

RUNNING ACROSS WISCONSIN FOR PANCREATIC CANCER: MY STORY

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Why? In July, 2009 I decided to Run Across my home state of Wisconsin during August 2010.. I immediately “announced it” to my high school classmates and running friends. Most people probably wondered “Why are you going to do THAT?” There are many ways to answer such a question. Because it’s there. Because I can. To test my limits. To learn more about myself. To raise money for a good cause. To show people that an “average” person like myself can do things that seem impossible. Because I know of other people who have done the same kind of run and even longer. To inspire others to become more fit and healthy. Because I think it will be fun. To re-connect and get “closure” with my High School Classmates. Probably all of these. But maybe there is no way to really answer such a question. I just had to do it!

Training and long term preparation: Over the next 12 months, I ran many races of distances ranging from 5K to 100 miles to get myself ready. From Aug to Oct 2009, I concentrated on “short races” doing several 5Ks, a 10K, a 10-miler, and a half marathon. I wanted to get some “speed” back into my legs. In Nov I ran a marathon and in Dec I did a 50K race. Both were relatively fast (4:16:00 and 5:43:40). Starting in Jan 2010, I switched to longer, slower ultra distance races to build up my legs for the 220 miles I would cover in crossing Wisconsin. In Jan I ran 40 miles in one weekend (20 on Sat & 20 on Sun). In Feb I ran the Iron Horse 100-miler in Florida (only made it to mile 71 because of freezing temps at night). In March I did the Shamrock marathon in Virginia Beach (4:16:52). In April I did 50 miles during my “Virginia 24 Hour Run for Cancer.” In May I paced a friend the last 38 miles of the Massanutten 100-miler. Finally, in June I ran 84 miles at the FANS 24 hour race in Minneapolis. After recovering, and running lots of slow miles in the Virginia heat and humidity during July, I pronounced myself “ready.”

Final Planning and Preparations: During the last two weeks before departing for Wisconsin, I carefully obtained all the “stuff” I would need, and decided on my “strategy” for each day’s run. I ordered more pairs of my favorite socks. Now I had 12 pair of Wigwam Ultimax Ironman socks. I needed that many because I would use two pair a day, changing socks at noon. I ordered another bottle of ‘SUCCEED’ capsules. They are mostly salt but also have some potassium. Because of all the sweating I expected to do, I needed to replenish my salt during the day as I drank water. I ordered another tube of ‘Hydropel’, a water-proof ointment for my feet to prevent blisters. I made sure I had a full tube of ‘Biofreeze’ a great lotion to soothe sore muscles. I got two new pair of running shoes. I got another bottle of ibuprofen. I planned to take 600mg before going to bed and another 600mg upon getting up each morning. I bought another bottle of tincture of benzoin, a liquid use to help in taping my feet. I had learned that (for me) the

best way to prevent blisters was to tape my feet before I started. Based on several years of long distance running experience, and reading/hearing what others have done for such long, multi-day runs, I decided to start each day around 7:00am, alternate between running and walking, with no more than 10 mins running at any one time, walk all the uphill and run all the downhill, take a 1-1.5 hour rest for lunch and foot maintenance, drink a lot of water during the day, and eat three regular daily meals. I planned to drink about one bottle of water per half hour, and also drink a bottle of vanilla Ensure every two hours. Ensure is like an entire meal in a bottle. Plus I would snack on pretzels for carbohydrates and beef jerky for protein. I would carry one bottle of water on a belt around my waist, so I could drink "constantly" if I needed to. I would have my crew drive their vehicle about 2-2.5 miles ahead, park on the side of the road and wait for me to arrive. I estimated I would get to the vehicle about every half hour. I re-confirmed the details of my route, my hotel reservations for the first four nights on the road, my classmate offers to stay at their houses the last three nights, and my classmates who would crew for me.

DAY 1 (Sunday: The Start: La Crosse to Bangor): On 8 August my wife Terri, my daughter Rebecca, and I departed Terri's brother's house in southwest Milwaukee at 8:00 am in our rental car, headed for La Crosse. After driving for 3.5 hours (including two hours of rain) we arrived on the outskirts of La Crosse and stopped for a quick lunch. We then drove to the start in Riverside Park on the Mississippi River and took some pictures. At precisely noon, Rebecca and I started the run. Luckily the weather was cloudy and the temps were only in the mid-70s. We took off a little too fast (for me), covering 5 miles in the first hour. We had to carefully wend our way through the downtown streets, carefully avoiding traffic as much as possible. To get the best footing and use available paths we often had to cross back and forth between the left and right side of the road. Finally, after about 7-8 miles, we were out of the La Crosse suburbs and into the much more peaceful countryside. We maintained a 5 mile per hour pace for two hours and then slowed to 4.5 miles per hour the last two hours. There were several big hills so we walked the uphill and ran the downhill. Finally, at 4:00 pm, we reached our destination of Bangor and stopped, having done 19 miles. At the same time, Margie (Western) Roberts and her husband Dave arrived, having just driven up from Milwaukee. They would be my crew for the next three days. Rebecca and I rode with Terri to our hotel in West Salem (about 4 miles back the way we had run), with Margie and Dave following. After Rebecca and I took our showers, we all went to a local restaurant for a nice dinner and good conversation. Then Margie and Dave headed to Tomah where they were staying for the night, and Terri, Rebecca, and I went back to our hotel. We were in bed and asleep by 9:30 pm.

