

# The Van Cortlandt Track Club

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July/August 2006



**2006 Riverdale Ramble in Retrospective  
Firdaus and Yayoi in the Wilds of PA  
Dave King Takes the Measure of the Course  
Chris Lowney Treks in Spain**

# VAN CORTLANDT TRACK CLUB

## 2006 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

# IN THE LOOP

President: Dennis Burns

Vice Presidents: Yuen Na Chun, Diana Cecil

Secretary: Gary Spalter

Treasurer: Larry Barazzotto

By Dennis Burns

### 2005 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Social Directors : Linda Norton, Wanda Bills

Newsletter Editor: Naomi Marcus

Controllers: Jim, Mike, and Pat Hudick

Membership Director : Tony Thoman,

Athletic Director: Ken Rolston, Firdaus

Dotiwala

Public Relations Arnie Gore

VCTC membership meetings are held on the second Saturday of every month at 10:30 am. Club workouts are Tuesdays at 7:00 pm (track), Thursdays at 7:00 pm (trails), and Saturdays at 8:00 am (roads/trails).

The VCTC newsletter is published bimonthly. For changes of address or missed copies, please notify us at 212 795-6460. We welcome all contributions.

Call race times to Jim Hudick:

201 816-8359 or e-mail:to

jhudick@optonline.net or use snail mail,

U. S. Postal Service. When submitting times, please let us know the date, name, distance, and location of the race; your time; age group award (if any); and other club members who ran.

Articles and times for the next newsletter are due September 2. E-mail to neshama44@msn.com.

After two years as VCTC President, I have decided to step down and give the opportunity to others who may be more qualified and/or have more energy and newer ideas as to what direction this club should take. I will remain as President and continue my responsibilities until the end of 2006.

When I first returned as President, I stated that I would be President for only a couple of years, and then step aside for another person to take over the position. There were several things I wanted to accomplish for the club.

We needed to have a reliable indoor location for our monthly meetings. We needed to find a way to get our newsletter out to more people in a less expensive way. We needed to form a liaison with other Community Based Organizations. We needed to attract more members to our monthly meetings. We needed to get more members to take on roles of responsibility in the running of the club.

Now that things are in place, it is time for me to step aside and let someone else take over. We need new ideas and new energy. Only new leaders can supply that. We need you, so please consider sharing your talents with the club. We need a new Secretary and a new President, but only those who have served for 2 years on the Executive Committee can fill those positions. That means that we need to bring people into the Executive Committee, so we will have future Board members. Just like a building, a club cannot exist without a solid foundation. Please consider becoming a part of that foundation.

Continued

In the Loop cont'd

As of today, 2 members have stepped up to fill positions on the Executive Committee. Katherine Callan has volunteered to be Social Coordinator, and share the duties with Wanda Bills. I'm sure her enthusiasm and her good taste will benefit our club. Thank you Katherine.

Jill Staats has volunteered to be Race Director of the Urban Environmental Challenge. Her intelligence and organizational skills will add a special touch to our unique race.

The Riverdale Ramble was a success despite many difficulties and last minute complications. Our thanks go out to Yuen Chun and Gary Spalter for putting on a great race in less than ideal circumstances. Though we greatly appreciate the Riverdale Y for offering us their location to stage our race, it was decided that the location around the "Y" provided some logistical problems, which greatly impacted on the race.

The Board of Directors decided that in order for VCTC to have a 2007 Ramble we will need a new location and a new Race Director. The Board decided that we would explore several options for a venue, but in the interest of sponsorship etc., we will need to have a venue in place by the November Club Meeting. If we do not have a definite venue by that time, we will have to discontinue the Riverdale Ramble. We will also need a Race Direc-

tor by that time, because without a Race Director, we cannot have a race.

SOOOOO, I am putting out the word to all members. Please consider a position as Race Director for the Ramble. This will make you an automatic Executive Committee member. If we have no volunteers for Race Director by November's meeting, the Ramble will become EXTINCT!

On a more positive note, Our X-C Summer Series, run by Fred Daley, and his famous crew of volunteers, is attracting over 100 runners per race. Fred's philosophy is to have a race in which the community people can participate. We see runners varying in age from the Masters runners to High School runners training for the upcoming season, to young children, led by the famous "Rabbits" Team. It's our way of giving back to the community. Our upcoming "End of Season Party" will take place after the last race on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Show up, run the race, and celebrate another successful VCTC race season with your running buddies.

See you on the trails.....

# Coaches' Corner, July 2006

By Ken Rolston

Greetings to all runners old, new and in-between. Here we are in the middle of yet another steamy summer and our thoughts turn to what else, fall marathons! There's a significant contingent of runners headed to Washington D.C., New York and Philadelphia from our club so I thought it would be a good idea to review some of the basic training programs. You can find plenty of them via the New York Road Runners link or Runners World. The one that resonates most for me is a 15-week program devised by Benji Durden which you can find on the Runners World web-site.

Each week consists of 4 basic elements:

- Most important is the long run, which should be done comfortably.
- Next is a speed (track) or strength (hill) run.
- Then a pace or tempo run.

