AM

3.02 mi

14'04" pace

138 avg bpm

42:33 min

My pace logged as slower than usual because I stopped to take photos of the hot air balloons sharing the horizon with the moon.

I saw: a group of men and women bowing towards the east; the hot air balloons hovered in that direction too; the same woman with her hair tied in an updo on a leisure walk with maybe her father or grandpa (the last time I saw her she wore a black shirt that said "I know about your fucking unalienable rights"). This morning she wore a black shirt that said "Sovereign."

Can the sun and moon appear
in the sky at the same time?

Dear Sovereign Lord Jehovah
In the name of Jesus

Remember the time, remember, when
Papa raised his voice and Mama
cried in the kitchen and grabbed
a knife threatening to harm
herself, she had spent thousands
on jewelry so they had to file
Chapter 23 Bankruptcy, poor
Papa and his little miserable
business ventures; butane candles,
vinyl chair repairman, Broadway
Security and like father like
daughter I and my: t-shirt
making stint, training for
school photography, alternative
after-school program ideas;
yet stuck teaching
I'm sorry Papa I'm sorry

I want 'juice - with you, said
Mama as she lay dying



The RV park at the other end of the park reminded me of my fleeting interest this past summer in purchasing a teardrop camper. When I thought about having to buy a hitch for my CRV and learn how to maneuver a trailer, I changed my mind. Yesterday, I attended a web seminar on buying a Dream Vacations franchise and becoming an online travel agent so I could work from home. Less than \$10K for the franchise fee and I'm seriously considering making the leap. If I do, I'll need to train for six days to Fort Lauderdale and Ryan could come along and share the hotel room with me. Will I finally achieve my dream of becoming self-employed? At breakfast when I told him about the franchise, he said that since I've run out of things to buy for the house (a bed set, wall mounted tv, recliner, dining room table, decorations for the yard), *there's something you can spend your money on.* Papa bequeathed me and Mandel the greater shares of the Trust in comparison to our siblings. I've been anxious about what to do with the money—the largest sum I've ever had. Papa had always helped us financially. *Papa was generous.* That's what I said when Eric asked us for input as he planned Papa's eulogy. Mandel had good cause for spending his share immediately—a place they could own rather than rent in Seoul. If Papa were still here, he'd probably say something like *Why didn't you save some of your share in case of emergencies?* I wonder if Mandel felt the urge as I do to absolve ourselves of Papa's lifelong hard-earned money. I started with practical household needs (and desires) and money market accounts and cd's. Papa appointed me Trustee even though I told him I wouldn't be the best one: *You know how I am, sensitive, and I'll be a mess, you know, emotionally.* I had to make the final decision on whether to sell the house, but the five of us siblings mutually decided it best to sell rather rent out. I vacillate between the idea of paying part of our mortgage off next year when one of the larger sum certificates reaches maturity or paying off as much as possible of my enormous student loan debt. These are some of the matters that come to me as my body is busy running and my mind wanders freely.

All that jewelry passed down to me. I don't even like wearing jewelry even rings too big for my fingers maybe I'd sell them like hauling all of Papa's clothes to Goodwill Salvador Army loads of 'em in one day could've should've kept some for nostalgic sake? Like his brown corduroy jacket with elbow patches some in dry cleaning plastic from 2000 never wore them again what was he buried in that blue and red sweat suit? No, remember, you and GG chose the outfit he oughta be buried in. He died in sweats.

