

The Long Run:  
A Phenomenological Description with Dialectic Verse of a Sport Odyssey

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by

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## AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION

This dissertation of James Edward Wharton, submitted for the degree of Ph.D. with a major in Education and titled " The Long Run: A Phenomenological Description with Dialectic Verse of a Sport Odyssey", has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

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Margrit von Braun.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation starts out somewhere in time. A phenomenon exists outside of Plato's cave. There is a gymnasium full of naked curiosity seekers hoping they can qualify for the next event. All seeking to perform at what they do best. Somewhere between metaphor and true meaning lies an interpretation. It just so happens that for this writer it started about the time of his conception. "In the beginning;" happens to be the first phrase you will encounter. Now to some that would cite a biblical reference. In this dissertation it shall be more evolutionary. From the first emergence on the floor of the stadium to the last breath...as death wins the race It evolves, and it crawls, and it walks, and finally it runs. It gets up like a new born fawn and wobbles a little, falls foreleg first, struggles a little more until it finds its own set of "Deerlegs..." and off it goes. Once away from the mother's care it just runs, and it runs with a reckless abandon, scattering lies, and stealing away every moment that can be had. Leaving in the trail, bits and pieces of broken dreams, ill-timed indiscretions – and spent endorphins...yet, always looking ahead to the next adventure, the next moment, and the next opportunity where the risk only aids in the pursuit of experience.

Thus this study is the use of phenomenological method and dialectic verse to describe a personal sport odyssey. The study will be: A descriptive reflection of self through sport and a description of the phenomenological experience by other sojourners in sport., plus a discussion of the phenomenological experience

The above framework is due to the fact that most of my life has been spent running. To, from, away, into, around and finally 'through the finish' of what I have titled: "The Long Run." A journey through the Sport World - A mantra for a life gone by. A life spent acculturated into

what I have so identified as the Sport World. Does this place exist? I believe it does. Should you be interested enough to seek some enlightenment on this topic then I welcome you. And why should you ask Why assign this many pages to a much used metaphor like” The Long Run.” What credence does it still possess...a worn out phrase who has lost its legs. How much meaning can be left in this holistic bit of rhetoric? What in the world does it have to do with reality? The phenomenon here as I will attempt to describe it - has everything to do with the reality, the experience of one’s (Gym’s) journey through a life conceived, matriculated in, and surviving on its own. Often running alone until near fatigue or heat prostration brings me to my knees. A vivid reminder to the fate that waits should I not re-infuse with more of something else...something new.

By force of will and the absolute surrender to the one who brought me here. I provide.  
This is a look at my run through the finish.

As I lay dying<sup>1</sup>...

My addictions laced tight.

I cannot sleep

I see no “white light.”

So bury me now,

but don’t cover my feet.

The race is still on...

I’ll die to compete.

Left with no time...

It all seems in vain.

This run to the end...

Dreams of easing the pain.

I'm still in this thing...

The line is so near.

This life is to die for.

For it's not finishing...I fear

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<sup>1</sup> A play on words based on the work of Faulkner (1930).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Jim you need this program” those were the first words Dr. Sharon Stoll spoke to me after my initial meeting with her back in 1992. I came in search of a life after coaching...I had just left a Division I Head Coach position for philosophical differences with the newly self-appointed Athletic Director. I needed something to ease the pain and I believe I had found it. The irony was, it was necessary for me to still remain coaching while attempting to complete my studies here at the University of Idaho. To Coach Mike Keller I will always be grateful. “Sport ethics” he sounded off, “there is none!” Yet we spent the following next five years together coaching track and field.

The process of seeking an academic doctorate and coaching at the same time presented unique problems for me. And this I found to be extremely difficult. The, “once a coach, always a coach” adage was still stuck to my shoes. After my first unsuccessful attempt to understand the impact the Sport World had on a persons life through quantitative analysis, I reversed field and headed for what I knew best. I ran away and was just about to disappear into that stigma known very well by those who have also been labeled: **ABD**. The shame of having done all the course work and not completing the dissertation...All But Dissertation. I have many colleagues who are now selling real estate and life insurance due to this condition. It did not help that for the majority of my life, I have struggled with a series of diagnosed learning disabilities. To which I will add here and now: Avoidance and procrastination due to self-denial and ego only magnifies the problem. It was a sad day in the classroom when I realized how difficult / deficient I was. It became clear I needed to learn how to learn...again. Dr. Stoll called me an apostle and that in turn makes her the Messiah

Somehow I got caught by the dream catcher placed outside the office door of Dr. Karen Guilfoyle. She was at the time the only resident qualitative educator on campus. She soon became my qualitative research mentor and advisor. Through her tutelage I learned of a new community of researchers, individuals studying what she referred to as that stuff under the covers, behind the doors and in the streets. For the next three years I spent getting in shape for a run in the qualitative world of research.

It was a slow start but a smooth transition was made. Thank you Karen for letting me go outside myself and come back to share within the circle you had created for all of us.

Dr. Stoll again came to my rescue. Jim you can't do both you can't coach and expect to finish your long run in time. I told her of my adventures in Qualitative research and would like to keep going in that direction..."Jim you're driving me nuts. "You need to read this stuff," and she handed me a reading list on the philosophical principles of the phenomenological method of study. And off I went and what is ahead is the result of years of reflective description and lived experience.

Dr. Jennifer Beller is somewhat of an unsung hero to me. She, after all is said and done, stuck by me. Her position on my committee was the one I sought the most after removing her no less than three times. Her numerous philosophical tailgating of my project kept me one step ahead – I can only acknowledge her competitiveness which I underestimated. There had to be a place on this committee for her. There is no one else who I have been more passive aggressive with than her, if not rude to, and I hope someday she can learn to forgive me. Her knowledge of statistical method and ability to communicate her direct feelings to me leaves me smiling.

This whole process of writing a dissertation can not be accomplished without support and to Dr. Mike (Kinziger) I owe an extraordinary amount of paddle time! His enthusiasm and support for me as an athlete, a veteran of the sports world culture, and his understanding of where I was coming from, lent itself to me during those times when I was stuck on my own. His understanding of travel into new areas of the educational wilderness and acceptance of my phenomenological perspective will always keep me on his trail, and in his wake. This man's work ethic and concern for his students is unmatched.

Finally, to those who shared with me their stories, their personal experiences, and their passion for sport. They are referred to as sojourners in this dissertation. Through the phenomenon of propinquity you have all redefined the one thing we all share – a lasting love for the experience. You have saved me from myself...I thank you all. You have all been a part of this... running, stride for stride with this man's addictive madness to finish the course...I share in this last gasp.

And a last shout out to those involved with Dr. Stoll and her center for sport ethics here at the University of Idaho - I salute...and treats will be forthcoming. Had it not been for you, I would probably be hunting wild game trying to survive until the next meal could be had. Thank you for putting up with Gym. For it is like any good organization – the work performed and the quality of the content is only as good as those who keep it running, and Dr. Stoll knows how important you all are to the program.



## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is for all of those who have heard the sound of the gun and knew the race was on and when it was over no matter what or where the place – you were never satisfied...and to that I say; forget the days and remember only the moments...for in The Long Run all that matters is that you realize; you are nothing more than an experience!

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## FOREWORD

A philosopher is that man, who constantly experiences, sees, hears...suspects, hopes, and dreams extraordinary things; who is struck by his thoughts as if they came from the outside, from above and below, as a species of events and lightning – flashes peculiar to only him. A philosopher: alas a being who often runs away from himself but whose curiosity always makes him “come to himself” but again. Nietzsche, (1998).

I took the run slowly at first, you'll see  
Through long nights and far into the day  
Little steps and long strides, gathering speed  
It begins right here at the starting line  
Until the day my defense set me free  
When all is written, all said and done  
I wish you the best in your own long run  
Behold the “smiling turtle” that waits, to greet thee. Gym (2004)

“He who does anything because it is custom makes no choice. - John Stuart Mill

## CHAPTER ONE:

### To The Long Run

In the long run we shape our lives and we shape ourselves, The process never ends until we die, and the choices that we make are ultimately our responsibility. – Eleanor Roosevelt (2004)

The true mission of American sports is to prepare young people for war. – General Dwight D. Eisenhower (2003)

#### *Description of Phenomenology*

Phenomenology is one of the latest methodological attempts in the history of philosophy to acquire knowledge and truth of reality. (Zaner & Inde, 1973) As the foundation for existential thought, the phenomenological method is a product of Edmund Husserl's<sup>2</sup> revolt against the positivistic and empiricalistic philosophies at the turn of the twentieth century. (Ayer, n d) Husserl argues that the positivists were products of the natural sciences and, as such, their

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Husserl (1903) emphasizes that philosophic truth proceeds from an understanding of “consciousness of self and our relations to the world” and not simply a reduction to empirical fact or generalization (Spurling, 1977). However this is not to say that Husserl does not believe in the scientific method, for he declares that his philosophy is a “rigorous science”. Even though it is not a science of objects or a science of the subject, it is a science of experiences. It is a study of phenomena more fundamental than logic or science to the very foundation of the structure of conscious experience (Thevenez, 1962, p. 41). In his later works, Husserl contends that the “crisis of European science” is due to the neglect of Lebenswelt on the life-world. Lebenswelt is the encompassing world of our immediate experience which can only be recovered from the world via the phenomenological method. Husserl died before he could more fully develop the concept of Lebenswelt but, he did postulate that phenomenology, as a rigorous science, is a technique for shaping and developing meaning out of experience in the Lebenswelt. (Husserl, 1923).

methodology presupposed a direction and end result. Phenomenology lets one get to the experience itself without suppositions – presuppositions. Written in first person, the phenomenological experience is subjective, objective, and subject-object. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964)

*Personal Description: The “I” of Experience*

The following is a descriptive, phenomenological account of a 40 year-old odyssey. It is a study in precognition (sans presumption) and the many questions it raises. It is more than just an emotional retreat into one’s sport “nostalgia, days.” It is more than just a re-creation of a journey into the mysterious, or a creation set to the tone of one’s past encounters within a world just now realized. It is what genuinely “lies inside.” This paper, this discourse...this project is not about passive feelings and non-experienced perceptions (Husserl, 1923) – it goes beyond just an aesthetic perception. It is active, it is intentional, it shall be all encompassing. I am not a passive recipient here, nor do I wish for the reader to be! In my world the only way to be a ‘knower’ is to also be a ‘doer’ - to have lived the experience, to have participated in the phenomena. Gabriel Marcel put it very succinctly: “To only feel is not enough, to feel is not to receive...one must but to participate in an immediate way.” (Marcel, 1950, p. 60)

Feeling for some can be a mystical experience. When one engages in an experience one can feel both physically and emotionally the content. I would add here that this is based on one’s limitations or knowledge of what the experience has left. It is looking to into the experience. There is a suggestion that to truly feel the total experience, one must understand the concept of flow or the peak performance ideal (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Some have said that the moment one truly feels - one with the experience, a mystical element is realized. For some this may be

easily realized. For others they find no truth or much difficulty in finding their experiences mystical.

If there is to be any form or function to “all this” it would be: As I know it, as I have experienced it, and how I choose to describe what takes place “in the moment,”

*In the Moment*

For the most part of my life, I have had no time for experiencing. The world bores me with its ideas and thoughts that do not allow for one’s active participation in the entire going on! I, for one, cannot wait for things to happen. For a spontaneous event is much more in tune with my nature...in fact I seek out such activity. There is no such thing in my life as a plan, never was...and to date it, or better yet the “I-Thou” (Buber, 1970)<sup>3</sup> has not changed. I stand on the edge and savor the thought of full flight, a fast dash down, or a long climb to the top. It does not matter which way I go – for I choose not to choose... I often go over the edge just to bring back a new experience – gain knowledge – stand with the risk. This basic behavior requires me to not contemplate my fate - but allows my fate to be confronted. Whatever it may be, I encounter along the way provides me with my composition, my spiritedness. If it is not genuine, there ceases to be any sacrifice involved... and without risk, and sacrifice - I am not whole, and the world, well – I no longer relate! It is essential that I maintain my mental sovereignty... that I live in my moments... I have no choice!

The following phenomenological perspective is a study in human experience. The following passages have lessons not only for those who were involved but also provides some

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<sup>3</sup> Buber (1970). Jewish existentialist, who wrote about the difference between the I-it experience to the I-Thou experience. The former is about objective experiences; the latter is about subjective experience.



awareness for anyone who cares to remember their days in the world of their sport experience...  
for Sport as I will define: "Has and is a culture unique unto itself."

Edgar Cayse (1990) speaks on the development of the self: In the spiritual aspects (of life) everything is good. As the individual works out his destiny by application of mind, his experiences become bad or good, depending upon his choices.

This statement or view says so much when it comes to preceding conditions. Those elements of either fate, destiny, coincidence that not only precede the initial thought or condition, but also motivate one into a behavior pattern, a sub-conscious survival plan.

Briefly, in response to Cayse's (1990) statement above - as to the part about choices, I have much to say on the matter of choice in one's human experience. Regrettably, this is not yet the time or the forum for that topic. I will, later, provide some very introspective words on choice. For now I will say this: "Making choices is no proof of one's virtue!"

*Phenomenology: To The Things Themselves*

I am an Existential Sport Phenomenologist: That's what I've come to call myself. Yet just recently someone called me a 'philosopher coach.' It is always good to have a title. A title gives you a separate identity with which you can use in the case of an emergency. This is especially important if you should want to make 'far out' comments that may tend to offend others. I have been called many things in my life, but for the sake of this academic exercise...Sport Phenomenologist will do - I will stick with that. I combine the two for a very good reason; in many respects I represent both of these philosophical views, and or positions,

and find it hard at times to separate one from the other. Existentialists<sup>4</sup> call for reflection on the “lived” or ongoing experience. Hence they often employ phenomenology as the method by which they come to know truth and reality (Thomas, 1972).

To understand all this one must be able to conceptualize the moment as an experience and this can be difficult. In scientific circles the attempt to explain such experience usually involves using the body alone...ala using a pure physiological analysis or studying the body / object as a movement But this is not the way of the phenomenologist. An example of which I would like to now provide.

A mountaineer about to set out to achieve a difficult peak makes careful plans and pays close attention to things like his ropes, his shoes, his pitons and other items of equipment. He concerns himself with the preparation of his body for the task. He is cognizant and actively aware of his body. However as soon as he begins the climb, all these thoughts vanish. “He no longer thinks of his shoes to which a short time ago he gave such great attention: he forgets the stick that supports him while he climbs...he ‘ignores his body’ which he trained for days beforehand...For only by forgetting in a certain sense, his body, will he be able to devote himself to the laborious task that has to be performed.” What remains, what is, is only the mountain. He is absorbed in it; his thoughts are completely given to it. And it is because he forgets his body that the body is able to realize itself. When the body itself is forgotten – “ It is only the behavior, the act, the movement that explains the body.” (Gerber and Morgan, 1979, p. 65).

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<sup>4</sup> Existentialists chose phenomenology as a method to describe their radical experiences. Existentialists can be divided into both positive and negative schools. Existentialists are known for specific themes of choice, angst or dread, and the blind experience. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964)

Running. The act of running is like other forms of movement. In itself a moving body is always subject to anatomical and physiological analysis. To the phenomenologist all description (though appreciated) is transcended beyond the movement - it becomes the moment that becomes most significant – the moment that through such a self awareness becomes as has been described... a pure experience.

Much of what I will be referencing throughout this dissertation comes from one of the first ‘official’ publications I ever read on the subject of sport philosophy...*Sport in a Philosophic Context* by Carolyn E. Thomas. Carolyn (1972) was gracious enough to pass along a copy of her own dissertation. It became a valuable reference for me. I always knew for me personally that I could feel the moments of experience – I just never understood what they (those moments) were, or what the affect of such moments had on me.

Like one’s first time with everything - it has stayed with me. I so love the first impression. I think that’s why I have struggled so with the perfectionism issues I do. So much of one’s involvement in sport is rooted in the perfect game, the perfect event...“The Perfect Moment!” Carolyn E. Thomas (1972) I want to thank you for the words, for they have been stuck in my brain for as far back as I can remember. Like my first game, my first race, my first love, or my first near death experience... they all have spent time sharing a “perfect moment “or two, or three, or...more

From out on the field, the space seems vast. I feel as I did as a child standing on a bald Montana hill watching the Northern Lights play hide and seek in the infinite sky. A momentary spray of mist across the moon makes it as my shoulders, take a deep breath, walk to the edge of the outfield grass, and place

bats at what seem to be strategic locations . Some I toss toward the right field wall, watching them bounce at crazy angles before settling in place, white as piano keys. I take Archie's bats from his arms and scatter them randomly about right field – like tossing the I Ching (Joravsky, 1996).

Man is not subject to systems but he is free to choose based on his own free will. There is an irrational nature about man that suggests many things; particularly that one's feelings do not fit any predetermined patterns. Although feelings, ideas, and behavior can be explained up to a certain point, logical cause-effect must, in the end, give way to certain "leaps of faith" (Kierkegaard, 1983, pp. 25-26).

What I will attempt to now do is to combine common- sense, personal experience, construct fact, de-construct sport, refine reflections, and proceed to describe a very highly complicated, and complex "world within a world" --- the nature of, and one's existence, one's experience in the world of sport. North Whitehead (1910) left these words, and I shall now pass them on:

Neither common sense nor science can proceed without departing from the strict consideration of what is actual in experience. (North Whitehead, p. 35).

The season begins. Year after year, after year...we greet old friends, old enemies - - implacable cacophonies. From full tilt to the wonder of sleep falling out of my dreams they were forever moments... constant companions. It seems improbable (impossible that I will ever be the same without them. I am the lived experience and now I choose to share with any and all those who may have at least given thought to any part of the following.

As far as this treatise shall be concerned the phenomenon at hand will speak for itself, but I will manage to lead the reader through what may be a somewhat: dualistic metaphysical journey. There will be those who expect facts, and to that I say: Describe the experience: “Of being - in the world,” and, follow that with purposeful expression: “How does it appear?”

*Rigorous Examination – The Elements of Phenomenology*

The most that I can, and will offer here is: That I am prepared to perform a most rigorous examination using the phenomenological method – from direct reflection onto direct experience. Phenomenology, according to Fraleigh (1987), holds that all knowledge begins from experience and returns to it for verification. Zaner (1973) does a great job summarizing the phenomenologist’s basic approach. I will list here briefly the elements of the phenomenological process:

Intentionality: Phenomenology considers the world not as independently functioning scientific data; rather, the world is a “correlate of consciousness”. (Husserl, 1923). There is a dialectical interdependent of the subject and the object: consciousness does not exist in isolation and objects do not exist in isolation. There is no subject without the object nor object without the subject. An object only has meaning to the extent given to it by the subject. Consciousness is directional. It is a moving vector between the subject and the object which effects synthesis. This interdependence of the subject object relationship was termed by Husserl as “intentionality”. (Husserl, 1923)

Descriptive: “All knowledge and all truth depend for their existence on the careful and accurate description of first person human experience, exactly as that experience manifests itself”. (Koestenbaum, 1973).

Reductive: In phenomenological studies, two terms exist for the reductive method: epoché and reduction. Epoché is a bracketing of the experience, a setting aside, a putting apart. It is the art of describing the experience from a distance. It is a state of reflection not unlike the aesthetic experience whereby one enjoys the immediate and then later is able to analyze and criticize. Epoché is crucial if we are to obtain truth. It is the art of slowing down, a stepping back so that the purity of the experience can be described. (Stoll, 1980).

Intuitive: Husserl (1923) called this Eidetic Reduction, whereby consciousness is reduced to essentials. All metaphysical judgments are reduced and one is to look at the essence as the essence. We know that a table is used to put something on it. When we see things like tables, we have an intuitive knowledge of what a table does. However, if I need the table to be a stool, I have the ability to give a different essence to that table. Meaning is not objective but intentional of the subject/object relationship.

Reflective: Reflective is giving meaning. Objects and experiences exist as we give meaning to them. Husserl called this constitutionality (1923). We give meaning through our reflection. Reflection/constitutionality is a constant process. Our consciousness of reflection achieves our world.

My basic approach or, what I have in mind is to remain as formal for those of you who need to read such things, as well push myself beyond all reasonable comparability with any other such authorship. In other words: You all will get the best of what I have to offer. You will get original thinking. You will be allowed to enter my mind and see me at my intuitive best. My perceptions will be authentic, not secondhand quasi-evidence. To get to the nature of a phenomenon - to get to the “thing” itself requires one to remain in the most natural of mindsets –

and I will do that... though some drugs might help! To keep it straight I am going to take you all on a run – a long extended run back to where it began and on to (maybe even through) the finish – should I die...consider it my privilege to have divulged my reckoning! There have been those who strongly advised me not pursue this course, this path, this direction... and my answer to them: “Then don’t run with me! “ I may not have all the skills it takes to put together such a project as I have started here, but at the end of this long run. “I’ll be there!”

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the “universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest --- a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole nature of beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and foundation for inner security. (Einstein, 1952)

### *Intentionality*

To comprehend the sport world and to understand the reason why each man as an individual, chooses to partake in sport is to pursue inquiry into personal forms of meaningful and significant existence (Thomas, 1972). What one person may seek to pursue in the world of sport may be completely meaningless to another. What one person finds through their personal sport involvement may bring more meaning, more motivation than one can ever understand... without a further, more thorough reflection; hence examination - the truth may never be realized. I have thoughts on this, and many of them will be cited here. Each and every participant in the world of

sport follows what can only be called a course of events. And that course has a beginning; a development stage and we would assume... an ending. The process consists of a series of one proceeding event after another...a series of thoughts and moments; of conditions and consequences...we quite literally become our own Creator. God may open the door, but the choice is ours as to how far we choose to go. According to Merleau-Ponty (1964) the question is always to know how I can be open to phenomena which go beyond me and nevertheless exist to the extent that I can apprehend and live them. I will add that: When one experiences the sensuousness of the “long run” eventually they are thrust outside themselves and become seriously sensitive to the perception of living, doing, performing, and experiencing.

Two or three roads diverged in the woods, and I ...while running -took the one more or less traveled, I never could be sure and it really didn't matter – A run goes on by feel and that can change at any given moment – and therein lies that which has made the difference. [sic] – ala Robert Frost (1993)

I interrupt myself at this time – in hopes that the reader - by chance will catch on to what all “this” (so far) must be about. There is an old saying for which I can cite no true origin. It goes: ‘If one has to explain - then the other will not understand.’ I am at this time engaged in the process of laying the groundwork for what is to be a reflective discourse regarding my personal involvement in the sports culture. As Husserl (1923) would say: A philosophical inquiry that; as it develops gradually discovers the nature of: “to the matters themselves”– always following the maxim that only what is seen (what is lived) is to itself - given to be, and accepted as: That which is genuine knowledge.



Using the Phenomenological inquiry method I shall gradually develop a pure essence of the “intentional” relationship between the lived experience, observation, and “the other (inner) world” realm... that place which by virtue of its essential character seizes without presupposition an existence of a purely psychical and universal description of an intentional and true inner experience. Again I say... if one has to explain it, the other may not understand!

To comprehend the ‘inner world’ of the sport culture and to understand the reason why each man, as an individual, chooses to partake in sport activity, is to pursue inquiry into personal forms of a meaningful and significant existence. –  
Slusher (1967, p. 8).

### **Setting The Problem: Phenomenology in Practice – In The Moment Meanings**

I believe there to be a period - sometimes only a moment - in one’s life whereby one thing, so genuine, so pure, so essential... creates or sets in motion a direction that for some unknown reason remains to be the most influential and significant event in all of ones life...it remains in the spirit forever and is evidenced by such an energy: “it” transcends all understanding. It may expose itself through another, such as a teacher, coach or clergyman... it may even be a parent, a sibling, a competitor, or a young “first love.” It may be none of the above – but manifest itself through an experience: positive or negative, or traumatic...a near death activity is always exhilarating! It may come in the form of a reward, or in total humiliation... however it expresses itself may not matter – it’s what one thinks, does, acts upon, “in the moment” that remains the determining factor... and the essence is; any one individual given the exact same circumstance shall most likely act in accordance with their own natural

instinct: a genuine noesis. The meaning of which originates from Husserl's Noesis-Noema Doctrine (1923).

When an event is perceived, there is, on the one hand, the act with all its elements, whatever they may be: the act as a real event in physical life, happening at a certain moment of phenomenal time, appearing, lasting, disappearing, and when it has disappeared – never returning. In essence, it is a perception that shows itself in a multiplicity of perceptions. Of course, there is always the chance that the event will return – in a different time, a different place, a separate reality, or my favorite a “temporal transcendental duplication (TTD)!” I love TTD's... for it is where I have spent much time – I know of this place. It is a place most folks completely overlook. It is my mental state, exclusively my place, where I conceive, act, and use all my sensory perceptions within the “stream of consciousness.” It is what makes me authentic, it defines my nature, my character, and is fundamental to my “event” outcome. I expect no one to pretend to understand my mental state, but I will say this: Those of us, and for those of you who dislike such an inclusion... who know nothing of their “inner-self, “their other-self.” You are left prisoners of your surroundings. I, personally, won't be taken alive!

*Phenomenology: Redefining The Experience*

I believe there are things: events and individuals that may pre-determine, or become a precursor to those moments that can affect the life of a participant in the sport process. My own view, which is based on no specific faith nor even an original idea, but for the most part on common sense and experience, is that one's - and in this case, my initial lasting influence: was that of a coach. From that came the influence of a surrogate family, a (friend) competitor, and a first love.

A coach occupies a high place in a boy's life. It is the one grand component of my arguably useless vocation. If they are lucky, good coaches can become the perfect unobtainable fathers that young boys dream about and rarely find in their own homes.

Good coaches shape and exhort and urge. There is something beautiful about watching the process of sport. I have spent almost all the autumns of my life moving crowds of young boys across acres of divided grass. Beneath the sun of late August, I have listened to the chants of calisthenics, watched the initial clumsiness of overgrown boys and the eyes of small boys conquering their fear, and I have monitored the violence of blocking sleds and gang tackling. I can measure my life by the teams I have fielded and I remember by name every player I ever coached. Patiently, I have waited each year for that moment when I have merged all the skills and weaknesses of the boys placed in my care. I have watched for that miraculous synthesis. When I look around the field, I look at my boys, and in a rush of creative omnipotence I want to shout out at the sun; 'By God, I have created a team.' The boy is precious because he stands on the threshold of his generation and he is always afraid. The coach knows that innocence is always sacred, but fear is not. Through sports, a coach can offer a boy a secret way to sneak up on the mystery that is manhood. – Conroy (1987, p. 80)

*Phenomenology: Practicing Embracing Embodiment*

I think now may be the time to address the existential component to my philosophical duality...

...If I take experience as merely a sort of passive recording of impressions, I shall never manage to understand how the reflective process could be integrated with experience. On the other hand, the more we grasp the notion of experience in its proper complexity, in its active and I would even dare say in its dialectical aspects, the better we shall understand how experience cannot fail to transform itself into reflection, and we shall even have the right to say that the more richly it is experience, the more, also it is reflection. – Marcel (1950, p 33).

There are events, special moments, and specific people who come into your life and shall forever affect you. Along with what I can only describe as: those who reside in the metaphysical dimension, there exists a humanistic component where I believe coaches fall unto this category. It is also my assumption that one's competition, one's friends, fans, and even lovers crossover, and most certainly affect the nature of this sur-reality. It is my belief that often those who do "affect" may be completely unaware of this phenomenon. There seems to be a moment in a young person's life that may well define the course of character their consciousness will travel. For some, this may not be the case at all. For some, examples I will personally cite may be nothing at all like the experiences they have had --- and therein lies the difference: The difference between the real experience and the unrealized experience... the difference between perception and one's own illusions. For many it may all just be in the "mind..." A disposition abbreviated down to ideas, consciousness, and awareness, strange feelings, as well some unexplained emotion. Again, if one has to explain it, one may not understand.

In the John Grisham novel, *Bleachers* (2003, p. 20-50), the following passages may help give some insight for I still adhere to the premise – there often can be no explanation. Upon the

death of Coach Eddie Rake his former players have all gathered to bury their coach. As they sit in the bleachers waiting for the dimming field lights to signal his passing, they replay old games and relive old memories, while desperately trying to decide once and for all whether they love Eddie Rake – or hate him. And for one ( Neely) the act of forgiveness becomes essential if he is to get on with his life.

Rare is the Coach who can motivate players to spend their lives seeking his approval. Neely first put on a uniform in the sixth grade, he wanted Rake's attention. And in the next six years, with every pass he threw, every drill he ran, every play he memorized, every weight he lifted, every hour he spent sweating, every pre-game speech he gave, every touchdown he scored, every game he won every temptation he resisted, every honor roll he made...he coveted Eddie rake's approval. He wanted to see Rake's face when he won the Heisman Trophy. He dreamed of Rake's phone call when he won the national title.

And rare is the Coach who compounds every failure long after the days are over. When the doctors told Neely he would never play again, he felt as if he had fallen short of Rake's ambitions for him. When his marriage dissolved, he could almost see Rake's disapproving scowl. As his small –time real estate career drifted with no clear ambition, he knew Rake would have a lecture if he got close enough to hear it. Maybe his death would kill the demon that dogged him, but he had his doubts.

Now for some this may all seem as foreign as a Marathon run but such events, such minds do live with the description given us in the above passages. How in the world would such a development come to pass in the life of a Neely or a Gym. For those who understand – you are not alone.

I believe there is an ultimate question to be asked here. In what way were you personally affected by the sport culture, sport process? What experiences in whatever you can remember touched you, molded you, and directed you through the maturation process? I believe those of us who evolved in, and through sport, have been touched – by the style, personality, character, and ethics of those we connected with – be it coaches, teammates, or other associations. There exists an (often unexplainable) concomitant connection between ourselves and those that we encountered along the way.

### **Problem Statement**

Therefore the purpose of this study is to use the phenomenological method and dialectic verse to describe a personal sport odyssey. The sub problems for this study will be:

- a. A descriptive reflection of self through sport
- b. A description of the phenomenological experience by other sojourners in sport.
- c. A discussion of the phenomenological experience.

There is a close connection to how we perceive ourselves, and how we act in the real world. The same can be said for how others might do the same – or how we are perceived by others in relationship to the/their world. It has been my experience thus far that should it be known - we all live in our own world...and in this dissertation it shall be the Sport World. So it must be that we attempt to understand the phenomena that exists.

In the chapter titled The Nature of Reality, the Dalai Lama (1999) provides a very clear provision in a discussion on phenomena.

How we perceive ourselves in relation to the world we inhabit and our behavior in response to it means that our understanding of phenomena is crucially

significant. If we don't understand phenomena, we are more likely to do things to harm ourselves, and others (Dali Lama, 1999, p. 85)

When we consider the matter, we start to see that we cannot finally separate out any phenomena from the context of other phenomena. We can only really speak in terms of relationships. In the course of our daily lives, we engage in countless different activities and receive huge sensory input from all that we encounter. The problem of misperception, which, of course, varies in degree, usually arises because of our tendency to isolate particular aspects of an event or experience and see them as constituting its totality. This leads to a narrowing of perspective and from there to false expectations. But when we finally consider reality itself we quickly become aware of its infinite complexity, and we realize that our habitual perception of it is often inadequate. If this were not so, the concept of deception would be meaningless. If things and events always unfolded as we expected, we would have no notion of illusion or misconception.

The wonder of the above would never have been realized if I had not done an investigation into the nature of phenomena. Reading, researching, and writing on this dissertation has provided such a learning experience for me to find the origins of the concepts used in citing and referencing the thousands of pages of material perused by me.

### **Significance**

This dissertation is to present the reader with another view, a perspective of “things” as they are. There is in a philosophical sense a question that shall forever bother my mind, for you see – “not much has changed” – internally that is. I say this in relation to attitudes, behaviors, ethics and the fundamental issues that remain inside of what I will call the “Sport World.” From

its genesis to the present, sport has played an integral part in the lives of so many individuals. My purpose here then will be to make the reader more aware of those who were both affected, and or afflicted by the process of being acculturated within the world of sport. Times have changed, yet the phenomenon prevails...Sport.

Sport as it has been determined is a microcosm of our society. Professor Harry Edwards (1969) says that: "If there is a religion in this country today, it is sports."<sup>5</sup> Edwards said that a few years back – and I was there...during the boycott days of the sixties. I have spent my life in the world of sport. Not a day has gone by where something I do, or think, or act upon does not involve some connection to the world I grew-up in. In fact it may be said that I have not grown up. From the age of six to now almost fifty years later I can still smell the odor of my first real leather baseball glove. I still have my first bat as well a rotted old pair of Rawlings (rawhide) football shoes...the soles never softened, they just broke in half after years of planter flexion-itis – an aging condition with no given name – until now. I remember receiving (and still have) my blue ribbons for being the fastest kid in elementary school.

I have many reasons or purposes for writing this dissertation. None more important than to meet the criteria for the completion of a Doctorate degree I began some years ago. Like many other journeys in my life - this one, has too led me astray...there is, in my experience -no one path to be taken, and heaven knows much "bushwhacking" I have done. I mentioned above that my purpose was to provide the reader with another view – a view from the inside. To make such a statement one has to be aware of their own present condition or state of mind...

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<sup>5</sup> Actually the quote is from Eldridge Clever (1968) whom Edwards quoted without reference.



“I am fully aware of the fact that the mental state I am in has little to do with my usual “mental state.” (De Fleurier, 1970). The process of writing a dissertation will do that to you. I am no more or less the same man, and I do not see, or feel in the same way as before. I am content with my consciousness. My senses are as keen as they have ever been. I see things, and I know things. My reasons stimulate my perceptions, which drive my actions, which result in the total integration of the thinking process. I have a strong desire to retain levity while exploring redemption.