Finally, optional easy runs for the other days. So a sample week would look like this:

Sun- Long run, 2 hrs

Mon- easy 30-40 min

Tues- track workout or hill repeats

Wed- easy 30-40 or rest

Thur- tempo run, 20 minutes easy, 20 minutes tempo (10 K pace), 20 minutes easy

Fri- rest or 30-40 min easy

Sat- 30-40 min easy

Durden believes that it's important to race every 3<sup>rd</sup> week or so. He advises running races instead of doing the long run but I think the long runs are too critical to your success. You might want to run the summer series races to stay race-tested, then move up to longer races as the weather eases. His full 15-week schedule is on the opposite page.

The easy days can be used as cross-training days if you wish. You can also switch to a Wednesday-Thursday long run if you're racing that weekend. Finally, you might prefer to make Saturday the long day since most of the club is available and it sure beats going it alone.

Stuff that may interest only me: Oprah Winfrey's marathon was run in 1994 at the Marine Corps in Washington DC. She was 40 years old and ran 4:29.15. It was my last marathon. I did 3:34.44 the hard way, 1:37  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 2:30 at 20 miles and then death at Hanes Point. Hopefully, you'll all run smarter. I also found an old Marathon-conditioning program from New Zealand's renowned coach Arthur Lydiard. Here's a sample week:

Mon- 15 K at  $\frac{1}{2}$  effort over undulating course

Tues- 25K at  $\frac{1}{4}$  effort over reasonably flat course

Wed- 20K at  $\frac{1}{2}$  effort over hilly course

Thur- 30K at  $\frac{1}{4}$  effort over reasonably flat course

Fri- 15K at  $\frac{3}{4}$  effort over flat course

Sat- 35K at  $\frac{1}{4}$  effort over reasonably flat course

Sun- 25K at  $\frac{1}{4}$  effort over any type of terrain.

That's a mere 160K or 96 miles a week. At that time he was challenged by Australian doctors who felt that this was insufficient since Australian athletes were running 300 K per week !!

## Benji Durden's 15-Week Training Schedule

Week	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1)	2:00 hours	30 min	Track	30 min	Tempo	Off	30 min
2)	2:15 hours	30-40 min	Hills	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
3)	Race (5-10K)	30-40 min	Track	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
4)	2:20 hours	30-40 min	Hills	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
5)	2:30 hours	off	Track	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
6)	Race 10-15K	30-40 min	Hills	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
7)	2:45 hours	30-40 min	Track	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
8)	3:00 hours	Off	Hills	30-40	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
9)	Race 10-15K	Off	Track	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
10)	2:45 hours	30-40 min	Hills	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
11)	Race $\frac{1}{2}$ marathon	Off	Track	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
12)	3:00 hours	30-40 min	Hills	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	30-40 min
13)	2:30 hours	30-40 min	Track	30-40 min	Tempo	Off	20 min
14)	2:00 hours	Off	30-40 min	60 min	30-40 min	Off	20 min
15)	<b>Marathon</b>						

For those of us who have no interest at all in running marathons, we are continuing our track workouts with an eye toward running a halfway decent 5K. All interested parties can meet at 7PM on Tuesday nights at the VC stadium. We run everything from 200's to 2,000's. Occasionally we'll jog over to the back hills to do some character-building hill work. There's nothing quite as humbling as 6 repeats up Cemetery Hill!

Riverdale Ramble 06



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## The 2006 Riverdale Ramble – A Retrospective

By Naomi Marcus

On the day of the 2005 Riverdale Ramble, race director, Yuen Chun, knew that we would have to find a new venue for 2006. Our in-house contact at John F Kennedy High School, Tony Thoman, was moving on to a new position. Kennedy itself was hard to work with. Although Yuen had met with the head of maintenance the week before the Ramble, and although several members of the race committee had visited the school and spoken with the custodians on the Saturday before the race, the custodians were nowhere to be found on race day, leaving VCTC to improvise solutions to a lot of last minute problems.

By January, it looked like we wouldn't have a venue for the race and the club reluctantly voted to cancel the Riverdale Ramble for 2006. The cancellation was announced at the Awards Dinner at the end of January. Fitzgerald and Fitzgerald and Chris Finger, two of our sponsors, told Yuen that they were very disappointed that the race wasn't being held. Most of you know that the Riverdale YM-YWHA stepped up to the plate and offered us a venue after the cancellation was published in the *Riverdale Press*.

Once Yuen knew that the Ramble was going to happen after all, she had a lot to do in a few short months. "It was harder this year because I had such a short span of time. Having such a short span of time made it more stressful," she said. Diana Cecil, Bill Gaston, and Gary Spalter contacted our sponsors to get them back on board. Simon Alicea, who designed the artwork for the application and the T-shirt, has disappeared, but Yuen was able to work with the printer to change the applications, which were ready in time for the Challenge at the beginning of April.