ERASURE: A SERIES IN PENCIL, WATERCOLOR PENCIL AND INK ON THE ESSENTIAL ERASURE OF OUR FAMILIAL PAST UPON THE DEATH OF OUR PARENTS



Living room circa 70's



4057 pre-room addition



Living room 70's



50 years ago—what? Baby (Me) pre-living room addition

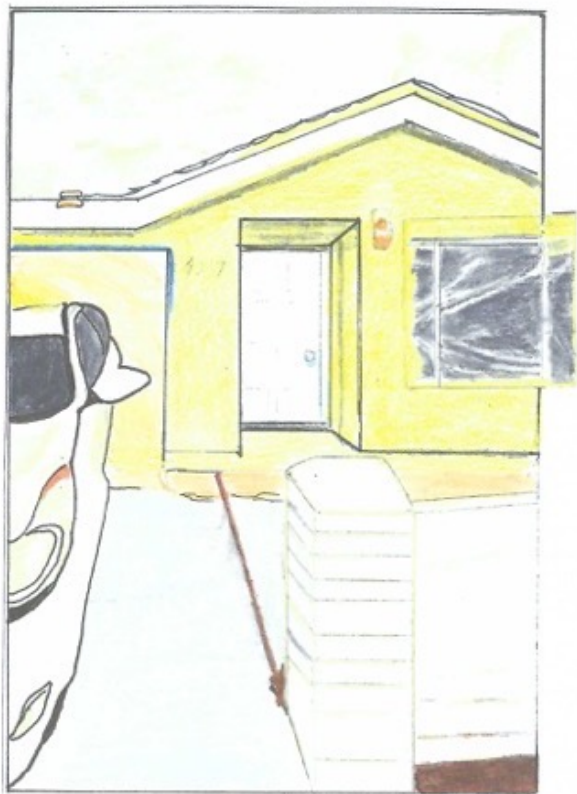
UPON THE DEATH OF
MAMA AND PAPA-OR-
ON THE WILLFUL SELLING
OF THEIR HOUSE?



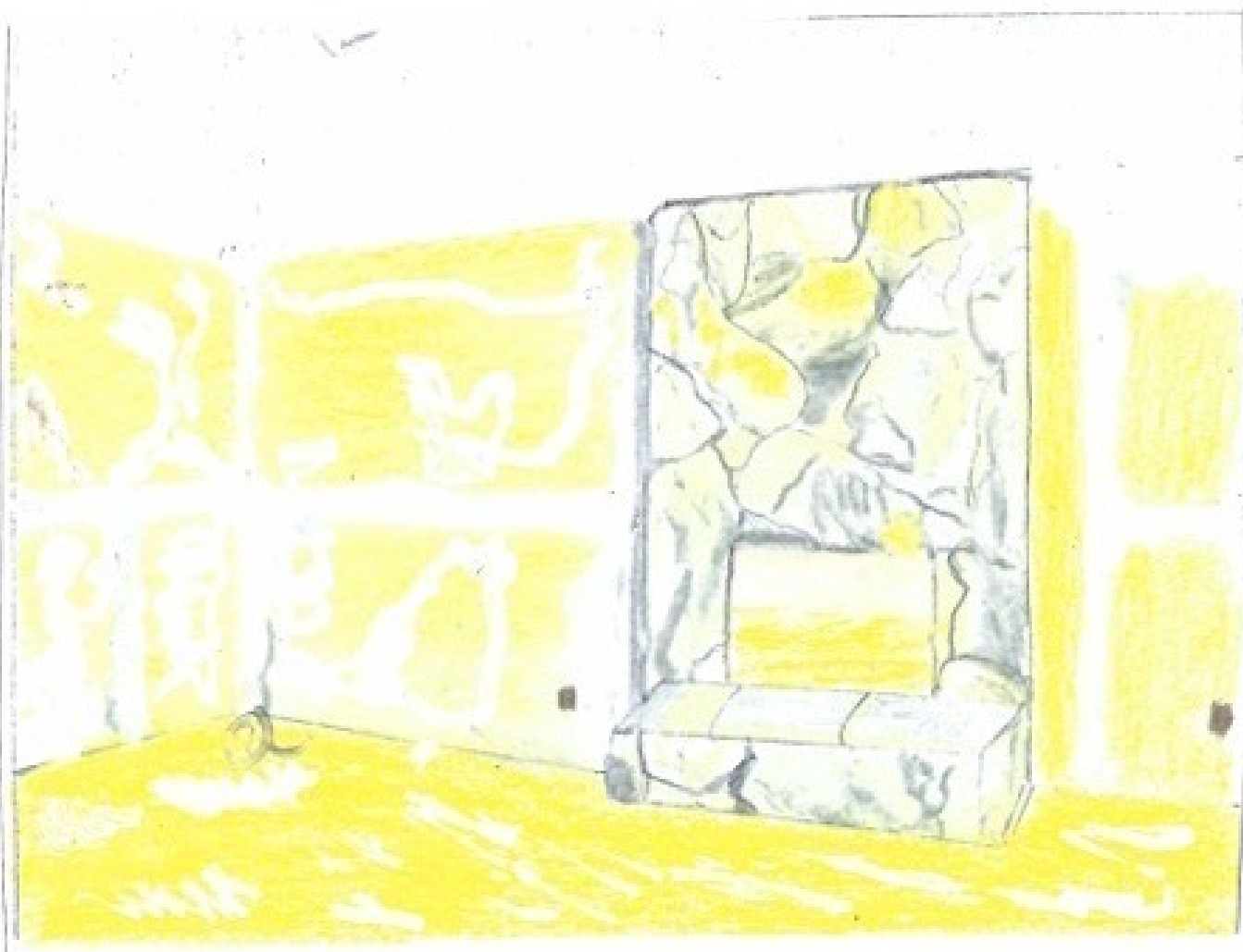
Papa as young father—4057 pre-room addition