The whole process is about conceptualizing the values, and the virtue of both the “knower” and the “doer.” It is with rationality that I am now able to focus my mind on a concept that I have made a total commitment to -seeking to describe the phenomena through a rigorous examination of the lived experience...”to the thing itself.” I have hereby stated my purpose - Ayn Rand (1957) speaks to this mental mixture when she says:

To introduce into one’s consciousness any idea that cannot be so integrated, an idea not derived from reality, not validated by a process of reason, not subject to rational examination or judgment- and worse: an idea that clashes with the rest of one’s concepts and understanding of reality- is to undercut the rest of one’s convictions and kill one’s capacity to be certain of anything (Rand, 1957, p.203).

The documentary *Hoop Dreams* (Joravsky, 1996) is based on the lives of two fourteen year old boys from the ghetto’s of Chicago. It is a story that typifies the struggle, the hardships, and the determination young athletes face in their attempt to make it in the sport world. While William Gates struggles off the basketball court, Arthur Agee struggles on the court. For Arthur-

maybe even more for William – basketball is the most important thing in the world. The hardwood gym floor or the rough concrete playground is the only place where he feels he really belongs, the only place where he can forget the pain and the poverty of his family life, the only place where he can be himself. “When I played basketball I knew what I wanted to do,” he explains. “This is what I want. You know, this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.” (Joravsky, 1996, p 71)

There is a crisis brewing on our nation’s playing fields and it is fueled in part by the unprecedented figures regarding sport participation (Svare, 2004). At the heart of these problems (in sports) is a profound change in the American culture of sports itself. At one time, that culture was defined by colleges, high schools and countless other sport programs. Young people were taught values ranging from fitness, cooperation, teamwork and perseverance to sportsmanship as moral endeavor. All of that seems somehow archaic and quaint today (The Knight Commission, 2001).

Both of the above statements were presented as topics during the National Institute of Sports Reform Conference (November, 2003). Yes readers, for those of you who do not know – we have such an institute. In fact, the theme for last year’s program was: “Crisis on Our Playing Fields: What Everyone Should Know About Our Out of Control Sports Culture and What We Can Do to Change It.”

I am driven in my purpose in my passion to examine the phenomenon of “It” the sport culture. I can point to hundreds of citations, press releases, sport commentary, Investigative reports, and institutional concerns. In January, 2004, during the Presidents State of the Union

message Bush cited reforming (by congressional decree) sports on all levels within our culture, stating “Sports is an institution, an integral part of our national culture.” (Bush, 2004)

The statements above provide many with a touch of what is going on. Possibly leading one to believe that Legislative ethics and moral consequences will scare the pants off all the would-be Kobe’s out there. Or, as evidenced from past examples: Continue to support large gatherings of academicians, scholars, sports reformists, and other leading figures intent on discussing (to the death) agenda, after agenda of “futura advica” or... futureless advocacy and rules implementation.

So am I purpose driven? Is my passion too much so - that I’ve outrun myself? Do I need any more explanation or reason – I think not. My motives are sound, and my mind is a mixture of rational reason as Ayn Rand (1957) defined earlier. What more purpose do I need? Things in the world of sport are said to be a mess. I could say, “I have been a mess.” Many of those who joined me on this journey have at one time or another cited similar claims. Then, there are those who made it through – did not get burned, maybe singed a little, but nevertheless arrived at the finish line. Some hit the ground to land on one knee and get back up to walk away. Others, well, vomited the past off to one side making sure they walked around the “sinewy slurp,” so not to get stained...but tainted they shall remain! In the end there were some who - never made it! There are still others running the race – It’s “A Long Run”...they will never quit – they don’t know what that means. Be it destiny or be it determinism we have all stepped in something along the way and the smell of sport is with us forever more. Finally, there are those who; died trying - and to them I shall raise a fist ... with a purpose. This dissertation is with a purpose so passionate I bleed spirituality and that should be more than enough reason to carry on.

Understanding comes through awareness and, there will be some of you who will never understand – no matter how aware you are. Why you might ask? Because you have not had the same experience, and if you have, you've long replaced the experience with a reason - to not look back... looking back can be disturbing or it can be enlightening – such is the choice. The following old African proverb may provide a spark of thought.

Every morning an antelope wakes and it knows it must outrun the hungriest and fastest lion to survive... Every morning a lion wakes and it knows it must outrun the swift antelope to survive. And unless you're an antelope or a lion you will never know what it means. Now then, let's just take a minute or two. Think what it must be like, either to be an antelope, or to be a lion - to be hungry and starving, or to be scared for your life. Though none of you who shall read this is either an antelope or a lion somehow I believe you can understand the circumstance. (Nike Commercial, 1990).

### **A Discussion of Phenomenological Terms**

I have up to this point provided a limited discussion describing the phenomenological method reviewed as part of this dissertation. It is not my intent to attempt to understand every tacit connection that Immanuel Kant (1781), Edmund Husserl (1923), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964), Martin Heidegger (1962), and Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1906/2002) bring forth to my studies. I make no pretence in believing that any one of the above philosophers can provide a definition to this project. Much of what follows are select terms, and relevant words relating to the specific topics and discussed experiences within the sports world. I can only hope that by using the best of the phenomenological methods subscribed to, the reader can find for themselves a connection to their own “lived experience.”

At a public talk I gave in Japan a few years ago, I saw some people coming toward me carrying a bunch of flowers. I stood up in anticipation of receiving their offering, but to my surprise, they walked straight past and laid the flowers on the altar behind me. I sat down feeling somewhat embarrassed! Yet again I was reminded that the way in which things and events unfold does not always coincide with our expectations. Indeed, this fact of life - that there is often a gap between the way in which we perceive phenomena and the reality of a given situation. This is especially true when, as in the example here, we make judgements on the basis of a partial understanding, which turns out not to be fully justified (The Dalai Lama, 1999, p. 36).

I included the above passage to provide another's description of what can often be a complex translation in the use of the phenomenological method.

My studies have included all of the above philosophers and their applications. But studying a method, as well using the task of applying such a method creates a special set of structural considerations. I shall now describe the phenomenological method I have chosen. I want the reader to have the best possible understanding of the thoughts brought forth in the following dissertation.

The phenomenological method I shall apply is hereby dedicated to describing the existence of experiences as they are –to those things within themselves. This dissertation seeks to describe things “as they are!” As I previously cited, most all phenomenology has followed Edmund Husserl's (1923) structure, attempting to use pure description. Performing his method as what he refers to as “rigorous science, using the structure of subscribing to the Husserlian credo

“to the things themselves” (1923). This enables me to refer to the content of my consciousness that has been acquired, as well those essences that make up the content of the experience. In other words all knowledge and truth depend on a first person human experience, and in my consciousness it shall be my way of saying - “I own it!”

The years of study, years of experience, combined with an acquired intuitive passion allow me to retain the active voice necessary to express the thoughts that shall flow throughout this dissertation.

As much studying and review as has been done using this method – confusion exists as to which or whose method was, or is more applicable. Well, I have determined that no one method is safe from expected, if not excessive criticism. It seems to me that all the great philosophers spent a lot of time attempting to “out think” each other – a legitimate form of intellectual competition. This may have been the only form of competition they were ever to engage in. I doubt these masters ever thought the world of sport would ever find a place in their consciousness.

At times during the course of this dissertation the reader may be re-introduced to their own phenomena – that of being reminded in essence to: subjectively having made their own way through the facts and thoughts as they are, and as they will be presented. A forewarning here to the reader – you can’t help it! It is nye impossible to not own some subjective doubt or acceptance that any of the following exists within the framework of your own consciousness. This is all about pure description and if one does not subscribe to the notion then maybe it’s because you’ve never been taken...

Down, tumbling out of control – somersaulting forward, then backward, tossed head first- not knowing up from down nor finding a breath anywhere - slammed head first into the hard-packed bottom sand, ten feet from the surface catching a glimpse of the sky light that looks a hundred feet above. The undertow pulls you further out into the deep - you can see, yet compression surrounds your body – helpless you feel the thoughts – of no place to go, and without warning you are rejected – spit-up, spewed like a bad taste, surfacing with a gasp as the black sand shark bumps you in route to the turtle shaped board attached by the rubber lifeline - an umbilical “from the womb to the tomb” it can all happen so fast...(Gym, 2004)

Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away! (Kinzinger, 2004)

All you can do is subscribe to the condition of the event and the object without recourse or proof of such a condition. Setting aside the question of a real existence without having experienced an act allows one to actualize – contemplate “it” as a real event. So, should you object –good! You now have the opportunity to use your own consciousness and return to the thing (the event) yourself – for your own reflective reasons. If this stimulates a response – good again! For if you can remember the abstract content of all those acts and now direct your consciousness past the contemplation phase...Phew! We have an understanding of the meaning. “Meanings” as Husserl (1923) calls them – acts that are contemplated in the mind though they may differ among the individual. Acts that within themselves may lay claim, without validity, to be the essence of the object to the subject, or a certain aspect of the act in itself. This according to Edmund Husserl (1923) describes this subject-object relationship as “intentionality.” The activity of holding on to those things “determined” to be the essence of consciousness. As does

Husserl's structure represent the described form of intentionality, I too shall attempt provide such a description.

The more we experience the more we transcend to the next experience. As we study the basic components of all the perceptions, desires, and reflections we enable the phenomena to be described with "intentionality." As well, by using the method of reduction described-a pure description of the experience is realized. There have been other philosophical positions brought forth as critical attempts to discount the meaning of one's experience. Most of these dismiss the structural aspects with the purpose of replacing one's actual experience with an account by merely staring at or just thinking about such objects. There are beliefs that such intentionality (through actualization) is not needed to account for a pure description of the experience. Thus, creating doubt that to fully grasp the magnitude of one's experience -it need not be possible to actually realize the experience. Historically there is clearly a separate determinism when it comes to describing phenomena. Philosophers often cited cultural, social, and genetic factors and included them as an accompaniment to the conceptual task of providing meaning when determining what defines a pure description. According to Hegel's (1975) phenomenology of spirit combined with Immanuel Kant's (1781) general phenomenology – any project described as a phenomenological study would more likely be structured as a type of philosophy rather than an experience in it – leaving the work performed-reading as a novel...an education for the reader's sake. When such descriptions (to the things themselves) are subscribed to, it leaves the reader with a "summa" a typical ending or some other form of absolute meaning/knowing. In this case, the essence will have been compromised enabling the reader to realize some unique form of logic or rational end to the now self-interpreted experience. There can be no defense to this



offense – the phenomenological structure no longer can be presented or realized without assumption or presupposition.

This whole process can get confusing but the task remains the same: a rigorous attempt at describing the experience. By staying with the pure description it will be understood that no conscious criteria, attempt, or method will be used to shape an outcome as it exists within the content of this dissertation. It shall further be noted that my consciousness is and shall always remain directed toward the pure attempt at describing the experiences as they are- “to the things themselves.” I have remained an active participant throughout the course of this dissertation. I shall assume this role by describing the phenomena as I have experienced it, and as I have lived it – with that position taken I hope there will be much in the way of critique, comment, and further conversation. And as I stated in the original subtitle - my attempt will be: Describing the essence of the experiences on this - The Long Run.

*Transcendence – To Sport It Self*

In the beginning: there was man, and there was sport! And Man, according to Plato’s (Macrone, 2000) adage was “created as a plaything of the gods.” Furthermore, this original life design accompanied with man’s natural skill to execute “spontaneous expression”- to play sport, it may well be (harmonizing again with Plato)” that which is the best part of us.” Could the gods really have known of the phenomenon that was soon to besiege the world – had sport on earth been created?

And sport, by its own early origin was the diversion by which a man disports or amuses himself in his leisure time. In fact, the Greeks used sport as a break to their warring ways – the Olympics were nothing more than a pause between four years of war. Sport has established

itself as an exclusive activity within the human experience. There is no civilization that has escaped the intrusion of sport. Harris (1972) in his writings discusses how sport has become a specialized activity that involves physical strength and skill. In the remote past the survival of the individual man, of the community and of the species depended upon these qualities, and even now occasions sometimes arise when the same is true- “ It is perhaps for this reason that sport appeals to something very deep in many of us,” says Harris (1972):

God alone is worthy of supreme seriousness, but man is made God’s plaything, and that is the best part of him. Therefore every man and woman should live life accordingly, and play the noblest of games, and be of another mind from what they are at present. (Marcone, 2000).

I am intrigued by what motivated Plato to make such a statement! In fact, the more I think about it the more it produces a disturbance of my mind. How peculiar of Plato to refer to man as just a plaything. I hardly believe it to be an exaggeration. Yet, I can not determine if it was said in jest, a jibe, or in contempt. If Plato was an athletic coach I could understand it. For coaches say things like that all the time. Tyrannical trysts and imploding innuendos to get the goat of the athlete...to motivate them. It distresses me to think that the gods could view man as something of so little value- created only to be viewed dancing, running, speared, or dangled about. I sense an immaculate manipulation at work here. But it should not come as any great surprise to those of us who understand such forms of expression or such motivation. Could it also be that the Plato, though unknown to him at the time,- may have provided the sport world with it’s first set of covenants...had the fate of sport now been determined?

Beep, Beep, Beep...I have just come across some new and enlightening information. It does not mean that I will take back the things I said above. But this information will now be inserted before someone calls me out on my partial knowledge.

Plato was perhaps the most well known teacher who was also one of finest athletes of his day: he often spent much of his time instructing students in the fine art, and physicality of wrestling. (Scott, 1971)

Now if that is true, I am sorry Plato for challenging you and your statement referring to athletes as playthings – If, as it was reported you did coach, then I can understand the logic – for only a coach might know of such things.

I've chosen the metaphor "The Long Run" for a number of reasons; most importantly –It describes best for me a continuum of personal experience –It's been a long run...this dissertation. I most often run alone anymore. There is solace in that. There is silence in that. And there is freedom in that. In the year 1913, Webster's Dictionary provided a definition of The Long Run, defining it as a term. Back then, I believe there were runners who too had a long run as part of their training progression, but I do not think Webster was one of them. Yet he was able to provide this definition:

In or during the whole process or course of events, things taken together, in the final result; in the end; finally. Such a finality. – Webster's Dictionary (1913)

I wonder if the intention of the definition was meant to be interpreted as such – a fatal view. It has been said repeatedly – "no one gets out of here alive." So before I go I shall wish to examine the course of events. The paradox here is that I have already been there. I left the start

over 50 years ago. And for some of you who may read this – you might be thinking of starting off on your own real soon. It's never to late! Mine has followed a course that entangled me for the most of my life in the world of sport. The long run is an activity that requires stamina, strength, and mental condition – one may even use their brain, of course that is until all the oxygen is depleted, the muscle system goes ketosis, and the heart defibrillates, forcing the runner into a state of ataxia - saved only by the hallucinations that follow whereby one either sees - the open arms of a blue sky, or falls feet first drowning in the ocean of fatty acid that holds the middle of humankind in it's obese place. It's much like any sport, game, or contest...anything can happen during the course of the event. That's the exciting part never knowing when one might be, “volatizing one's consumption!” When one might not come back alive!

I have seen things on the long run. I have talked to dead people, I have flown like an eagle through the Grand Canyon. I have murdered my enemies. I have been with the most beautiful women in the world. I have won every race! It can be said to be exaggerated, or to others it may seem imagined. I have a theory about this.

It comes down to one being able to be the master of their own mind, and of their own the body – to adjust the balance, try a new connection when the wiring got switched, or the input was bad. There is no instant replay here to alter the outcome should a bad call take place. It becomes the individual's sole responsibility to recognize which one of you is on the run at any given moment. I am now saying that there is more than one of us per person. Dualistic, pluralistic, schizophrenic; the separation of intellect and strength. The hypocrisy between professional and the amateur. A calling out from within our own spirit as the Greeks would have described –The Paideia, an association with one's, “split personality.” Ideally the concept should

work the ideal unity of the mind and body the physical strength and intellectual pursuits. But something happened along the way – We succumbed to gluttony, ego, fast fixes, and big money – simply put for those of you who will question my thought process and struggle to understand my upcoming statement with, and about potentiality ... we got too fat. In the Long Run, should you not...you will get fat! This is more than just an observation and it has a number of important implications. Experience can not be denied!

I know, I know – no absolutes! But to that I say; it is time to face the facts. We have lost the ideal unity of the physical and spiritual. We have forgotten or better yet forsaken the “pure” essence of the sport experience. Where did it do you might ask? What is the pure essence another would say! I in my finite wisdom will attempt to define what I mean by the pure essence: “That for which we intended it to be.” Specifically I hereby refer to that ‘lost ideal’ of why we participate in sport.

Hell the Greeks lost it a thousand years ago – they just would not admit it. It goes back to the beginning. Besides, there is, to this day mythical characters and immovable granite statues that glorifies this ideal. Who is going to challenge the great Hercules anyway. It would be tantamount in today’s sport world to the equivalent of the USA losing a basketball game to Puerto Rico. And for the rest of the world – it is so intent on specialization, professionalism, and the obsession with winning the most medals ever. What did we do - And so what did they do – They put on what might arguably be one of the best of all Olympic games ever...the 2004 Olympics – They made up for it! The gods had to be pleased – The marathon was run on the actual course from Athens to Marathon – what could have been better than that?

If we can come to be so influenced then we must understand the original intent.

Personally I am prepared to be influenced by the seriousness of the situation – of Plato’s adage...

“That we humans were in fact created as a plaything of the gods and live in another mind from which they are present.” (Marcone, 2000). It begs the question just who then is, or who are the gods and what are their influence on the sport world. One time during my first season of college football it was the fourth quarter – the last game of the season. It was a must win for us to stay undefeated. I look to the sidelines and there was my defensive back’s coach yelling to me, “get your ass to the post, get your ass to the post” “Why?”

“Goddamnit listen to me You can question God, but you do not question me. Goddamnit, now get your ass to the post!”

I intercepted a pass on the next play, saved a touchdown, and returned the ball for a modest gain of yardage – could he have been god?

I’ve had many troubles in my life, most of which never happened. – Twain  
(1962, p. 40)

We are all born with the ability to run. In every child there is a runner, a potential athlete. We were all once part of such a natural process – born with unlimited potential. There was not yet a learned fear of failure. We performed physical feats without giving any thought to the concept of a fear, a failure, or a disappointment. As extraordinary as this may sound all we need to do is look back within our infancy. It may be idealistic, even somewhat presumptuous – or, as I have been told’ elitist’ to make the statement I have above. Should I stand trial on all three - guilty I will plead? And I hope my punishment to be running laps all day long. Least any of you forget, running for so many years was the punishment for subverting authority and general

misbehavior. It is becoming much clearer to me as to why 'The Long Run' has such personal meaning.

The infant's gift for learning is undeniable. Sensitive observation of children can reveal the keys to their natural aptitudes. We can see that the infant's body is relaxed, therefore sensitive. The young mind is concept free, therefore receptive, with uninhibited emotion's and great motivational energy. The young child learns complex patterns of speech and movement with an ease and rapidity that is astonishing. (Lewis, 1984)

Such observations are the true beginnings. Does this mean that every one of us has the potential to be a great athlete? It could! But the point is; we all have potential! It's as simple as that. What we do with that potential seems to be the essence of our efforts. Yet, for some reason we have forgotten what emotion there is in the attainment, in being able to fulfill that potential. I myself have never been satisfied when it comes to achieving my potential. A fact that I have chosen to keep me motivated – there is strength in knowing the potential one does possess is yet to be realized.

And there must somehow exist an ideal for every one of us, man, woman, and child. Every body that moves on this planet, if you look at it that way, may well be inhabited by a strong and graceful athlete, capable of Olympian feats.

Fanciful statements, but true. The athlete that dwells in each of us is more than an abstract ideal. It is a living presence that can change the way we feel and live. – Leonard (1974, p. 80)

Searching for our inner athlete may lead us into sports and into a world we would have never realized had we not made the attempt. And in some cases it can go beyond the sports world...A run beyond the gravity that keeps our feet close to the ground through the metaphysical - into the realm of other places. There is as always one good run left in all of us... runs, that push us to the edge of our life, to the other side –maybe even close to death. There is always an “other side.” A factor of unknown origin, yet a place within that oozes with one’s own uniqueness. A rouge gene, that surfaces, kick into gear only when a extraordinary demand is placed upon the system. For some it may be only an endorphin release, for others it runs rampant just waiting for the call...to be used when one needs to perform their last best effort. And this run of mine that follows may be my last “one good run!” The duration of which is yet to be determined.

We have no official puberty rites in America, but war and sports definitely have an unofficial sanction. Both deal with artificial realities. We have a romantic naivete about athletic competition and war. To the uninitiated both seem a parade of heroes. Too late young men learn. There are no winners, only those who lose less. What an overwhelming sadness when sport becomes the same. (Warner, 1979)

Learning to lose less – I was never able to do that – I was never taught that concept. It was about winning more, never losing less. Where do these ideas come from? I can’t help but wonder when is it ‘too late’ to learn. I spent many years running through life... “not learning.” I was far too arrogant, and way to busy. Yet, now the more I live the more anxiety I seem to gather about wanting to learn - like compound interest it increases exponentially-and I have this fear that I am running out of time.



Johnny Kelly died today. He ran more Boston Marathons than any other person -sixty-one in all. He was ninety-two years old and ran his last Marathon when he was eighty-four. Kelly called the marathon his own personal inner place. “If I should die running tomorrow - it would be glorious way to go” (Tsiotos, 2001, p. 112).

Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding, for gain from it is better than gain from silver, and its profit better than gold. (Proverbs 3:13-14).

*Other Side, Flow, Pooh*

There is much that has been written about the other side, the inner meaning in relationship to one’s involvement in sport. Personal feelings are often hard to verbally express. And for those who might understand this concept they know of such things. These are moments, and they are experiences and no one can do justice by just expressing – they must be experienced to be understood. That is why some thrill seeking adventurer created the Bungee Jump. To jump off a thousand foot cliff ledge and free fall for nine-hundred and ninety-two feet – well now, that is something to live through...that becomes an experience. It has been said that the mind cannot differentiate between a real event and one that is perceived to be. This is a complex nexus of unconventional determinations. On one side there is, and on the other side there isn’t. Now to some of you this may not seem very important but to me the implications are significant. When one writes about phenomena and the nature of describing the experience, it must be known as to where on the time line continuum – when does experience takes place. Sometimes an experience culminates in nothingness – a vague remembrance yet a strong sense of background. Like a song that just pops into one’s mind for no particular reason, and leaving one with the rhythm and void

of the lyrics, it often requires some composition to again fit the experience with moment that was intended to be. Stuck in the consciousness for days on end the moment lies in wait...until.

The very heavens seemed to open and pour down rays of light and glory.

Not just for the moment, but for all day and night, floods of thought seemed to pour through my soul, and oh, how I was changed – and everything became new

(James, 1902)

An independent variable, an isolated event...an experience revealed. Without experience life would be a only an assumption – and I'm here to make no assumptions.

As a result of my experiences, I believe that I exist not only in the familiar world of space and time, but also in a realm having a timeless eternal quality. Behind the apparent multiplicity of things in the world of science and common sense, there is a single reality in which all things are united. (Harman, 1968)

### *Nature of Reality*

If there is a single moment which is indivisible, then we would have only the present. But without a concept of the present, it becomes difficult to speak of the past and the future since both clearly depend on the present. Moreover, if we were to conclude from our analysis then the present does not exist; we would have to deny not only worldly convention but also our own experience.

The Dali Lama (1999) notes that one needs to understand the nature of reality to understand that everything we perceive and experience arises as a result of an indefinite series of interrelated causes and conditions, our whole perspective changes. It also becomes apparent that

our every action, our every deed, word, and thought, no matter how slight or inconsequential it may seem, has an implication not only for ourselves but for all others, too.

The Dali Lama expresses this view of reality in terms of a dependent origination. By seeing things in this way it draws us away from our usual tendency to see things and events in terms of solid independent, discrete entities. It challenges us to see things and events less in terms of black and white and more in terms of a complex interlinking of relationships, which are hard to pin down. (Dali Lama, 1999, p.40-41)

Those who nothing of their inner place – (their other side) are sure to become prisoners left to die in, and of their surroundings. I am unsure where or why I retained the previous words – but they have stuck with me for some reason. Of all the things that surround us, our ability, or willingness to accept an ‘other side’ to one’s life seems to be the most difficult of ‘comprehension’s.’ I mean what value is there to such thought anyway? What can possibly be gained? It may be due to a lack of concentration (Wharton, 2004).

How much thinking is required...Concentration requires practice, and training. I am unsure where I got the above passage as I collect passages like fishing lures– but it stuck with me for some reason. Words and images live in my brain and sometimes I just spit them out like I would a bug in mid breath while cruising along on one of my evening runs...for some reason there are more bugs in the evening than in the morning...And the fish bite- During an evening hatch.

As a child you were pure potential. You could learn anything within human capacity. You had within you the seeds of becoming a physician, an

attorney, an engineer, a craftsman, a dancer, an artist, or an Olympian. It never occurred to you that learning would be difficult. - Millman (2004, p. 35)

Pages past I said it was time to get this thing going before I go – before my time runs out. My procrastination may be due to my consumption for perfection. It might be hard for one to understand to what degree perfection can overwhelm their life should they not be put on the edge -that point where the decision has to be made – the commitment to the act itself – and the physical skill performed without hesitation or subjection. It can be no better demonstrated – or so described than at this time. Perfectionism is an obsession- I acknowledge my obsession- RITUAL.

“A leap of faith still requires a perfect takeoff.” (Wharton, 2004)<sup>6</sup>

As a fourteen year-old, I feared nothing – well maybe for the exception of my coach. I had since left home and was now making my own way. So it may be added that I could have included my father but as you will learn, my fear of him was no longer with me. My work experience consisted of working for my Grandpa and my Uncles who all made a living in the construction trades. My uncle Leon was a roofer and I would help him whenever I could, slapping down those three-tab split cedar slabs and asphalt shingles as fast as possible – for not only was the pay based on speed. The California sun and mid-day heat made it nye impossible to roof later in the day. As with most things up to now competition was always present – and during work hours it was survival. It didn’t matter me being related or not – I had to hold my own on the job. But there did come a time for some friendly waging – a bet you can’t or, I’ll bet you - that

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<sup>6</sup> A play on words in reference to S. Kierkegaard (1983), Danish existentialist’s point of view of God and man. God cannot be proved, thus the leap of faith.

kind of talk. Money was a grand motivator and at fourteen I would do just about anything for some extra cash. One day while on the roof my uncle says to me, “Gymee – you’re pretty fast. – can you jump? I told him sure I can, why? And I see him staring at the next adjacent house with its hip roof and three in twelve pitch looking right at us.

“You think you can jump from here to there” – pointing across to the next house to be roofed... you mean, “roof to roof. Why?”

“Well, ‘cuz then we could tie up the rope and send all our stuff over without having to get down and go back up over the ladder 3-4 times.”

I looked at him and then walked down to the eve of the house and studied the distance between the two. I knew I could broad jump at least sixteen feet because I had...twice. Yet, it was hard to tell the exact distance. Not to mention that if I should not make it, the fall (which I knew to be at least eight feet straight down) would hurt. After checking out the jump I looked back up at my uncle and asked, “How far do you think it is Uncle Lee?” - I will admit there was some apprehension – yet, I really wanted to do it because it would have pleased my uncle greatly, save us some time, and money. But most importantly I would be the hero of the day. And one never knows what that could lead to.

Uncle Lee thinks for a second: “Well let’s see, the houses are 20 feet apart and each roof overhangs bout 2 feet so I’m guessing bout sixteen-seventeen feet.” I thought for a few seconds - I knew I’d have a running start ‘downhill’ no less, and though I did not think about sustaining any serious injury- who would have at that age – I figured it would be a good test! Definitely worth the risk! Now I was obsessed with making the jump!

“Alright, ten bucks and I’ll do it.” I was barely able to make ten dollars all day long busting my ass – “Ten bucks!” My uncle laughed, shit, that’s damn near a day’s pay... Five bucks!”

“Deal,” I said. “Does that mean I get five bucks for every time I jump?”

“Yep!” I think the thing I remember so vividly about that moment in time was the fact that: not once did anyone who was present ask, “what will we do if he doesn’t make it?” – It was never about not making it! It was a great moment, and the jump was made, and my uncle to this day still lives in the first house I ever jumped to...and that event lives on in his mind as it does in mine. It was a special day!

In this case self-testing or the challenge was my primary focus. Pleasing my uncle was more important but, of course the money was good back then! There is a great personal reward when one can overcome, accomplish...live through a risky adventure. It is a matter of being in control of the situation. There are so many possible meanings placed upon one who chooses to take chances. Just the idea of a risky act might seem out of the ordinary to some. To me it comes down to proving to myself that I can do it. Most of the risks I have taken are done without the witness, or knowledge of another. They are mine to behold and to die for! Dying is the last thing we will remember about living.

On taking chances and seeking to participate in risky activities, Alvarez (Alvarez, 1973) provides some sense to it all. Though I strongly adhere to my own personal “Zen Tenant” I do appreciate a good explanation every now and then.

And that finally, is what risks are all about. They are look a sharp close-up of your own life, in which all of the essentials are concentrated and defined. You

deliberately set up a situation which, in order to survive, you must respond to as fully as you know how. The situation itself may be utterly artificial - on a mountain there is always an easier way to the top - keeping but the element of the risk makes it terribly serious. The fascination for me is keeping the risk in complete control. Flirting with danger for kicks bores me: it is a form of exhibitionism, a vulgarity to one's self...You must take complete responsibility for your own life...in doing something difficult, something that extends your concentration and effort and resourcefulness without ever losing control (Gerber & Morgan, 1967, p. 125).

#### **What's Up (What's Going On?) - 4 Non Blondes**

Twenty-five years and my life is still  
Trying to get up that great big hill of hope...  
For a destination  
And I realized quickly when I knew I should  
That the world was made up of this brotherhood  
For what ever that means  
And so I cry sometimes  
When I'm lying in bed  
Just to get it all out  
What's in my head  
And I am feeling a little peculiar  
And so I wake in the morning

And I step outside

And I take a deep breath and I get real high

And I scream at the top of my lungs

What's going on?

And I say, hey, hey, hey

And I said hey – What's going on? (Perry, 1992)

There can be no better time than “right now” – this present moment for one to take “another look” at what “the hell” is going on in the world of sport. My proposal is in the form of a further examination – an intrinsic, even intrusive view at the nature of sport and how its elements have come to affect so many individuals who grew-up, believed-in, and finally succumbed to the power, allure, pain, disorientation, and exhilaration, “This, the sport culture I refer to, is a culture.” “This” (the sport world) is one of those “other” places – full of “other” lives and “other” experiences. Experiences that somehow defined the participant and set in motion from early on – ones’ place in the race...for life, or until death do them part!

There may be documented effects on one’s life, or on one’s behavior, personality, or character and through reducing the process to one experience after another – well, new lives can be recognized, if not created. What may this all mean for those “just hitting the road?” I would think they may emerge with a more than less significant justification for staying with the long run themselves...for many in this age of non-reason and moral relativism, it’s the short run that matters. Personally, I never thought I would get here – to this place in time - consequences should have taken precedence. Spiritual laws should have buried my soul – consumption should have consumed me. Yet, there exists a single-minded mantra recognized by many as the



essential argument for staying the course, supporting the effort and enjoying the experience. As Jim Morrison (1995) of The Doors put it, “No one gets out of here alive!” This whole project was, and has become a major undertaking in my life.

To all of this (I again note: “This” as a “thing” will almost always refer to the ‘Sports World’ unless stated otherwise) – and to all the “things themselves...” I am here to say: “I started my life on a dead run and I’ll be damned if I’m not going to finish it off – on a dead run!” If I sound a little suicidal it is because - I am! Death was never my intentionality - but I now hereby admit, the near death experience has always fascinated me. I have and will continue to prescribe events in my life that far exceed the logic, rationale, attitude, and behavior that someone in, and of my age, place, position...I should simply “know better!” To know better is to know otherwise and I have yet to meet otherwise. Furthermore, for the sake of “this thing” it should provide for extended argument – Those who are here with me now whether in spirit or - on their own dead run ... do not, nor have not- met otherwise either!

Someone misled me. They said it would get better. It never did. They of course would include parents, friends, teachers, and coaches...all those professing the blessedness of the sport world. (Warner, 1979)

They did not intend to lie...they just never new the truth. They intended only for my best interests -I know this because they told me so. I was told to be or not to be or I would be missing out on the greatest experience in life. The greatest show on earth. It turned out to be an addictive compulsive behavior that sentenced me to a lifetime sentence - a prisoner should one see it that way. I was having fun and desiring more at the same time. I was addicted! Even the

complimentary size 10.5 running shoes I choose to wear – they have been so named: The ‘Addiction’ ( Brooks Sports, 1999).

*Andropolis – Running Ahead*

Andropolis’ slender body was a blur as his legs ate up the ground. Around him the rocky terrain gave him only a small clue as to how much distance he covered so far. The muscles in his thighs confirmed it. Six miles, with more than twenty to go. Don’t think about that. Think only of the mission, of that last mile into the cheering crowd that waited for him. Think only of their happiness when they learned his news. The gods had blessed this day; surely they would spare one more blessing to end it happily. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 5)

As one of the participants in this dissertation voiced about her involvement in this project

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Hey, what’s up with the ending always having to be happy! For the most part the only time I was truly happy was when I was engaged – no, not like in to be married – but totally in to my run – I had to be...because it helped me to ignore all the other things I hated (Jade, 1998)

This project is something about which I have great passion. I truly believe in the reasons I shall cite, and the position I will take in its defense. I am not there yet, so the reader cannot expect to be there yet – unless of course they too - belong. Maybe they too have peeked into their own past experience. This project could be about none of you, or it could be about one of you. What matters is- it’s about all of you – especially those that engaged in such an activity and when it was all over – sat down, leaned back and looked inside the moment just past without

having to explain a thing, nor utter a word... only feel how damn good it felt... “Damn that was great,” in fact, “I think I’ll do it again” – but this time I will take it further. I shall add to the experience, which has now left my immediate consciousness. The moment has passed and I crave the next time – the next moment! I don’t want any order of events – I don’t need a trial attempt – it’s about staying engaged – doing what is necessary to achieve, and to please my hedonic nature – I am conditioned to secretly, sensuously, and sardonically add new twists and turns, change the course, play hide and seek with my life - as I know it. It is about reinforcing one moment after another...What can be wrong with that?