The printing process for the polyester T-shirts is more complicated, and Yuen wanted to have plenty of time to ensure that the print job came out right. The shirts were delivered the Friday before the race -- a nail-biting week late -- but at least they arrived. The T-shirt is something that Yuen takes particular pride in. "I love to see people wearing the shirts," she said. "We spent the money on the T-shirts and people actually wear them." I can attest to that myself, as the Ramble T-shirt is one of my preferred hiking outfits.

Although we missed the JFK track for the Fun Run and the copious parking, the Y had many advantages over JFK. The building was clean, and runners appreciated the shower and locker room facilities (particularly one young lady who attended mass at St Margaret's Church right after completing the race). Unlike the custodians at JFK, the custodian at the Y made himself available to clear construction ladders out the lobby, mop up water that had leaked into the entrance, and find registration tables. Unfortunately, parking was limited, and the race blocked traffic on the streets surrounding the Y, leading to complaints from the local residents. Registration was low -168 runners - possibly because we were competing with 10 other races that day - but the runners enjoyed the race and the challenging course with its downhill start and uphill return. "People said 'we'll be back next year,' Yuen told me."

"It feels good when it goes off well," says Yuen, who has directed the Ramble for 3 years. "The first year, I didn't know what was going on yet. The more I knew, the more I thought about it, and the more I stressed about it."

Ramble cont'd

Will we have a Ramble in 2007? Although the Y was kind enough to offer its facilities, the limited parking, distance from the subway, and difficulties with the local streets posed problems for us. Yuen was planning to meet with personnel from Manhattan College. Relocating the registration site will necessitate redesigning the course once again. Working with institutions limits the dates that we can use. Mount Saint Vincent was willing to offer us the use of their campus this year, but not until the Sunday of the Puerto Rican Day Parade, when the NYPD was unavailable for local events. The Manhattan

College graduation has sometimes coincided with the date of the Ramble.

Yuen wonders if it might be time to rethink the Ramble. "Is it time to put on a different kind of race entirely in Van Cortlandt Park?" she asked. A race in the park would require fewer volunteers, something to consider since many of our most dependable members have moved away from the Riverdale area. The Ramble no longer has the importance that it once had when it was our club's only race. The Challenge and the Summer Series are more manageable, require fewer volunteers and make fewer demands on the community. Maybe it's time to think about a change.

## Join The Friends of Van Cortlandt Park

By Dennis Burns

We all love to run in the "Green Oasis" in the middle of the Bronx. The sound of birds, the aroma of the foliage, and the soft feel of the earth beneath our feet is a welcome change from the cluttered and noisy urban surroundings.

Though Vannie is "Wild", it takes the dedication and hard work of the NYC Department of Parks' staff to keep it in its wild state. Despite their hard efforts, it sometimes seems as though they are fighting a losing battle, especially with budget cuts.

The flats, on close inspection are worn down, and devoid of grass. There are areas where litter and discarded garbage abound, especially after a holiday weekend. The truth is that Vannie needs our help, and we as users of the park need to be vigilant in maintaining it and helping to preserve one of the last natural areas in the Bronx.

It is in this spirit that the "Friends of Van Cortlandt Park" was formed. A dedicated group of volunteers helps to maintain the park, and educate the public, especially school children, to the natural but delicate beauty of this prized ecosystem.

Trails are maintained, evasive vegetation is removed, classes in Environmental Education are given to school classes, and other projects are coordinated by the "Friends of Van Cortlandt Park".

The Friends fought a valiant battle to prevent the Filtration System from being built in this wild place. Though they lost the battle they brought different communities, which surround the park together for a common goal.

The paving of the northern section of the Putnam Line (Railroad Tracks), the building of housing right up against the Putnam Line in Yonkers, and the building of housing in the northern section of the park on McLean Ave. shows us clearly what can happen when the community is not united to preserve our wild ecosystems.

We in Van Cortlandt Track Club are regarded by the FVCP as a valuable ally in the preservation of Vannie. The Friends, have also helped us by cleaning up the trails for the Urban Environmental Challenge, providing student volunteers for the race, and even paying for our portable toilets for every race.

Continued on next page

Join the Friends cont'd

I am asking you to help the FVCP to protect our second home by joining the Board of Directors of this great organization. With leaders like Paul Sawyer, Executive Director; Roscoe C. Brown, Chairman; Eric Seiff, Counsel (Who runs every Ramble and Challenge, and is quite fast for a 70+ yr old), and myself, you will be in good company. The meetings are only 4 times per year, and won't interfere with your training.

The FVCP needs new members to fill the Board of Directors. Now is your chance to make a difference. If you really love Vannie, now is your time to prove it. Please Join the Board of the Friends of Van Cortlandt Park. Saving the planet starts in our own back yard.

If you are interested, contact me.