New couch, but the
paneling must stay.
Your Mother chose the
70's style panels so
the panels must stay.



4057 UNDER RENOVATION
IN PREPARATION
FOR BEING SOLD
OUT



As I ended today's run, I saw the people at the benches still bowing, and something new for my Sunday run, a group of army reserves grouped together on the lawn wearing dark blue shirts that said "Army" taking orders from a woman wearing fatigues. The four hot air balloons landed on the Northwest side of the park and I glimpsed them between the trees, slowly deflating.

Run Date: Tuesday 9/17

@ about 6 AM if not a few minutes after

Went to the doctor yesterday because I woke up with a rash all over my inner legs and face. The doctor gave me a steroid shot in my hip and now it's clearing up. Frustrating to know that even the doctor doesn't know the cause. Eczema related? Who knows. Yet another brush with troublesome symptoms. Yet I ran today anyway.

I applied to so many jobs the past couple of days after changing my mind about buying a Dream Vacations franchise. I applied to library assistant jobs, ESL jobs, writing and editing jobs. When the chair of English emailed me last night, she said she received a request for recommendation and that she would give me a glowing review but wanted to talk to me first. I called her immediately, and she was so very cool about the whole thing. I told her I was hesitant to write her as a reference considering she is my boss at my current job, but she reassured me she would keep my pursuit of other employment to herself. I explained that I want to keep my options open, that the primary reason for applying elsewhere is my concerns over our going into the 8-week model. To my surprise, she doesn't think it's a good move for Temple College. I also mentioned I'm considering for UNT's MS in library sciences (yet again—a few years ago I nearly did), and she said that that was something she's wanted to do but didn't because everything's going online now. She asked if there was anything she could do to help me to make things better, and of course I thanked her for her kindness. What I didn't tell her is that one of the reasons I'm looking at other jobs is because of the epidemic of mass shootings, especially on school and college campuses. I guess I felt a bit ashamed for what some deem a paranoid perspective, *for how likely is it that you'll be a victim of a school shooting?*

Run Date: Saturday 9/21

The reason for the missing stats is that I Forgot my Fibit; nevertheless, it felt freeing to just run without tracking anything. I should have at least used a timer, though, set to 45 minutes which would have ensured I ran 3 miles since my average pace is about 1 mile in 14 minutes.