I walked through mists and clouds, breathing the thin air of high altitudes and stepping on slippery ice and snow, till at last through a gateway of clouds, as it seemed, to the very paths of the sun and the moon - I reached the summit, completely out of breath and nearly frozen to death. – (Basho, 1955)

It takes a very unusual mind to make an analysis of the obvious (North Whitehead, 1910, p. 60).

“This thing,” the sport world, is truly a Phenomenon: The degree to which can only be known - by the experiencer- the doer. Should you not understand, then this can and will be of no help to you. Should you like to understand, then this may provide an insight into such a world, a culture, a process...a reality. It may only exist in the consciousness of the experiencer. It may only be a sequence of events that temporally affects one’s perception. It is my suggestion that the reality of a Sport World does exist. I passionately propose there to be an “other” side to the sport world experience!

I heard a sound like a million bees buzzing, and smelled scorched ions on the air. I could almost see the electricity waltzing in the air around me, enough of it to strike me dead a thousand times over. The blade of my ice ax spat like an adder. I had taken my crampons off and hung them over my shoulder again; now the sharp points, stabbing into my back through the sweater and shirt, began to give off tiny electrical shocks. I felt like a skin diver held in the jaws of a giant shark; it would either spit me out or chew me into bits, and there was nothing I could do about it, nothing at all. (Schultheis, 1984, p. 7)

To all my known and unknown friends  
 At home and at the world's far ends  
 Who live and die by the lonely run  
 And strive to race against the sun  
 The beauty is in seeking to find  
 The secret ways that affects our mind  
 Come death should we ever lose our pace  
 And never make it- to the "other place." (GYM, 2004)

### *Sans Meaning*

To understand this proposal one must understand the nature – the origin of man as a “sport species.” This dissertation is, and will be about individual athletes. Specifically, those athletes who grew-up, evolved, and were inculcated into what I have previously called the Sport World. Thesis, theories, arguments, and assumptions - they all make up the context for any subject discourse – and this will be no different...well, with one exception. That, as I now

address the committee is the fact that the author of this treatise sans phenomenon has for his whole life, professional, and now late blooming academic career ...suffers from a significant number of learning disabilities. Most of which have labels and stigmas that would keep any good therapist in a job for life. Does this mean I should be given special dispensation, an academic accommodation, or some sort of “separate exemption” – Sure it does! Would that not be just a perfect (simple) “neurotic” bureaucratic solution! But I ask not for that...absolutely not! Let me tell you why... I have, for almost all of my earthly time, been given a release from this most personal of neurological conditions. The cause and effect of such a condition has frustrated and exhausted as well stimulated (self- admitted) not only myself, but also those who have come into contact with this unsanctioned behavior. I now find myself “in the moment” of having had enough of it all. I see this as a catharsis - another parallel dimension to this already disabled dissertation. In theory there may be some explanation. It can be said that such a theory must, or does exist to explain the evolution of one man’s dissipation – a race with himself. Unfortunately, I find no exceptional explanation of such an encounter. What I do know, and for what I have learned thus far - sport (the sport world to which I have belonged) somehow, and in someway has had something to do with this moment! And as I shall exhibit – “I am not the only one!” It is “A long run,” and to that I shall present this dissertation. And I ask only that you consider the homogeneous honorability to wit I submit this dissertation... it has been lived!

There are certain events that may reflect the significant dimensions of all your life, mirroring your entire history in a passing moment (Murphy, 1997).

Theories abound as to the social, cultural, and genetic relationship sport has with those athletes who are fortunate enough to be distinguished as one. Are these athletes born and raised?

Are the athletes developed and nurtured? Where do their personalities and behaviors come from? Why, when we least expect it do some outrageous exhibition of behavior seem to become the example? Traits like competitiveness, confidence and character – what role does/did sport play in the acquisition of such attributes? Is sport a creation, or is it a contradiction when it comes to the development of the individual? One of the most discussed questions of the past twenty years is the question: Does Sport build Character? I consider the question to be of utmost importance. I will spend some words on that question later... somewhere along the way – but not right now.

Till an old experience you to attain it shall be something like – prophetic  
strain. – Milton (2004)

### *The Phenomenon*

Any, or all of the above, can be said to have some element of truth as it applies to the affects of an individual's sport world existence. Or, it may simply be that no direct evidence exists to support any of what is aforementioned. With that noted – the reality is that it makes no difference one way or the other. If it has to be explained then it may never be understood – especially for one who has never lived such an existence. It is, found only in “the lived experience,” a phenomenon to which there is no precise measurement or statistical scale to account for the degrees of difficulty, and element of risk experienced - just by living. To understand any of this might seem foreign to a quantitative researcher. It may seem alien to this committee. It is my position, and not my hope that you shall be given every opportunity to embrace this concept of what I have brought to the table. I have studied, I have researched and most importantly - I have lived this. A phenomenologist (without pretense) I have become, and

an athlete I shall forever remain. I wish to take you all on a long run and we'll get in shape as we gain strength... one forefoot before the other – It really is the only way I know how to do this!

There will be a lot to see, and hear, and experience along the way.

*A Lost Sojourner – Rick*

Every time I head out for western Montana I have this vision I will cross paths with an old friend of mine. He was an outstanding athlete in college – we both achieved “All-American” awards and we often competed against one another. We went on to coach together for a number of years and we have put together some outstanding teams with our share of outstanding athletes. During our tenure as coaches we often discussed moving on and upward in the “ranks.” We were a lot alike (similar backgrounds). He was not as motivated as I was, nor was he willing to attend to his own disability disorder...a state of bliss can exist in ignoring that which we choose to believe has gone away...some things never go away!

I very clearly remember the conversation that has remained with me to this day. As we talked of our aspirations, it was evident he had every intention of maintaining the status quo – remaining right where he was – right where he had been for the past twenty years. He said to me; “Gym, from the time my athletic career ended to this day all I wanted to do is coach, just like I am doing now. I have put my life into this job and it's all I know – I can't imagine doing anything else...except maybe hunt and fish.” In 1995 the decision was made to replace him as the coach. He soon disappeared and for the last nine years I have wondered whatever happened to him? Quite often I would think I had seen him on the streets of Missoula or riding a bike down one of the many trails I would frequently run when visiting. Thoughts, but no facts as to his whereabouts, but about three weeks ago I had just turned off Interstate 90 and headed down

Orange Street into downtown Missoula. As I crossed the Clark Fork river, I saw this figure on a bike, terribly underweight, clearly disheveled, a little grotesque even, yet, I knew – I just knew it was Rick. I traveled about two blocks and quickly turned around illegally in the street. I almost had second thoughts, but decided to pursue him anyway. As I came up from behind him on the bike I yelled; “Hey Richard.”

He looked back and said; “Ya, and who is it?”

“Richard, it’s me Gym!”

For what it’s worth – I hardly need to go much further – for if I tried to explain, one could still not understand, it goes without presumption. I knew what I saw at that moment was what I had for so long believed - he didn’t make it, he was blindsided-passed on the uphill portion, he looked one way and was caught by the other. He gave up before he had the chance to finish - he stumbled on his arrogance, and gave up on his ability to run through the pain...his gumption was gone. He had nothing left, and had he been successful in his first attempt at suicide I would never had lived this moment. It was good for me because I shall never dismiss the connection to that which I hold to be (metaphorically) true – in the long run we shall all die...Some while still alive. (Wharton, 2004)

### **The Warm-Up Methodology: Preparing for an Odyssey**

It would seem, Adeimantus, that the direction in which one starts out to be a man will determine his future life. – Plato (1961).

The first two decades of the fifth century B.C. marked one of the greatest turning points in world history. These were the years of the Persian and Greek wars: two powerful empires consisting of city-states, democratic ideas, and philosophical minds that produced some of the



greatest thinkers known to the world today. Societies emerged, armies conquered territory after territory. Many died in battle... their ideas went with them. New civilizations expanded, and religious thoughts became laws. Customs and cultures spread. Mythical creatures and Herculean Gods were born...And in one of the greatest single moments in all of time...One man stood alone, and his effort, his desire, and in his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice he pushed himself beyond all normal limits of human endurance. His name was Phidippides and forever shall his name be synonymous with the longest run – the Marathon. In essence, we all have been part of our own long run: To the “thing itself,” some will finish, some will not, and others will transcend the experience – not taking anything for granted.

...Phidippides ran over 140 miles to deliver a message then turned around, rose to the challenge, again, running back the same distance. Upon arriving, Phidippides delivered his message, collapsed, and fell dead from exhaustion.

I ask of us all: What price will our own race demand of us? Is this whole process so worth telling, describing, and writing that one cannot finish the effort, complete the run?

How shall one then deliver the message – how shall one run the race? How shall they hear the truth?

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans: 10:14)

In the long run – none of us will finish: to finish is to die. On the long run thoughts come and they go, some remain forever to be with us. Whenever I take out on a long run I always end

up asking myself, “What is it that I will remember when the run ends.... where will I find myself?”<sup>7</sup>

*Andropolis – The Long Run – The Why?!*

Many pages ago you first saw the name Andropolis...he ran across the page like he did in his real life- a metaphor for the marathon as real as his idol Phidippides. He was a Greek kid from New York and like the many participants in this dissertation he also had an experience to share – and so it continues...

There were pebbles in his path, but his thick leather sandals avoided most of them automatically. A badly placed pebble could turn his foot and send him sprawling into the brush that lined the mountain road and then both he and his mission would become a failure. He would have destroyed the only chance for fame the gods had granted him in all his years. He must be careful. Was he being a fool? He tried to put that thought out of his head, picking up a burst of speed and letting it carry him forward for another mile, but the thought kept returning and it soon beat a rhythm in his brain, repeating with every slap of his sandals on the road. “Fool. Fool. Fool. Why didn’t you carry out your orders? Fool. A great military victory, and you’re going to ruin it with your idiocy. Fool of a Greek; your name will go down in the scroll of history, synonymous with stubbornness and ill-judgment.” (Fleischer, 1979)

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<sup>7</sup> First person descriptive, stream of consciousness, the phenomenological methodological first step in finding the essence of the experience, Husserl, 1923. The author will use the stream of consciousness, first person description throughout the indented quoted material as a discussion occurs.

Throughout this dissertation one will read of chances, foolish maneuvers, crazy concepts and wild experiences - all with the same peculiar symbiotic relationship: that of finding a way either through motivation, anger, commitment or just pure exhilaration - a way to live through the years – holding back nothing... yet going the distance. In most cases we are left just with nothing more than an account of one's self versus the other- an ego reduced to a pure reflective examination. Is this me, or is this who I have become, and where, oh where, was/is the determining factor that left me subject to my own questions? "Again...Fool." Nothing about this dissertation came easy, except the foolish notion of mine that I could complete it. I am no scholar – I am no writer of merit. I have no large body of work to reference...I am on the run here, and I can't go back!"

His heart was pumping hard now; Andropolis could feel its beat pulsating in his throat. The sweat had dried on his running body, and the chill of these mountain passes raised the gooseflesh along his arms and shoulders, making him shiver. If he'd taken the river road, as he'd been ordered to, by now he'd have been relieved; another runner would be heading towards the city. Light of heart, light of foot while he, Andropolis, would be sitting by the river bank, wrapped in a woolen blanket of Athenian weave, sipping a restoring possett. Instead, he faced three more laps even harder than the first one, and his endurance might not be equal to it. What if he'd erred? (Fleischer, 1979, p. 9)

I have chose the phenomenological perspective as the passive participant in this dissertation and as its running partner, dialectic verse shall fill the active role attempting to give the reader some understanding as to the origin of this whole activity. There is a conception, a

nature in, and to all of us - some just needed to separate foolish assumptions that things would just “work out!” It must be that inner nature which causes one to second guess our actions. As athletes go; What-ifs and Ya-buts flow like sweat – always a question. Did I do enough? Did I do well enough? For all of you out there who can understand this next thought? As hard as I have trained in the sport world and as many killer workouts that were completed- there is nothing that compares to the rigors of training for this run -through my dissertation. Dissertations do not just “work out!” There are deadlines, and directions to follow – there is an order to all this.

A few years back when struggling to master an academic session. It was told to me; – “Gym, you will never be able to do this.” Now, another damn second guess surfaces; I often wonder- should I have not taken that other road?

There is richness in one’s ability to grasp the meaning of things. Much is based on our capacity to remember those same things. The ability to remember the detail lies in the amount of intensity experienced while engaging in the activity. There are so many separate hunks of experience - years pass by and one experience runs into another. To understand and separate the sequence of events requires one to think back on a continuous line of reality. I find it more valuable to put the stories up and out in the open. A big circular room where are my thoughts could be posted – like those wanted posters you see in the Federal Post Office buildings. Keep them in a circular motion as I walk around the story board of events and reflections. It became a task to arrange many of these same events into some order. Much of which I found to be well grounded in the intensity of the experience. Vivid moment to moment recollections of events. Episodes from the past. (Castaneda, 1985).

“You! Andropolis!”

“Sir!” His slender body erect at attention, he stood ready to receive his orders. Around him the September air swelled with noise. The cries of Darius’ Medes and the victorious shouts of the Athenians and the Plataeans mingled with the clangor of weapons beaten on shields as the victors chased the vanquished to their ships. The Persians ran hard across the marshy ground, heading for a little spit of land they called “Dogs Tail,” around the back of which they’d moored their ships for safety. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 10)

“The Gods have favored us this day,” said Kastor in a rough soldiers voice. He was commander Miltiades’ most trusted captain. “We were outnumbered more than ten to one, but Athene has placed the Persians in our hands. See how the cowards flee, shouting in fear. But, we must get the news to Athens immediately. They fear news of our defeat; we must hasten to bring them news of our victory.” (Fleischer, 1979, p. 12)

Like the long run of this dissertation Andropolis listened to his superior, accepted his orders – but still he had his own agenda – he believed he knew, or thought he knew the best route to the finish. No matter what the challenge it all requires a dedication , a commitment to complete the tasks required of one to reap the benefits to be victorious in the attempt – not to mention the humility one feels when the words and thoughts and phrases fail to capture the essence not the reality. As I stated earlier – I do not consider myself a writer – more like a runner who writes – like a skywriter in the sky – I leave points of coefficients – friction not fiction – facts, stepped on by the flavor of my mind in a moment that lives inside the open air of too little oxygen – but thoughts there are...With the paradox here being; the faster one runs, the slower

the thoughts, and the slower I run- the faster the thoughts. I have no time to research this. But it is so !

“Sir!” agreed Andropolis, his body quivering.

“You are called the fleetest of our runners. Indeed I have seen you myself at the Games. It is too early in the day to light the beacon fires; they will not be seen until the sun goes down. No, you must make a run for it. Take the road long the Kephisos River. I have relief runners posted there; you’ll find your relief and he’ll find his relief some five miles down the road and so on until the last runner leaves from Kolonos, just outside the city. Taken in laps, it will be an easy run for you all.” (Fleischer, 1979, p. 20)

Excuse me Commander – to those of us who engage in the Long Run - we do it for other reasons than to claim it as; ‘an easy anything’ – there is no such thing as an easy run! If it was easy we would never have started – that is not the nature of those who chose this course. Being not a writer I can only as I’ve said; take this Long Run one step at a time. One leg pulls the knowledge while the other pushes the desire...an effort that combines both the deliberate with the instinct to move forward one stride after another in an attempt to seek ‘before tiring’ a balance between just doing and attaining perfection. Doing means doing well, but it cannot be trusted.

Not to mention no glory for the runner, thought Andropolis bitterly, as his head nodded automatically, and he knelt to tighten the straps of his sandals.

Unless it’s the final runner, trotting in fresh and sweet smelling from Kolonos, bringing news of a victory he had not yet laid eyes on, making the men in the

Agora cheer and pelt him with coins and honors. But what an occasion for glory it would be if one runner and one runner alone covered the distance between Marathon and Athens before the sun went down. Andropolis glanced at the sky. Three hours. More than twenty-six miles in three hours. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 30)

How foolish of us to think we can ‘do it’ alone, seek no counsel, stay the stubborn course- let our ego run with us. But then, who can one trust to lead us – map out our strategy, claim to be the one (Coach) who knows what’s best – what’s best for our minds and physiology. While I can see Andropolis glance up at the heavens to get his confirmation – I can only shout at that same sky – loudly and almost desperate... What the Hell am I doing! I can’t stop now – I feel a new strength.”

I’ll take the mountain road, he had decided suddenly. It’s not the easy route the river road is, but it will be all mine. No relief runners are posted there. This is the hour I’ve been waiting for all my life; the Gods have placed it within my grasp. Here is my chance to win honors and undying fame. I’ll do it. I have the stamina. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 31).

My question here has to be – Why would one start without the experience of knowing how far and how fast one can go. It requires an enormous amount of trust in one’s instinct – one’s intuition. Pace is not an acquired skill, it is learned, and I have many questions as to the coaches’ qualifications to run the rough roads and less trodden trails. It has always been my belief based upon my experience that in the Long Run uneven terrain, unstable footing, builds

the overall strength necessary to meet the challenge of sucking unfamiliar dust of a new road, the objective being in avoiding the washout. A leap of faith<sup>8</sup> is all that remains.

But had he? Pelting along now, his chest tight against the wind, the legs-long for his small, thin frame-aching from the toes to the groin, Andropolis felt nothing but doubt and anxiety. He had been running for nearly ten miles now, with sixteen to go, and almost every step had been uphill. This was longer than he'd ever run in his life before. Accustomed to running nine miles every day over smooth terrain; he was torn by pain in every muscle of his body by this punishing uphill run. Perhaps if he slowed down? No. Instinctively he knew that if he slowed his pace at all, he'd stop and lie panting in the road, and his name would live forever in infamy, not glory. He had to go on. Hermes, give me strength, he prayed. You whose sandals have wings, you are the messenger of the gods and the god of the messengers. Give me strength and, most of all, grant me endurance. Athens is still so far away. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 36)

Stay the course. Focus. Write on what you know. So many start, and so many never finish- an (ABD)... All But Done – scenario, all but the dissertation - ABD in capital letters... a stigma in academic circles; a name with no title. And as Andropolis sighs, to the thoughts of slowing his pace he wants not his name to forever live in infamy not glory. “The pain is the same but different - it's all about the pain!” Many long runs have a similar theme when it comes to pain. Prayer may not always delay the onset of pain. Yet for some strange reason

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<sup>8</sup> Leap of faith, term made famous by Soren Kierkegaard (1983).



people still pray especially when desperation appears to be winning. I find that nothing good comes from acting out in desperation (GYM, 2004)

Suddenly, he felt his chest lighten, and his muscles began to release their painful tensions. It was as though he had run up against a wall, and had somehow managed to crash through it. He ran lightly now, with renewed energy. Hermes had heard his prayer. But he was thirsty. Terribly thirsty. How he longed for a cool drink of water from one of the mountain streams fed by the snows. Miles behind him he remembered the tinkling of water, but here nothing. Ahead of him perhaps. He had to keep going. The wind ruffled the light hair that curled in sweaty locks above the leather strip binding his brow. His eyes- blue, like those of Homer's ancient Achaeans, from whom Andropolis boasted his descent- squinted as he tried to see across the miles that lay ahead of him. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 40)

There are some theories or myths that exist that speak to having the necessary experience to complete the long run. Verbal dehydration can bring the effort to a jog – and with all the adamant adipose noise I can muster, even as I find myself half-way down within inches of a bloody touchdown – “Jogging is not running! Jogging is not running!” Damage can be done should not one understand this concept.

But the road took so many sinuous turns up the side of the mountain and across the crags that he could make out nothing - no sheep or shepherds, no flocks of goats, only an occasional wind swept olive tree bearing fruit too small and too bitter to be gathered for the press. Below, on the river road the path lay straight and clear ahead to Athens - already other runners would have been halfway to

home, had they but known his news. Parched, his dry tongue licked feebly at his parched lips. The river road. He'd disobeyed; he'd committed the sin of pride, had he also cost his city a night of anguish, thinking themselves defeated by the Persian nation? (Fleischer, 1979, p. 42)

Sometimes when we get into the middle of something we find ourselves stopping, standing, attempting to get our/one's bearing. I'm sorry but this is no time for a prayer. One just needs to think – If I was out in the middle of the desert what would I do, lay here and cry...die? What sense would allow me to turn around and head back, having gotten this far? There comes a time when one must grab himself up by the seat of the pants and take to the trail - move on and not second guess. Even if it's the wrong decision- it's the right move – Once in the middle we can only look to see ahead...therein might be the paradox! One barely has the time to appreciate the view. The worst case scenario is that you will die.

No. The gods would help him. Without thinking, Andropolis lengthened his stride, and his foot hit sharply against a small boulder growing slowly in the road. Spinning, Andropolis crashed heavily to the ground, striking the road with the right side of his body, full-length.

For a moment or two he lay there, listening to the breath whistle from his chest, glad to be lying down. It was over. He could just lie here till the snows came and covered him and he would meet death gladly, for having been so disobedient a fool.

No. Impossible. He had to get up. An entire polis, the greatest in the world - Athens- was waiting for his words. Andropolis pulled himself up to his elbow,

resting his body on the ground while he moved his leg. His knee ached fiercely, but it moved. The leg moved; the thigh moved; the ankle moved. Nothing was broken or torn. He was scratched and bleeding, but all was in good running order. He uttered a harsh laugh. Running order. Pulled himself to his feet, jogging in place. The blood was already caking on his knee, forming large scabs. The mountain road lay ahead of him still; he could not take his rest until it lay behind him. Slowly but with gathering speed he began to run again. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 49)

Falls and setbacks; Time spent trying to retrace ones steps. There is no merit in taking back the thoughts. Confidence is hard to take back when one has already committed themselves to the activity of correcting the errors and rewriting the words to fit with the next step – a smooth run! This activity; of finding a deliberate translation that connects my thoughts to the experience is not a smooth run. There is bleeding somewhere!

Eighteen miles. He had run eighteen miles so far; the stone marked at the edge of the road proclaimed it. Something more than eight miles to go. What time was it? The sky was turning pale purple at the horizon line as the sun traveled down to meet it. Apollo had driven the chariot's fiery horses across the sky one more time; in less than sixty minutes the sun would set. Eight miles to go before the pale of the purple turned to deepest blues and flaming pinks and oranges. Could he run eight miles along darkening mountain terrain in under sixty minutes? Mt. Pentelicus was behind him; he had almost covered Mt. Anchesimus;

only Mt. Lycabettus lay between him and the walls of the city now. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 52)

The amazing thing about The Long Run is that one can run miles and miles before they realize how far they have traveled. There are so many thoughts and images that leave traces of themselves – footprints on the hyper thalamus – subjects for extraction left in place for another time. Running time is warped in the long run – skewed to the ‘motion of the notion.’ In other words:

The pain of his injured knee had become a part of him now; he embraced it as though it were divinely sent to spur his progress. Run. Run. Run. He told himself again and again. Run. Run. It was the only word he would allow in his head. Run. Run. The scabs on his knee and legs burst with his exertions, and Andropolis felt fresh blood streaming down his bare leg, dripping on his sandals and making them slippery. But he couldn’t stop to bind his knee. He had to keep going.

There can be very few reasons to stop when nearing the finish. In fact there is a response that overtakes the mind and the body – to go faster, to not get passed, to see the finish for what it is- the momentary end ...and the beginning to another fine reflection. Another effort to process and another start to prepare for. There is no sign of submitting to the pain - it is all just ‘perceived exertion’ now, and it means nothing! It is a race against oneself to run through the finish. Competitors add another dimension should they be involved - but this run to the finish is all about knowing how much one has left in the tank how many more seconds, how many more steps one can go before the end; the collapse, or death-

should it come to that! It' a proud moment when one can come so close so as to kiss death on the cheek.

Trembles were seizing his thin body and raking it; his legs felt like wobbling jellyfish, the kind he'd seen as a child off the docks at Piraeus. His shoulders jerked in spasms, while thirst overwhelmed him so that he could barely breathe. Dust from the road was choking his nostrils and mouth. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 55)

Unfamiliar territory that possesses us to venture into such a place – Personally I am curious. In fact, I write because I am curious. And to that I can also state; I run into the unknown for the same reasons. A good Long Run can take you places you've never visited before. Though it is a challenge and can leave you gasping for air, it is nothing more than another inconvenience. If you can't portage the canoe, or forge the river, you've taken the wrong road. Should you not be willing to go the extra mile you shall never know what may lie in wait? If we all had stopped to map our life I can't help but wonder how many would have turned around when faced by even the slightest obstacle. Condemned to curiosity - resigned to risk:

Dust? On a mountain road? No, by all the gods. He was heading downward now, onto the flat. The walls of Athens were not three miles distant, and the Agora itself some four hundred yards into the city from the northern postern. Around him he could see, in the darkening sky, signs of habitation. A villa was nestled there, among the mountain's crags, surrounded by olive trees. Goats appeared on either side of him, crowding him off the path, their yellow eyes questioning his right to their terrain. Down the path he pounded, past the goats,

past the shepherds who hailed him in excitement, who beckoned him with their flasks, tempting him with water, wine, fresh cool milk. Not now. He couldn't stop no. He ran on toward the city.

"Where from?" called the guard at the postern gate.

Andropolis opened his mouth to answer the challenge, but no word could issue from the parched lips. Only the wheezing, heavy rasp of his breathing. Wordlessly, he pointed behind him as he kept running. "Marathon?" (Fleischer, 1979, p. 60)

Somewhere along this run, or maybe it has yet to be said - but, I know it's been said before. One must come to understand from where they came. It is important even if it can't be verbalized. Knowing the general direction may pass for the time being - at least it gives one a direction in which to point. Knowing learning from the past provides a reference a bearing should it be necessary to make a return trip. Hell that's why the compass was invented yet how many people know how to use one properly. The result being; one is left to wander about with no real direction in mind, a direction unknown.

Andropolis nodded his head, exhausted as he passed beneath the gate into the teeming city. Dusk lay everywhere on the stones and brick of Attica; soon the beacon fires would be lit. He ran onward, to the meeting place in the market, the Agora, where the noble families of Athens had gathered, the men's faces heavy with doubt and worry under their curling beards. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 65)

It can all be so exhausting. In the moment of such exhaustion one must know their limit or 'limitless.' A place beyond tolerance where physical ataxia combined with total

psychological surrender puts one in a perilous position...maybe near death. Right now, without attempting another thought I want any of you who have gotten this far to sit back, close your eyes and reflect on the most exhausting moment you can recall. You might even remember a moment that took place while you were there, a witness to another's exhaustion. To wit we then realize our own was/has become less:

“A runner!” cried one, as Andropolis came into view.

“From Marathon?” The boy's tunic was ripped; his legs and sandals covered with blood, both fresh and drying.

“Alas!” See how he sweats and trembles. It must have been a great defeat.” (Fleischer, 1979, p. 70)

Writing is exhausting. In fact in the Long Run it may be the writing that brings me to my knees. I have had visions, described as self-flagellation. One moment my head rests semi-balanced on my shoulders and the next instant I have it squeezed between my palms trying to blow an image out my nose – I hear noises that aren't there, spontaneous interruptions I can't stand this anymore – I would much rather have my legs covered with blood and my toes missing nails. Then I realize something; Writing is like running, the dried thoughts and ripped pages bring fresh blood to the surface as long as you can keep going - keep moving on the two feet that got you this far. I remember reading of rituals where runners flogged themselves with thorny branches of locust trees and ran until their legs bled out and their shoes squished with blood. Now that I could write about! A murmur, half moon, swept a cross the Agora as Andropolis came to a halt, wheezing and choking. Shivers shook him so hard he could not speak.

“Water! Bring the runner water!”

“No, bring him wine! And hurry!”

But Andropolis shook his head, gasping for breath, he straightened up, and opened his mouth to speak. At once, the voices in the Agora died down, and every eye was bent anxiously on the blur-eyed young man.

“Nikaskomen machain,” he croaked, his voice breaking.

“What did he say? Have we won?!” (Fleischer, 1979, p. 75)

It has to be experienced – I can not hold back anymore. If you have never won – How can you know about the win – If you have never run – how can you possibly know what it means to triumph over yourself, or over another in all out competition – To the death- the games, and race, and events, the risks are what gives us a glimpse of oneself – they reveal things. Things that we may have never known, had we not tested our will, and fed our desire to cross the line – just to see what’s there.

“We have won the battle! He said we’ve won!”

A shout of triumph and great glee swept over the Agora. Praise to all the gods; Athens has conquered the Persians and driven the invader back to his shores.

Hearing the shout, Andropolis felt a great peace descending upon his spirit. The weariness drained out of his limbs and left him filled with euphoria. He had not failed his city. He had run the distance to bring Athens the news. Happiness suffused him.

“Boy, have you run all this way alone? Twenty-six miles and more? Have you run all the way from Marathon?”



Andropolis smiled and nodded. He felt his eyes closing. Peace was blessing his eyelids.

“What’s your name, son? Tell us your name that it may be written in the scroll of never-ending fame.”

Andropolis son of Tesomides, said the runner in his head. I am the runner from Marathon. The Marathon runner. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 77)

I may be assuming a lot here with all that has thus been written. So far, any symbiotic relationship to any of you is purely for “others” out there who should happen to read between these lines, for as I have established I am nothing but a compilation of my own experience, a basic instinct. To research what I know best – and despite any magnificent monologues a simple biological interaction. This is nothing but a thought sans the assumption that someone will understand the purpose of their own life and seek to spend a little time on their own run. I think it to be in our silence that we come to know who we are, and why we do the things we do, and most importantly who we have become. For the most part, I am not happy with my behavior. What a mess I have made of things at one time or another. I have no answer, sure there exists justification – but those are wasted words with amoral attributes. Real thought is needed – real redemption

But none of the anxious Athenians caught a syllable of the dying man’s silent answer. As darkness descended on Athens and the beacon fires from the mountains by the sea confirmed his news of victory, they wrapped his lifeless body in a cloak of finest wool and carried it off to be rubbed with the rarest of oils and burned on a hero’s pyre.

As befits a hero—even a nameless one. (Fleischer, 1979, p. 85)

As I ascend to my last high mountain resting place, there will be no beacon fire to guide me—and to that matter; for any others to find me by. I will have been victorious in my final days – This whole run through life – This long run of mine will be my answer to - I'll wrap my own body in my favorite garb. I'll listen to the wind and I'll talk to no one. Who said it all has to have a happy ending anyhow?

Not until this past Olympics could the modern version – a remarkable story of another modern Pheidippides. “A triumph of the will “

There may no one who epitomizes the triumph of the will as does Kyriakides. A modern day Greek runner who left a legacy of will and who in himself possessed the spartan character that spurned the cry from the Greek mothers to their sons; “Win or Die!”

“A triumph of the will,” is the way Greek runner Stelios Kyraikides victory in the Boston marathon in 1946. For those of you who no nothing of a; “A triumph of the will,” I encourage you to seek reference material on this accomplished Greek runner. He has been called the modern Pheidippides. He had a purpose in his life to the degree very few of us can ever understand. No one gave him a chance of winning the Boston marathon at the age of 36 – “You can't do it.” he was told. In fact the director of the marathon refused to allow Kyriakides to enter the race, fearing that; “We're afraid you will die in the streets.” But he ran anyway – “This is my destiny,” he said. Kyriakides ran against John Kelly who has also made an appearance in the text of this dissertation. There can be no more a fitting description than the ancient Greek motto to which he devoted his run: “With it, or on it” –return victorious or dead.

### **Reflecting Comments**

The dissertation that follows is intended for an audience interested in sport phenomenon. There are hundreds of authors, researchers and other authorities who can, and will be cited for their work in this field. Additionally, I have chosen many other resources: from movies, documentaries, original writings and personal conversations. To all of the brilliant and valuable works referenced I feel an obligation to present them in the best way possible. I will, as well, provide a selected bibliography and listing of all detailed references.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### A Descriptive Reflection of Self Through Sport

#### *On The Run...*

Let me tell you a story. It's about a young boy who grew up in Berkeley, California. He was an angry young boy. He wouldn't listen to anyone. He didn't trust too many people. He was stubborn, and he felt he had to do everything his own way. He was a survivor. And he never talked of his family life. He was baptized and molested within days of each event.

People took an interest in him because he was so likable, yet so competitive. He had lots of friends but not many friendships. When he was young, he cried a lot when he lost at games. Some thought he was a just big baby and always wanted to get his way. He played all the time. Every sport or game imaginable. He got good at many sports and he had one advantage ...he could run very fast. In the fall it was football, in the winter it was basketball, and baseball in the spring along with track. All he wanted to do was play. He was a dreamer, and an incurable romantic. Everybody liked him because he would always laugh and smile. Sometimes the smiling and laughter was not genuine. It was easier if he did so. Nobody ever asked him, "How are things going?"

His life was a separate reality. The only value he saw was being able to become a sports star...an athlete His life was all about sports, and when he got older it was sports during the day - even while school was in... and it was his friends, and girls at night. Girls always liked him. They all seemed to want to help him and take care of things for him - like a mother would a child. He depended on his Aunt for direction. He was a fair student, And like on most of his

report cards, added to the bottom (in addendum) was: He does not apply himself. If only he would work as hard in math as he does at recess. As a sophomore in high school he never thought about preparing for college. It was all about sports, and he was really good at that. He found that he would get lots of attention if he was a jock....so he began thinking and acting like a jock. You might ask what does a jock think and act like? I'm not sure they are called jocks today. The NCAA likes to call them student-athletes!

