

PART OF THE PROCESS

by Lonn Robertson

To my running friends (including those I have yet to meet): If, like me, you have been doing a lot of racing recently, my advice is to take at least one opportunity to simply WATCH an endurance race (volunteering is perhaps even better because you get to be fully part of the process, but simply watching will be adequate).

I have so many people I'm proud of:

To the people who finished near the end of the pack but had smiles on their faces: Thank you for reminding me that if I'm not at the end of a pack in some adventures in life then I am not reaching far enough. Thank you for reminding me that stretching my limits is an experience of joy and should be celebrated - just like you did with your smiles as you went through the aid stations and at the finish line.

To the people who finished at the front of the pack: Thank you for inspiring me to continue to train and bust my ass, even though many days I don't feel like it. Even though many times it hurts like hell and feels much worse than work. Watching you guys and girls was like watching a great

ballet - I'm inspired and consistently in awe.

To the people who called it quits by mile 26 but forgot to tell their legs it was time to stop: You are the people who have faced adversity and not let it overcome your tenacity and determination. You reminded me that even when I've lost the battle, I haven't really lost the war. There is still something holy and important about going as far as I possibly can and fighting the good fight.

To the people who had the wisdom and courage to DNF: Those three letters can seem like an obscenity to a racer and we all hate being associated with them. Nonetheless, it takes as much or more courage to say, "It is ultimately important for me to risk my pride and hurt my feelings and say, this is enough," than it does to continue on and hurt yourself or someone else. I saw the several people who pulled out of the race - YOU SHOULD HAVE PULLED OUT! You were wise and you were brave and I commend you. You protected yourself and the many people who would have been at risk if you had continued.

To the people who reluctantly but obediently allowed us to pull you off the course for medical evaluation: You were gracious about it and compliant. Thank you for understanding that while we knew it was going to totally mess up your finish time, we only wanted to be sure you weren't injured. I think I might have been an ass had I been you - but you were kind and understanding. What great character you have.

To the McKenzie River race directors and volunteers: I know it wasn't the race anyone wanted but with your hard work and countless hours of agony, the 2011 MRTR was indeed a great success. I counted hundreds of smiles and heard great praise before, during, and after the race.

Finally, to the runners on the course: You were all so generous with your thanks and praise as you came through our aid stations. All of us volunteers felt like we were heroes even if we were small cogs in the wheel of your great effort today.

I have never been more proud of being a runner as I am today - a day when I didn't run. ■

The author, Lonn Robertson, was the Aid Station Captain at Buck Bridge for the 2011 McKenzie River Trail Run.



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