What did I see? I saw runners on the outskirts of Old Settlers Park and an event called "Family Comfort" with dozens of tents set up on the grass. Curious as to what this event was all about, I waited till I got home to look it up rather than looking it up on my phone right there and then so as not to interrupt the rhythm of my run. This is what I found online when I searched "Family Comfort Old Settlers Park": Come spend the night in Old Settlers Park! You'll pop your tent around the Lakeview Pavilion, eat dinner, have fun, play games, sit around the campfire eating s'mores, watch a movie in the park and then off to sleep under the stars. Wake up with the sunrise and enjoy breakfast then enjoy the Outdoor Expo celebrating National Hunting and Fishing Day.

More than usual went on today; St. Jude's Walk/Run seems to have already taken place—banners were strewn on the ground and smeared arrows drawn in chalk on the sidewalk. Signs were set up with aphorisms from A to Z related to children's cancer. I saw what appeared to be a dead armadillo (I failed to step closer through the bushes to verify that it was a dead animal and not a bundled-up blanket or grocery bag).

For the duration of the run, I tried not to worry about the return of hives this past Wednesday even after I got the steroid shot. Now I need to see a dermatologist to try and figure out if it is: Lupus, Chicken Pox, Eczema, or something altogether unrelated to skin conditions like—dare I say, Cancer? Another issue on my mind of late is whether to go with Atmosphere Press some two years after the offer was made to publish my story collection, "Giving Up the Ghost," which will be my first book. Now that I can afford it, and failing at finding a traditional publisher, after researching the "flipped model" that the press uses, I'm thinking this is the best way to break out with a first book. The fee covers editing, publishing, cover design, and distribution, while I get all the royalties. My pride tends to get in the way—pay to get published? Yet, I think it's a fair price for the full editorial and publishing package. I digress. Back to my run. I should run without Fitbit more often. I kind of like running without any agenda.

Child dying from Cancer
all wrong and Papa died
from Cancer wouldn't say
right but he lived a
good life long life long
time coming if something
else dont kill him
This too shall pass



Non-Run Date: Tuesday 9/24

Woke up to pee at 3 AM, went back to bed, woke up again at 3:30 from itching on arms and legs. Hives all over legs and arms. Walked back and forth between bedroom and kitchen in a state of shock that after a rash-free weekend, the hives are back with a vengeance.

Called 24-hour nurse:

"Can you please hold while I look up some information...Can you count the rashes?"

"No, they're like, spread out."

"Okay, are any of them the size of at least a credit card?"

"Oh yes, for sure."

"Based on your answers, it sounds like you need to see your doctor within 24 hours. If you are unable to make an appointment to see your primary care doctor, then go to urgent care. Now if you had not called 24-hour nurse line, what do you think you would have done?"

"Well, uhm, I'd probably, let's see, ha, uhm, well I'd wait till 7 o'clock when my primary care office opens and ask if I can be seen immediately, and then, uhm, if not, then I guess I'd have to go to urgent care. Is that the answer you're looking for?" *Are you reading off a cue card right now? Why do you ask what I think I'd do if I didn't have 24-hour nurse line available? I guess you're trying to gauge customer satisfaction.*

Searched for the nearest urgent care in-network. When arrived, just one couple waiting ahead of us; filled out two forms, sat back down, nice to have Babe with me. Closed eyes to try to calm nerves, yogic breathing, hoping I didn't have a fever. Hives now spread all over legs.

Waited, waited, more patients filtered in—an old man with a persistent cough. When he sat down, he scrunched his face and bared his teeth as he scrolled on his smart phone. The sign on the counter said, "Patients are not necessarily seen in order of arrival. When you can be seen is based on several factors: Whether you had an appointment, registered online or on the phone." I just needed to be seen immediately yet without the symptoms that would send me to the ER. A kind of medical limbo. A woman wheeled in in a wheelchair; a young mother with a baby (seen right away because she had an appointment).