And he found that being a jock definitely had its benefits. For one thing, you get immediate attention from your peers. No one expects much from you, so when you claim you can't do something, someone is always there to do it for you. There is always a cheerleader or a girl friend who will give you the answers for the exam, or write papers for you. And if all else fails, your favorite teacher will come to the rescue and give you another chance to earn a passing grade, or just give you a C so you'll be eligible to play in the next game, season, and semester. How could any jock not be as average as any other student? Along with the academic help, he got a lot of help maintaining his physical fitness level and strength. A jock gets the opportunity to take three or four P.E. (physical education) classes a day, plus after school practice. Others admire you for your physical ability and athletic prowess. And if you are a good enough jock, the rules that others abide by don't apply to you. Sometimes even though you are not a dumb jock, you get the chance to act dumb, and when you do that for awhile - some start to help you even more. Others seem to want to show kindness to dumb jocks and it makes them feel good if they can help. By acting dumb you can let your mind get lazy, and like a leaky water pipe, you begin to follow that path of least resistance. You get to be the team captain, and earn a four-year letterman's sweater.

In his senior year he was awarded a college scholarship and had opportunities to go to many big name schools. Things could not have been any better for Gym.

Now the above passage or “dumb jock rites” may seem to be just that...dumb. But, with the exception of a few generalizations it is all true - and as the experience described it can't be changed – it can only be learned from.

*Lived Experience – On the Run*

I had just spent the entire night in a concrete drain culvert. It was dry, smelly, and dusty; it ran underneath State Highway 4 - somewhere Pittsburgh and Berkeley. I loved California as a kid. I spent a lot of time running. I would run to stay away; to avoid going home...things were not so good at my home, but then, whose home was especially good when you're only thirteen! There was always a steady breeze blowing through this culvert, it was a nice place to be...it felt good on those hot California mornings; I knew this place well – I'd been here before. It was a good place to think about stuff...

The previous night I spent hiding out at the home of my girlfriend. Her parents really liked me a lot. She was Mexican. Being with her, and around the family was so much fun...I loved everything about the Spanish culture. It was great to feel so accepted. My Father “hated Mexicans”, that is why I so enjoyed my time with Rebecca's family. I even had my own little room out in the pump house...in fact we spent the previous night together... snuggling in the dark! We snuggled a lot! Her mother would talk with me! I knew nothing about love in those days. I was to find out many years later that Rebecca was actually one-half 'Piute Indian' she never learned this until her father died. I never told my dad this – it would not have mattered anyway! I knew he didn't like Native Americans any better. But, I did know this: Rebecca was

the most intriguing girl I have ever since come to know! And what an important role was she (much later on) about to play in the course...destiny of my life!

To comprehend the 'inner world' of the sport culture and to understand the reason why each man, as an individual, chooses to partake in sport activity, is to pursue inquiry into personal forms of a meaningful and significant existence. (Slusher, 1967)

Still on the run...it was Thursday night – I remember it well. The next day was the all school "field day" at my high school. All kinds of events- a 50 yd swim, a softball through, hoop shoots, jumps, and runs of all sorts...all of which I was anxious to do. But it was the 600 yard run that really intrigued me. (Even more than Rebecca had!) I remember how the others would talk of "it," and how they would... "die!" I think it was the dying part that fascinated me most; could someone really die running that thing? I, as many young men were at that time, was invincible...being at death's door was a most motivating disposition. I did well there!

I was still quite tired from the past two nights but the thought of participating/ competing, moved me into my hyperactive mode...another place I was most familiar with. I had no choice in that matter – let's just say I was born to it!

#### *The Event...*

Coach Howard Brevick ran the stopwatch. In fact, he was pretty much in charge of everything! It was said that he reveled in watching the pain on the faces of those who came across the finish line, fell knees first on the asphalt, or ran to the chain link fence only to hang themselves by the fingers until they had recovered enough to make it to the grass and throw-up...Coach Brevick would not tolerate "puke" on the (his) "blacktop," the name given to a very course grade of asphalt in the 50's.

No one “as it was,” or for what I could determine: liked him. He was absolutely the meanest P.E teacher in all of Northern California. “Hey man, can you believe that he made us run today,” the others would say.

He was a classic “Bulldog” of a man, Korean War veteran, tugboat captain, football player, shot putter, and coach. Pain and discomfort was the only true measure of how hard one had worked: according to Coach Brevik. He believed that two, if not more workouts a day was the only way one could achieve “athlete (his criteria) status.” His criterion was; should you happen to live long enough for him to put you there, then maybe he would consider it...and only when you (in his ‘eyes and mind’) deserved it!

My life was “messed-up!” And it was hot - I had not slept well: the rumbling of the big trucks, and their “jake” brakes kept me awake...I stuck some marshmallows in my ears...it helped!

I had a pair of red-ball sneakers (I had stolen them from J.C Penny’s a week earlier) with a place for my little toes to poke out. I wore no socks, and had not cleaned my ‘school issue’ gear. When I got to the starting line Coach Brevik looked down at my shoes. He also looked at the St. Christopher’s medal I wore around my neck. Rebecca had given it to me on our bus ride home from the shopping center (there was no such thing as a mall back then). She stole it from W.T. Grants and I was honored to now wear it...we would find any excuse to “go steady !” “You might need that,” he said: lifting a finger as to touch my cross...I just looked at him...He really did scare me!



Coach Brevik had never ever spoken to me until just that moment...I am not sure he had meant too...a slip maybe? And he said nothing now...he had a way of saying nothing, while saying everything ...I knew that...good coaches do that!

Coach Brevik scared the hell out of me. He scared everybody! My initial reaction was: “I don’t like you, I can’t like you”...in fact, “I hate you,” I must hate you; because everyone hates you. I had no such reason for such an attitude except that I hated a whole lot of things at that time. This man never smiled. If he spoke it was to remind one of the sissy-ass-pantywaist gutless pieces of dog crap they really were. He had a way with letting young men know that they had not earned his attention yet – if ever they could!

There were so many stories about him...kicking butts and grabbing kids by the nape of the neck, and in one swift “jerk” move of his massive outstretched arm- remove any possibility of being able to use their feet as a means of escape. Everything that I had ever heard about this man told me to avoid (forever possible) the P.E. section he taught. For some strange reason - I think a simple twist of fate landed me next to him.

“OK girls, line-up,” his teeth never separated when he spoke, “let’s see which one of you sissies can lose your cookies first! He reminded me of one of those madmen, a deranged psychopathic fiend...the likes of which showed their sinister smile in the Wolfman – Vampire movie posters that I would fixate on while standing in line at the Enean Theater. I really (thought) I hated him! It was easy to hate things back then....and one did not even needs much of a reason. Hating a man like coach Brevik allowed me to retain my anger. Yet, there was something, and for some reason, “in that moment” I felt so desperate: to seek; gain his approval, want his recognition...I loved to hate what I did not yet know!

*Embracing Embodiment*

...If I take experience as merely a sort of passive recording of impressions, I shall never manage to understand how the reflective process could be integrated with experience. On the other hand, the more we grasp the notion of experience in its proper complexity, in its active and I would even dare say in its dialectical aspects, the better we shall understand how experience cannot fail to transform itself into reflection, and we shall even have the right to say that the more richly it is experience, the more, also it is reflection. (Marcel, 1950)

There are events, special moments, and specific people who come into your life and shall forever affect you. Along with what I can only describe as: those which reside in the metaphysical dimension, there exists the humanistic component I believe coaches fall unto this category. It is also my assumption that one's competition, one's friends, fans, and even lovers cross over, and most certainly affect the nature of this - sur-reality." It is also my belief that often those who do "affect" may be completely unaware of this phenomenon. There seems to be a moment in a young person's life that may well define the course of character their consciousness will travel. For some, this may not be the case at all. For somewhat examples I will personally cite may be nothing at all like the experiences they had --- and therein lies the difference: The difference between the real experience and the unrealized experience...the difference between perception and one's own illusions. For many it may, all just be in the "mind..." A disposition abbreviated down to ideas, consciousness, and awareness, strange feelings, as well some unexplained emotion...again, if one has to explain it, one may not understand.

I loved Coach Brevik...he let me sleep in his garage for almost a month. He had prepared it with a bed, and a radio, and an old blanket that served as a curtain. He took me in. And in the process; his feelings never changed – I got no ‘special’ treatment...I believed that he knew what was best for me – I followed, and I listened. He once slammed my father up against the wall outside the P.E. office. As would be described today – My father had issues with him! Coach Brevik bought me a new pair of running shoes – and he took me (made me) around to all the places where I had “borrowed” the goods (equipment). I spent many Saturday’s (between training) making good on my borrowed items. Coach Brevik had an ethic about that kind of stuff!

Coach Brevik took me fishing and dove hunting. We once traveled to Bremerton, Washington – where we went on a tugboat, and fished off his brother’s commercial fishing schooner. He introduced me to other coaches – like Percy Cerutti, and he once thanked my Aunt; (my tennis coach) Roxanne Davies for helping to “toughen me” up for him. Still, I had no reason to like him! He made me run so far, and so hard I would cry. I could / would never stop, but would cry inside and I would throw-up and I wanted to stop – but didn’t dare...I feared him; not because of what I thought he would do, but of what I needed to do - to become in his eyes, the athlete/person he wanted me to be – I needed him for me to; “make it!” He would say to me: “Jim, you never, ever - leave it on the track, or in the field. You’ve got to ‘want it’ ...you must ‘want it’ - so bad...even if it kills you!.” I trusted coach Brevik....and I believed in him...Why?

There was a time when the court, cinder, and green – the game meant everything. A common sight, to me did seem all - adorned in a spiritual high. The glory, the guts, and the fight. It is now as it has been before; the origin of fiction, and lore. The truth is not to be found

competing in only a dream. I turn every which way I may - back by night and fore by day...Only in history can time tell things of which I have once seen – I now can see no more.  
(GYM, 2004)

I believed in Coach Brevik because: Well, I could say: “that I knew not better.” Or, that it (what he did) was: “probably good for me.” The reality was that: You see...I did not mind the; “if it kills you part...if it kills me part! “ I learned from Coach Brevik that being in sport was, who and what I was – it was what defined me! Now, that is not to say this (way) method was for everyone. For just because one has learned to run fast, train hard, and excel at a particular sport – did not mean; they had “made it.” There is far and away too many examples of this not being the norm, nor even the exception! In fact, were I to cite just what it was I had learned from the/my experience at that time – I would have had no answer...for the question was never asked. All that mattered was that I had become what someone else had seen to: that which I was supposed to become. As an athlete I survived, I thrived, and I always wanted more, and more of the total experience. I could never get enough...and even now I have such a compulsive behavior attached to my personality: always the need to move, do, jump, run, sail, climb...as well, achieve; always willing to please...!

#### *Reductionism – Reflecting on Meaning*

I hereby need to regress a moment: A time for reflective forgiveness. For it was somewhere in this time frame (most probably it occurred earlier) that I believe – I had no concept: “of the self.” I was completely engulfed in a process, in a culture that rewarded miscreant behavior. I may have been a survivor as I like to call it...but all I had become was a rebellious punk who expressed his behavior by acting completely outside the lines.

This was easy to do! For as long as I could be in the game, or in the race, or train to the death...I was excused! It was a time when I skipped many of the lessons. It was a critical time for me to have missed out what as I (using the reductive method) can only describe as: the essential components to my moral and character development. This may not for some, be such a time for such a self-disclosure – but for me it has become a quest. Again, as I have previously noted: there is, I believe in all of us, an “other side.”

I was and felt so fortunate to have had all the attention, the great coaches, friends, thrills and of course the personal experience that no one could ever take away from me. It all was at that time a learning experience...one that now allows me the unique opportunity to give: a descriptive explication, peculiar to such mental phenomena.

Roxanne Davies was one of the most competitive human beings I had ever met. She was a Palm Springs tennis brat, a spoiled rotten kid, teen, and athlete. She hated her father (I think she hated lots of things -men included), and this by her own admittance was her best part! She was an outstanding teacher, and we got along great. She would tell me stories of how much pleasure she derived out of teaching tennis to the 40's era celebrities – who after lessons would be further humiliated by challenging her to a match: Betting was involved, and the ‘celebs’ didn't last long.

One time Roxanne sat me down (in front of many others) after a junior match and told me she would make me a great tennis player someday. But first I had to get an attitude; an attitude about the game – about myself...a killer instinct! She once walked on to the court during a side change, grabbed me right around the neck – stuck her forehead on mine and told me: “If I didn't move more, get to the net, and beat this little shit,” she'd “kill me herself! “ I believed her!

She taught me an aggression I had not yet learned and how to take down my opponent by whatever means. She taught me an acceptability of behavior that I did not have to be accountable for...as long as I was able to “win” nothing else mattered. I remember how much Roxanne hated my father...she was the only person I ever knew at that time that took nothing from him...she assisted in my development, she motivated me...and all of this made me like her even more!

I met Percy Cerutti as a youngster. Coach Brevik had known of him and his “training methods.” He was an advocate of what I never could quite say but was very interested in and most willing to try... Stotanism! Coach Cerutti believed one must drive them-self, seek a form of suffering, plea to their inner soul that: “Only when one grows tired can one build the confidence to overcome” - delay the onset of exhaustion! Cerutti was a tactless taskmaster who preached that: “No man becomes a champion without training hard (“to the extreme”). With hard training came confidence, and with confidence comes character, and strength of body, of will, and of the soul.” I really liked the “new soul” idea. I was very ready for another soul!

Australian coach Percy Cerutti preached a creed of “Stotanism,” or to better explain: A philosophy which sought to “seek suffering.” Cerutti’s training methods were self-created out of his personal training experiences and his personal attitudes toward life. Cerutti’s creed of stotanism (a union of the words sto-ic and spar-tan), with it’s insistence on hardihood and simple living was a variation of primitive camping at Volodalen...a special place he choose on the coast of Australia. (Doherty, 1959)

During one of my summer breaks I was asked to run junior track. Both boys and girls ran together. We had a man named Bud Winter as a coach. He knew coach Brevik and coach Treete – they were both former athletes at the college where he coached. .He would later on become

famous for his coaching of some great Olympians. I wanted to be an Olympian. He was a lot different than coach Brevik. Not so menacing looking, a little quieter – I listened and went along with his different ways...some thought him strange. He had a name and a phrase for everything – like a special code or language. He also liked to hunt and would talk of the speed of the deer as it ran and bounded through the woods. He was fascinated by the motion ...and would have us do bounding drills – up and reach out with our toes with our forelegs pushing and driving – and all the while he would yell “high knees, high knees!” He was a method coach - He had specific workouts that he believed would produce specific results if you could do the work. He called me ‘Deerlegs’ and it stayed with me to this day.

Through Coach Brevik I was able to establish my belief in a concept, a routine that I now know was needed in my life...a routine that only a few (should they live through it) experience such a combination: That of one’s personal system with an obsessive compulsive behavior that stressed striving for excellence, endurance, and in general – surviving the experience! It is all in, and about the experience! Little did I realize then how self-reliant I was becoming...how much strength I was gaining...how much pain I could endure. I denied pain – in fact, I began to enjoy how my body and my mind handled such a flow of opposition: that pain which was imagined and that pain which was real. Intellectuals rationalize this concept of dualism and often argue the merits of a mind / body separation...all I can say to them is: The more I (my body) did, the more I (my body) wanted to do. The harder I trained the further and faster I ran, the more I (my body) endured and the more obsessive I’d become. The end result was that; I was better prepared and ready for any such activity that required my mind and body to engage in.

It was from Percy Cerutti that I learned the ultimate in concepts: “Crazed commitment!” That is what he called it. He also said that if one practiced being in a state of “crazed commitment”...they would be able to see their soul. I saw my soul!

### *Finish Line*

Coach Brevik died four years, two months and one day after my first encounter with him. As I sat on the infield of Edwards stadium in Berkeley, California the 1967 NCAA Track and Field Championships were just about over...I was expecting Coach Brevik to come down and see me – my race had just ended...I wanted to throw-up very badly, but dared not. There was no way I wanted him to see me in the act! I was a freshman in college. As I looking up for Coach Brevik in the stands, I noticed someone was standing behind me...At first all I saw was a shadow – but it was no way large enough to have been Coach Brevik. It was another athlete, a teammate. He handed me a note, it was a telegram from Coach Brevik’s wife. Coach Howard Brevik had died at 12:35 P.M. the day before. He was putting the final events together for the all school field day that afternoon...The telegram was short: Two lines or so.

“Jim, Howie died yesterday. He wanted to be there. He would not have wanted you to know before your race. You were his favorite.”

As I sat on the infield grass, I could only think of how he would have grabbed me up one side with his massive arms – look right into my eyes and proceed to tell me just what it does take to win the “big one” – my seventh place finish was second from last, and I knew that just wouldn’t do! I would have welcomed a little yank from Coach Brevik.

I leaned back looking up at the sky and began to reflect back some four years to the day I ran my first race for Coach Brevik...the field day. I had just finished running the fastest 600



yards ever run at the event. I ran so hard I thought I was going to die – it was everything I had heard it to be...and more! I started off fast and never gave one thought to what was to be. Nearing the end of the race, around the last turn, I caught my little toe (which was sticking out of my shoe) of my left foot, completely removing any skin and the entire nail that had once been there. I had made it across the finish line, well ahead of all the others. I had my hands on my head and wanted to throw-up very badly...doing all I could do not to fall down. I turned back to look at the others and noticed that behind me stood Coach Howard Brevik, his big barrel chest and wide posture cast a huge shadow, and I had a hard time focusing on his face. He looked down at my bloody toe and then looked up, showing no emotion. I got this strange feeling that he liked what he saw...he smiled without showing any teeth...his teeth scared me! Then he said, “So hey kid, what kind of a name is Warston...,” still not separating his lips. I just looked at him...disbelieving that he actually spoke to me and a question no less... “Hell,” he said, “it doesn’t matter, I want to see you out for track: And hey, you don’t need those little toes for anything – anyway - it’s only the big toe that counts – you remember that!”

A philosopher once said that life is only meaningful if you know where it is you are going, and if you know from where it is you have come. And if, as we pass through this life we allow the fear of dying to hold us back, then we have not yet lived!

So what does this mean – where am I taking you on my run...which is far from over by the way? I cannot conceive of myself being anything other than what I have become...and I need not attempt to convince any of you to run with me. I am only what can best be described as a believer, a survivor, an experiencer, ... a being not bound by structure, convention, and or authority. I am a product of, and a direct result of megabits of conscience, experience, and

genetic pre-supposition. I will argue that nobody can speak with authority that has yet to experience that which they have yet to experience. Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood.

If there is to be any “intentionality” to this discourse it may lie in the following ongoing phenomena that I will now describe. Edmund Husserl (1923) serves up this directive. It is a matter of describing, not of explaining, or analyzing...one must return to the “things themselves.” With that, there will be no further explanation.

*Through the Finish...*

It's the fall of the year 2001. I have reached a point in my long run whereby – my motivation has been in wane for months now... I do not like to stop for anything. This project is missing something. I strongly sense what it is, and can best describe it as: my self-intuition. I started to grow very impatient...but I found myself waiting and soon enough it came...like a hard rain it hit just as I was struggling: desperately seeking to recollect myself...only to find I had then expanded my purpose beyond all reason and all logic. It was what can only be described as: “the ultimate in the moment experience!”

The last time I had seen Rebecca, was well over 35 years ago. Years before that she had provided me with my special St. Christopher's medal...I wore it forever, and left it with her for safe-keeping. She was also the one who motivated me to such a level that she would never be forgotten. In fact, over the years I often thought of what might have been...of what may have come of her. If there was ever a young love at such a critical time in one's life – it was that which existed between the two of us. But it was never to be. Once past those high school years all that remains is what was left of the experience. I could not help but wonder what had

happened to my St. Christopher's medal, as well my high school letterman's sweater, and as an afterthought: The small medallion given to me by Coach Brevik...it had an image of a runner and it was well worn and it was my last spiritual/physical link to Coach Brevik...I was again feeling quite messed up!

It was early December when I received a late night phone call. "Jim do you re... (and before she could finish )... member me – I responded. "Do I remember you...BC (that is what I called her) Oh my God! Rebecca what are you doing?"

BC and I have since spent hours, and days, and now months: returning to a "forever time. "A time that has placed us both somewhere between it never was - and will always be," a time that spontaneously activated my spirit and saved my soul. Now I am no model man – and have already left myself open to so much criticism here. But I cannot constrain this moment – it is, and may well be a/the defining moment in what this whole dissertation is about. This is about life and specifically those lives so affected by their experience in the sport world. Well add another dimension folks, for this run is a passionate one – and 'it' like the rest of my runs – has the potential to be a long one!

On February 15, 2002, Rebecca and I met again after 35 years. We went to dinner, and to visit her mother (Marcos, her father had died five years ago). Her mother welcomed me with open arms just as she did so many years ago. I stood in the living room of the home I remembered so well - it had not changed...I repeat this for any skeptic...the home had not changed in some 35 years. I started to get tears in my eyes.

BC's mom couldn't control herself neither...she really liked me a lot (back then, as well again now). Within the emotion she breaks out and says to me: "Jim, do you remember those old

bloody shoes you used to have? I remember so well the day you showed up here with blood all over your shoes!” At that moment, all I could do was walk outside – if there is really such a thing as being back ‘somewhere in time’- this was my moment...and I savored the moment!

Rebecca and I returned to her home. After some wonderful conversation we went upstairs and she removed a box from her closet, as well a small item from her jewelry box. She said, “Hold out your hand,” and she placed my once lost St. Christopher’s medal in my hand. She picked up the box from the floor and we both proceeded to open it. Inside, still in the three decade old plastic wrap was my letterman’s sweater...a maroon cardigan...with a big block ‘D’ covering the small waist pocket. I picked up the sweater about the same time I hugged BC. As I started to lay the sweater down on the bed I put my index finger into the small pocket (it was a total intuitive act)...as I circled my finger in the pocket- I felt something there...working it up and out of the narrow space – I placed the round medal in my hand. On one side was the image of a hurdler on the other an inscription...I did not have to read it – I knew what it said, I just looked at BC, turned my head to the side and started to cry...

“Hey, you OK,” she said.

I opened my closed hand and replied: “BC, Coach Brevik gave me this medal...

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Moving Together, Learning Through Phenomenological Experience:**

#### *Introduction to the Sojourners*

When it was that I first proposed this project I had not given much thought to the inclusion of others. It has been my experience that those who know of what the sport world is, or is not about often choose to retain for themselves - their reaction. Now I can not say why this is so. But hopefully having brought forth the many others – Sojourners as they will be called will provide some insight for the reader - it has for me.

I can not go without notice here. There exists a great visual reconstruction. And to that I cite an extraordinary Long Run theme: The scenes are portrayed in the movie version of *Forest Gump*. I enjoy the use of visual images to assist to facilitate the act of description. Thus I add the following.

In the film, we see the coach looking on as Forrest Gump streaks across the field, he comments: “Run you son-of-bitch run, run. He must be the stupidest son-of-bitch alive, but he sure is fast.” (Zemeckis, 1994)

After the death of his mother we find Forrest sitting alone on the front porch of the Alabama home he grew up in. Contemplating his life Forrest gets up from the old rocker and decides to go for a run.

“Now it used to be – I’d run to get where I was going – I never thought it would take me anywhere! And that day, for no particular reason I decided to go for a run. So I ran to the end of the yard. And when I got there I decided to run

down the road. And then for no particular reason, I ran to the end of town. And when I got there, I decided to run clear across Greenbow County. And then, for no particular reason I decided to run clear across the great state of Alabama. And then, well, I decided to run to the ocean. And then, for no particular reason - I turned and ran to the other ocean. And when I got there -I did it again. When I got tired - I slept, when I got hungry -I ate. And when I had to go -you know - I went.”

“Now when I was running - I thought a lot. And people would come up to me and ask me why I am running. They just couldn’t believe that somebody would be doing this for no particular reason. I’m just running I would tell them. It seemed to make no sense to people. But for some strange reason it gave them hope. My Mama said: ‘Forrest, you gotta put the past behind you before you can move on.’” (Zemeckis, 1994)

While Forest ran on his own Long Run others joined in, running along, and celebrating every mile as if it was their final day – it became a total spiritual activity. The scene ends with hundreds of other sojourners staring in bewilderment as Forest just stops, turns, and faces the following crowd.

“I’ve run for 3 years, 2 months, 14 days, and 16 hours – ‘I’m pretty tired, and I think I’ll go home now.’” (Zemeckis, 1994)

And just like that – Forrest Gump’s running days were over. The analogy is much like that of an athlete’s career – it can just end – just like that!

Within those frames exists a mini anthology a 'Gumpus Collectus' if you will. Though the surreal scenes may seem just that - the symbolism stands on it's own. Should you have difficulty understanding, let alone visualizing such an activity? Allow yourself a little time to accept the metaphor for what it is: a re-hydrated narrative that somehow connects the Forest Gumps' of the world - to the world of sport. This may seem to be an unlikely independent variable. And for those of you expecting to quantify this statistic as would be the case with most conventional dissertations – good will, and good hunting for this will not be for you. And like Forrest Gump would say: "That's all I have to say about that!"

Who are these people- These Sojourners who wanted to make this run? Along this run reference has been made to others – those - them. The sojourners who move in and out of this dissertation - are all part of their own continuous saga, a series of events, a life journey – a personal sport odyssey – and personal experiences. Some started in the fifties some in the sixties and some well later on in the seventies. But we all share a common feature. A single component to why they chose to give of themselves here in the way they have. I want to thank them all for their words and feelings and images of their experiences in their own Sport world. The description is from those that experienced.

The discussion and dialogue for all the readers has been provided by the sojourners. The concept and structure came about naturally – my brain thinks the way this is written. My thoughts go here, and there, and everywhere - but the thoughts of others land on their feet. My experiences are not others experiences yet all of our experiences are somehow shared the more we move along. That is the phenomena of the method – The further one traveled, the more one can learn and can trust in sharing – The more they see that –Hey Wait I'm not the only one who

has been thinking that way...Whew! Picture the following if you will. The group has been lined up, the calisthenics have been performed, all have completed their three laps around the practice field – time for some stretching – And now team before we start off in this run lets discuss the nature of the Long Run ahead. Alright, it's time to head to the team room. Let's Go: Hup, Hup..Hup !

*The Roster, the Experienced, and the “Experimenter”*

The run goes on from the initial strain of first step dysplasia to the warm-up phase where the body feels the blood flow begin. On through the steady state and into the flow and beyond – maybe to the surreal sublime, euphoric place that exists when I get there. I don't always get there though and that ruins the run for me The information gathering phase of this dissertation involved personal conversations, phone calls, letters, e-mails long car rides and plane trips and the draining Bus trips through inclement weather conditions and depressive late nights after an unsatisfactory performance.

“Alright team, line –up, and count off by the numbers...1,2,3,4,5....”

Jade – Maggie – Jet – Stink – Fig – Nobbie – Nipsy – Boo – Cisco –  
 Stretch – Gym – Newt – Red – Ike – Obee – Philly – Bree – Ech – Doggie –  
 Young Blood - Kate – Zee – Isum – Yabut - Sad Sac – Yaw – Lavie – Mayhem –  
 Slim... all here Coach.

The above roster is hereby provided for the rest of this run. These sojourners account for hundreds of years experience – if all totaled. A combination of participants in both team and individual sports...some describe risky adventures, others were just willing to share. Importantly, we all shared in the common theme of this dissertation – reflections of their own inculcation in



the Sport World. All are here by their own admission, and of their own (free) choice. They were invited here, like one is invited to participate in a sporting event -an invitational if you will. And they all had to meet the criteria, the qualifying mark to get into this event. Not only that - they all had to be able to run along at a pace that keep them engaged...they had to stay with me. I was the selection committee and they chose whether to run along. There was not a formality to this just the opportunity to go back and describe from where they began, and how it was, and how they got to where they are now. All of them were acquaintances, friends, athletes, and competitors all of who I have known, or knew somewhere along the way. Every sojourner created or used a pseudo name of their own choice. They all have some special meaning – they took great enjoyment in this “name calling!”

I will first list the sports that these sojourners have excelled in, and it varies greatly. This group represents Athletic participation from the past five decades. From the fifties, to the millenium. From the Professional ranks and Olympic competition. There are both men and women...who were once boys and girls. There is mixture of race and of culture. And there is the one thing they all have in common. The Sports World. More exactly; “their” Sport World and the inclusion into it. From the times they can remember through the times some wish to forget. The range and level of participation and of experience start at the elementary level through club sport and junior AAU championships. From high school all Americans and scholar-shipped into college. From Collegiate NCAA experience, As All-American Athletes to Olympic Qualifiers and onto the Olympics themselves. Gold, silver and bronze medal winners. A few held world record in their events and competed against others who set records of their own. There are post - college, semi-professional and Professional ranks represented. Some finished their careers and

stayed in sport through coaching. Others left the sport world and sought out careers in other fields. Is this an elite group? I would say so. Are these people special in some way? I would like to believe that. Some became successful, some failed, and a few, well they did not make it – they died along the way...or as one world class runner and ex-Olympian did relate;

“Look at me now coach, I’m God Damn selling hot dogs to these yuppie bastards here in Pioneer Square. They don’t even know who the fuck I am – I may as well be dead, and I don’t care. Every once in awhile someone I knew from the past will come up to me and say; hey aren’t you ...It’s like I’m still supposed to prove something ! (Cisco, 1997)

Professional Bull Rider, Professional Hockey Player, Professional Basketball Women’s Professional Basketball (WNBA), Olympic Cycling, Olympic Coaching, World Class Mountain Climber, Professional Baseball, Track and Field Middle, Distance Runner, Professional Mountain Bike Racer, Olympic Downhill Skier, Olympic Track and Field - Sprinter Hurdler, Decathlete, Olympic Marathoner, Professional Football – Running Back, Professional Boxer, Karate Surfing, Long Distance Road Racing, Olympic Volleyball, Biathlete, Triathlon

*The Use of Dialectic Verse and Phenomenological Method to Describe the Odyssey of “Select Athletes” Acculturated the World of Sport – To The Long Run!”*

If I must clarify one term in the above title it would be “Select Athletes.” I would qualify the term select by adding the suffix(Ed)...“Select(ed) Athletes.” Now, that is not to say that the athletes who participated in this project were selected by me to fit my purpose. It was necessary to establish criteria for participation. The duration of athletic involvement, the level of athletic

success, and the concomitant competitive/character of the individuals were essential to being select(ed). The essence here is; those who were chosen were all know of or known by the author of this dissertation. All bias aside the sojourners were ‘out there,’ still remain, ‘out there’ - as do the others who did not have an opportunity to participate. I sent out no questionnaires. And I did not use any guide or random selection tables as charted in the back of any good research guide. There exists not a lick of scientific data. There are some footnotes and explanations. There is no measurement scale – no computerized data entry, or likert scale. There is no nomagram for one to place a personal dot on a graph line to determine if they - or heaven forbid one of their children might find themselves afflicted by any one of the instances described. I hope for there to be an assault on the senses to the reader who finds extreme boredom and a non relation to their personal interest. I called upon all those who wished to share their experience. I traveled thousands of miles to sit with, to run with, and hang out with them. I asked for them to consider my premise...members of this sojourn. I competed against as many as I competed with the same. I coached, and trained, and became friends...again. In some cases I became a mentor to those who chose to run along...to those who asked for my expertise. It was mutual – it was fun. It is and remains an ongoing involvement on the part of us all.

### *Dialectic Verse*

The use of Dialectic verse was consciously and systematically used by both Socrates and Plato. In fact it is as old as philosophy itself. The use of dialectical verse as a method is nothing more but method of dialogue – that is, of discussion. As the phenomenological method is way of describing things – the dialectical method shall be the way in which those same things are

discussed. One would think the above statement should provide enough information on the subject.

Strange is the aversion to this conception on the subject of dialectical verse, for it is very simple and should be readily accepted as irresistibly evident (Croce, 1906/2002)

In the pursuit to describe experience one must find the time to do field work - That active involvement into the culture of things as they are. One may never know about a phenomenon without gaining some knowledge and acquainting themselves with the phenomena. Taking this to the extremes is not what I am suggesting. But I do suggest one get as close as possible to the things themselves. The following passage lends some insight into one man's pursuit into a cultural investigation.

To learn of the culture one must go beyond the University gates. By exploring the remote and or exotic – it is necessary to be in the setting, learn of the vigorous, the dense, and the heterogeneous cultural phenomenon. It shall be my thrust of investigation to get out and into the culture. If one is to study opium addicts, one must get into the opium dens and even smoke a little opium maybe. They must live with the gangs and the hobos and so on should they wish to study the later Field work is thought to be that which is learned best by doing. (Van Maanen 1988).

I hope there are a few of you who can remember “back when” it was time to choose sides for the elementary play yard game that was about to begin. The teacher, or if you were so fortunate as to have an actual P.E. (Physical Education) instructor - would holler out: “Alright class, line-up!”

“Psyche, you will be team captain, your team name is the Fauns. Homer, you’re the other captain, your team is the Manes.” After all, the kids had found a spot on the line facing the same direction - the choosing began. To understand this phenomenon it can be said: One must have had the experience...been in the moment. There may not have been a more fallacious, intimidating - loss of self (esteem) feeling in all of one’s early years as; that of being chosen, or as the case may be...not chosen. On the other side, there was such a confident anticipation, a smattering self-conceit for those who were first to be taken from the rest...a rite of passage for a young man who wants to be athlete.

Psyche knew what he was doing and he had no need for a philosophy to support his choices – he wanted to secure a winning team. Homer, well he had an ease, sincerity about him - he sought his choices based on the spirit of friendship...on the fun to be had. He wanted a win too but it was most important his friends could share in the moment.

As innocent as this activity seemed to be; the very first and the very best would go on to spend years being effectively indoctrinated by this play ground ritual...“Ok, let’s choose sides”

To all of you, sports must have those who succeed and those who fail. There are those who have unmatched natural ability, and those who still await the results of their own ‘genetic gamete.’ One thing is certain - the experience will forever remain. Be it positive or be it negative the journey begins – a few will “make it” most will not...but their lives will be forever changed.

I have always been interested in the questions of how could we know of another’s experience, and if so how much can we know and when was this experience. I consider myself a curious case of combined empathy and energy. With this dissertation being about sport and the sport world it stands to reason my degree of interest and curiosity is confined to those

experiences realized by all who participated in sports. It begs the question here as to what business is it of mine to want to know or even care about what is going on in and with the experience of another individual. Somehow I can't help but wonder whether such experiences can be described as such. Of course not, in my logic. But to go a stride further – Has anyone one else been affected in the ways I describe? I am seeking understanding here. – I may be also asking for understanding. I am seeking the truth – It comes down to a selfish pursuit of finding my own meaning of life as I have lived it – Heidegger (1959) said that you can find the meaning of life if you can reduce it to one thing.