Thanks,  
Dennis



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# R A C E R E S U L T S 2 0 0 6

**13-May Saturday, am**  
**Son Run 5k**  
**3.1 Miles, 5.0 Kilometers**  
**Wrightsville Beach, NC**

22:56 Annemarie Krothe F28 **1st AG**

**14-May Sunday, am**  
**Carl Hart Mothers Day Duathlon**  
**2 mile run, 10.5 mile bike, 2 mile run.**  
**Heckscher Park, Long Island**

1:07:07 Gabrielle Elissa Popoff F29 **3rd AG**  
 12:21 2 mile run  
 41:33 10.5 mile bike  
 13:14 2 mile run

**14-May Sunday, 8:00 am**  
**NY Jr. League Mother's Day Co-Ed 5K**  
**3.1 Miles, 5.0 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

23:04 Neil Ghezzar M35  
 23:36 Arnold L Gore M65 **1st 65-69**  
 24:37 Ramon Ruiz M66  
 27:37 Edith Jones F66 **1st 65-69**  
 27:35 John Arbucci M48  
 41:09 Ivan Ragoonanan M60

**14-May Sunday, 9:00 am**  
**NY Jr. League Mother's Day Women's**  
**Half-Marathon**  
**13.1 Miles, 21.1 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

2:12:05 Susan R Epstein F62  
 2:19:27 Gilda L Serrano F57

**20-May Saturday, Am**  
**Reason to Run 10k**  
**6.2 Miles, 10.0 Kilometers**  
**Wilmington, NC**

48:20 Annemarie Krothe F28 **3rd Woman Overall**

**20-May Saturday, 9:00 am**  
**Healthy Kidney 10K**  
**6.2 Miles, 10.0 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

46:05 Blas Abadia Jr M51  
 48:52 Neil Ghezzar M35  
 54:51 Luis Cruz M43  
 56:11 Edith Jones F66 **1st 65-69**  
 53:36 Ivan Ragoonanan M60  
 1:01:42 Ramon Minaya M66  
 59:25 John Arbucci M48  
 1:01:19 Fernando Ruiz M74  
 1:01:38 Shelly-Ann Stewart F31  
 1:03:38 Lisa E Fleischmann F42  
 1:16:55 Gilda L Serrano F57

**20-May Saturday, Am**  
**Thailian Hall 10k**  
**6.2 Miles, 10.0 Kilometers**  
**Wilmington, NC**

50:19 Annemarie Krothe F28 **1st AG**

**28-May Sunday, 8:00 am**  
**Long Beach Trophy Run**  
**10.0 Miles, 16.0 Kilometers**  
**Long Beach, Long Island**

1:52:40 Fernando Ruiz M74

**4-Jun Sunday, 9:15 am**  
**New Hyde Park 5 Miler**  
**5.0 Miles, 8.0 Kilometers**  
**New Hyde Park, LI**

33:56 Blas Abadia Jr M51 **PR**  
 47:38 Fernando Ruiz M74

**4-Jun Sunday, 9:00 am**  
**NYRR Anniversary Run**  
**4.8 Miles, 7.7 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

38:28	Ramon Ruiz	M66	<b>3rd 65-69</b>
44:48	Edith Jones	F66	<b>1st 65-69</b>
46:12	Ira A. Weiner	M47	
48:18	Gilda L Serrano	F57	

**10-Jun Saturday, 9:00 am**  
**Circle of Friends New York Mini 10K**  
**6.2 Miles, 10.0 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

57:44	Edith Jones	F66	<b>3rd 65-69</b>
1:03:46	Gilda L Serrano	F57	

**16-Jun Friday, 5:30 am**  
**COMRADES ULTRA-MARATHON**  
**55.2 Miles, 89.0 Kilometers**  
**Durban, South Africa**

11:24:17	Lanny Levit	M55	
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**18-Jun Sunday, 8:00 am**  
**WABC Fight/Prostate Cancer**  
**5.0 Miles, 8.0 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

33:12	Ivan S Mills	M50	
35:19	Blas Abadia Jr	M51	
35:59	Firdaus Dotiwala	M37	
36:38	Paulino Santana	M45	
43:31	Frank J Lindsay	M49	
44:43	Edward James	M59	
46:00	Edith Jones	F66	<b>3rd 65-69</b>
46:01	Ramon Ruiz	M66	
47:53	Ira A. Weiner	M47	
50:09	Gilda L Serrano	F57	
48:41	John Arbucci	M48	
51:10	Fernando Ruiz	M74	
52:41	Ramon Minaya	M66	

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**24-Jun Saturday, 9:00 am**  
**FRNY 8K Run**  
**5.0 Miles, 8.0 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

38:54	Arnold L Gore	M65	<b>2nd 65-69</b>
43:00	Ivan Ragoonanan	M60	
46:53	Edith Jones	F66	<b>2nd 65-69</b>
49:13	Susan R Epstein	F63	
37:23	Blas Abadia Jr	M51	
50:49	Fernando Ruiz	M74	
40:22	Heidi Pabon	F33	

**25-Jun Sunday, am**  
**Farfield Half Marathon**  
**13.1 Miles, 21.1 Kilometers**  
**Fairfield, CT**

1:52:46	Blas Abadia Jr	M51	
2:05:06	Michael J Yorio	M58	
2:05:36	Arnold L Gore	M65	
2:09:24	Adrian Hunt Smith	F52	
2:20:44	Susan R Epstein	F63	
2:31:25	Fernando Ruiz	M74	
2:35:39	Bill Smith	M61	