When the PT brought us into a room, he took my vitals, asked me the basic questions, and said everything was normal of course except for the hives. No fever, 100% oxygen, blood pressure low. When I finally saw the doctor, I answered more questions and asked some of my own: Could this be shingles? Nope, 100% hives. Can you develop allergies to foods or other things later? Yes, especially with someone like you who has eczema and asthma. Could it be related to menopause? I think I'm menopausal because I'm 50 and getting hot flashes more frequently. Maybe, but not likely. There are not enough studies on the relationship between hormonal changes and the tendency to get hives. I came out borderline lupus years ago...no comment. I have a referral to see a dermatologist next week. A dermatologist would just treat your symptoms the way we will. What you really need is to see an allergist. Assessment: Urticaria: a rash of round, red welts on the skin that itch intensely, sometimes with dangerous swelling, caused by an allergic reaction, typically to specific foods. Also called nettle rash or hives.

Instructions: Take Zyrtec in the morning, Benadryl evening and Zantac 2 times a day. Take Medrol (an oral steroid) for six days (6/day 1, 5/day 2, 4/day 3—you get the picture). No alcohol, wear loose cotton clothing, avoid the sun and sweating. Oh no! No running! I'm a runner, no running, no not until the hives clear up. No drinking! I'm a teacher, and drinking is one of our few stress outlets!

Non-Run Date: Friday 9/27

Still can't run today (I run every Friday morning for at least 3 miles in preparation for the next 10k). I finally have an appointment with an allergist. This latest breakout of hives is finally subsiding three days later. In the interim, the following happened:

- ✓ I was able to attend our first Temple College open mic and perform. I played the part of "Writer" and Brenda played "Writer" in my schizophrenic/split personality mini one-act play. I still had hives on my legs, so I wore a long black dress to cover the unsightliness. We only read excerpts from the play because it would be too long to do all three scenes. I nearly choked up on parts (after all the play focuses on my pre-emptive grief over Papa's cancer). Brenda play-acted weeping in the most emotional scenes whereas I maintained a steady, even, mostly monotone voice (I don't know why). I filmed it only to find that the end part (called "Closure") was cut off because my video camera battery had died. When I re-watched it, I cringed at how the roots of my hair are gray while the rest is brown, even after dying my hair pastel blue last week.
- ✓ Good news! I asked Nick if he runs a table at AWP for Atmosphere Press and he said yes, he does! I asked if he thinks my book might be released by then and he thinks it can happen, so I'm going to register and then sell my book! My heart leaps with joy despite the lingering anxiety looming in the background over the unknown in connection to my hive breakouts.

Run Date: Saturday 9/28

2.52 mi

13'12" pace (even after not having run for a week and still on hive prescription meds)

146 avg bpm

Another day...just breathe

Another day...just breathe

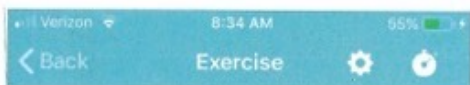
Another day...just breathe

Run Date: Friday 10/4

Swing of Justice
overflowing poop station
sent photo to HOA and demand
they clean it up

Remember you sent us a photo
of overgrown sunflower so
called violation Fuck you
Same day found out
Papa couldn't breathe
without assistance and
that was it

We spoke on the phone one
last time His breathing
stifled his voice weak
and hoarse I wept
into the phone and he
whispered When again
are you coming In two
weeks - don't you remember?
Flew in two days later
Papa gone already
unconscious near death
Remember of course you
remember Check your
messages to retrace
and confirm true time
and date as if sureness
of past could make it better



0.36 mi
141 avg bpm

What's this?
Korean? A holdover from my visit to
Korea in August?

Run
Friday at 7:29 AM



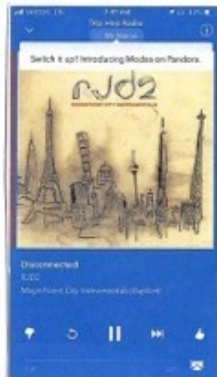
1.14 mi
144 avg bpm

Disregard! Fitbit went
haywire and didn't
record my actual
run data.