It becomes a matter of the epoché – This epoché will receive much more attention in the next chapter- but it runs wild with the epoché of others as well. Like a double elimination softball tourney the winner will be determined when the bracket reduces one by one. Teams and players are eliminated. Their game is lost and their performances are nothing but a past day's play – Finally it ends with only one winner – but is that the truth of the matter? – I am so curious about this phenomenon. Therein is my reason for needing to know? Is this the way for all? Do we, within our private consciousness, accept our place, our uniqueness'? Is this a condition of universal experience? Is this the truth?

### *The Sojourners*

All of those who participated in this Long Run have themselves- been on their own long run. They are the sojourners who provided their own stories. They like me have been forever involved in the “Sport World as the Lived Experience.” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Behind every individual who submitted to me their story lies their motivation, personal reflection...and their experience. We have run together (metaphorically). We have lived together (symbolically). We

have loved together (spiritually). We have all shared in the phenomenon! (Husserl, 1902). For some, a discussion of sport was about a time, an accompaniment to their now “normal life” – for others it was a chance to illuminate, reveal a secret, unveil some of their past thoughts...thoughts that have never left - just placed in memory of... “to the things themselves” (Husserl, 1903). For some this was an effort- for others a matter of fact statement of how we learn to run between different worlds. I think most are in agreement that at some time we found ourselves caught between childhood and our present adulthood physically, emotionally, or spiritually connected to the world of sport. A note here to the reader, I did not include financially in the above. Contrary to all that is currently omni-present in the now “million dollars a minute” world of sport - those of whom I speak of would all agree – it (this) had nothing to do with money. For the sojourners here there was no “sellout” - because there was no money! Pure unadulterated sport! I do believe there was a time, however brief it was that such a state in sport did exist. For during that time, sport was the essence of a culture – a real place where late night transcendental deliberations took place. One would lie awake at night bouncing their brain waves around the room and watch the energy sparkle behind their eyes...all while needing sleep for the next day of competition. Over and over visions of the next day’s events would repeat themselves – and they had yet to be experienced. A state of mind -that’s what it was. True Consciousness!

*First Person Consciousness*

My ‘inner mind’ works easily right at the fringes of consciousness,  
providing me with dreams, fantasies, intuitive feelings, memories of’ lost

moments, ‘posthypnotic reminders and sometimes ‘peak experiences.’<sup>9</sup> At one point, I lived happily with the assumption that everyone was like that, but as I grew older I found out indirectly that this behavior was frowned upon...so I learned to keep it to myself and to share it selectively.

-Digz, (1978)

From the beginning, I loved the thought of the Long Run concept. My life has been one obsessive moment after another. To this day I wonder what my life may have been like had I not stayed the course I did. I’ve never held a “real” job. ( what is that anyway!) – just been out there doing things as they came to me. Right now I’m surveying roads traveling around from place to place – It’s something I’m quite used to. As an athlete I traveled throughout the world competing in one competition after another. It was very intoxicating- the people - the parties, the women...the friendships, the women. I loved to compete and every place I went it was a new competition and not just on the circuit. There was lots of off-time, and I made the best of it. Why wouldn’t I - to be in some of the most beautiful places in the world and have time to explore. (Tour de Jean, 1992).

From the time I was a little boy I knew I wanted to be involved in sport – I can’t explain that (how I knew back then) but it came to be. I hated school and I was quite “shitty” at team sports – I had a problem with the whole coach- athlete interaction. But, I loved riding my bike and my bike is where I excelled...I could

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<sup>9</sup> Peak Experience refers to Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, description of flow – the peak experience of



go out on my own “long ride” and be gone for what -was forever to me. The things that would come and go from my mind – it really pisses me off that I didn’t write some stuff down years ago. That’s why I got behind this project. (Stretch, 1997)

All knowledge of each man, far from being our contemplation, is the taking up by each, as best he can, of the acts of others, reactivating from ambiguous signs of experience which is not his own, appropriating a structure...of which he forms no distinct concept by which he puts together as an experience pianist deciphers an unknown piece of music: without himself grasping the motives of each gesture of each operation, without being able to bring to the surface of consciousness all the sediment of knowledge which he is using at the moment. Here we no longer have the positing of an object, but rather we have communication with a way of being. (Gill, 1991, p. 49).

This was a challenge for me, to go back and reflect on my sports world experience! When I was asked to put my thoughts down on this subject. The more I thought the more I realized I could not always separate the good stuff from the bad. I really was and still am confused as to what was/is right and wrong in sport as it pertained to me! Do I need to explain that? My perceptions- I think are very skewed – I always wanted to do more – to be better. Hey, I was never satisfied with my performance, even when it was “world class.” I have some very conflicting memories about my own experience. I don’t know how exactly, or why – but, being involved in sport to the degree I was... has really screwed up a lot of my relationships...I’m not very forgiving, or tolerant, and that’s when it comes to me! But, I do understand - being in the

Sports World phenomenon. I can relate to that! And, The Long Run (The Eagles, 1990)...one of my all-time favorite songs! (GYM, 2004).

If our sanity is to be strong and flexible, there must be occasional periods for the expression of completely spontaneous movement –for dancing, singing, howling, babbling, jumping, groaning, wailing – in short, for following any motion to which the organism as a whole seems to be inclined. It is by no means impossible to set up physical and moral boundaries within which this freedom of action is expressible – sensible contexts in which nonsense may have its way. (Watts, 1958).

To begin this story I have to strip myself of certain conventions, but since all the major figures of my childhood are dead I can harm no one but myself. I think, if we are to find our way into the nature of experience, into those multitudinous universes that inhabit the minds of men, such case histories – though I hate this demeaning term – have a certain value. Perhaps if we were franker on these matters, we might reach out and occasionally touch, with a passing radiance, some other star in the night (Eiseley, 1971).

Can one really be born into the sport world? Possibly. I believe it has already been established that there are those who matriculated, were indoctrinated, and as discussed, inculcated into the sport world.

It's 1959 and here's Bob Richards writing long before any of this. I met Bob Richards as a youngster and I ate bowls and bowls of Wheaties with his picture on the box. He reflects a time when there was an ideal, even to the point of naivete...Bob Richards was an Olympic gold

medalist, he believed in the Heart of the Champion – he went on to write a book of the same name.

The thing that's meant the most to me in my life was being involved in the sports world - it's the center of my universe everything else seems to come to life around you. This is what I have found in the sports world: that men want to go to the top, that men embody within themselves the qualities that make the top obtainable; that they have self control. They use their minds, their creative imaginations; they keep looking for the peak and they aim for the highest point. They go for the ultimate experience (Richards, 1959).

Why are some so attracted, so motivated, even obsessed with the sport in their world...what drives them to do the things they do? Not just on the court, the field, the track, but also in their lives, their relationships, in school, or on the road. To many of these athletes it's the dream that there must be another hit, another race, another shot - another chance – another wave-perfect moment out there just waiting for them. They become addicted to their own sport, a specific event – the next experience!

What I'm addicted to are the nights when something special happens on the court...It is far more than a passing emotion. It's as if a lightning bolt strikes, bringing insight into an uncharted area of human experience. It makes perfect sense at the same time it seems so new and undiscovered...It goes beyond the competition that brings goose pimples or the ecstasy of victory...It's my private world. No one else can sense the rightness of the moment. (Bradley, 1979, p. 35)

I was born an athlete. I cradled the balls and ran barefoot through the fields. I took tree limbs and batted rocks into the sky. I chased fly balls and birds and dragonflies in a never-ending stream of ecstasy. I moved; therefore I existed. I enjoyed; therefore I lived. I was young then and life to me was just another game. I grew older, but not much wiser, I still ran and jumped and played with pure joy. I only thought of this moment, this day, this time (Bradley, 1979, p. 35).

Listening to the softness of my footsteps as I am running free and alone through the winding trails of life. I can only ponder which trail will take me in the right direction. To a place where I might find all the love and happiness that life endures. A place where I can be accepted for who I am not for who I have beaten. A place that understands that one does not win all the hearts, that one can't always shoot the moon. The mistakes I've made don't always find the way to forgiveness. It has been a struggle, and even when I hear of understanding I can still find no comfort in the direction I'm going. How come there are no signs. There are so many paths. Can someone tell me which way to go, would I listen anyway. Maybe I've lost my way and just don't realize it. It's my path and my life and I've yet to see the way. I can only say that my feet are getting tired. I can only hope that I will be arriving soon. (Maggie, 1997)

### *In The Moment*

I was a boy in the fifties, an athlete in the sixties, a professional in the seventies. I could spend my whole time attempting to contrast, and compare one time period with another. Moving through each decade with compound interest until I reach the present moment – but like a game

of chutes and ladders I've thrown the wrong set of die... and back I go – to the start of the game. I have much reverence for the start, and in essence I do not want to finish. If there is to be an ultimate athlete oxymoron it's that there really is no finish – there is no end to it all – to finish is to die...the sport of death now- I've said it!

I am best when living on the edge – recently for me it's the edge of obscurity and liquid thoughts. I miss my involvement with the team. I am sure that I'm cleaner for it all...I never realized until now the worth of experience, and I carry it with me – the things I wished I'd done – the special odd moments – the intensity – I'm missing it all! So much! ( Jade, 1998, 2-97).

In my title I used the phrase “A Return to Forever” athletes, for whatever reason stay connected to their experience. In most cases it is so personal, and so intimate sharing is not an option – at least until the right time or person or place comes along to offer a refuge for their thoughts – their experiences. A place with no presupposition no prejudice. So this for now will be the place - a place where those who have signed on to this quest can relate their reflections. These “sojourners” as they have been described, can tell their stories, and “return to forever” - to the things themselves – their experiences.

Our thoughts are the epochs of our lives; all else is but as a journal of the winds that blew while we were here. (Thoreau, 1995)

I truly enjoy hearing what others have to say about their experience...be it an “old pro” a middle aged master or, a young “up-start” athlete. Mark Twain would say to the young “up-start.”

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do... so... Explore. Dream. Discover.”

(Twain, 1962)

What I find to be a difficult task for most is; “talking thoughts” about their experience. Attempts at expressing those reflections (to others), as well to themselves often leaves them stymied – stuck in the middle an emotion and a response. Though these reflections may be clear in the moment, time has a way of changing one’s perception. This could be no more evident than with long distance athletes, and those who pursue high-risk activities. But when they are able to describe their experience what descriptions we do get!

*Can You Take It? Are You Tough Enough? – The Lived Experience-The Brutality of it All.*<sup>10</sup>

Ben Meecham (Conroy, 1987) was a friend of mine and we both grew up with fathers who for some reason felt it was necessary for an athlete to be shamed beyond reproach, take a beating, draw blood, and not leave the arena until the concept of “killer instinct” was clearly understood. Hell, we all knew that some day we would have to fight to the death to win a contest! Wouldn’t we?

As they walked out of the barbershop, Ben told his brother, “Today you are going to witness a beautiful sight Matt. You are going to get a chance to watch me whip Dad in one on one basketball. And seeing Dad lose in a sport is a sight to behold. He’s the worst loser in the world. Of course, he’s the worst winner in the world too.” (Conroy, 1987, p. 115)

I lived on a dead end street. It may have been considered a cul d' sac but my family never used that phrase – it was “the circle” to the kids - Oxford Place on the map. One side of the street was Italian the other well, ‘Sooners’ for a start...four families all from Oklahoma...and I was related to them. And, I mean ‘all of them’ - the Italians as well. Mickey Mantle was an ‘Okie’ so they did have something to be proud of! Joe Dimaggio had just retired so the Italian side remained content. For he would live forever...Italians loved their idols. And, since I was named after one of the craziest (at that time) players in all of Baseball – I figured my fate was set.

Probably the best thing that ever happened to me was going nuts!

Whoever heard of Jimmy Piersall, until that happened? (Piersall, 1963)

Well my father had! It was his contribution to a self-fulfilling prophecy. I can recall as a kid my relatives joking with me that I was named after this ‘crazy’ center fielder who played for the Boston Red Sox. A player, who once during a game, climbed-up to the top of the backstop and wouldn't come down; a player who, after hitting his 100<sup>th</sup> career home run ran backwards around the bases; a player who was sent down to the minors after suffering from a mental disorder. And this was all because my Uncle was first to have named his only son - my cousin ‘Mickey!’

There was always a game of some sort being played in the circle. It was also a place where ‘young blood’ was spilled in route to becoming the best athlete in town. It was always about being the best – nothing else would do. At the same time Ben Meecham was preparing to

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<sup>10</sup> A stream of consciousness approach is now occurring. Gym is describing two corollary events, one written by Conroy – actually a play on Conroy's work the Great Santini, 1987 – and Gym, the parallel life. The Conroy passages are not word-for-word, but are a retelling of the story.

go one on one with his Dad – I was warming up to the challenge of striking out mine. It was ‘High Noon’ for the both of us.

Deep in my cells I know there’s something bad at the end if I don’t get through it. This keeps me honest. It keeps me scared. I am stronger because I know there is a consequence. I know I can’t get away with slacking off. This is what happens when you ascend above mediocrity. It’s a game. It’s a test. It’s the way I have lived my life.” Iceman (1997)

I live in my own world – being an athlete was a great experience for me. I saw myself in ways I still don’t understand. I was so afraid of things. I hated the moment right before competition. For all I love about sport – I hate just as many. Some of the things I did were really sick. Some of the things my coaches did were sick. I had friends and teammates – we did lots of stuff together. I never had a lot of confidence in myself – and I loved having teammates to share things with. There’s just so much I can’t get out of my head. When the time came to quit it was tough – I will never forget some of those days. Stretch (1995, 5-95)

Usually the crowd consisted mostly of family members and some kids from the street. I think today everyone knew- that there was something up - both in the Meecham’s (Conroy, 1987) driveway, as well, a few houses down at the ‘circle.’ I’m not sure how it all got started but this was during a period when a Father found it necessary to prove to the world, well, at least to the neighborhood - that he could still ‘beat’ his son! To this matter I had very little control... both in logic and reason this escaped my consciousness back then... Japs and Germans I was not at war with, Blacks and Mexicans did not threaten me supposedly; the Russians were the next



great evil – but for now I had become the immediate threat to my father! I had no choice; I was obligated to accept the challenge. Had I not, it would have shown weakness on my part. It was all about competition! And at this time, in this era, it seemed that a father's son - was the only competition.

“Oh so you think you can take me do you... smart mouth. We'll see about that! Your mouth has improved but you're still a mama's boy. You still haven't developed the killer instinct. If I was paralyzed from the neck down I could still beat you in a spitting contest. And there's one thing we both know. I'm a hell of a lot better athlete than you.”

The games went on, the families and spectators had their choice of venues, neither of which reflected any reverence for the father's dominance as had always been the neighborhood condition.

“Kick his ass, Benny.” One of the cousins yelled out from the sidewalk that ran below the Mecheems driveway. My Aunt Claire would just sit and observe. I can not remember her ever verbalizing her thoughts. My intuition was that she did not approve of the games as they played out in front of the neighborhood. She was my father's sister and she always knew what I was soon to find out – he would do anything to win.

The rules will be this. I get three outs – you have to get me out on strikes before I can hit the ball out of the circle...there, right there is the line - between the two telephone poles.

While I planned my pitching strategy, Ben Mecheem (Conroy, 1987) was preparing to prove his own masculinity by taking it to his father in their own one on one basketball challenge. It's moments like these that can set the tone; leave a lasting mark on, or, in the life of the young athlete. The following descriptions I make no excuse for. Not everyone will, or can understand

to what degree a “moment may be more than a moment” unless they too have experienced such a significant moment.

In retrospect of early spring five street crossing and a bus ride, nine more blocks to the nearest park. Dreams growing like new grass and legs growing faster than any other member, bones sticking out all over like a turkey dinner- the boy who used to be a tree climber, and a rock thrower, is now throwing basketballs, and baseballs, and footballs, up and down the courts climbing clipped diamonds. There is more decision in a twelve year old’s Spring than at thirteen or eleven -a mind shaken to the top, ready to pop like a bottle of Coke and not quite sure of anything. (Meschery, 1968)

Games can get awfully rough out here in the street. Name calling was common – pussy, punk, panzie... chicken shit. Mouth, mama’s boy, little puke...kiss ass. It was all supposed to be in good ‘game’ fun! It was to be taken in stride – for if you could not ‘take it’ you had no business being there! A true right of passage played out prematurely in the street, in front of family and spectators no less. Paving the way for the next generation of young athletes – providing them an opportunity to see what they could be facing in a few more years...reading themselves for their own fateful father’s day!

Inspired not only by his newly found confidence, Ben’s skill as a basketball player had improved tremendously. His Father, Bull underestimated Ben’s speed and condition. Their game remained close – then in an instant a turnover would change the relationship of both Ben and Bull forever. (Conroy, 1987).

In that single instant, Ben was unseen and unfelt by his father. He slapped Bull on the left buttock, then swept low around his father's right side. Feeling Ben's release and the hand hitting his left side, Bull reflexively looked to his left and switched the ball to his right hand. As he did so, he realized his mistake and tried to recover, but by this time Ben had flicked the ball away from him and retrieved it— a steal! (Conroy, 1987).

Down in the circle I too, was about to put it to my dad! There is not often an explanation available when one feels the confidence – having been beaten all my life it was now my time to return the favor – little did I know, Wait, I take that back- all back. I knew what it was going to do. I knew what was going to happen. But it was time - it was time for me to prove it. There was no question in my mind that I could outrun my father, I was fast. But he would never have agreed to a race. My tennis game was exceptional as a youngster – but dad considered tennis a sissy-ass game and hated my Aunt for ever getting me started. I loved tennis! I would have kicked his ass in a match! So it was baseball - his sport that had now become the test. For the last year I had been lifting weights and gaining arm strength. Learning to snap my wrist and whip the ball as it left my hand...and unknown to him I had also developed a sidearm curve, one scary pitch, if I could control it that is.

When I was nine years old my dad (as little league coach) would tie my feet together and then stake them to a short lead near home plate in front of the backstop we used to practice against. While unable to move too far one way or another he would then proceed to throw (pitch) balls... at, near, and very close to my body. All with good intent! This exercise was designed to help me lose my fear of the pitcher as I stood up to the plate. My dad had it in his mind that this

would be the best way to teach me. I was hit a lot! I did learn not to be afraid of the opposing pitcher – but I don't think it was for the same reasons my dad had in his mind. I remember once during a practice session, I was doing very well – ducking, and dodging, bending and turning so well... I stood right in there! A little frustrated he decided to let one fly. I could see it in his face, I was always able to see it coming from my dad.

The one absolute thing there is to know about baseball is; If the pitcher really wants to hit the batter – he can... a properly thrown pitch can always drill the batter - if that is the intent. - Gym (2004)

As soon as he let the ball go I knew it was coming right at me – I had no place to go, the tether was only three feet long. I had just enough time to quickly turn completely around put my back to the ball push up high on to my toes and take it between the shoulder blades – It almost felt good! It hurt, but it was much better than taking it in the face, or back of the head. But it was a hard hit- so hard my wind (breath) was taken away – to my knees I went... a gasp and nothing else. With my eyes facing the old mattress hung up on the wire backstop I grimaced and sucked in hard – this really hurt! Behind me my dad stood not saying a word – he couldn't, because he wouldn't - and I knew that.

“It is I, the great Bentini”, Ben mimicked as he began to dribble the ball between his legs trying to shame his father into open court where he knew he could drive around him. Dribbling slowly, Ben started toward his father, changing hands with each dribble, hoping to catch Bull with his weight shifted in the wrong direction. Do you know Dad, that not one of us has ever beaten you in a single game? Not checkers, not dominoes, not softball, nothing.

“C’mon, mama’s boy, bring little mama’s boy up to Daddy Bull.”

(Conroy, 1987).

After my dad had stepped off the regulation (twenty of ‘his’ long deliberately extended strides) sixty-feet from the plate to the pitchers rubber – I was ready to go. Now it was up to me to throw my best stuff right past his bat. I had too. In his first at bat he was really surprised, a late swing liner outside the poles and one foul tip - that was it. We had no catcher so there were no real balls and strikes - the block wall returned the ball. It would bounce back and as it rebounded out towards me in the center of the circle...I would move in field it and turn my back on my dad glancing over to my aunt who just smiled and said nothing. He had the advantage here. He didn’t have to swing unless he wanted to...even if my pitch was a strike. I whizzed the ball right past him nine times - three of which were from my sidearm.

“Hey, no sidearm – I told you never to throw sidearm, that’s cheatin! You’ll ruin your arm.”

“No way! That’s my best pitch, and it doesn’t hurt my arm either Grandpa showed me how to throw this way. “

I knew right then my dad was not happy – first of all he blamed my Grandpa, and second he didn’t have control of the situation. I now had him a little scared. It was not my side ‘arm’ he was worried about. He was afraid of the motion, the ball coming across the body, from the outside in – he was afraid of me hitting him with the ball...I knew this. I had rattled him just enough to think; that just maybe, just maybe his son might smack him with the baseball. It had been a few years since my days in the backyard at home plate, feet tethered, while baseballs were being thrown at me. But I had not forgotten...I was to never forget! And to this day as it was

then; never was it my intent to hit him with the ball ...it was critical that I strike him out – though the thought crossed my mind I was without the necessary ‘killer instinct!’ to follow through. To me there was something just not right in such an act of intentionality. An early ethical dilemma for sure! In his second at bat another victory for me. Fifteen pitches, one of which was a let-up which he pulled foul and drove over my aunt’s house into her backyard...a close call all the way around. One more at bat and I had him!

Right hand, left hand, right hand, left hand, the ball drummed against the cement as Ben waited for his father to move out against him and Bull held back, fearing the drive to the basket. At the foul line, Ben left his feet for the jump shot, eyed the basket at the top of his leap, let it go softly, the wrist snapping, the fingers pointing at the rim and the ball spinning away from him as Bull lunged forward and drove his shoulder into Ben’s stomach, knocking him to the ground. (Conroy, 1987).

My father’s last at bat was now the true test as to whether or not I could come through and not let-up on him again. The one pitch almost cost me, and it was so close – for him to claim the win in this game would be like all the other times we competed – I would never hear the end of it and the chance would not come my way again. My dad was smart, he knew that I was getting better and yet he still could not stand to lose- so any new contest, or repeat match was out of the question. The first three balls I threw were perfect strikes and he did not swing - not once!

I yelled, “Come on, what’s the matter with those.”

“You just throw the ball, I’ll swing when I’m damn good and ready –and none of that sidearm crap either.”

My next pitch was a sidearm screamer that had him backing away long before the ball reached the manhole cover.

“Goddamn you! I said no sidearm – that’s chicken shit, you wanna play or not?”

I was getting impatient and I knew he was messing with me. On my next pitch I came over the top and right down the center, he swung hard! A game of inches, for an inch higher and he would have sent the ball to the end of the block but a pop-up onto the lawn behind the wall was all he could do. “Two more strikes,” I yelled “that’s all you’ve got-two more strikes! “

“Just pitch the ball!”

And I did just that! My dad was ready – and he tagged it – a level swing and the unmistakable sound of the ball and bat meeting at the exact same instant - a rocket came flying off the bat. I did not see the ball, but from the sound I knew it was hit hard and right at me - just then in a completely defensive reaction I threw my glove up in front of my face as the ball was within inches of smacking me right between the eyes - somehow I was just in time. The impact of the ball drove my glove right into my forehead knocking me backwards and spinning me around a step or two – I had caught it! You’re out! I yelled, “you - are - out – of - here.” The first thing I saw was my mom and aunt who were now watering the shrubs in the yard – They were looking right at me, yet they showed no real outward excitement – there were no hugs and kisses! In fact they looked a bit worried.

In the Meechams yard Ben was lying flat on his back – having come down hard on the court surface... Though he did not see the ball go in, he heard the shouts of his mother and sister: he saw Matt leaping up and down on the porch. He felt his father rise off him slowly, coming up beaten by the son for the first

time in his life. Screaming with joy, Ben jumped up and was immediately flooded by his family, who hugged, slapped, pummeled and kissed him. (Conroy, 1987).

Down the block a few houses away Ben's mom, brother, and sister were all running around their screams of celebration could be heard as they all fell to the grass laughing. Rolling in Ben's victory on the court (Conroy, 1987). I stood in the center of the circle with the ball clutched by both hands in my glove. Staring down the street my brother and cousin started to walk towards me from their outfield position. My dad stood with his back to me still swinging the bat as if he was going to get another chance...somehow I knew that it wasn't over.

The lone figure of Ben's father was still standing under the basket, sweating, red-faced, and mute, watching the celebration of his wife and children inchoate, resurrected anger of a man who never quit in his life. Mary Anne (Ben's sister) saw him standing alone and went over to say something comforting.

"You played a good game dad," she said.

"Get out of here, get out of here before I start knocking every freckle off your face."

Mary Anne put her hands to her face, removed her glasses, and looked at her father with eyes that were filling with tears. "That was mean, Daddy. You had no call to say that.

The yard became quiet the whole neighborhood could sense the situation was about to escalate The shouts of "Ben get your ass over here," could be heard down the block.



“But I won Dad, I won fair and square – I only had to beat you by one basket.”

“I changed my mind: lets go,” Bull said, picking up the basketball.

“Oh no, Bull,” Lillian said, marching toward her husband. “You’re not going to cheat the boy out of his victory.”

“Who in hell asked you anything?” Bull said, glaring at his wife.

“Get over here, Mama’s boy” Bull said, motioning to Ben, and let’s you and me finish this game.”

Ben moved forward until he heard his mother shout at him.

“You stay right there, Ben Meecham. Don’t you dare move!”

“Why don’t you go hide under your mother’s skirts, mama’s boy?” Bull said.

He was gaining control of the situation again and was entering a phase of malevolent calm that Lillian was having difficulty translating.

“Mama, I’m gonna play him,” Ben said.

“No your not,” his mother answered harshly, with finality, then speaking to her husband, she said, “He beat you, Big Marine. He beat the Big Marine where everybody could see it, right out in the open, and it was beautiful. It was just beautiful. Big Marine can’t take it that his baby boy just beat him to death on the basketball court.”

”Get in the house, Lillian, before I kick you into the house.”

“Don’t threaten me, Big Tough marine. Does Big Tough Marine have to pick on his family the day his son becomes the better man?”

Bull pushed Lillian toward the house, spinning her away from him, and kicked her in the buttocks with a swift vicious kick.

“Stop that, Dad,” Ben shouted. “You stop that.”

“Quit kicking Mama,” Karen screamed.

He kicked her again. Each kick was directing her toward the stairs.

Finally, Lillian started to run for the kitchen. Bull would have kicked her another time but Ben got between him and his mother. The screen door slammed as Lillian disappeared from view. Bull’s face was hideously contorted as he stood face to face with Ben, who was trembling involuntarily...fear lay heavily on him.

Bull went up to Ben until they were almost nose to nose, as Ben had seen Drill Instructors do to recruits. With his forefinger, he began poking Ben’s chin. “You get smart with me, Jocko, and I’ll kick you upstairs with your mother so you pussies can bawl together.

Now let’s go let’s finish the game. “I’m not going to Dad. I won, “ Ben said, his voice almost breaking. He could feel himself about to cry. (Conroy, 1987).

My aunt Pat and my mom just starred into the circle where my dad stood, still swinging the bat not facing anyone. Just then, he turned looked right at me and said, “Alright now it’s my turn. It’s my turn to pitch to you.”

“No way, that wasn’t the deal Dad.”

“I didn’t make any deal – Give me the goddamn ball and your glove and we’ll see who can get who out?”

“You’re not using my glove.” And I started walking towards the home plate sewer lid - I hadn’t taken two steps when I heard;

“Here you go,” as my dad flipped the bat forward end over end right at me – it was coming so fast- end over end, bouncing off the barrel then the handle, then the barrel again - bounding off the hard asphalt. At last, contact was made - the barrel end of the bat with my upper lip...Pop! It caught me right between my nose and mouth. The impact could be heard at about the same time I yelled – blood was gushing from my face- my nose and mouth immediately felt numb - I had just caught a ‘screamin’ ball hit right back at me and here I am with a bat stuck in my face – I did not expect it. I know I tried to say; “What the Fuck,” but I couldn’t form the words- my front teeth were now protruding through my upper lip.

“Don’t you swear at me – you should have been ready – I said here, didn’t I!”

“You bow to hell...you pooh bah bat, you pooh bah bat at me”...my mouth was not working...and I was so close to crying!

“You big baby, go have your mom wash your face off and let’s go – It’s my turn to pitch.”

I looked right into my dad’s eyes and at that moment I knew he was not concerned for me – he intentionally threw that bat, and now all he cared about was getting his chance to pitch at me. As I turned away I covered my face with my glove and kicked the bat sending it spinning off into the street, blood was now running down my neck, I started walking towards my mom and

aunt who still (up to now) said nothing. My aunt was the first to say, “Gymee come here and let me look at that.”

I walked up into the yard, lowered my glove and my aunt gasped. My mom did the same - after seeing the mess my face was in, yelled out to my dad, “Ed, Gym is really hurt – his lip is split open.”

“Hey, he’s okay, just wash it out – it’s no big deal...don’t baby the boy -hurry up!”

I really didn’t need my mom and aunt to fuss over me but I knew it made my dad really mad. As I leaned over I used my hand to cup the water and splash it up on my face – it stung bad, but the blood mixed with the water helped my mom get a clear view of the damage.

“Oh my God! I’m taking you to the hospital!”

When my dad heard that he yelled, “No, you’re not !”

Still leaning over I raised my right arm. I flipped my dad off – and yelled “asshole.”

That’s all it took, on a dead run my dad was into the yard grabbing me by the hair and standing me straight up

“You little bastard.” And he poked his finger in my chest – of all the things I hated while growing up it was how and when my dad would put his finger into my chest – “Don’t you ever call me asshole!”

Well, this was ‘it’ - I slapped his finger away and when I did, my hand caught my mom’s holding the hose. It pushed a stream of water right into his face and down his chest.

“You son of a bitch – you little son of a bitch.”

“Ed, you guys stop it – stop it right now.”

As my dad grabbed for the hose I yanked it away and again sprayed him with the water. He turned and grabbed the hose a few feet back and yanked it hard ripping it from my grasp.

“Ed,” my mom yelled.

“Get back Lorraine,” I just stood there waiting to see what he would do next when he starting whipping me with the hose and the nozzle smacking against my legs and lower back. Water was going everywhere. My dad was totally out of control – he had the meanest, most crazed look on his face. My first attempt at running failed, the hose and nozzle had wrapped itself around my leg and I tripped falling face first right into the flowers my mom and aunt had been attending – I turned over trying to unravel the hose and scooted backward on my butt pulling the end of the hose yanking my dad forward and down on to one knee. I had lost my glove somewhere in the fraykus...but this was my chance to run. With my dad down I turned and took off.

Behind me I heard dad yelling, “You little bastard.”

I started to run down the block but instead I veered off, right for the circle – where I had last left the bat spinning. When I reached the bat I immediately picked it up and started running down the street.

Our house was three doors down, cady-corner to the Meechams. With the bat in my hand I did not look back. When I got to my house there was my dad’s 1957 red Studebaker pickup truck parked where it always was. I then did what to this day may have been the one single purposeful vengeful act that forever changed the course of my behavior (not to mention the father-son relationship). I took that bat and I smashed in the front window of my Dad’s truck. A noise that was heard down the street. As I pulled the bat back out of the crushed cab window I

hesitated, and for some crazy reason stopped and briefly checked the label –whew! It wasn't my Mickey Mantle signature model – it was a Brooks Robinson!

It must have been quite a scene – me running, blood dripping, adults screaming at each other- basketballs bouncing off a young man's skull, thrown bats. Young men growing old fast, right there in the circle, on the block, and in the side-yards of the only home ever known. It was as if nothing else mattered – not the neighbors viewing – the relatives agape at behaviors they knew could erupt at just about any time...in one way it could have been considered a sickening demonstration of behavior gone wild. The game, the contest, the competition at home was forever changed - I would never set foot in the circle again – a few days later I found my self living with my grandparents, I was no longer welcome in my Dad's home and I had yet to celebrate my fifteenth birthday.

If Ben and I were to compare the experience we would share the one common denominator that all, young, athletic, competitive boys fear the most – that they will be caught crying in the face of adversity.

“That's it, mama's boy. Start to cry. I want to see you cry,” Bull roared his voice at full volume, a voice of field drills, a voice to be heard above the thunder of jet engines, a voice to be heard above the din of battle. Bull took the basketball and threw it into Ben's forehead. Ben turned to walk into the house, but Bull followed him, matching his steps and throwing the basketball against his son's head at intervals of three steps. Bull kept chanting, “Cry, cry, cry,” each time the ball ricocheted off his son's skull. Through the kitchen Ben marched, through the dining room, never putting his hand behind his head to protect himself, never

trying to dodge the ball. Ben just walked and with all his powers of concentration rising to the surface of consciousness, of being alive, and of being son, Ben tried not to cry. That was all he wanted to derive from the experience, the knowledge that he had not cried. He wanted to show his father something of his courage and dignity. All the way up the stairs, the ball was hurled against his head. The hair was short and bristly from the morning haircut, the head this moment was vulnerable, helpless, and loathed. Ben knew that once he made it to his room the ordeal would end, and this long march: the heads of sons, the pride of fathers, victors, losers, the faces of kicked wives, the fear of families – but now the only thing that mattered to Ben...”I must not cry, I must not cry.” (Conroy, 1987).

Every one of us – of the millions of human beings is in some form or another seeking happiness...not one is altogether noble, nor altogether trustworthy, nor altogether consistent: and not one is altogether vile. And not a single one but has some time wept.- (Wells, 1920)

The Saturdays in the circle, or on the block, during the reign of the father, or if be the great Santini, can only be compared to your own individual experience.

