

Good to Be Back

Category: Exercise

written by William Cayley | July 6, 2021

Running is a great start to the day, but sometimes I feel overwhelmed and struggle with motivation. Most mornings, an energizing run gets me ready for the day. On not-so-good days, I start tired, and it takes more coffee than usual to get myself going.

After my first marathon in 2008, I ran the first of many Grandma's Marathons in 2009. That first 26.2 mile tour of Lake Superior's north shore was a sweltering fiasco, but I made it to the finish in Canal Park and realized I had started an annual tradition of visiting the north shore each June. I continued running year-round for fitness, but added a spring tradition of increasing mileage to be ready for Grandma's by summer. Ten-milers several days a week punctuated by weekend long-runs became the routine. I felt fitter, and my kids reminded me I was a better dad when I ran.

Some folks took advantage of COVID lock-downs to increase their workout time. That was not quite me. The chaos of COVID was compounded by the stress of a fire: our house burned, and we had to move out during renovation. Many mornings, it was a struggle just to get out of bed. While many ran virtual marathons in 2020, I did not. Exercise became more work than it had been in a long time.

By early 2021, the pandemic seemed more in hand, and we were back in our own home. Grandma's was slated to be "for real," and I signed up.

Race day dawned clear, sunny and comfortably cool. Though crowds were smaller, the starting line bustle felt familiar.

With the national anthem, more than a few of us in the starting corrals choked up. The National Guard flyover seemed more gripping than usual. The volunteers at each aid station kept letting us know "we're glad you're back." I teared up when I saw my family at Mile 12, and when I high-fived Elvis at Mile 17. There was no bag-piper at the top of Lemon Drop Hill, but Canal Park was a sight for sore eyes and legs. Rounding the final corner to the finish, I ran with eyes half closed, dripping with both sweat and tears.

Crossing the finish line, I did not care that this was one of my slowest marathons ever. I had just run the first major US race since COVID, and it felt good to be back.

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