Run
Friday at 7:24 AM



'Love Me
Right'



'We are much like humans...
We like to look at beautiful
women... sometimes too human'



'Count back
from 4'

'You'll wake
up and
not remember
a thing'

Run Date: Sunday 10/6

No Fitbit Data

- ✓ "I know about your fucking unalienable rights" woman on another leisurely walk with gramps.
- ✓ Old white dude with camouflage hat who wore a "Come and take it" t-shirt on a previous walk.
- ✓ Coincidence? I bet the beat-up car in the parking lot belongs to the free-thinking gal while the big-ass built-in-Texas truck belongs to the gun-loving Trump-supporting old dude with downcast eyes.
- ✓ Little old lady walking her deaf dog; when we met her last time, she looked amused upon our calling Mei-Mei a jerk.
- ✓ Two bikers in fancy biking gear.
- ✓ Two large dark-chocolate colored identical-looking dogs walking their owners.
- ✓ Male twins walking one big dog.
- ✓ Two late teen girls having their photos taken. One was dressed in a fancy formal maroon-colored dress while the other wore jeans and a white t-shirt. I heard the latter refer to her girlfriend as the one who "never likes the pictures we take." *Good for them being out in the open as a lesbian couple here in suburban conservative Texas.*
- ✓ Two dead frogs flattened on the sidewalk. One was being eaten by a swarm of ants, probably the one we addressed last week as *poor, poor, frog*. I admire ants for their tenacity and simultaneously despise them for their ability to so completely consume and infest. Ants, like other creatures, act on pure instinct. Do we deceive ourselves into thinking we are free?

Run Date: Saturday 10/12

8:03 AM

Temperature: 53 degrees



It isn't that I haven't run since the 6th, but that I did not feel compelled to log anything about that afternoon run when I felt sluggish but ran anyway in the midafternoon heat and only completed 2 miles. Today was my first run of the fall season when we are finally having real fall weather. It was chilly and so I started my run with a hoodie, which I took off about halfway through my run.



Friday 10/18 Day before second 10K

Today is the day before my second 10K and I am taking the day off from running or cross training. Will I beat my time for the first one (1 and a half hours)? I don't really care.

Friday 10/25

Can't do skin allergy test as scheduled because skin over-reacting with hives. I'm writing this as I sit in the waiting room; talk to Allergist soon when he arrives.

They gave me two Xyzal, an epi-pen shot, and a breathing treatment.

- o Take Magnesium oxide (250-500 mg. twice a day to help insomnia)
- o Cool bath with Epson salt/bicarbonate baking soda for itch
- o High risk for outside running (the end of my running stint? Get exercise in other ways? Join a gym? Ugh—that's not why I run).
- o Asthma is bad, so prescribing a special inhaler. Hives slowly subsiding, breathing treatment highly effective in treating asthma.
- o May have a viral infection. Must take Xyzal up to 4x's a day to make me asymptomatic. In a month, get off meds for 5 days again and try skin test again.
- o If hives return, take Xyzal and epi-pen if necessary and get blood test instead of skin allergy test.
- o Apparently, what I felt Tuesday at work (lightheaded, nauseous, nearly fainted) was an anaphylactic event.
- o Diagnosis: hyperactive immune system (a.k.a. Lupus??)

I run because
when I'm running, I'm not having to do that other thing I don't want to do.

When you run, you're in motion. When you're dead, you're not.

I run even when I don't want to—and then I do.

Have you heard the saying, "There goes an hour (or two) that I'll never get back." Well, I never say that about running.

I'd rather run than sink into uneasy slumber with a sick feeling in my stomach over the unknown—Is it allergies? Lupus? Cancer? Chronic Fatigue? See, when I'm running I am moving towards, against, into...

A body in motion is a beautiful thing.