If Ben and I were to compare the experience we would share the one common denominator that all, young, athletic, competitive boys fear the most – that they will be caught crying when in the face of adversity, and that they toughed it out - beat the demon. It’s how we were taught, taught to compete, taught to win!

Does it really all have to come down to this the above examples – I included the passages because they happened. I cannot expect anyone who has not experienced what I’ve described to

understand how such an event can develop, how it escalates, and how it eventually ends...if ever! How else is the young athlete, “that little ‘son-of-a bitch’” going to learn anyway? One must experience it!

A cultural creation – a sports catastrophe, in the lost and found pile – stuck in the father’s gospel with no clear mission in sight. Oh, when did the glass break the view from Plato’s cave pushing one out into the event slamming them into reality? Gone is the wonder of the celestial circle - dead spirits remain, and only a manhole cover is left... hiding the secrets. It no longer can be predetermined - the nature or nurture argument. Being a ‘devote’ to the culture seals the sacrifice. Like a hungry gator it lays in the mud waiting to chomp on the limbs of another unsuspecting prey. Spitting out pieces of family matters that once held the genes of innocence... deconstructing past lives. The marvels of creation reveal the monsters and myths of character development playing ‘tug-a-war’ with young souls. In such an existence, one must be very careful as to how they form their fate without becoming a victim to or of the sport world – no wonder such loyalty exists. Men can’t afford to cry... even when we don’t like to hear what we read.

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. The blood dimmed tide dries in the sun, giving itself up piece by piece. The ceremony of innocence is drowned – Yeats (1921)

*The Relatedness of the Sojourners*

All my life I was told how good I could be...you would have thought I would be optimistic about my chances. There was this boy who put a note on the door of his apartment. It said something to this affect: If someone smiles at me



before I get to the big silver bridge, I won't kill myself. Running five miles in record time obviously resulted in no smiles. Cisco (1991, 9-91)

"I'm never satisfied with myself. If it weren't for some one else telling me it was okay I'd pull my shoes off and beat myself until I bleed – just to teach me a lesson. And you know what really pisses me off - most of the time the others are lying – Fuckers!" (Red, 1993)

"Sport is my Life and my life is Sport!" - Lavie

As a father relates to his daughter through a letter

Dear Lavie: Where did my little girl go?

The little girl who used to beat the boys on field day in elementary school and used to be so anxious to show me her blue ribbons. Now the ribbons have turned to medals and photos and radio interviews and newspaper clipping. Now you are on video tape and running in state championships and receiving offers for college scholarships. And while it is not a life and death thing, it is sure edging that way. Lavie, you will always be my little girl...Love Dad.

"If I didn't have football to take out my anger I would probably go crazy. When I played Pop Warner I was the biggest kid in the league. And then when I got into high school I was getting my ass kicked pretty regular. So I had to get really tough and mean and viscous. Football for me was about beatin' the shit out of someone before they beat the shit out of me. My coaches loved that shit ...And I loved that!" (Ech, 1994).

“Where are you - you fuzzy bastard. I miss the hell out of college and competing. I have been writing down my stuff for you - my after thoughts. Sometimes my head spins when I think of all the shit I’ve been through and all the stuff I put others through –especially you. Then, I say Hey, they just don’t understand they never will – so quit worrying. But I know you know what this is about. I swear there are times I get so depressed I just want to run over people. I really need an outlet. Today I almost stabbed some fucker with a cucumber in the produce section. – I think I need help...I am too tired tonight to give you my journal entries...I miss you. (Misha, 1997)

Boxers are smarter than people think. I never got too far in school. I never cared and no one cared whether I did it (finish school) or not. But at the gym, I met other kids who where there for the same reasons that I were. Some got sent there to be watched – the court, or some judge thought it could be good for them. A lot of them had trouble in their home life. Boxing was a good way to ‘spent my anger.’ It helps you to learn certain things – like you can’t just go off in the ring. You have to learn the right way! The cops ran the gym some nights, and I got to know some of those guys better. I worked really hard. You know I never graduated (from high school) so I had to make some money in the ring and I did...it was really good for me. (Nipsy, 1993)

It was my mother who fist got me interested in sport. My dad never gave me much attention. I had two other sisters and we all probably drove him nuts. I never had much confidence until I started playing basketball, and volleyball, and

lifting weights. Not many girls were lifting back then. They did not want to get muscles. When my parents split up I watched my mom get really down...depressed over the whole breakup thing. She let herself go, started to drink, and get fat. We used to fight about that. I was really embarrassed. Once, when I was interviewed for an upcoming game the reporter asked me about how I got started in sport. I told him about not wanting to be like my mother – my fear of getting out of shape, and fat. I really had this image thing. My mom was very upset by what I had said - it came out in the paper. I really regret saying that. Sometime later I told the same guy I was gay and he never printed that...the asshole! (Maggie, 1994)

I ride bulls because it's the next best thing to all of the races and matches and wild nights that I had. I think of it now as my way of punishing myself. It's like I want to make up for the times – you know, when I did really shitty. I still let those things bother me a lot. You know I could have done better if I wouldn't have fucked around so much. I really missed the guys and the competition after college. When I quit competing (after college) I was drinkin' every night and never listened when my friends tried to stop me. I would get real crazy, and mean, and wanted to beat the shit out of everybody. I started bull riding because it was a good substitute, and I liked the challenge... I remember a few times in college when I quit in the middle of a race. I can still make myself mad - just thinking about it. I did start running again! Road races, and lifting, just to keep in shape. Living up here there was nothing else to do, work and drink. I got three DUI's in

less than two years. I was really pissed off when I couldn't drive. My dad killed himself you know. He just couldn't take it anymore. I don't think it had anything to do with me. He did it three weeks before my son was born – I was so pissed at him. After that I went to bull riding school. I figured I could make some money – I got pretty good at it. Bulls are so powerful – it's an unbelievable feeling to wrap-up on top a monster bull. The bull wants to do everything it can to throw you off into the dirt and stomp you to death. (Slim, 1995)

### *Philly*

The California Youth Authority (CYA) was not a place where one could fine tune their motor skills. Being athletic was important, it allowed you access to the others who 'cliqued' together in a competitive sense. Being incarcerated one can learn a lot about the human (teenage) social condition as it existed during the early sixties. Thank goodness for those exercise periods. The perfect forum for one who can run for long periods and exhibit bursts of speed when it was necessary to escape from the inside, because there was no other way out...one must have a talent and, one must be able to prove them self. I vividly remember a movie called the *Jericho Mile* (1979) – the depiction of a young man who passed his time by running. It came to the attention of some people on the outside. In fact, he became so proficient he created quite a commotion amongst the inmates. They marveled at his abilities - he was able to run at a world class speed and - he never left the yard. After leaving the CYA for the first time, I remember being restricted to my own backyard. I had to find a way to release all the anger and energy so I created my own running track along the perimeter of the fence that kept me in. My uncle lived next door so I asked him if I could use part of his yard to extend my "running path." He let me remove some

fence boards along the back portion, an area that should I not dip my head enough I would certainly implant the redwood two by four that held the fence together. We fixed the gate, so now I could complete my circuit. It worked out to be about fifteen laps to the mile. It was the perfect place for me to escape. I spent many hours running on my track and, I would run pretend races – I never talked, nor did I listen, even when being ‘yelled’ at...I was too busy counting my laps. It wasn’t until eighteen years later that I viewed the movie *Jericho Mile* - the memories of being in the yard, on my own track, what a time that was! Deja vu or a preview of the future – I should have paid more attention. Now I know it’s never too late to start – paying attention. But, who the hell pays attention when they’re fourteen years old? After leaving the street where I grew up things did not go so well – everything I did, I did for all the wrong reasons. I had become desperate!

Man you was one angry white boy – I remember your skinny ass, and long legs. I kept thinking what the hell you were doing here in this place. A ‘Punk surfer boy’ I called you! When they first brought you up to my cell, I tell myself –Man, I’m gonna mess with this little white punk - but good. I always wondered if they did stuff like that on purpose – mix us all up like they did... probably so we wouldn’t gang up. I remember thinking – glad you weren’t Mexican. I remember I pissed all over your mattress and pillow -never expected you to come after me like that –shit, I had thirty pounds on you – but Damn you were fast, and had them long arms...and the guards just laughed. You called me ‘bug eyes,’ you remember that? We was both really messed up! You were crazy... like a windmill – sorry, I laid you out so bad! Man that was a long time ago. (Philly, 1997)

It's 1965, Northern California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) Track and Field trials in Pittsburg, California, and I was warming up on the infield grass preparing for the 180 yard hurdles. I knew who most of my competition was – but there were a lot of other schools here that we didn't run against during the regular season. During my sprints I kept noticing this tall Black hurdler from Richmond – he was looking at me really hard...he would run by and do a 'sideways stare' – I avoided eye contact, but I had very good peripheral vision I figured it was just a psyche job. I had observed him earlier – he won his heat in the high-hurdles. Intimidation can be a real big factor to the young athlete...especially if you were the one feeling intimidated. I later learned all about that. But this guy was really bothering me...He looked intimidating!

I didn't get a real good look at him – we wore our hoods up over our heads to keep the sun off. It also provided a hiding place – that way eye contact with the competition was avoided. My event was called and I took off for the check-in table. After checking in for my race and hearing the obligatory 'good luck' from the girl manning the table – To this day I still dislike the 'good luck' phrase. I have made it a conscious effort to refrain from such talk. Being lucky could never replace the hard work involved. There's a lot more to say on this - but not now! All the runners were marshaled up to their lanes and told to get their blocks set. I would never set my blocks first – my first move was to stand behind the starting line, look to the first hurdle and take off hard counting my steps and timing my stride just right to the hurdle – touch down, and run hard towards the second hurdle. I would stand looking over the second hurdle put my lead leg up and stretch for a few seconds. That was my routine...and now I was ready. My coach was the one who got me doing this. He had his reasons and I believed him. The one universal

phenomenon that prevails in the world of sport is that of the ritual, the routine, that one special thing an athlete does in preparation or as a ‘repetitious superstitious.’

The call was made; Runners, sweats- off! Runners, stand behind your blocks. I stood looking straight ahead, I was in lane three – up ahead in lane five was the ‘intimidator’ as I’ll call him – Hey, I was nervous, what else can be said? Though I didn’t know it now, or think about it until many years later – the salient component to competition would become a black and white affair. It had been a little more than two years and adolescents can perform miraculous changes – my legs were much longer now, which gave me a few more inches of height.

The start of the low hurdles was staggered so one could see those ahead, but not behind. I always had a good feel, an intuition for the runner behind me...it was fear! My coach would say- never; never let the guy behind you catch up. Large numbers of intervals with no rest was the punishment should I let it happen during a race. The final multi-word command came next, “Runners take your marks!”

Just as I was about to get my last standing look at the track ahead I see a big black ‘afro’ head turn and look back, directly at me...the bulging ‘bug-eyes’ were all that I needed to see. “Philly!” I’ll be God Damned; it’s that ‘Fuckin Philly’ ...this was no time to get distracted. But my concentration had been breached – I’m sure he had recognized me earlier – but he had waited till now to confirm our past. Given the thirty seconds or so it took to position myself in the blocks I had enough time to see us both back (at CYA) in that cold army beige cell- him calling me skinny white-ass and then peeing all over my pillow. In an angry ‘return to the moment’ - I remember running like a ‘Wildman’ landing three or four blows to his chest and arms before he nailed me on top of my head dropping me to the floor, bending me backward over the iron frame

of the bed...wasting no time I pushed myself up and lunged forward driving my head right into his stomach...only to feel his knee come up and catch my chin

I was wasting energy here - getting angry, and thinking... not the way to start a race. It seemed like forever before the 'get set' command was given...then 'KaBam!' The gun goes off! I hesitated... what the hell am I doing - I'm in a race here - I need to qualify for the semi's - where did my mind just go... damn 'I've blown it!' Getting to the first hurdle was autonomic - I don't even recall going over it. Somewhere between number two and the third hurdle I realized where I was. 'Philly' had about a five-yard lead on me and I could hear my coach yelling from the corner of the grandstands clear across the field. 'Get out, get out! "What are you doing?" There's eight hurdles in this event and it's over in about 21.0 seconds - I'm like a favorite in this race so there's no way I'm not going to make the next round. No way! The last four hurdles are all on the straight-away. My strength was being able to run a very fast curve but I had to hit number five just right - no stutter-step. 'Philly' still had a lead on me but I knew that if I hit (not literally) the last hurdle perfect - I could out run him to the finish. He was a high hurdler and his take-off would be closer to the hurdle - mine would be further back allowing me to accelerate and then catch him before his trail leg hit the ground. We crossed the finish line - a tenth of a second separated us - I just nipped him, he was faster off the last hurdle than I thought - something I would never come to assume again. One can never assume they know who, or what, their competition can, or can't do, another 'Nemesis' encounter! The beating was different this time - though no blood was shed our lives would forever be linked together...we were to meet again many more times, and the best of friends did we become! Our 'race' would change the color of my views forever. And, my sports world was no longer colorblind!



In the late sixties, I found myself in the middle of nowhere. Having flunked out of my first University experience – it was time to start again. I had plenty of scholarship offers and opportunities but I screwed them all up. My grades were poor and I had no test scores to account for. I was told to head to the hills, leave my past behind...to the mountains I thought.

During high school, many of the Bay Area athletes were recruited by colleges in the Intermountain region, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Utah. One of my old football buddies ended up at the University of Wyoming. Another in Montana. I really wanted to go to Oregon. I ended up in Idaho along with a dozen or so others from my home town. There was a real run on athletes – scholarships were plentiful.

To say that “It” (the sport world) was a different time is/was an understatement of humongous proportion. I experienced total culture shock. From Berkeley to Idaho! What was that about? It was about getting away, or to be truthful – an extension of the paternalism that prevailed / controlled me...and my life. My mess was now all mine and so I packed my bags and left. My coach was instrumental in making the deal

“Gym, we think it’s in your best interest to get away from here, from home, from this environment...”

“But coach!”

Removing myself from the temptation and fast lane changes where on any given night the chance of making it to the next day was regarded as a statistic. A lot of athletes in the sixties became lost. A statistic never again to be found in the back of a sports page. The fact is I did not take school seriously. Football came first, track came second and the rest well, the rest was filler material...days and nights doing time with the books and friends and drink and more. Games,

competitions, new adventures with young men and women who were like never ones I met before in my life. It has been said that there is comfort in surrounding yourself with ‘like’ beings. I found out what oxymoron meant my first few weeks in Idaho. Had it not been for sport, specifically three-a-day football practices I believe I would have ended my life right then and there... Just to show them bastards back at the big time school. See what happens when you get sent away –to a place where you are just another ‘dumb jock’ all of this attitude anger behavior was intended to remove the depression of not being home. Back home in the city, within the community, with old school friends and others who thought you were the coolest cat around. I lacked the ability to be responsible and accountable...how satisfying it was to blame everyone else for my misplacement. Idaho! What the hell was I now doing in Idaho?

The football dormitory was the norm at most colleges during this time period. A whole dorm building: meal hall, recreation room, TV’s, showers and toilets all for just the football players...the team. We even had student assistant coaches as chaperones. My first culture shock came when I caught a number of boys from the great Northwest gawking at some of the black players on the team. I remember asking what the hell are you staring at during meal time – “Hey, I’ve never seen a black man ‘in person’ before. ...only on television.”

“You’re kidding!”

My roommate was a friend from back home – he was black, we competed against each other in high school and now were teammates and I did not get good feelings, ‘vibes’ (as they were called back then) about my association with Ike. After football season was over the players were allowed to move into the regular dorm life as it was called. My friend Ike and I did just that. It was the spring quarter and racial disturbances were common place on many college

campuses across the country. It was early 1968 and I invite all readers to do their own research into those times...as Bob Dylan said: “The times they are a changin’...and fast!

Many pages back I made the statement that I was colorblind. My once nemesis Philly provided me an experience with such a condition...and it was his sister who gave me a confidence to stand on my own when it came to realizing the issue of integrated relationships. Having close associations with the black culture during this time was to say the least an affair to remember. Being in Idaho and having those associations was a time never to be forgot. It was the beginning of the days preceding The Revolt of the Black Athlete and it was a time that was to change the position, the place of the Black Athlete in sport forever. It should be well noted here that during this time all of those involved in the sport world were affected by the display of behaviors and questions of character that tested our resolve as members of the human race. Whether we understood it, or accepted it, sport, much like the social culture of the time had now become part of the whole race relation dynamic that overwhelmed America. Friendships were made and lost based on one’s prejudice. Relationships were sacrificed based on color... lines were drawn. It was a compelling adventure that I personally embraced as a young man looking for another run in which to express my now evident rebellious behavior.

Martin Luther King Jr. made the statement; “That black people have better memories than white people. They have to, because white people don’t have to remember that they’re white.” (Cleaver, 1968). I have never given much thought to what Dr. King said, but one of my most favorite things to do is activate my memory.

Ever since I was young I wrote notes to myself – notes on big pieces of paper, scribbles on little pieces of paper. I kept old cards and personal items – all have been a great resource for

me in the process of writing this dissertation. I also wrote poems. I never thought about sharing any of this until now. (Gym, 2004)

*Harry Edwards*<sup>11</sup>

I first met Harry Edwards at the airport in San Jose California. He was involved with the sociology department there. He was also a track fan and that day he was the representative from the school assigned to me. . I was there to run in the San Jose Invitational track meet. I would be running against Lee Evans – who would become the Olympic gold medalist in the 400 m at Mexico City in October of the same year. Lee and I had known each other for many years. I almost went to San Jose to run – But I messed that deal up. Dr. Edwards took me to the school cafeteria and after lunch he said if I was interested he would be talking at a rally sponsored by the Black Student Union. It was the first I had ever heard of a potential Boycott of the Olympic Games by the black athletes. I attended and I was attracted to the message. To know from where one has come one must know of the times as they were. The following passage from Harry Edward’s book, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete* (1969) may lend some insight into “those times.”

It’s beyond me why these people would allow themselves to be misled by fanatics like Harry Edwards. These athletes are seen by millions of people on nation-wide and world-wide television, they have first string-starting assignments at white schools, and they are invited to all the big athletic events. Why our

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<sup>11</sup> Harry Edwards established himself as the leading sport sociologist of the 1960s. The main figure in the Tommy Smith and John Carlos Black Salute demonstrated on the podium of the 1968 Olympic Games. Edwards would go on to stardom while Smith and Carlos languished from the deed.

Niggers right here at the University have never had it so good (Edwards, 1969, p.192).

The above statement was made by the director of Intercollegiate Athletics at one of America's major universities, later to be white listed by the Olympic Committee for Human Rights during the Spring, 1968 track and field season. He was speaking to the sports editor of one of America's leading weekly news magazines. His remarks are typical of the sentiment of many athletic administrations that determine policy in the world of intercollegiate, amateur, and professional athletics in America. All too often too many of these self-proclaimed guardians of the morals and ethics of the sports world lend tacit approval to such corrupt and hypocritical attitudes, thus further degrading and violating the basic human dignity and intelligence of black athletes. (Edwards, 1969).

Today on this day in the eighteenth of October 1968 is the anniversary of one of the single most controversial events in Olympic if not sport history. On this day Tommie Smith and John Carlos stood tall with their black gloved fists raised high in the air while receiving their gold and silver medals.

Our mass spectator sports are geared to disguise, while affording expression to, the acting out in elaborate pageantry of the myth of the fittest in the process of surviving. From the Little league to the major leagues, through the orgiastic climax of the World Series; from high school football through college sports teams, to the grand finale of the annual bowl washouts; interspersed with the sub-cycles of basketball, track and field meets – all our sports give play to the

basic cultural ethic, harnessed and sublimated into national – communal pagan rituals. If there is a religion in America today - it is sports. (Cleaver, 1968, p. 246)

*Philly: Christie – Crude Reality of Sport and Racism*

I grew up in the housing projects of Oakland, California. When I was eight years old we moved to the suburbs. A new school, new teachers, and new kids – I was not very happy at first. As a nine-year old in 1955, I remember my dad teaching me how to play baseball. He taught me how to hit and I could hit the ball pretty hard. He ‘d take me, and my brothers to Emeryville Park where we’d watch the Oakland Oaks play. This new area was a child’s playground – it was paradise to me. There was open space and fields to play in but my favorite thing to do was play baseball. I’d rather do that than anything else in the whole world –that was it for me! This is where I learned the game of life through the games at school. Baseball, football, basketball these were the sports that sustained me during my school years and perhaps have kept me alive even longer than I could be. This is where I learned the game of life through the games at school. Baseball, football, basketball these were the sports that sustained me during my school years and perhaps have kept me alive even longer than I could be. I idolized Mickey Mantle – he had everything, speed, power and he could drag bunt. Not many other players could do the things he did. I wanted to be just like the “Mick.”

I’d write to the Yankee stadium for pictures of Mantle and they would send them. They would also send along team pictures, something unheard of today. Pictures I still have to this day. By the time I was ten, I was a really good player and did what the other boys did. I played little league, and then Babe Ruth league. It was a dream come true for me. From the time I was nine until I was

seventeen all I did was practice and play baseball. I moved on to the semi-pro league, my dad died, and then the Vietnam War happened – everything changed for me. Personal problems hit me pretty hard, I lost my way, and the things I was doing could not have been good for me. Drugs became a part of my life. In fact it might be said I lost my life during this time to the drugs (Sad Sac, 2002)

I had known Philly's sister for three years prior to her visiting me in my Idaho dormitory. We became good friends and shared our latter teen years. She had remained in the Bay Area of California but we stayed in touch via letters and pay phone conversations. When she announced that she was coming for a visit, I was elated and could hardly wait. I gave no thought to the fact that her being black would cause me any concern. She was Christine to me, she was a friend and that was that. As for the days that followed her visit. I can only say this – the standard to which I have since chose, and I will add, trusted my friends was etched in my brain forever during the events that transpired on a cold February afternoon inside a dormitory room.

The campus newspaper reported it as a racial incident. The “Redfield Raiders” as they were called - named after the residence hall where the incident took place. The picture in the paper did not show the extent of the damage done. Most of which resided in me, and in the emotional anger that I displayed. Yet the physical damage was nothing compared to that which showed on the faces, and in the heart of a young couple who was not yet ready for such an atrocity. Everything I owned in Idaho was piled crudely on the floor in the center of the room, Clothes, bedding, books, photos, as well an unopened gift, still wrapped, crushed by hatred under the likes of stomping racist feet.

Christine and I had spent the afternoon with her watching me run intervals at track practice after which we went for a walk through of all places a cemetery...a favorite place of mine. It was quiet there and on many occasions I would train on my own running down the many avenues and lanes marked by headstones and gravesites that extended for over a half a mile. Once in awhile I would stop and view the names and inscriptions of those who had made it into this sacred place. My ability to write obituaries may have originated inside the old wrought iron fence that surrounded the perimeter.

At dinner in the cafeteria, we withstood the curious looks of many of the residents that lived along side one another in the hall. We shared dinner with some of the athletes I had gotten to know and I introduced her as my friend from back home – the sister of a then outstanding College wide receiver. I sensed there were some observers who were noticeably uneasy. Christine may have been the first Black girl to grace the dining hall that semester. She may even have been the first Black girl ever seen “in person” by some of the boys in residence. There were always lots of various preparations of Idaho potatoes served at meal time. I remember Christine commenting, “Damn Gym, I’ve never seen so many different ways to eat potatoes!” We were the last to leave the dining area and my room was just up three steps and on the main floor. Girls were not allowed to stay the night in the dorm but the rules permitted visits as long as the door was left open. My roommate had made arrangements to spend the night elsewhere so of course we were ready to break the rules. That all changed as soon as I opened the door to my room.

Christine was the first to enter and not a step was taken when I saw her face lighten, and a high pitched scream come out. There on the floor was a pile of my belongings covered in white



bleached flour and poured over the mess was a whole bottle of aunt Jemima's maple syrup – the bottle lay on top with the picture of a black woman, bandana wrapped around her head and smiling. Scrawled on the walls and window were the words: “Go home Nigger lover,” and in the window, “Fuck California.” On what was left of the mattress on my bed which had also been defaced, again the words “Nigger Lover.” It was a very sad moment, and an angry moment. It was a long night - which we did spend together. I hated that day more than most any ‘other’ in my life up to that point. I would have rather had another whipping – I had developed a tolerance for physical pain. This was different. I hated it most for what Christine had to experience.

We remained friends and many years later I ended up coaching her daughter in track and field. She returned to Idaho to visit relatives in Boise some two years ago. We spent a few days together and talked about that day in 1968. Some days are not meant to be forgotten...they will forever remain an experience. Christine was diagnosed with cancer in May and died of complications due to pneumonia this past August 8-20-04. I wrote an obituary for the paper and bought a commemorative brick in her name that will line the sidewalk of her High School.

A black hand supports

The white body of a fallen teammate

The ball that scored the winning goal

Was placed in motion by a gray hand.

The sweat pouring from our bodies

Is neither black nor white. (Meschery,1968).

Hey, “White Boy Hurdler” – It's good to hear from you again. You were my All-American boy you know! It's has been a long time since those days in San

Jose and the crazy nights we spent undoing the day. Yes, I was a product of what you call the enculturation into the Sport World. Hell, we all were weren't we? I was totally caught up in the Black cultural swirl that existed during the sixties. Did you know I lived with Wilt Chamberlain for awhile? He had this all girls volleyball, and cross country team. We traveled all over and had a great time...he took care of everything." (Ech, 1976).

### *Reflection*

One might ask, what does 'all the above' have to do with my dissertation. The answer is everything. It has EVERYTHING to do with it. It is what keeps me on the edge. It is what drives my emotions, my anger, my frustrations – It makes me crazy and keeps me sane at the same time. It keeps me on the run...the long run. Is that so hard of a concept for you all to understand? Can any of you understand? It is my logic, and as misguided and flawed as it might seem to the rational side of an other – it remains mine for keeps. I live carpe diem everyday. I have to live with myself everyday. Some days there is no rhyme to the reason and I can offer no apologizes. The utter paradox to this whole process might be summed up as follows. Can any of you even imagine how much I haven't said, discussed, or disclosed? Think about that for a minute. In your own life. What the hell are you doing anyway? I am nothing but the sum of this whole messy attempt at retribution through a / my personal discourse...My dissertation. WHY ! This whole dissertation might just be about what we do not say to each other. About what we feel for another person or how we judge their behavior and how we pass one living moment after another never asking what was that all about. There's an old saying I've taken to heart as of

recent when it comes to acknowledging my own behavior. There is no instant replay when it comes to moral actions.

“A wink and a nod it’s good enough for a blind man.” For some that may mean nothing, for me it means everything. Here I am studying, writing about the world of sport. Here I am discussing the morality of actions, and the codes of ethics, and principals that one must live with to survive in the world gone crazy with things that are used briefly then thrown away, discarded as trash. For me, there are no more throwaway moments. There are no more forgotten experiences. How can I teach ethics without having practiced those same ethics? The truth is: “My ethics at times throughout my life fall far short of what I have expected from others,” to use a now common phraseology.

“At times my ethics suck!” And they do so because as a young man growing up in the Sport World... sure Gym blame it on the Sport World. ‘No, Butt face’ – I’m not blaming it on anyone. The fact is - ethics had nothing to do with my performance. Principles and morals did not win races. Rules were only words that got in the way of what was important...winning the game, the race, the match. My life was all about performance. And that, for you the reader - that is not an excuse. For there can be no excuse for some of my actions. I accept that, and I am attempting here in this dissertation to better understand it. I have already earned a Ph.D. in hindsight - It’s the future I am most concerned with. I have been passionate in my progress, and proposals to provide others some insight into what goes on in the Sport World. I am asking others to look hard at themselves - be more aware of personal behavior, their actions, and their ethics as it pertains to their involvement in the world sport.

Journeys and odysseys, as does this Long Run have a special characteristic about them. The nature of which lies in the many directions one can go, drift, meander off, to during the course of such a journey. It's in the nature of the anything that has an element of time and duration to it. The longer one travels the more likely one will encounter new directions. The more one can see into those experiences.

“Dying is the last thing we will ever experience in our lives.” (Castaneda, 1985, p. 322)

### *YoungBlood*

Young Blood was one of the finest prep sprinters in the nation: full ride scholarship for football and track at UCLA. He too suffered from the craziness of a home gone mad. We were both from California and had many “firsts” with each other in high school. He, from the south, I was from the north. After his first year at UCLA, he found his way to Idaho...transferred in and he and I became instant friends, competitors, and training partners. We had the plan of the century. We were going to lead our mile relay team to the national championships. Finally, a goal - and a real purpose. Oh, what dreams lay ahead to be realized. Inseparable we became, and along with a few other teammates we were all ready to die for the chance. Our lives were now all about becoming the best mile relay ever...there was no stopping us – we had become relentless in our focus and in our commitment to training.

There is a distinct smell experienced by the senses when one smells the ocean air. Standing on the pier, your lungs can fill until they feel like their going to burst...I can smell it even now – but you had to have been to the ocean to know that smell. An ingestion of condensed odors, fishy bowels, dead starfish, and the rotting bodies of bulbous kelp left to brown itself

among the blue green algae that is now gathered to supplement all the minerals we humans are deficient in. How did we get so deficient – Could it be because we really did emerge as a species from the depths of the ocean and slime our way into this life on earth? Every time I visit the places where the waves crash upon the shore, my mind moves between the calm and the commotion. It is said that love can be found along the shore – I never found love there.

The stroll out onto the piers elevated wood pylons allows one a whiff here and a taste there – an eye full of wind before a watery tear temporally clouds the vision. I marvel at how the old legs of this structure withstand the stress of years and years of battering. Maybe it's better not to know some things. Sometimes what we know might be too much – an unhealthy inevitability should we let things go. This brings to mind a question that has for years bothered me for an answer. If one knows of another's vision – another's destiny, does one have the power – the will to affect the outcome. From a vantage point on the old pier that juts out into the Long Beach bay... I saw the death of a destiny. I will always wonder if I could have affected the outcome.

The quest to be the best at something can often take us places to the other side...beyond, or outside of the inhabited body. I think athletes are susceptible to this phenomena. The seeking out to be better, or to be the best sends them to the edge or "risky-ness." Young Blood and I both believed that to be the best we needed to have "out of body, out of mind" experiences. It was also very important that we find out what the truth was. Having grown up in an environment that abused the truth constantly I had a personal interest.

This capacity for consciousness of ourselves gives us the ability to see ourselves as others see us and to have empathy with others. It underlies our remarkable capacity to transport ourselves into someone else's parlor where we

will be in reality next week, and then in imagination to think and plan how we will act. And it enables us to imagine ourselves in someone else's place, and ask how we would feel and what we would do if we were this other person. No matter how poorly we use or fail to use or even abuse these capabilities, they are the rudiments of our ability to begin to love , to have ethical sensitivity, to see the truth, to create beauty, to devote ourselves to ideals ...and to die for them if need be. (May, 1953)

Some of us adopt a must win can't lose philosophy. We do this without understanding the ultimate variable of ambiguity. Should we not be able to compete we will realize soon enough that the game the event the sport is will not embrace the attempt - For to just attempt is not good enough. At this point a critical decision must be made.

The other truths that were sought could lead us to endure the enormous amount of conditioning, strength work, and mental training necessary to perform the great feats of speed and power that would define us as athletes. How much could are bodies and minds take. In our mind, and in what limited research we had done, we concluded, the only way we could succeed at this was to alter our states of consciousness. Now at this time, in our lives and athletic career, we had the choice of any substance we wanted...from natural Bee Pollen to the steroid Dyanibol. We chose to remain as close to the organic as possible...to seek not only the physical benefits but as well - the spiritual. And that meant we would come to rely on the Native American tradition of using Peyote as a training aide. Now I do not know how many if any of you are familiar with such a method, but I will say this now. There are substances that will, and substances that do - increase, promote, and can generally improve one's athletic performance.

There are many references and research material available on this and many related topics. In fact, it is one of the major ethical controversies that thrive in the Sport World. That is for another chapter if not another complete dissertation.

To the above I will say: Drugs and ergogenic aids are to the Sport World what Tai is to the Chi – to the attainment of the ultimate! But at what cost, for such the objective to be met - the achievement of physical fortune, and that quest to be the best. The earthly body can only withstand so much of the rigors of degenerative training. There's no escaping the deterioration of a distinct pathology - that of pushing the human body to the limit of it's tolerances. There is a lot of confusion that surrounds this practice. And I am not here to compound any such confusion, just to opt for another tone to the discussion. The reality is; drugs, and performance enhancement, both legal and illegal have been in existence for as long as sport. The truth about the use and abuse of drugs, and performance enhancement will never be completely understood. There is a sound logic behind me making this statement. "Athletes do not want others to know of this experience."

When one chooses to seek the penultimate point in their training they must also be prepared to handle the ultimate...what does one do when their new found strength, power, and psyche literally propels them into another dimension of athletic ability.

Southeastern Idaho had a number of Indian reservations...In fact at the time there were quite a few Indian athletes participating in football, basketball, cross country racing, wrestling, and track & field. The first introduction into the world of athletic enhancement via Peyote ingestion came from befriending a number of the Indian athletes on campus. They were well aware of the potential physical, and spiritual benefits. They spoke of elders and shamans within

their culture that endorsed such a practice. Not only had 'Young Blood' and I been introduced to this new system but we found others to be equally as excited about improving their performance.

For a period of about eight weeks during the summer we trained hard. We had no official coaching – we were on our own – we knew what we needed and we prepared ourselves. We maintained good diets and got plenty of rest - it was important to take care of the body during the rigors of training. We were quite disciplined – more than we had ever been in fact. We traveled to Utah and Arizona and trained with others and learned from a number of other Indian cultures. We were invited to go out into the high chaparral, and were taken on extended desert runs where sucking cactus water, and 'Chia, (a jello like substance) seeds' provided our only nourishment. We once did an all night workout to avoid the heat of the day. We were learning to train on our own, we were strong, and we were very well conditioned physically, mentally, and spiritually...it was a most fantastic experience. Young Blood and I had become great training partners and with the Olympic trials some nine months away we were very confident – ready for our day on the track and a chance for a spot on the team.