**27-Jun Tuesday, 7:00 pm**  
**Run Until the Violence Stops**  
**3.2 Miles, 5.1 Kilometers**  
**Central Park, NYC**

23:55	Arnold L Gore	M65	<b>1st 65-69</b>
24:53	Ramon Ruiz	M66	<b>3rd 65-69</b>
26:30	Ivan Ragoonanan	M60	<b>3rd 60-64</b>
30:17	Edith Jones	F66	<b>2nd 65-69</b>
30:44	Susan R Epstein	F63	<b>3rd 60-64</b>

## Rocks, Roots and Dark of Night

### Firdaus and Yayoi Run the Laurel Highland's Ultra (June 10, 2006)

By Bette Clark

Yayoi Shimada was looking for a personal challenge, a way to "push the limit," and, most importantly, a way to qualify for the Death Valley 135 Mile Ultra-Marathon. So she and Firdaus Dotiwala braved the wilds of Pennsylvania to run the Laurel Highland's Ultra, a grueling, technical trail run. The Laurel Highland's Ultra offers competitors a choice of courses: a 50k (31 miles), courses and one covering 70 miles.

To enter the lottery for the Death Valley Ultra, Yayoi needed only a 50 miler (you have to run several of these, or one 100 miler). Unfortunately, when she and Firdaus looked for a June race, all the races on the West coast were full. The East coast does not have many ultra races of this type (Ever wonder why, Firdaus?) So Yayoi decided "why not run an extra 20 miles?" and entered the 70 mile race. (Yayoi, will you add mileage to your first 100 miler, too?). Firdaus took the more conservative course and entered the 50K.

The two mileage hunters left New York very early on Friday morning to drive 6 hours to Johnstown, in the southwest corner of Pennsylvania, near the Ohio border. Even before the race, Firdaus' back "was a little tight," and he and Yayoi stopped frequently en route. After checking in at the hotel in Johnstown, they made their way to the official "Trail Briefing.": Here, last minute instructions about the start and finish, aid stations, and details about the single track, technical trail were shared, along with a pasta dinner. Warnings about bears, snakes and other wildlife in general were issued ("Seriously!!," stressed Firdaus). This part of Pennsylvania has bear sightings often.

One unique aspect of this trail race is that

there are mile markers at every mile along the 70-mile trail— a well established hiking trail. Both races are run along the same trail, (with the 50 K race finishing at the mile 31 marker), with different starting times.

Yayoi and Firdaus both went to the finish area the night before the race, to see for themselves where the shuttle would pick up Yayoi for the point-to-point race, and to figure out the logistics of different start times for the two distances. Firdaus was to drop Yayoi off at 3:30 a.m. for a 5:30 start for her 70 mile race; then get to his place for his 6:30 a.m. shuttle for his 50 K race starting at 8:00. Sounds complicated, eh?

At 5:30 a.m the next morning, feeling cold and nervous, Yayoi joined about 100 other runners, including 16 other women, at the start of her 70 mile race. The race originally had a cut-off time of 18 hours, but very few women made it to the finish in that time, so a few years ago, the cut-off time was extended to 22 hours.

Yayoi did not really feel ready for a 70-mile race—after all, she had only really been preparing for a 50 miler. She had planned to run as many miles as possible in the first 3-4 hours; "the rest would be damage control. "I just might have to drag myself to the finish line," he said.

She soon discovered that the first 3-4 hours (or close to 20 miles) was not really 'runnable.' The trail was exceptionally hilly, with steep ups and downs, full of rocks and roots. It didn't really matter how much effort she put in; there was no way to put in much distance in the 3-4 hour time range she had anticipated. She managed 5 miles in the first hour, (98% of the trail could not be run) and most of this was walking/power hiking. In the second hour, she

Continued on next page

Laurel Highlands Ultra continued

covered about 4 miles. Even at this pace, Yayoi was leading as the first woman, until mile 15.

After about mile 8, the terrain became gently rolling, and she found she could run some of it. But after slightly less than two hours into the race, Yayoi noticed that her body "started to freak out." Her hands had become so swollen that they looked like gloves. While she was drinking water regularly (she filled her hydration pack at every aid station), she hadn't taken any salt tablets, and had swallowed only a sip of Gatorade. Her hands continued to swell until she couldn't even make a fist, and her lower legs also began to swell. She felt very uncomfortable—and worried—as this had never before happened to her.

She had begun the race at daybreak, and so had not needed her headlamp at the start. Despite running in the light of day, Yayoi barely noticed the landscape around her, as she concentrated on moving along the rocky trail. Early on, she became fed up with all the rocks, finding them very difficult to navigate, and taking a few nasty falls (along with almost everyone else). The terrain was particularly difficult for her, she felt, because she is primarily a road-runner, and had had very little experience on such rocky trails. Rocks and roots, rocks and roots, everywhere-- she was fed up with them early in the race: the phrase "nasty rocks" kept playing inside her head. She couldn't complain about the weather conditions though—it was warm, but there was a cool wind throughout the day and the sun was not much of a factor as the trail was covered with dense foliage.