DAY 2 (Monday: Bangor to Tomah): After a good night's rest we were up early as planned, ate a continental breakfast at the hotel, and headed for the start point. Got

there a few mins before 7:00 am and soon met Margie, Dave, and Dale Trudell, who had driven from his home in Appleton early that morning to the hotel where Margie & Dave stayed in Tomah. Rebecca, Dale, and I started the day's run about 7:10 am. The weather was already warm and humid and got worse all day. There were a few clouds and only a little breeze. I resumed my pattern of running 10 mins and walking 5 mins, walking the uphill, and running the downhill. Rebecca and Dale ran at a faster pace and often slowed down to wait for me to catch up. For most of the morning we averaged close to 4.5 miles per hour. Terri, and Margie & Dave alternated at intersections waiting for us with water and food. By 11:15 we had 18 miles in and decided it was time for lunch. Dale had brought his lunch with him and opted to just relax in the shade at the side of the road (near Fort McCoy). The rest of us headed to a nearby Arby's. I took my shoes and socks off, aired my feet, and reapplied some Hydrex. After a nice hour long lunch break, Terri and Rebecca said good-bye and headed back south to Terri's brother's house in Milwaukee. (They flew home to Virginia on Tuesday). Margie, Dave, and I went back to where Dale was waiting, and we started the afternoon's run around 12:30. My legs and feet felt great after the break, and we were able to continue along at the same 4.5 miles per hour pace for two hours. However, because of the worsening heat, we slowed to 4 miles per hour the third hour. By 3:30 we had done another 10 miles (total of 28 for the day), and Dale decided that was enough. I decided to add two more miles to shorten the next day's run from the 35 miles I had estimated. I finished at 3:45, hopped in the car and headed for my hotel in Tomah. After showering, Dale, Margie, and Dave met me in the hotel bar and we had a couple drinks to celebrate the day's run. Then Dale headed for home, and Margie, Dave, and I went to a restaurant for dinner. My college friend John Hanley joined us there. He is a Brigadier General in the Army Reserve and had been on duty that day at Fort McCoy. After a great dinner we headed back to our hotels. I was in bed and asleep by 8:30pm.

DAY 3 (Tuesday: Tomah to Babcock): Woke up early after another good night's rest. Thankfully, my legs felt great again. This would be the first test of my ability to run 30+ miles the day after running 30 miles. I had never done that before. After meeting at Margie & Dave's hotel, we all headed for the day's start (two miles past Tomah). Once again we had two support vehicles. Dave drove John's car and Margie drove theirs. That way John's car would be waiting when he finished. John and I were on our way by 6:50. The weather was still warm and humid, but we had some clouds and a little breeze, and we ran mostly on more rural, "back-country" roads. We spent a lot of the morning going through the Necedah Wildlife Refuge. We saw and heard several sand-hill cranes. I love the sounds they make. For most of the morning we still were able to keep up a 4.5 mile per hour pace, although John started to feel the effects of the run just before we stopped for lunch around 11:30, when we had 18 miles in. This was the most miles John had ever run. The most he had done before was 12 miles. We again

maintained a strict routine of 10 mins running and 5 mins walking. We hopped into the cars with Margie and Dave and headed into the tiny town (unincorporated) of Babcock where we found one restaurant in the center of town. It looked like the only inhabited place open. The service and food was great. After relaxing there for about an hour, we went back to where we stopped before lunch and resumed running at 12:45. The sun had now come out and the temps were getting into the upper 80s, so our pace was slowed to 4 miles per hour. We ran together for the next 10 miles, when John declared he "had enough." He did great, doing 28 miles. Margie and Dave took him back to his car, and John headed directly back home to Milwaukee. I continued on for two more miles to once again get in a 30 mile day and reduce the miles for the next day. Luckily I had overestimated the mileage for this leg --- I thought it was 35 miles while it turned out to be only 31 miles. At 3:45 I was finished and we headed to our hotel in Wisconsin Rapids --- about 14 miles ahead, but the closest one. After checking in and getting cleaned up we had dinner at a nearby restaurant. Then we went back to the hotel and rested. After checking my feet carefully, I was very happy I still had no blisters. Checked my phone messages and had my big "crisis" of the Run. Karen (Mortier) Mayer had a surprise inspection at her hospital that morning. It would last 4 days so she could not crew for me until Saturday. I then had to put "plan B" into effect. I called Joe Theisen and asked if he could crew for me on Thursday instead of biking with me. Then I called Kathie (Allen) Taylor and asked her if she could crew for me Friday (the day I was scheduled to stay by her house after the run). Thankfully, both agreed. I was in bed by 9:00 and asleep by 9:30 pm.