We both had a great year I had made it to the Olympic trials. Young Blood didn't, barely missing out. In Elite competition, a hundredths of a second, a half of an inch, a stubbed toe – can change the direction of one's life forever. After not making the trials Young Blood took it hard. He came to me one night, and told me he had decided to take the summer off, purchase a motorcycle, and tour the country. I was still training and he would be missed by me. His mind was made up. We shared some moments, and traded handshakes - he left me all his belongings. I gave him my Uncle's World War II leather bombardier's jacket for the road. He looked as if he belonged as an extra in a motorcycle movie as he road off into the east. His first stop was to be



Yellowstone National Park. I received a few postcards that summer, tracked his progress and read his words, which seemed to be progressively despondent. He spoke in the negative and I was concerned.

Standing on the end of the pier that extends out into the bay in Long Beach, California one can see south across the sandy beach to the rugged cliffs that face the sea. “Young Blood died right there,” I said to a friend who shared this moment with me. I pointed to the top of the cliff where he had sailed off on his black and red Triumph motorcycle. When I received the news it upset me – it physically affected me. There are things to this day that have remained in my psyche relating to the death of Young Blood. He died by his own doing – and I believe I know why. His life was all about making it big - running hard, living hard and pushing himself to the edge of his ability... I know this because we both engaged in the credo – “run fast or die.” I spoke earlier of the penultimate – that last step before one leaves the ground – the last experience before the ultimate “jump to the other side.” I do not know whether he died before he hit the sea or not...maybe he tried to save himself. In the middle of an experience when one realizes a reverse of direction is not possible might be the most critical of decisions ever one has to make. Boundaries, lines, rules - to the edges of reality – to the point of no return... these things fascinate me.

The marathon runner must desperately resist the dictates of all reason; it is no illusion; the tremors felt in the mind, the blood flow, the capillaries bursting spentless; it is in this terrifying moment- when one experiences the image of themselves curled up, on the curb, bricks in hand, waiting for the darkness,

watching as others pass by...miles later the race long over- and yet that forever remains a part of one's experience. (Lilliefors, 1978, p. 85)

There may not be a place for an outsider on this run for it taxes your whole system, starting with the belief system. Many young athletes are often told "if you do not believe you can, then you never will!" The fact is many young athletes are told a lot of things and it may take years before they realize what was meant by it all. Young athletes do live in another world. During their time of engagement nothing else seems to matter but their game, their event, their sport. If I was to return to the past, I believe I could count every time a coach impressed upon me the value, the necessity, the importance, the expediency, of a given command – there was no time to think or question...it was no time to wonder why just for me to do or die (Kipling, 1891) - I lived many years with that credo tattooed to my gray matter.

*The Athletes Mind and the Surreal (Gym 2004)*

What are your first recollections, impressions of getting started in sport?

Seattle, Washington (8-30-97) In The Long Run – what role has sport played/meant to you in your life?

You can't outrun a thunderstorm you idiot.

Sure I can, why do you say that, there has always been someone telling me I can't do this, and I can't do that. I never liked it – for anyone to tell me I couldn't – my father would say it to me all the time. So I would just do it anyway – I hated riding the school bus, the driver was so gross...total pervert - so I would run all the way home from school – seven and a half-miles...and when I couldn't get a ride I would run to school. My Uncle was a teacher at the school, and when I

got there he would let me in to change clothes – He started calling me Stinky – a nickname that stayed with me all through school! (June, 1993)

Nicknames, now there is something I can relate to – everybody I knew had a nickname – we even had names for the coaches – course we never told them, but I’m sure they knew, especially the crappy ones...they deserved it.

I’ve been in sport all my whole life; at first my parents took no interest in me, or any of my activities. They were part of the whole Hippie thing! Then one day my Mom (out of the blue) comes to watch me play and goes into this explanation about how her Dad was a professional athlete and he didn’t care about anything else or, anyone in the family. It was really a hard time for her – but she was glad I was doing so well. “I think you got my Dad’s genes,” she would tell me. Later, I learned more about who her dad was. (Jet, 1995)

Oh my God! Mine too – were like hippies, I knew, but I didn’t know ...I was just a kid, and all these weird people would be hanging around – asking me, “Well, how’d you do today – Tiger! ” “Tiger, I hated to be called Tiger...later on I learned he really meant Tigger like from Winnie the Pooh – but he didn’t know the difference – So one time I told him to quit calling me Tiger – and besides it’s Tigger -so he started calling me Pooh – and I thought that was much cooler-he even had a tee shirt made up with Pooh on it. (Stink, 1997)

So, who was he? Who was your mom’s dad? “He won a silver medal in the Olympics – the decathlon...and then played pro football! And I think a coach after that! (Kate, 1997)

My Uncle would give me money for every race I'd win – dollar bills!  
And, that was in elementary school! I was totally obsessed with sports by the age of ten- I remember just wanting to beat people (especially the boys) I always had to win...I loved beating people – and getting the money. (Jade, 1997)

Mine (parents) were always around! I hated the way my dad acted at the games. He was terrible! I was really embarrassed – so pissed at him. One time he ran onto the field, the umpire had to stop the game! No wonder my mom left – he was a total asshole, especially when I started to get good. He would tell his friends stuff and try to take credit for my doing well. (Bree, 1997)

I think that (my dad) was the whole reason I got started in sports. My mom left too, and I was always trying to please my dad. My dad was great – He just sat and watched. I think he would drink, or get stoned and come watch me play. I'd look up in the stands and he would just smile and wave – I never knew how I did, he always had the same expression– but that was Ok. I can't remember ever having a serious discussion about me being in sports. Even when I told him I was gay...what the hell – you know - I still can't figure that out! (Obee, 1997)

I remember watching my dad treat my brother like crap – He was always on his ass about his playing – He didn't pay as much attention to me and I'm glad. I actually became a very good player- got a scholarship and left home...my brother quit right after High School – He really was a lot better athlete – but he was pushed way too hard. He just quit! I kept on going, and going – and now here I am playing pro ball. (Kate, 1997)

I really enjoyed being in sport as a kid. The places sports took me. I was in AAU basketball. My age group team was really good. My time was absolutely consumed by me playing ball. My life between eleven and seventeen was all about basketball, track, and volleyball...and then in college - it was like I finally got a chance to concentrate on one sport and that was good except I missed doing the others. But I wouldn't trade the experience for anything! (Zee, 1997)

Would you do it all over again?

You bet! It was really hard work – at least I had to work hard to get there. At first I didn't get a chance to play much...all I did was practice. I really got into the physical part of it all – I got real tough mentally. And I started to develop physically. No one could believe how big (muscular) I was getting. I really enjoyed the physical pain – especially working in the weight room and body building...I got off on that! (Zee, 1997)

Do you have any pictures?

Ya! I had a complete portfolio done. Not like a before and after. But I used them to see how I was doing, and I used them for competition. It (being photographed) was really something that I'd never planned. I was never a candidate for home-coming queen but now people pay a lot of attention to me. Check these "abs" out. I am so...much more confident...No more "sagg-eee ass." It's a sex thing you know! Sport is really about sex to me! (Zee, 1997)

Oh my God! Look at you...like zero body fat. I bet your old friends would love to see you now...I would kill for that butt! (Kate, 1997)

One time I got so pissed at my parents I gained like twenty-five pounds between Thanksgiving and New Years. I hated my coach and my parents for going along with him. He was always trying to control me, especially about my weight. He would give the other girls special (extra) stuff – shoes, sweats, money, and hold it over me – like, hey if you do as I say -you’ll get treated right. I hated it (that year). I think I had thoughts about killing myself. (Maggie, 1997)

### *Epoché – Bracketing*

A period of time in terms of noteworthy and characteristic events – A point in time – the beginning of a new and important period in the history of anything.

This Long Run can be nothing without those who chose to see it for what it is—a time to keep moving while still expressing their thoughts and experiences. A study it might be, but as I reinstate an old adage; When the going gets tough, really tough – seek enlightenment, catharsis, redemption, forgiveness...damn what am I saying here – a sarcastic rat that runs out on the rest leaving others to figure it out for themselves. Sport can’t be bad can it? Why do I detect a theme of negativity, drops of doubt – a cloud that rains down on all the beautiful descriptions, thoughts...eyes wide reminiscing the wins and the great plays - “ass kicking” moments never again to be relived. It may be because athletes will never be satisfied – In the attempt to seek perfection, performance, a spiritual in the moment (Thomas, 1973) or is it all really just in the mind of those whose candle blew out far too soon. Who are these people that (we) call... themselves athletes?

By definition this chapter is my attempt to make a point in time – to provide a possible new start to the middle of a run about the history of something – An Epoché

I've often wondered what drives a person to achieve something. Why is it that some people with great talent don't believe in themselves and others with mediocre ability hang in there, to achieve something great? Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that those with great talent don't have to work as hard to achieve something. Whereas the less gifted realize that they have to work and may force themselves to become the best. If I can settle some anxiousness here for any of you – “No one ever reaches their potential – but some (will) just love to die trying.” (Gym, 2004)

The Indians had a saying to describe when one was going to “the beyond” in a physical or spiritual feat of power or endurance - “out of their skin” one was. Athletes too can get out of their skin – they just never realized it until it was explained to them. So much of what the athlete does never gets explained – it's assumed for some crazy reason that an athlete will know when such a thing (like their life) might turn inside out. It can also be said that most athletes are not allowed to think that much - so how would they ever be aware in the first place! I think that is why I, after a long career chose to stay close -always curious, prepared to learn and hopefully be of some assistance to those “others” passing through...before I pass on. I think it's time for a song...sometimes one must “seize the moment!... Carpe Diem!”

I used to hurry a lot, I used to worry a lot – I use to stay out till the break of day. Oh, that didn't get it --- it was high time I quit it --- I just couldn't carry on that way. Oh, I did some damage, I know its true ...Didn't know why I was so lonely, till I found you. Oh, if you can go the distance ----we'll find out...in The Long Run...in The Long Run. Ooh, I want to tell you... it's a Long Run ...it's a Long Run - (The Eagles, 1990)

Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him – Huxley (1932)



## CHAPTER FOUR:

### Transcendental Reflection

#### *Introduction*

The Palouse is to the desert, what calm seas are to the ocean. Gently rolling hills like recumbent waves – I swear when one is in the middle of the other – a movement can be felt – a nausea forces one to balance themselves against the floating clouds and the shifting soil. The safest place to be may be on all fours. There is a shift in dimension, a surreal scene where self-consciousness is subdued and I resign myself to the notion that I am for now in the middle of nowhere and the possibility of ever being found is remote...even by chance should I be seen I can perform what I do best and run, run, run to safety. Swells of confidence propel my imagination. For the past twenty years, I have always set aside my birth date as a time for my own special run. I have made it a tradition. I have, where ever I found myself to be, left the roadside, left the urban distraction, and took off on a run across the most isolated place nearest to me - be it in the forest, or along the beach, along a winding river. Once I ran repeats on an abandoned ski slope until I could only crawl to my waiting cruiser. On this fall day it shall be through the golden wheat, and chaff fields that blanket the ‘Palouse’ – A place named by the Indians in south Eastern Washington. It’s after dusk before the moon can cast a shadow but I know a silhouette can be seen when the horizon is tipped just enough to allow the sky to give you away.

Learning to let go, to be spontaneous, to trust in the moment may be the most frightening of experiences for one... who can not. I do not know where the Moon is supposed to be, nor if

Earth and Jupiter align when fate meets destiny, or who directs the cosmos to a coincidence...but what I do know is this. There are times when reality suspends all the logic...it can be an overwhelmingly obsessive condition, where if one attempts to make sense of the situation an authentic opportunity will be forever buried and left for dead.

It should be known here that I have no formal training as a writer – nor do I write fiction. I was asked to describe an experience and with that...In the far off distant sky I could see the reflection of the near full moon lighting my way. Like a lighthouse beacon the reflection was static so with that my direction was set – off I went across the pressed earthen field. Trails of post combine carpet, a matted turf like a well worn rug running for as far as I could see. Every shade of brown, gold, and yellow green singed by the sun. A border of churned and turned clods of dirt were still wet with sub irrigated moisture, all steaming in native spirit. It was a glorious start to a long evening run. The silence was everywhere –only my breathing could be heard and I did my best to quiet that. I was heading east towards the moon. I saw only what I wanted to see – colors and contours mimicking the waves of rolling wheat grass straight stalks of chaff straw stuck like needles into the matted but soiled cushion. Tamped down the bent barely dead vegetation made for slippery footing. A challenge it was to accelerate either up or down as I sought to find some co-efficient of friction to keep me from tumbling off into the void of a newly formed crop circle. Those things as far as I know may be the doing of some extraterrestrial manipulation. A sign of things to come – because I was taken completely by surprise by what happened in the next hour. It was now as dark as it was to get under the moon glow – with the northern light sky doing aurora. I finally came upon the origin of the glow I had set my bearing to – one could get lost very easily out here...as I was to soon learn. I approached the steel tower

like I had conquered a mountain peak. Running the last five-hundred meters hard and driving up the hill – I had run for nearly an hour and a half up to now. I was very pleased with myself.

The large rectangle metal frame supported what looked to be a fuel tank, as well a large water tank. The fuel was diesel I knew the smell, and the water was an unexpected benefit. had not brought any with me so I helped my self to the spout – I chose not to drink any. I ‘splished, and splashed’ enough on myself to cool off and watched as my body steamed the rest away. I decided to take a rest, stretch and just gaze out across the great Palouse. Sitting cross-legged I could make out the lights of a far off glow in the distance, I imagined high school football on a Friday night...and I was right. I could have been meditating but whatever mental place I was, a movement off to the south startled me. I could barely make it out but it looked like a human figure running up the hill right towards my place of rest. Out of no where - from the other side of the Palouse hills...emerges another runner. How can this be, who the hell in their right brain could have known...like they really did? When one is in this position the brain conjures up all kinds of thoughts as to the meaning. I crouched low, as far down into the four-inch stalks of straw as I could. Not much good for hiding. I had given thought to running but reversed my decision. Oh well, I know I had not yet been seen as the figure crested the rise to the tower... with what looked to be a similar sense of pleasure that I had felt earlier. She put her arms straight up into the dark sky, let out (semi-yelling) a very audible shout - “alright July,” and put her hands upon her head. She was looking back in the direction she had come and I could see from her outline - she was a runner...clad only in shorts with a mesh upper wrapped around her waist. Not wanting to cause a heart attack, or scare her silly, I quietly said

“Hey, I’m a runner...it’s okay.” I didn’t know what wouldn’t scare her. And I figured to at least identify what I was doing here... nevertheless something between a “Whoa...shit - a yelp, and a yeow! Christ... you scared me, “ came out.

“I’m really sorry, I didn’t know what else to say.”

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

Well, I ran,” and to that I added, “it looks like you did the same.”

“There’s some water in the big tank – but I wouldn’t drink it”.

“Thank you, how did you find this place.”

“Well I could ask the same question of you?” Without wanting to go into a long winded explanation. I told her I was celebrating this day with a birthday run...something I have done for many years. I started my long run from off that way - pointing to the west. I saw a reflection from down off the road and figured it would be a good place to run to.

“How long have you been running?”

All my life (giving her my ‘smart ass’ answer). She smiled – No, it took me a little less than ninety minutes to get here...

“My name is July.”

“I know.”

“How did you...?” then she stopped in mid sentence.

“I heard you when you got to the tower.”

“Well, I’m glad I didn’t first squat and pee. Now I really have to...you scared the pee out of me.”

“Hey – It’s okay,” and I walked over to the other side of the tank tower.

“Okay, I’m done.” I heard her splashing water over herself the same as I had done. Runners know how to do some things naturally. And water is the sacred savior to the runner on a long run. “My name is Gym.”

“Hello Gym, I’m July, it’s nice to meet you.”

So after our introduction we both took to the sit and stretch position and began to talk – we had wonderful conversation. And we sat for a much longer time than we should have. We both started to stiffen up. “Would you like to finish running together?” July asked. And so we ran off in the direction from which she had come

Our memories, at any given moment, form a solid whole, a pyramid, so to speak, whose point is inserted precisely into our present action. Bit behind the memories which are concerned in our present occupation and are revealed by means of it, there are others, thousand of others, stored below the scene illuminated by consciousness...and preserved even to the most infinitesimal details. (Bergson, 1914, p. 320)

On our shoulders and in our hearts we carry the burden of hidden desires, of meanings beyond the ordinary – out of this worldly realm of which only gravity bonds. Was she a beautiful dream or just a vision who appeared to me one summer night. Two souls wrapped in the aura of unblemished attire, sweating from the same nocturnal moon, illuminating each other with eyes that see beyond the darkness. There was no wonder as to who we might be - it made little matter. We run away in silence telling each other to forget nothing, yet remember it all. Stride for stride we warm to each other as we slide our shadows down the hill...faster and faster. There is nothing closer to pure ecstasy than that of running out of control in the dark... trusting in the simple fact

one mis-step and down you go, face first into the humility that you didn't catch yourself falling head over heels before things got out of control. "It was not uncommon for me to let things get out of control!" I never thought of July that way. And I never saw July again.

*Reflection, Refraction, Reality*

By the time it came to the edge of the Forest the stream had grown up, so that it was almost a river, and, being grown-up, it did not run and jump and sparkle along as it used to when it was younger, but moved more slowly, for it knew now where it was going, and it said to itself, There is no hurry. We shall get there some day. But all the little streams higher up in the forest went this way and that, quickly, eagerly, having so much to find out before it was too late. (Hoff, 1979, p. 65).

I can remember back to a summer Saturday of my fifteenth year. It was hot, not a single cloud in the sky, a most typical California day. The sights and sounds of the track meet had my undivided attention. It was on this day in 1963 that I experienced a personal awakening, an enlightenment of spirit. I had come to San Jose to run in a Junior Olympic track competition. Within the course of the day I had become friends with one of the other runners. It happened to be that the runner was female, not shocking news but at that time it was not commonplace. The meet was nearing its completion, with just a relay event to run. It so happened that one of the runners on our team just did not have the strength or desire to run, so we boys needed a fourth runner. The reactions of the others were mixed as my friend offered herself to fill the position. I was delighted to see the strength and conviction that she had and I knew that something very positive was to come from this event.

It took awhile, but finally the officials gave their reluctant permission. Competing with, let alone against the boys was just not the norm.

Intrepidly the race began, undaunted from the start, we all ran as if it was our last race ever. Frankie was no exception, her strong, soft movements carried her as if she was running on air. It was an outstanding display of individual talent – she was a runner and more than that she aspired to be a great athlete.

We had become close friends and the mutual respect we had for one another was genuine. Our shared communication reflected our desires, beliefs and commitment to be outstanding athletes some day. Looking back, I can't help but to remember that I had an inner doubt for some unknown reason (maybe it was due to my "prescribed cultural upbringing," those structured and organized around masculine participation in sport) the reality of Frankie's desire to become an Olympic competitor.

But there was another side to my association with her. There was another side to me. Some two years prior to the aforementioned event I had become a friend with another young girl. Susan was thought to be one of the best upcoming multi-event performers in her age group. At that time, club athletics was still the only avenue available for young girls to compete. Swimming, gymnastics, tennis and track and field clubs produced some of the top junior female athletes of the time. Susie was her name we called her Bat...the reasons - I shall not reveal. She was a pentathlete an event that combined throws, runs and jumps...she was a great athlete.

On a early June morning just after the school year ended it was reported that a coach – (I learned a few days later that it was her coach) had raped an athlete while out in the field on a training day. I was very familiar with the coach. And I participated in many training days with

Bat. I had spent many days out in the fields and surrounding areas training with Bat. There was always a group who trained together. We would ride out in the back of the coach's pick-up truck maybe six to eight of us at any one time. He was a very qualified coach and seemed to know much about training for all types of multi events. He was very loud and gruff, but I liked the hard work he would make us do. One day in middle June he crossed the line – he went too far. Bat had gone with him on this day, others were supposed to go but for some reason did not make the trip.

I remember it was a Tuesday afternoon when I got a call from Bat – it was already hot and I was lying on the cold concrete floor of my garage floor when the phone rang. My dad had fixed up a phone line that allowed the phone, which was in the adjacent kitchen wall to ring in the garage. He never wanted to miss a call, in fact I set many speed records getting to the phone to retrieve calls...there were no such thing as recorders back then. I was in the middle of doing a workout – that included push-ups, pull-ups and general calisthenics. I raced to the phone and Bat was on the line. “Gym – Gym did you hear about Coach P. Yea I did Bat why? It was me – it was me - it was so horrible...he took me out by the old slaughter house and he and Bat started crying...I could not make out the rest – I didn't really want to. But, between the sobs and the crying she was able to tell me that: “My dad thinks it was my fault – He said I should never have gone with him, and that girls had no business running around like I did.“

Now as I think back; at the time I was not old enough to understand the ‘ill-logic’ of her father. As time has passed, and with experience I have been able to understand a little better. Nonetheless Bat became the object of her father's anger. Which seemed to overshadow the act committed by the coach.



Bat and I talked for quite awhile and made arrangements to meet up in a few days at the park near her home. She was not allowed to go out, so we had to plan to meet in secret. I did not like Bat's father - he reminded too much of my own. A fact Bat and I shared in many a conversation. Friday came and I was getting ready to go to my Aunt's house, it was a few houses down street from Bat's - about a mile and a half from my home. I spent the summers mowing lawns and working for many of my relatives, and friends of family. The phone rang - It was my Aunt. "Gym, don't you know the little girl down by the park entrance? Ya, why. "Well there are police cars, and an ambulance there- it looks like something has happened." I had barely hung up the phone...within a second I started on a dead run for my bike, my dad was home that day - I could hear him yelling at me as I rode off and around the corner. I paid no attention. It was a very furious ride, I was breathing fast, and my heart was beating so hard. From a block away I saw the flashing lights and the police cars and people standing in the street. The back door to the ambulance was open but no one was around. The front door to the house was closed. People who I did not know were all talking and I was trying to listen. I was feeling very, very scared at this moment.

I can not, nor do I want to express verbally how I felt later that morning. There are no words to describe the moment. Bat had taken her life...she had shot herself in the head with her father's gun. I remember just being physically sick! I would rather just take a minute here and feel it! I spent the rest of the day with my Aunt and my life was 'again' changed forever that day. Later that summer I pulled the trigger of my Uncle's old Winchester 30/30 rifle...And shot a member of the Hells Angel's motorcycle gang out of Oakland California attempting to rob my Uncle. It probably saved his life. If I could have on that day - the day in which I straddled my

bike in front of Bat's house I would have killed Coach Peton. I would later pay a price for what I thought was the right thing to do. I am no martyr, nor does my philosophy have standing in a community of academicians and specialists in the area of human behavior. But I can, and will say: There are moments that will and do forever change the course of one's life – I do not know with any degree of certainty as to how many are necessary to qualify for the norm of a given population. Nor can I site why some will be affected more than others. I do not care. For once and for all, these are my experiences and I have provided the best possible description of the things as they are. I spent a lot on anger during my adolescent years.

Years later, I became a coach of female athletes, and much of that decision and commitment was due to the early orientation I had received in the world of women's sport. It became my goal as a coach to seek a better understanding of the female athlete. In doing so, it was essential that I sought to help those I coached, unselfishly on my part, achieve their goals. It also meant placing a genuine emphasis on establishing sexual equality and providing positive support. Honest and open communication expressed the state of mind needed to maintain those positive relationships.

I have learned to respect and never again doubt the will of the female athlete to seek what I thought not to be possible.

*Frankie*

It was 1980, and as it most often is, raining in Eugene, Oregon. It was no surprise to see Frankie there on the track, for deep down or way back or whatever – I knew she could do it. My sense of faith and her determination could not be matched. It was a privilege and an honor to have received her thanks for the years of support and confidence I had provided. It was a time of

complete reflection upon our past, upon our first contact, for when we looked into each others eyes, she on the track and me in the stands, the often times insanity of our obsession to become whatever it was we had become, existed. Memories of past events can be a strong stimulus, those that are exclusive. There in Eugene, at that moment during her event, as it had 17 years earlier, was a moment in which faith and commitment had found its sanity.

On that day Frankie qualified for the Olympic Games.

Women, what fools we are, invading unprotected the world of men. In that world of reason is it not reason for us to give, to be willing converts, ardent learners? Within our being, conflict and frustration exist. Our hearts have lost the room for reason. How can we unlearn that which is our culture, that which we were taught! Can we survive? (Gazette, 1984)

Men, conceived as a lone soul, nobly and necessarily pitted against the whole cruel world; A knight who is duty bound, the provider for everyday existence, forever locked in competition. Our regarding most things external to ourselves as outright threats continues to be a pathway to lethality. How can we unlearn that which we were taught? Can we change? (Gazette, 1984)

The above passages were given to me many years ago and I could not think of a more relevant time to use them. While I have had much time to think about what it means to be a man in today's world my personal awareness and development is based upon a very androgynous orientation and perspective. For myself, the importance of the male-female relationship is essential to the nature of my existence

The more I write the more I review old notes and reflect upon past lives the more I realize how much I loved California in my youth. There was something very special about the times and the era – the sports and the friends. It's all about adapting to the changes. Who plans this stuff anyway? Here's my question do any of you have it figured out? What I mean by that is this: Is this now where you wanted to be – did you bring forth such a plan of action for yourself that you were able to realize the desired results? Here's my dilemma I am, have been, was – how ever it is simply put – I was not prepared in many of the directions I traveled. – in fact, Most of the time when I got to where I was I just started right in – It came very easy for me to learn.

I was long ago distracted so madly. I've since forgotten which way the bearing went. I just ran through it all!

I feel a touch of anxiety. Writing does not always come easy for me. Disclosing personal information even less attractive. But the direction of this dissertation can jump over a very critical eighteen years of my life...As a coach in the world of Women's Sport. I believe that my experience and awareness of the male coach –female athlete relationship can provide an insightful look into a very interesting area of human relations. The first opportunity to coach the female athlete came unexpectedly for me. I would like to say with certainty why it was, I accepted a position to do so. I now know why but I'm not sure if I am ready to discuss it yet. It has been a topic of conversation with many of my peers and colleagues – especially those who chose to remain coaching male athletes. "Gym, why do you want to coach the girls?" I was asked that so many times I began to get most defensive. Damn, I really hate to bring psychological factors in to the run here. I have been doing so well as of late. Let me say this for starters. Throughout my career, I have coached women's track and field, women's softball, women's

strength and conditioning all at the university level and Olympic level. Presently I am coaching elite women athletes in a number of different venues. The Marathon, Triathlon, Biathlon.

The social organization of gender in our society has traditionally defined what men and women are supposed to be and do. Cultural images of the male as the doer, physically powerful, the capable achiever. The women's role was one of just being, a feminine ideal that did not stress aggression, competition, or equal participation.

There is no question that our society to some extent has changed its view of the traditional status of both men and women. This is especially true in the Sport World. Increased participation by women in the public world of work has forced our society and men in particular to examine more closely the past patterns and typical attitudes that have affected their relationships. Trying to sort out and understand the various roles can and has led to some confusion... to say the least.

Our society defines achievement, aggression, strength, and toughness as masculine attributes, and considers the possession of these attributes to be unacceptable in females. (Eitzen & Sage, 1991)

Traditional gender roles are constantly being challenged by women, and by men and by the law. The political and business structure of our society has done much to advance our state of gender equality. Aside from the workplace, there is possibly no other environment where traditional patterns, attitudes, and beliefs have been challenged more radically or more visibly than those in the world of sport.

One of the recurring themes within the world of sport is that sport can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger society. The nature of sport, its organization, goals, functions, and

structure provides revealing clues about society. Sport infiltrates and mirrors many levels of our society.

I will try to effectively discuss and analyze the association that takes place between me and the women who share in an interpersonal relationship. The question that might be asked is; what relevance does this have to this dissertation. I may regret the inclusion – but relevance it has.

The participatory relationship that we share exists within the world of organized sport – traditionally considered a “man’s world,” male turf where women did not belong or dared not tread. In athletics, as elsewhere, sexual stereotypes told us what men should do and what women could not do. The process of socialization into sport was acceptable for males; for they were the strong, aggressive highly competitive “natural athlete,” while nineteenth – century notions about femininity and the myth of female frailty contributed to the male imagination that “women just couldn’t compete.” In short, it is no wonder that the world of sport experiences the obvious gender strain and continuing role conflict that it does. Role strain is conceptualized as the condition that results when an individual finds themselves occupying two significant social roles, each of which requires a different and opposing set of values and behaviors.

I have learned a lot as a coach of female athletes. Gender roles cannot be denied. Biologically there exists a difference between males and females in relationship to physical appearance as well as some physiological differences related to athletic performance. Our culture’s image of women have made it appear that women are not as capable as men.

History has shown that women athletes have been underestimated, undervalued, and as a result, under researched and misunderstood. Recent research studying female athletes has provided some interesting findings.

The coach/athlete relationship is unique and multidimensional, with the potential for high degrees of relational ambiguity: The coach is part teacher, part friend, part counselor, and part parent, while the athlete plays the complementary roles of student, friend, client, and offspring.

Communication, fundamental in establishing and maintaining good interpersonal relationships, enables relationship partners to reduce ambiguity about another's intentions and the meaning of their behavior.

Communicating is something you do with your entire body at all times. The way you walk about the office, school, or into a room. The way you sit and stand communicate your sense of your right to be there. Before you say anything, other people have already made a decision, on some level, about whether or not they will listen to you.

Within the sport environment, I have faced a wide range of variability insofar as talent, motivation, and personality are concerned. It is a very complex and often times I am faced with the ambiguous task of maintaining my personal values and philosophy while demonstrating sound ethical principals required of my profession.

The male coach – female athlete relationship can be very special and emotionally meaningful. In general, a competent, sympathetic and understanding coach is sometimes experienced by the athlete as a kind of extended father figure. This can and often does lead to a hero – worship association on the part of the female – who in general lacks positive female role-models. This places an additional burden on the coach and in most cases the special feelings and

personal support create an emotional bond that can lead to an athlete becoming overly dependent upon the coach. In order to become and remain effective, I must be cognizant of the many outside as well as internal influences which can interfere with our relationship. There are so many positive elements that are conducive to establishing and maintaining our relationship, but there are times when one another's actions or suggestions may inadvertently create mixed signals or feelings. It is quite challenging and as coach I feel I have the perspective and understanding that enable the athlete to realize that my personal contact is part of the process available in helping her reach her potential. That process of understanding each other motivations through effective communication is critical to my success and the athletes' development.

*Jade*

We both came from the same place: we were collegiate athletes who suffered an intense amount of depression and anxiety after competition was over. Here is a woman who is complete "joy"; she is amazingly outgoing and delightful. When she said she had a major drug addiction and huge weight gain, I of course asked "when???" She said as soon as she stopped competing. I remember looking at her and feeling an intense and overwhelming urge to cry. (Jade, 1998)

Jim, this has happened to me ever since I left college. It's something IN me, all around me, and if I didn't I wouldn't know how to survive. It used to torment me, reminding me that if I stopped running, stopped trying, I didn't have an identity, and no one cared or knew how special I was anymore. I take a deep breath, and then another – I taste the hint of wine and swallow I'm feeling warm



and flowing – and I just had to call you. Could you just press your head, your body up against mine for just a moment - to travel this place with me, to know, to realize how much I need to not let go. There is so much of you here for me, like a reserve tank of toughness. Once I touch it I am sustained for days. Addicted to a perpetual half –mile. Everything that we represent I wear upon my body, in my moods, my choices...my ability to take it to the next level - to feel the pain, and go further than I'm supposed to go. My endurance never ends, and when I fear being alone you're always there, and there's so much more of me because of you – if I run away will you find me? (Jade, 1998)

Peer pressure for me to conform to sexual stereotypes really began in adolescence. I wanted desperately to learn how to walk, sit, dress, and talk so that I could catch myself a respectable supply of boyfriends. I had become boy –crazy and at the same time I was a teenage girl trying to be an athlete. (Eck, 1976).<sup>12</sup>

I soon developed a split personality that split even further when I discovered that my best route to serious athletic activity was men. I charmed my way into training with some of the fastest runners who ever ran. I ran and hurt and laughed with that super group almost every day for two years. They taught me the fine point of being an athlete, of life and of love. It was an unforgettable time in my life, but I paid a heavy price for the memories. Found myself with “male” attitudes toward women, but I also wanted to be able to play “female” to my heroes. I was caught in the dilemma of wanting to assert myself athletically,

verbally, and sexually, but O worried about the consequences of not conforming to the female norm. My self-esteem rose and fell like a roller coaster. I had to justify myself through male approval. (Ech, 2004)

I felt bad for her experience, but then I felt powerfully understood and as if we both came from the same “place.” I haven’t felt that with anyone for a very long time. I then also realized how much I still carry all of those unresolved thoughts and guilt. It was incredible - to simultaneously feel connected and distant at the same exact time,” (Jade, 1998/2000)

There are things that happen and leave no discernable trace, are not spoken or written of, though it would be very wrong to say that subsequent events go on indifferently, all the same, as though such things had never been – they always will be! – Byatt (1994)

*Propinquity Fate and Reflection from Jade*

I first met him when I was about eleven or twelve years old. I was in the sixth grade. It was an all district field day for the grade school. I saw him standing at the fence watching the events and races. He was writing things down in a notebook. My uncle and my dad were also watching me that day. Before every race I would get ready by stretching my legs – I learned to stretch playing soccer. Before a race my uncle would wave me over to the fence and say; “I’ll give you a dollar if you win the race.” I won seven dollars that afternoon. On one of my trips over to the fence to ‘collect’ from my uncle I ran by this same guy standing

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<sup>12</sup> Conversations with Lynda Huey, “Runner’s start: An athlete, a woman.” New York: Quandrangle Press.

there... watching. I remember asking him who he was. He told me he was a teacher, and that he thought I was really fast. I told him I was the fastest kid there - not even the fastest boy here could beat me. He smiled and said he'd be watching me... I liked him immediately. After my last race I ran by him yelling, "See I told you!" He smiled, waved, told me, "Way to go!" And I ran off to meet my dad. (Jade, 1998)

Thirty-one years ago two people met, on a hot day in May. Never was a thought given to who, or what would ever become of such a meeting. And never was it mentioned again...until many years later. This is how it was.