There were 5 major "checkpoint" aid stations along the way, with 3 minor aid stations in between to replenish food and drink. At these major checkpoints, split times were recorded, and volunteers were ready to offer anything she might need, along with a chair for her to

for her to rest briefly. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> checkpoint at mile 31, a volunteer saw Yayoi's hands and told her she needed salt tablets and electrolytes. She took some salt tablets right away and from then on, took electrolytes every hour, but her hands and legs remained swollen. As the saying goes - "if you start to drink water when you get thirsty, it is too late."

Firdaus was supposed to meet Yayoi at mile 47, but missed her because of the timing of his race (Yayoi's race started two and a half hour earlier). This was the aid station with her first "drop bag" where she could get to some spare clothes, shoes and socks, if needed, and any special snacks she had squirreled away (in Yayoi's case, a favorite fig cookie from a New York deli). She was able to get to these things, but was very disappointed Firdaus was not there.

As she approached the 4<sup>th</sup> aid station (and 3<sup>rd</sup> major checkpoint) coming down a big hill, and crossing a highway, volunteers yelled out her bib number (91) so that her drop bag would be ready for her when she reached the station. When she arrived, volunteers shouted "what do you want?" She felt as if she was treated like a queen! Here, she did sit in a chair to rest, but she was still very swollen and had trouble urinating (only once in six hours), despite drinking a large amount of water. Was this a sign of water retention? Not enough salt intake?

From mile 47 to the next aid station at mile 57, Yayoi found the trail easier to run. There were still lots of rocks, but no major hills. Unfortunately, she really started to break down and felt her condition going downhill. Her hands and legs were becoming more and more uncomfortable due to the swelling, the fatigue was becoming overwhelming, and she began to lose her motivation to continue.

But when she reached mile 50, Yayoi realized she had achieved her goal of running 50 miles, Continued on next page

Laurel Highland Ultra cont'd and she celebrated by herself, in the middle of nowhere, by screaming into the wilderness. When she got to mile 57, there was another big check point, and there she rendez-vous'd with Firdaus at last (he finally caught up with her). She was pleased to find another chair, and lots of volunteers offering her things. One volunteer encouraged her to swallow some hot soup, warning her that the sun was going down and it was going to get much colder. Her headlamp was given a final check to make sure it worked before she had to rely on it in total darkness. Best of all, energized by the food, and encouraged by meeting up with Firdaus, she gained her second wind. Before she left the station, he warned her that she would have daylight only up until about mile 62, and so she should plan to get as many miles in as possible before sunset. She arrived at a small aid station at mile 62, where she picked up a grilled cheese sandwich, chips and pretzels, then filled up water, just as the sun was setting (about 8 pm). Yayoi left from the aid station feeling good. Even though her legs were still sore and swollen, she was running. She didn't need her headlamp until about mile 64, where the trail started to get harsh again, with more relentless rocks, now hidden by the darkness. The headlamp didn't light up the path underfoot very clearly: the trees were very dense and it was very hard to see the ground. She had no choice but to start walking again, and from time to time she had to stop to see the trail markers to make sure she was still on the trail.

At mile 65, a woman caught up with Yayoi, and the two of them began to power-walk together: Yayoi found it very comforting to have company, and the two women encouraged each other as they walked and talked. At about mile 66, a man who seemed to be lost, wandering in the dark, joined them. Even

though he kept trying to run in front of them, he fell often, and despite his effort, didn't seem to be getting anywhere faster than the two walkers. Eventually, he joined the two women—and then, in another mile, another person joined them. So now Yayoi was with 3 other people, making her way in the darkness over the last miles.



As they passed each mile marker, they counted down the miles together, walking and talking, hearing cars going by, knowing that they were getting closer to the highway and the finish. Yayoi was grateful for the company and also for the glo-sticks that lighted up the mile markers and tricky, easy-to-miss turns. Volunteers were stationed at some of the turns (standing there for 8-10 hours) to help direct runners. As Firdaus mused, "the volunteers are the life blood of these races--without them there simply would be no race."

### Laurel Highlands Ultra cont'd

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From the finish line, Firdaus could see the tiny beams of light from the headlamps through the dense trees, and he and others waiting cheered as the lights grew closer. Only about 1/2 mile from the finish line, Yayoi could hear people shouting and see bright lights, as if there was a big party: screaming back at the voices was "the best part of it." At that point, she was just so glad to get it over with. She actually felt pretty good, physically, except for her hands and a relatively deep gash she had on her shin which she suffered when she took one of her several spills.

Yayoi completed the 70 miler, her first race over 50 K, in 17 hours, 14 minutes, and was the 4th woman overall. She was one of only 6 women to finish under that 18-hour cut-off time. Her trophy, which was described in the race literature as "unique," was a wooden figure in the shape of the stone mile markers; it was engraved with a simple '70.' Yayoi's time of 17 hours, 14 minutes, will be added later.) Firdaus finished the 50k in 7 hours, 16 minutes, but he did not get a "unique" prize or any other trophy for his 50K finish. The race planner's excuse was that this was the first time the 50K had been run as a race and they had not planned a trophy. His race was obviously a "side show" (Firdaus, next time just run the longer distance, eh?)