I remember it as a warm late spring afternoon only the kind California can create. I was looking forward to the day – away from the classroom. I was a teacher within the district and traveled from school to school providing Physical Education instruction for the 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. It was a chance to get out and observe the hundreds of young boys and girls participating in the district field day. Jumping, throwing, and running events were on the schedule. I was there to observe and assess the overall organization. Today it was an assignment, and I was to report to the district director my impressions and possible recommendations. As I stood on the playground, I could not help but notice this one young runner. The hair was pixie cut, initially I couldn't help but think I was observing a young boy...besides winning all the races. The athletic skills and physique were very obvious. She was quick, coordinated, strong, fast on her feet, and very confident...it was clear she loved to compete.

Seven years later I found myself in western Montana. I was called late one night and asked if I would be interested in coaching at the university. An old friend of mine was there.

Actually, it was the athletic director who contacted me. He was in need of a coach for the women's track and field team -As well a strength and conditioning coach for the volleyball and basketball programs. It was a chance to pursue a master's degree and work with college athletes...and off I went. It was an exciting new start and along with the on campus duties I had the responsibilities of recruiting. Being from the Bay Area of California, I was familiar with all the high schools, had many contacts, and knew the track and field community very well.

Recruiting is what you do when all regular duties cease in the world of college athletics. As a runner there is an old adage when in doubt, "run hills." As a college coach there is the similar adage...when you have an extra moment, "you recruit" And I did just that.

During the fall cross-country season I started to receive feedback on my inquires into prospective runners (athletes) from the Northern California region. The coaching network is a phenomenon in itself. So many of my old friends who were now coaching went to great lengths to provide detailed history and insight into the athletes not only from their programs but from other district schools as well. Pages of questionnaires, letters of recommendation, even video tapes arrived weekly. My time spent assessing the talent, credibility of the referral, and general sorting through the hundred or so folders I had assembled consumed those extra minutes I spoke of earlier. Writing return letters and hours spent on the phone in conversation with prospective recruits never ceased. I didn't want it too. If there is one compulsive factor about college coaching, besides the physical task itself - it is in the recruiting. An athletic 'flea market' exists in the sport world and coaches are always seeking to find that; "diamond in the ruff!" - That one anthropologic athlete - A talent that had been dismissed, or discarded...as cold as this may sound the reality exists - it's just not readily admitted too.

There was a little girl

There was a man

He stopped to speak

I think I know of who you are

“No one else knows that,” she replied.

I think I know of where you are going

I will see you soon (Bennett, 1993, p. 29)

You always seem to stay – stay with me to watch, to celebrate, to ache. I always know you will be there. You move me to imagine first with my eyes then with my body – my sensual side does a dance upon your senses. It’s about locking into another’s pace and being able to immediately sink into a double world that speaks a unique language. Your fuzzy head turns as I turn, your lanky legs twist and fall into stride with mine...we are home. (Jade, 1997)

I have chosen to include this topic or as I would like to think this phenomenon propinquity. I never knew what propinquity was until my major professor and I entered into the discussion of interpersonal relationships. Those relationships that seem to gather momentum along the way. The more time one spends in close proximity the likely one can experience propinquity. It is and may be one of the most powerful of such unknown variables in reference to human behavior. I believe this to be especially true in working relationships, teacher student, and in particular. The coach athlete relationship. It crosses gender and it crosses the race and it can if not understand cross the lines of ethical behavior.

To climb steep hills requires a slow pace at first. (Shakespeare, 1613)

There is an order to life – a long slow progressive “Run to Death”, as I may like to view it. I have come to realize that I view many things with a different lens in what connects my vision to my brain. It has been called a neurological disorder. For now –let’s just say that I know of my limitations but I also know of my strengths and one of them is in the ability to open up discussions on what I consider to be critical elements in and regarding one’s involvement in the Sports World.

I started the above paragraph with the idea of life being in order –my run the death analogy. Continuing...yet, along the way near the edge there are those moments of brief joy, sustained exhilaration, things that happen without reason or for no explainable reason. It may be a dangerous liaison that feeling of pleasure one gets when they let their personal feelings run away and imagine, and misinterpret the actions and expressions of another.

When I was a teenager and barely into adolescence between puberty and my grandpa’s old Argosy, magazines things started to change before my mind could sort out the right and the wrong. I was no longer at home. I was now moving in and out, and was somewhere between the world of my grandparents and my one aunt who took a personal interest in my well being. Confusion exists only when it doesn’t feel good. In today’s world of sensual sexual pseudo psycho correctness the consciousness of an act such as I now site would probably land both myself and the perpetrator into the depths of the judicial system not to mention a lifelong treatment program.

It once, every so often makes one just want to sit down in the middle of the road – oblivious to the consequences – uncertain to the outcome, caught

between the clouds of day – and the dark of night – It can be a matter of life and death. (Gym, 2004)

Just what has become of innocence? I can see it in others, I have observed it in my own children, and I have had it taken away...at least that is what I have been told. “How could she do that to you? Your whole world, your innocence has been stolen from you.”

It was during the middle of the day and it was as I reflect a most curious case of; what did I do to deserve/experience this? My childhood friend and burgeoning Pentathlete had recently committed herself to a life no longer worth living. She, and I know this, had no intent of making me miserable... but it happened. Somewhere between misery and anger and surviving what had become a tremulous summer of '63', I can only thank Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys for providing me some place to go when “In My Room” with my own thoughts of leaving this place behind. I later found out as did many who came to know of those other places in one's life that he too (Brian Wilson, 1963) spent a lot of time locked up in his room. My Aunt took a very keen interest in me. This was due to the fact that she despised my father. I did not think much about spending so much time with her. She was allowing me to live at her house. I helped out around the place and had lots of freedom, and she enjoyed my company. Her fiancée had been killed in an automobile accident while serving in the military. There were times when I knew she was sad, she would drink too much, probably to ease the pain. I would have to come get her and drive her home – from her waitress job. The truth is, she allowed me to drink with her. I got an early start into alcohol education. I kept things to myself, even though I knew my peers would have thought my activities would be “very cool.” Lucky Gym!

I say now that I did not understand, but being there in close proximity day after day created a condition of what can only be described as a mutual attraction. Here I was being provided a place of comfort, money, a chance to drive her 61 ford convertible. For a young angry boy who was told how much of a mess he had made of his life so far..."I couldn't have had it any better" - unless of course that comforting led to a seven month long sexual relationship. An experience that put me between my fourteen old body, and her twenty-six years worth of experience. She was beautiful and I was cute and the rest can only be "that which lies between." I doubt it would serve much purpose here to go into great detail on the events that followed. There are those who may never understand. There are also (unknown to me at this time) others who may read this dissertation – I mean who reads dissertations anyway...but one never knows. And if you should read to this point I would suggest you be neither attracted, nor repulsed by the actions, and the activities. There was no gun to my head. And I have long sense recognized the profound significance of the experience. As usual, I ran away, and misery did not come with me. I would like to believe that I was enlightened but I have been informed otherwise. I repeat what I said this earlier on in this dissertation "I have yet to meet otherwise."

There was never any more inception  
 than there is now,  
 Nor any more youth or age  
 than there is now,  
 And will never be any more perfection  
 than there is now  
 Nor any more heaven or hell



than there is now.(Whitman, 1855)

One has to devote himself his whole heart and soul to the recovery of his innocence. And yet...this cannot be the work of our own self to make it right with oneself. (Merton, 1968)

I might agree here with Merton to the extent that to lose one's innocence can leave one empty and in a sense feeling impure. It can require some assistance to replace that, which has been lost. There can be a significant affect upon how one feels about them. I have learned this to be true about many of the examples I have encountered through what at best I will call my training as a "sports therapist." Things can get lost in the world of sport and without guidance a most direct effect could be irreversible.

Propinquity in general more so propinquity in sports fascinates me. I say this because I can. And I say this because I have experienced first hand. These are factors that influencing interpersonal attraction. From personal attractiveness to like personalities to the perception that the more we meet and interact with them the closer we find those like conditions friends we do become. Yet there are degrees that extend beyond just being friends. From what started out as a casual contact, leads to or the perception that a relationship of more substance has developed. To the degrees of which propinquity can need to be understood. The French have a saying 'Voisinage.' A nearness to the source can be of great advantage.

To be drawn near like a moth to a flame – yet without hopefully such severe consequences.

It is what one does with their motivation that I believe needs adjustment. – There always exist the potential for one to have ulterior motives when the quality of, or the state of a relationship begins to draw closer to the source.

### *Running and Coaching*

Ideally, as a coach I cherish the opportunity to lead, inspire and motivate an athlete. Countless hours are spent throughout the year in direct contact and communication with the athlete. Whether it be an office contact, a training session or the day of an intense competition, I must be prepared to give myself what I feel the athlete needs at that moment. The moment might require me to be a friend, a stern disciplinarian, or maybe a trusting confidant. It requires a strong understanding of human psychology and knowledge of one's personal self. There exists a high degree of self-disclosure within our interpersonal relationship. The intimacy of the information disclosed is in direct relationship to my ability to establish honest, open communication. It requires an uncompromising ethic.

Neal (1978) stated that a coach's ability to communicate with an athlete is vital to all aspects of coaching, included "information gathering" as one of the critical communication skills necessary for success in coaching.

As a coach I have used that idea for many years. I have kept an information file on every athlete, storing relevant behavioral and attitudinal information that might help me to understand an athlete better, especially during those times of stress or conflict. Generally, it comes down to a matter of being able to be very sensitive to others needs and feelings. For me, it is a process by which the understanding of human behavior has a direct affect upon an individual's performance – in this case, athletic performance.

This process of understanding requires both myself and the athletes to be receptive to and become comfortable with, the work of doing something different – adapting to change. Those who can adapt and respond positively to the many dimensions of social, physiological, and psychological change, dramatically increase their chance of success. In relation to this, I as a coach, am not without my own bias when it comes to dealing with athletes and their behaviors. I have even gone so far as to develop some of my own general stereotypes. For the most part they are quite subjective and personally perceived but they do enable me to better examine the actions and rationalizations of the many different attitudes and strategies used by the athletes.

Now, for some clarification here. I did not, nor do I believe very few coaches learn to coach from a book, video sessions, or handouts from the many clinics they have attended. It comes from experience: a combination of learned, gathered, and that which is then put into practice.

I have learned and can fully understand that not every individual athlete wishes to compete and win. Some wish to just be there, to belong, and have no desire – no matter how hard I or any coach might try to push them beyond the “comfort zone.” The workplace for both of us becomes less competitive with the main function being a general repetition of the everyday operation. It becomes an easy path for that particular athlete to travel, and for that type of athlete it’s the comfort ability of the environment that allows them to deal with themselves and others. Change is not something that this individual finds easy and most often there is a lack of attention on the part of the athlete to help in their own development. There is very little detail to our interpersonal communication. Inexperience and a lack of confidence in their training abilities and performance level is often the reason.

There are those individuals, possibly due to experience maturity or a higher level of understanding, whether it is a natural or conditioned level – seem to welcome the changes that take place. They are much more responsive and often more demanding of themselves – an over-achiever in a sense. The relationship that I have with these athletes is characterized by their willingness to work towards a goal – usually a common goal that has been predetermined by our personal communication. It is at this level that there is more pressure to perform, both as a person and an athlete. If there is to be role or gender conflict it usually surfaces at this level. Both as a coach and as an athlete we have advanced our skills to a level of dedication in their development. The understanding of the long hours, the extra endurance and strength work begins to pay off. There is the beginning of a significant coach/athlete relationship, one that is often unspoken, reflects the mutual respect for each other. Yet there are some very bothering conditions that exist in the coach's Sport World.

A feeling of change comes over us when we succeed. A kind of magic results. Our physical and mental skills change from the routine, into something memorable. It's artistry, a performance, and an expression.

As a coach I must say – this is what it is all about. The excellence that comes from an athlete who is performing at the peak of their individual potential. Those whose individual movements demonstrate economy and efficiency. They are the ones who have a higher level of concentration, commitment, and personal intention. There is an emotional feeling to what they do. The reasons may vary; sometimes there are no explanations as to why many of these athletes live on the edge of a psycho-social-physical dimension. For some it is the challenge, for others it is the risk. But whatever it is, there is a commitment and personal dedication to improving

themselves. These individuals are at times the most difficult to work with. Their intensity (as well as my own) creates both inner and interpersonal conflict. Their own uncertainty, temperament and self-concept can at times become impossible to deal with. It requires an awareness of each other that can only be understood through our own communication experience: "The time that we spend on the other side of each other," it requires an enormous amount of patience and give and take. It is an emotional involvement that cannot succeed without trust and respect.

It is at this point that we both are making a contribution to one another. We begin through mental discipline to understand the compromise; often it is to the point where it becomes an unconscious act of function on the part of one another. It is an integration of each others actions, instinctively analyzing each others performance. We both learn to positively balance and control our emotions and try to focus upon each others transformation into excellence. Change becomes a position, a state of mind. We learn that it is a most necessary function. Our mutual respect for one another becomes an unselfish expression that needs not be understood, just felt. The course of events and emotional involvement that takes place naturally develops into a relationship, often a friendship. On this level there is more meaning to what the athlete or myself might feel towards each other. It is clearly a time that we share the responsibility for understanding each other's motivations. There is much internal conflict and at times a dilemma exists as to the expectations we might have of one another. There are no written guidelines, no real rules as to what we can demand and expect to get from the relationship. There is no knowing when (for it can happen in a very short moment) the vulnerability, the fragility or the intensity can breakdown the connection that took so long to form.

If there is a reward to be gained through a participation in the coach/athlete relationship, it is not clearly understood by some of those within the profession. It can be too much to cope with. Mistakes are made and emotions run high. The coach has an inordinate amount of control.

The reward is in the effort; it is in that moment when all of the hard work, the risks, the accomplishments pay off. It is not always measured. It can often be that sense of one performing on the highest achievable level possible. The relationship of one thing or person to another. A moment of realization of intense personal satisfaction that we both receive from committing ourselves to each other, both physically and mentally. There is a quality to the mind and body that will always be felt when one knows they are tried their hardest to accomplish what they set out to do.

I am presently involved in the cultivation stage of a coach/athlete “mentor” relationship. By way of our relationship I have helped to develop more confidence in our understanding of each other’s abilities. We have developed a clear definition of the relationship and the guidelines for our behavior have been established. We have become close friends, yet a positive autonomy to our friendship remains.

As a male, I have changed. I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to unlearn that which I was taught and I feel am a better person for it all. My female protégé will survive, she will handle the conflict and frustration in her life and career. We are both becoming better at what we do and how we are perceived in today’s changing sport scene.

#### *Propinquity Issues and Description*

I am not surprised when I hear my friends talk negatively towards the female athlete. There are those men who still feel very threatened by the women’s intrusion into sport. Some

can no more handle a male/female relationship let alone the intensity of the coach/athlete involvement. There will always be that macho myth and hard line male image for some to live up to. A 250 pound bench press and two six-packs of beer go a long way in proving one's masculinity. We all have a lot to learn from each other – about sport – about being a man and about being a woman. I am proud of the performance so far, but there are still many challenges ahead.

Years ago, while sitting in my office looking at my notes and pondering the many questions this LONG RUN had brought to mind – I looked up to see an old coaching friend looking down on me. We had coached high school football together many years back. Football camp was in session and he was here for the week. I had not even said hello before he spoke.

“Well, if it ain't you, staring at the Women's Track sign on my door, I see you're still working with them Fag coaches – trying to get those tight-ass girls to run around the track. You know it's ruined the football program don't you.”

“Hello coach, I'm glad to see that you have not changed.”

Some things never change!

*Eros, Ethics and Other stuff.*

The sport of sex and the eros of the athlete is alive and well in the sports world.

In sex is the attitude of experiencing sexual desire and passion as one aspect of interpersonal relationships. Separating sex from the rest of the self, indeed, is no more tenable than to isolate one's larynx and speak of “my vocal cords wanting to talk with my friend.” (May, 1953)

The life instinct, or sexual instinct, demands activity of a kind that, in contrast to our current mode of activity, can only be called play. The life instinct also demands a union with others and with the world around us based not on anxiety and aggression but on narcissism and erotic exuberance. (Brown, 1967).

### *Conclusions*

It is said that you can't go back. Well, I take a different view of that – it is my belief that one has to go back - back to the circles, to the fields, to the sandlots, and the streets and the playgrounds, back to the sacred places and the secret missions and the spots where the first great events took place? Who is to say that the Parthenon in Greece is any more important than the circle at the end of the block? Is it not in the “experiencer”? Who is to say that one can not have or find or create one's own field of dreams? I am not suggesting that there are answers there. I am suggesting that there are still questions there – questions as to where one lost or found their character, their morals, their love for a game or an activity – their love for the sport . There are questions – so many left unanswered.

Recently I made my own sojourn. I went to some places from the past – primordial sports where I had begun – The backyard, the street, the circle, the school – I ran in the coliseum - I played football in Kesar Stadium. Recently I saw an interview with some professional baseball players – They were discussing their first trip to Yankee stadium in New York. They were acting like ten-year old kids with hats cocked and gloves under their arms twisting the finish off a beautiful piece of ash and hickory caressing the bat and fondling the ball like it was their first time. Staring in awe at the solid bronze figures (portraits) of DiMaggio and Gering, and Ruth and Mantle, Whitey Ford and the others – for it was their first trip to Yankee stadium. And they were



in a spiritual paralysis. The aura was like nowhere else they had ever been. There was a religious sentiment to the grass, the basepath, the bleaches, and the fence. As one of the players put it, I feel as if God himself built this place. But we all know it is the house that Ruth built. I hate the Yankees but I love this place, its an honor to be standing here.

There is nothing like being there – being in or at a place of worship, where the activity, the run, the catch, the hit, the shot was made. That is why one must go back. Not to relive the moment. NO, it is all about being in the moment. It is the moment. And it can be the moment that defined one's personal behavior for life. Experiencing the sensation the tingle the goose bumps, the nervousness, the fright the euphoric endorphin. It is about letting it go, leaving things in their place as they were. One can not change it – but one can change. Even in the horror of the face of the father or the screaming in the face of a coach – even in the place where you dropped your first fly ball – it cost us the game you know. Or when you lost the race you should have one - by a whisker at the tape. Those places still live on maybe not in the physical sense . I once was to have murdered their closest competitor; I guarantee they will have been realizing what that moment was for them. Some have been long dismantled, turned into drugstores, and parking lots. It cannot be easily explained – it should not be. In some cases it is nobody else's business. Who really wants to hear of one's religion or of one's past feats as an athlete? Who really cares? Yet for some reason there is a catharsis in reconstructing for the sake of this dissertation. But for the most part much of this will go without real notice, and that is okay with me because it is not about you or anyone in particular. There are bar stools for that sort of talk. We are all too busy to really care. Oh sure, we shall pretend to care with one ear to the story, the other to the music, and the eyes checking out the action behind the voice.

All the time our mind is thinking about other sides of our own selfish existence – my kids are the best, God I have to wash the car, and that bastard at the bank is making it hard for me to get the mortgage on the house. I need to raise my children and keep the wife happy. I wonder what I can do to bring in some more money.

“You know I was one of the fastest kids in my class,” he breaks in mid-conversation. “I could have been an Olympic runner. But I had this coach he was a total ass-hole – he hated me.” (Gym, 2004)

Conversation in and about the past we have them daily. Some do get stuck back when. Some do like to relieve the past days of glory talking up their athletic exploits and grand moments that have become legends only to themselves. It has somewhat different for me – I can remember great plays of others and outstanding feats of athleticism – I am drawn more now to the question of what happened to him or her. I wonder how or if their life was affected like I believe mine was. No stop right now Gym. This is not about a belief – this is about a life. I was swallowed whole like Pinocchio and Geppetto. Left to find my way out of another world – Sport as I have mentioned so many times throughout this dissertation was my life. It is my life; it has been what has defined and created and conditioned me and my mind, and my body, and my associations with just about everything I have come in contact with. It is and will always be a competition. Just this past weekend I called an old friend, a past competitor and Olympic athlete in his day. We talked of kids and the strains of the years the women and the others whose paths had crossed crisscrossed with us along the way. We had not talked for some 15 years and still the current pushed us towards competition.

“I am not able to run anymore – bad knees.”

And of course my counter is good, “I will come down and kick your ass on a run just like I used to.”

“Yeah well, I have been mountain biking for the past twelve years and I’ll ride your butt into the river – can you still swim?”

It was not until we put that past notions behind that the real discussion began. How his wife was not competitive and how his son learned not to be competitive and how he worried that he will not be able to get through the years ahead being of the passive persuasion. There is always something to be learned from the past, be it yours or another’s. In the sport world, we learn to mask and diffuse, confuse, and cajole the competition to keep that edge that we think is necessary to win. I will go a little farther here on this – we need not think we must know that it is an edge and that we must activate, we must not give in to the rigors of the competition. We must keep the edge.

This Dissertation - and how would I know this, I have never written one of these. Again, this dissertation should come with instructions for assembling one’s life via their inculturation into the Sport World. It is supposed to have a beginning and should be with an ending. And the result is to be supportive material, with references and citations. That might be all well and good – I hope it ends that way – but for me it cannot. It will not come to an end until I do. Therein my love for the death of my experiences...and it will be the last best one experience I ever had. Preceding the end I assume it must be that I have formulated a series of concluding thoughts. The dissertation is nothing more than a portion of time spent running along at my own pace.

Like in a long run, I think it is necessary to disassociate oneself at some point along the way. I find a great deal of difficulty trying to maintain concentration throughout the course. I

have slowed the pace a little at times to gather myself...and to gather my thoughts. Statements as to what I learned from the rigorous research and thousands of hours of reading and citing examples of the things as they are.

I did something recently that I needed to do. I went back. I went back to some of the places I had been before. Places where I had grown-up. Places where I had experienced both the worst and the best of times in my life. I made a decision to do this to feel those moments again. More clearly to feel things in all good conscience and as the author of this dissertation I could not conclude without having gone back. I could not describe the experiences as accurately and as confidently without standing on the old steel manhole cover in the circle we used for home plate or going back to my Uncles house or my grandpa's roof, or the back yard where some of me is buried forever. Pieces and bits still strewn about in the spiritual wind that still produces. And asphalt playgrounds. This might sound totally nuts to some – and it may be to others. But it is what I had to go to satisfy my self my curiosity and my passion for getting the feeling back and putting others to rest. Many of the places still stood – all looking much smaller in physical size and less intimidating than they had some forty years ago. Sad, I was not nostalgia in my voice yet.

As far as I can determine every one of these dissertations are supposed to have some form of a conclusion. Time is of essence for I am running out. This conclusion is due tomorrow, It must be reread and probably rewritten and ready to go on to my committee by the end of the week. The nice thing about a long leisurely run is you can quit when you want. This run is dragging on and my legs are getting heavy, but I will pick up my feet and get through the finish. That is why I have come to call this conclusion a run through the finish. I can not begin to tell the

reader how many times as an athlete and as a coach later on I was part of, or witness to, a race being won and or lost due to the fact one “did not run through the finish.”

When I began constructing this conclusion, I was about four miles out and still five to go to get back to my keypad. It would be my greatest achievement to invent a device whereby one could record their thoughts while engaged in an activity such as running. On a run these sorts of thoughts transcribed upon the return. So many thoughts are left as footprints on the road or lost on the trail.

I myself have recovered from a past long day spent in the office of my major professor. A beautiful day outside and hear we are fiddling and faddling with the nuances of the more salient points in my dissertation. I have developed a propinquity for my major professor and she knows it. But it doesn't change a thing. It has been twelve going on thirteen years that she has come to my rescue. A modern day savior like my Andropolis was a modern day marathoner. God Gym, you are just not organized- “You go here then there and you are so scattered. Gym what is this?” That seems to be all I heard, every few minutes or so she would look up from beneath her bifocals and just roll her eyes. And I would just shrug. And I would come up with some lame comment as to how much I have learned under her tutelage.

“Well we just have to get this done so stay on task now where did you get this reference?”

I got to the point where it was no longer possible to explain myself. I don't know where some things came from. I just wrote from where I have been – I wrote from the passion that is? What was left of me after “de-constructing” myself in front of those who will look at this scandalous sports strip tease? I have spent considerable time pondering the effects, the options,

the moods, changes, and conversations. The more I saw myself in the reflection, the more it makes me want to break every mirror. In my attempts to get at the things themselves I requested a “no judgment zone” be enacted while in dialogue with SS. But the more we work the more I realize how can one not be judgmental?

I would like to believe that we are not that far apart. While she stood in the grounds of Kent State University watching students fall dead due to an out of control national guard – I was sitting in a lecture hall listening to Dr. Timothy O’Leary promote the use of hallucinogenic drugs to save the soul and the society only to walk outside and find myself being tear gassed and unable to run that day – those bastards never gave one thought to the fact that a good day’s run – a day of training was lost on their arrogant use of green canisters rolling across the green – no wonder I’m rebellious. I remember one of my favorite kids. A young man I had recruited and tried to save. He left me with some of his poems after dropping out of his last race. It was a most unusual occurrence. The whole team started out with the gun off they went across the rolling green grass of the arboretum and when the race ended there was no Cisco in sight. He had somewhere along the way decided to runaway and he kept going. He got on a bus, left town, and was not heard from for years. But he left me many of his thoughts with me.

A soul crawled in my window

last night

Put a hand in my chest

And stopped my heart.

The curtains froze like ice

slow but final

the glass eye closed  
with confidence  
Silence  
followed bearing gifts  
like darkness  
and aloneness  
Time heaved  
came to a sighing stop  
and melted rain sheeting  
off a window  
Pain  
the blur I became in the glass  
was silence  
bearing gifts like  
darkness and aloneness  
Depressed about the day  
I didn't run (Cisco, 1997).

And that's Okay with me. Damn, what can I say,. What is the truth? Does one have to expose their own personal gymnasias to let others in on the family secrets? Teenage drinking, adolescent sex, hallucinogenic drugs, performance enhancement, lying and cheating. Adulterous behavior. Is it necessary to expose all the realities? It seems to me whether it's right or not, it has been done. I would love to think it possible to go back and start the run all over again – but there

is the paradox again – You just don't have that option. One can't just return to a forever time and rerun their life over and over. Except off course in their mind and that for all of you is what drives us mad. . Madness and insane words that stir up images of contorted faces and wild rocking chair movements while sitting perfectly still contemplating the next worst case scenario. I'd rather be sliding down an icy glissade with only an ice ax and moment – a moment left when you have only one chance, one last opportunity to flip the body one hundred and eighty degrees and in one fraction of a second with all the power you have drive that pointed stainless blade down hard into the frozen rock and stop within inches of sure death before sent to your death in to the bottom of a three thousand foot crevice. I'm not sure here if I have left the paradox paragraph or not...but if I haven't I end it with –you must give something up – to gain something more. Possibly that is what this dissertation is about. I have chosen to give up things here about the life of one who hopes to go out and with what he has left – make a difference to those who might encounter a similar set of experiences to date.

...who the hell is not going to have some opinion about that? Where did my character go? I know I had some once upon a time. I know I had to be better than what has been described. I know that. But I also know that I failed to learn. I failed to pay attention. I went on, and on without giving thought to the fact that I would be here today witting on this very subject. What a contradiction...

In a meeting with one of my committee members (MK) a few months back he asked me to possibly elaborate on what I thought to be the paradox of my Long Run Dissertation. Well Dr. Mike. Here it is! There is always pain in the pleasure of accomplishment. Or, in another version – you can't be happy without hurting. You can't win without losing ...how's that? Running is



synonymous with writing, page for page stride for stride. Now I'm not sure if I can qualify the separate pain that one feels when involved in a physical task versus an emotional one. Pain is pain and I have for as long as I can remember have had an enormous amount of tolerance to pain. In fact if I didn't feel any, then something must have been wrong with the activity. I must not have pushed myself long or hard enough. Two parallel universes exist here- real life to the life in sport. I made claims having to do with the separateness all through this dissertation. And I will stand by those claims. In fact, the more I reflect now, the more I feel separate. Here is why I did what I did and **how** I interacted, my ethics my character, all the while involved in the sport world. It would be my contention that I had to behave that way. Relativism to the max.

I must interject as my distraction has gotten the best of me..."again! Just this morning I awoke to the news that had won the New York City Marathon run this pas Sunday. It was just a few months ago she was seen sitting on the curb in Athens hands held to her head sobbing that she had to quit. The worst thing for anyone involved in sport – that day you had to quit. Redemption for was the headline. It does the heart well to see someone make a return to the event and finish with a more positive result.

When your heart stops you die – it's as simple as that, and when the love and the passion go you may as well die. So to all of you and to all the things this dissertation may or may not represent – "I leave you with my scars, and the scabs and even the birthmark that smiles when I bend over just enough. I have left myself open and if I take time to explain anymore – than you really don't get it!"

Religion: Sport is a religion. It goes further than thinking if God exists or not. God is sport. Sport is much easier to see, feel, and touch. The sport, body parts, and cough up the

phlegm produced without fear of going to hell. I am and will not let this concept lay here left to dry on these final pages.

In the end, sport as it has been described is about manipulation, deception, strategy, competition, diffusion of responsibility and power. In the end there are conclusions to draw. I think each one here has drawn their own, but there exists that last lone metaphor that motivates, that drives us; to “run through the finish “– Behold.

Throughout the year, marathons take place all over the world. Most of the runners, whether they’re men or women, are comparatively young, have been running most of their lives, and all are in good condition – very good condition. The contestants in these races come from all sections of the world.

The marathon I decided to enter was a big and famous one – the Boston Marathon. Back on the reservation in Montana I had been a good athlete – good in football and baseball and outstanding in track. I won the state finals, and had my mother and father not been killed in a car crash in my freshman year in college, I really believe I might have had a crack at the Olympics. My dad left my three sisters and myself a 1,500 acre ranch on the Blackfoot Reservation where we raised mainly cattle. My Indian name is Joe Little Turtle. (Winters, 2001).

I shall always remember my grandfather, one of the tallest Indians I’d ever seen. He would tell me things like, “Remember, Joe – Behold the turtle! The only time he makes progress is when he sticks his neck out.” Turtles are very special symbols to the Indians. He lived to be one-hundred and three and got up one day in early March of 1970, threw his favorite pipe in the fireplace and said; “I shook

hands with Teddy Roosevelt and accompanied him on a worldwide tour. I corresponded with Will Rodgers I smoked a pipe with Mark Twain, and was present when Apollo Eleven, with Neil Armstrong aboard, took off for the moon. I've seen enough – enough for me.”

I watched as grandfather grabbed a shovel from the corner of the shed and said, “I'm going out to dig my grave – don't nobody follow till two moons pass. Then if them turkey buzzards and coyotes ain't got to me, throw some lime on me, say what ya want, and then be on about your business!”<sup>13</sup>

When I won the state finals in high school in Great Falls, Montana, I was wearing my grandfather's moccasins. At first they were going to disqualify me for not wearing the right gear, but the officials got together and overruled the decision.

I had to spend most of my time working on the ranch tending to the cattle. Meat was not selling well and my sisters were all going to college, so I shelved my running dreams, but I did find myself running as much as I could on the ranch. I so loved to run and did so whenever I could find the time. This was especially true during the winter months when it was bitterly cold, and I mean cold, as much as forty below this past winter. The heavy snow and high drifts would always strengthen my legs. Come spring and the thaw I found I could run like a deer.

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<sup>13</sup> The phenomenological description occurring here is an epoche reflection of marathon runner, using the metaphor presented through Winters' Tales, (Winter, 2001).

When I turned sixty, I decided that before I packed it in I would go to Boston, hoping that I would meet the qualifying and pass the requirements to enter the race.

I must confess I never dreamed of winning, but being a runner one always has to think big that way. There were so many fine runners and athletes – all so much younger than myself. All I wanted to do, like many people my age, was to make a good showing and run through the finish. I notified my sisters that I was on my way back east to Boston to run in the marathon. Three of them were married and not living on the reservation but in other parts of the country. The night before I left Montana all the men of my tribe had a big council meeting to which I brought my grandfather's peace pipe. Originally the pipe had four eagle feathers attached to it; now there was only one. Also the bowl on the pipe had a large crack in it...but none of that mattered. There were eleven of us and we all puffed on the pipe. It was very strange, for I could feel my grandfather's presence – as a matter of fact, before the smoked cleared, it had formed the shape of a turtle. And I remember what my grandfather had told me many years ago. "Behold the turtle – the only time he makes progress is when he sticks his neck out!"

The next day I drove down to Great Falls, boarded the plane and was on my way to Boston. The day of the race I did something that I had wanted to do ever since I was a small boy. I always wanted to run just wearing a pair of buckskins, a beaded band around my head and a pair of moccasins. I had painted

a turtle on my chest in honor of my grandfather. I was the only full-blooded American Indian in the whole darn marathon. Joe Little Turtle, Blackfoot Indian, age sixty from Rocky Boy, Montana. I could describe the whole race to you but I won't take the chance of boring you besides if you have reached this point you've read enough already. And I thank you for enduring.

The finish line was in sight; I ran as hard as I could...to be sure I'd make a good showing. Getting to the finish of a race can be as hard as starting one. Just when I crossed the finish line, I don't remember. I do remember my sisters were there and all the tribal chiefs and many others were watching as I came to the end of this long run. It seemed as if I was crawling when I crossed the line. I was so tired I didn't even realize that my heart had just gave out, but I didn't give up...I staggered for a few steps fell to one knee and then on to my chest. Just before my eyes closed forever, I saw my Grandfather looking right at me. I felt a sharp pain in my right hand - I opened it up, extended my fingers, and there in my palm was a picture of a turtle – and he was smiling!

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