Firdaus had not felt well-trained for the 50K distance, but he knew he could finish because of his experience with other ultras. He enjoyed the trails, stopping to take in the spectacular views of the valleys, on such a clear day. He ran about 8-10 miles of the race with a guy who was getting ready to run the Vermont 100 mile ultra-marathon, and he enjoyed talking with him and giving him tips based on his experiences in that race. He found that he focused less on his own discomfort because he was preoccupied with Yayoi's race and concerned about how she was doing—he knew that this was a difficult trail trace, and while he had many tough ones under his belt (such as the Escarpment, a technically more difficult trail, but less than third the distance), Yayoi had much less experience with these types of trail races. He was also disappointed to have missed her at mile 47... Congratulations to both Yayoi and Firdaus for their ultra races, and all the best for many more to come...

Check out race details at [www.laurelultra.com](http://www.laurelultra.com)

For **more news about VCTC ultrarunners**, read about **Olga Varlamova's** latest encounter with the Western States 100 Miler at <http://runmoretalkless.blogspot.com/>



## Should the South County Trail be completely paved?

Bette Clark sent me this as a public service announcement. How do we feel about this? We runners were not keen about the paving of the old railroad tracks. The asphalt extends to the city line now, but there's still a 2 ½ mile stretch in Yonkers that's unpaved. Is there any point to keeping it unpaved, or should the trail be paved all the way?

### Now is the time to let our voices be heard!

The South County Trail project is in the final stages of construction. A completion date is expected in the spring of 2007. This trail will be part of a 36-mile greenway that runs the entire length of Westchester County from the Bronx border to the Putnam County Line. Built on the bed of the Old Putnam Rail Road Line it provides a smooth, flat path free of vehicular traffic. It's perfect for cycling and other foot traffic and connects many County Parks along the way. This is a wonderful recreational asset to the county.

**However the Westchester County Legislators have voted NOT TO CONSTRUCT a 2.5 mile section of the trail in Yonkers.** This "missing link" isolates and restricts usage of the trail. There is no practical reason why the trail cannot be built in this section. Technically it is an easy section to build and the funds have already been voted on and allocated toward construction.

The "Missing Link" is in the 16th Legislative District represented by Andrea Stewart-Cousins. Write, e-mail or call the county legislators and voice your opposition to this dead-end policy.

Eliminate the Yonkers Missing Link: Voice Your Support for a complete South County Trail

Chair: Jose Alvarado

[Alvarado@westchesterlegislators.com](mailto:Alvarado@westchesterlegislators.com) 914-995-4070

Committee Members:

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Suzanne Swanson [Swanson@westchesterlegislators.com](mailto:Swanson@westchesterlegislators.com) 914-995-2807

Or write the any of the above at:

Westchester Board of Legislators

800 Michaelian Office Bldg.

148 Martine Avenue

White Plains, NY 10601

# GO THE DISTANCE

BY DAVID KING

Late this past winter, members of the VCTC Secret Society, who were eager to relegate the seemingly unwanted task of measuring the new Ramble course, cornered me. After a lot of arm-twisting and threats to my wellbeing, I agreed to do it. All I could do was promise accuracy and to throw yet another wrench into the cogwheels of the beleaguered Ramble. However, in the meantime, taking my new job too seriously, I began an assault on some of our(VCTC) more sacred distances.

My first self-made order of business was the Environmental Challenge. Knowing from the beginning that this action would only produce pain and controversy, I proceeded with the enthusiasm of a distance runner in the middle of obsessive-compulsive behavior. My result: HERESY. The course measured in at (forgive me Dennis) **5.739** miles. I had used the wheel so I knew this to be very accurate (I implore that the hit squad not be sent out).

Then came the Ramble. I don't think anybody had any preconceived notions about this one. Everybody was just hoping our team would "luck out" and it would be a simple 10k. UH-UH. **6.05** miles the way it was laid out. Unfortunately, getting that extra seventh of a mile was to be deemed impossible by the powers that be, since that would have meant either moving the start/finish lines up to Skyview, crossing Riverdale Avenue two times at the race's beginning or moving the turnaround point back down Johnson Avenue...a logistical nightmare for the cops. So the course was declared sound at 6+ miles.

Next task: the Summer Series 5k. After much toil (riding a road bike over the X-country course), the numbers were in. **Three point zero two** miles for what had been the course in the past. So I kept going and got a true 3.1

mile reading, moving the starting line back about one hundred forty yards, to the dismay of everybody.

Not having had enough, I was off to the hallowed Saturday morning runs. There were rumors of 8.8 to 9.5 miles for the longer run and 4.9 to 5.5 for the shorter. First the shorter run: from tennis courts, VCP parade ground (the flats) to the wooden pillars where one makes a left to get to the Putnam Railroad bed—1.61 miles. From this point up the RR track bed (now partly paved) to the makeshift bridge just into Yonkers—another 1.80 miles. From the first mentioned barriers back to the stadium--0.31 miles. That makes a grand total of **5.52** miles for that run.

For the longer jaunt: tennis courts to barriers—1.61 miles. Barriers to the start of the Aqueduct (where that homeless biker has claimed squatters' rights) —0.82 miles. The length of the Aqueduct: 2.68 miles (sorry folks). Down to the Tibbetts park drive, around and to the Putnam RR track bridge another 1.80 miles. In from there (as in the short run) — another 2.11. Grand total here: **9.02** miles. **9.0** to compensate for tire deflation, humidity and flattening of the earth's poles since I did the measuring. This puts to rest the distance estimates by runners based on times of runs and the even less accurate GPS systems. But this bearer of the bad news does have a saving grace: **I HEARBY DECLARE BY THE POWERS VESTED IN ME BY GOD, SAINT DENNIS, SAINT FRED, AND SAINT YUEN THAT ALL DISTANCES RECORDED IN RUNNING LOGS UP TO THIS TIME (06/26/06) ARE GRANDFATHERED AND NEED NOT BE CHANGED TO REFLECT THE NEW AND IMPROVED MEASUREMENTS! AMEN.**



## A Summary of Dave's Measurements

<u>Course:</u>	<u>Distance</u>
Urban Environmental Challenge	5.739 Miles
Riverdale Ramble	6.05 Miles
Summer Series 5K	3.02 Miles*
Putnam Line Trail	5.52 miles
Aqueduct trail around Tibbetts Brook Park and back via the Putnam Line	9.0 miles

\* Has been redesigned to equal 3.1 miles.

## **A Summer of Pilgrimage**

By Chris Lowney

By the end of September, 2006, there will be a new record in the VCTC record books—fastest time for a 500 mile journey across Spain while carrying 20 pounds of stuff on your back.

VCTC's ultra-marathoners like Firdaus or Olga could churn through the course in five days, if they could maintain the pace that earned each one a "buckle." And I calculate that Bill Gaston, at his marathon-best pace, would finish in exactly two days.

I, on the other hand, hope to finish the route in roughly *28 days*, provided that my 48-year old body parts hold out. I'll be walking between 15 and 20 miles a day, tracing the medieval pilgrim route from the French/Spanish border in the Pyrenees to the tiny town of Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain, where, according to Christian tradition, the relics of St. James the Apostle are buried. Pilgrims have been coming to this town for more than a millennium, and thousands walk or cycle the route annually. Some do it for spiritual enrichment, though many for the physical challenge or simply to escape from daily life's chaotic pace in order to see a beautiful part of the world at a slow pace.

The route is virtually straight, very well sign-posted, and served by an extensive network of low-cost hostels that offer pilgrims a bunk and

a shower that, with luck, even runs hot water. Restaurants en route typically offer a "pilgrim menu" each night, serving a full meal and Spanish red wine for roughly \$10—not even Short Stop can match that!

So, all in all, I can't pretend this will be the most challenging trek ever attempted. After all, I'll be doing it in Iowa hiking shoes; medieval pilgrims wore crude sandals or walked bare-foot. My sister and brother-in-law, Maureen and Tony Thoman, have, like lots of VCTC members, pushed their limits of physical endurance in marathons. My main challenge, on the other hand, will probably be to be to avoid head lice from hostel pillows and to sleep through the snores and belches of fellow pilgrims.

I hope that VCTC members will join me on my month-long trek---I don't mean *literally*. Unlike Maureen and Tony, who are quite sociable, I'm an irascible loner, and 30 days with me would not be a very pleasant experience for either of us.

But you can join me *figuratively*, because I'm doing the trek walkathon-style. With Maureen's help and support from Tony, we've set up a little non-profit to take pledges for each mile I walk. Every dollar we raise will go to education and healthcare in the developing world: I am paying all my own expenses

Pilgrimage cont'd

for the trek, so none of your money will subsidize my plane tickets to Spain or my new lightweight backpack. Instead, the money will go to places like St. Aloysius high school, located in one of Africa's largest slums (Kibera, in Nairobi, Kenya). Like some new, smaller public high schools in the Bronx, aspiring students to St. Al's need to pass an entrance exam. But St. Al's students have another "qualification": every one of them is an AIDS orphan.

I'm walking across Spain, and if I get tired or fed up, I'll take a bus or stay in a hotel. These kids, journeying through life without

parents in one of the world's poorest countries, are humanity's real heroes. I would be honored if some VCTC members or your friends would help me to help them. You can find out more about the trek and our beneficiaries by checking the website: [www.pocf.org](http://www.pocf.org) Or, feel free to call my sister Maureen or brother-in-law Tony to learn more. I'll be maintaining a blog during the trip whenever I find towns with internet cafes. Please check into the website starting on August 25 to see how I'm doing, and please spread word to any of your friends and colleagues who might support us with a pledge.

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