DAY 4 (Wednesday: Babcock to Plover): Woke up to a cloudy and somewhat cooler morning (temps in the mid-70s). Once again my legs felt well recovered from the night's rest. After a quick breakfast stop at McDonald's, Margie, Dave, and I headed back to the start of the day's run (about 4 miles past Babcock). We arrived a little after 7:00 and I was on my way at 7:10 am. This would be my first day alone on the road, and I was anxious to see how well I would handle it. Because of the clouds and cooler temps I was able to keep up a 4.5 mile per hour pace for most of the morning. The first 10 miles were more of the quiet, back-country roads similar to Tuesday. However, as I approached Wisconsin Rapids, the roads became much busier and I had to once again contend with running through city streets. After finally getting through the city and about 2.5 miles toward the next city (Plover), the sun came out and it heated up a lot. Having run 19 miles by 11:45, I decided it was time for a lunch break. Margie and Dave had found a great restaurant only about 2 miles away with a lakeside view. We had a fabulous fish fry lunch, I did some quick foot maintenance (still no blisters), and I was back on the road a little after 1:00 pm. The afternoon run was brutal. The skies were clear, the sun was relentless, there was no breeze or shade, and the temps were in the low 90s. To make matters worse, this stretch of road was four lane highway and perfectly straight. For the next 3.5 hours the scenery never changed, the traffic never

let up, and my pace slowed to 4 miles per hour or less as time went on. I was determined to at least get 30 miles in for the day. Luckily I reached 30 miles, just after getting to the center of Plover (near my hotel for the night). Again I had luckily overestimated the miles for the day. I thought it would be 37 miles, but it was only 33 miles between Babcock and Plover. So at 4:00 pm I called it a day and checked in to my hotel. After showering and taking a very short rest, Margie, Dave, and I headed to a nearby restaurant for dinner. We had a great meal, took some final pictures at my hotel, and then Margie and Dave headed home to Milwaukee. Their three days of crewing duty was over. I called Joe Theisen to confirm details about his meeting me in the morning and crewing for me, did some more foot maintenance, and went to bed. I was asleep by 10:00pm.

DAY 5 (Thursday: Plover to Symco): I woke up to a forecast of “sunny, humid, and temps in the low 90s.” It was going to be a tough day! But at least my legs and feet felt good after my night’s rest, and I was able to have a good breakfast at the hotel before I started. Joe arrived a little after 6:30, I loaded my “stuff” into his van, and we headed to the start point (just a ¼ mile away). Once again I would be alone most of the day, although Joe brought his bike, with the intention of biking back to meet me after he parked his van for each of my water/food stops. I started the day’s run at 6:45 am and settled into my usual “run 10 mins, walk 5 mins, and repeat” routine. For the first 4-5 miles it was a repeat of Wednesday afternoon with heavy traffic on a 4-lane highway. In addition there were some big hills to climb. The heat was becoming oppressive. Luckily I had an idea that would “save the day.” Joe had a couple of old white t-shirts along. I cut a “strip” off of one, soaked it in ice water and draped over my head and the back of my neck. Then I soaked my hat in ice water as well and put it on top to hold down the shirt. I looked a little like Lawrence of Arabia, but it worked very well. Around mid-morning, after passing through Amherst, I was finally done with 4-lane highways and again on quiet back-country roads. The scenery was perfect ---- rolling hills and fields with farms on both sides of the roads. It took me back to my childhood on the farm. Because of the heat and hills, I was just hanging on to 4 miles per hour pace. By 11:30 I had 19 miles in and was about 3 miles short of Iola. I hopped in the van with Joe and we had lunch at a nice café in the center of town. I ate what seemed like the best cheeseburger I’ve ever had, did some foot maintenance (still no blisters), and headed back to resume the afternoon run at 1:00 pm. The temps were now about 92. Thankfully, Joe’s biking back to me for a mile or two between each water stop helped pass the time. Tried to hold a 4 mile per hour pace, but as the hours continued I slipped to about 3.5 miles per hour. At 4:00 pm having covered 30.5 miles for the day, I called it quits. I was about 4 miles short of Symco, my goal for the day. Unfortunately, this time I had not overestimated the mileage for the day. But since I had planned 31 miles for Friday, I figured I could get a mile or two back then. After getting to the van we headed for Joe’s house in Wausau. He and his wife Vernell had graciously offered to put me up

for the night. It took about 1.25 hours to get there. When we arrived, I took a shower, relaxed for a while, and had a great dinner and visit with Joe and Vernell. Upon checking my feet I found one tiny blister on the side of my left heel, but I didn't think it would cause a problem. Called Kathie (Allen) Taylor to confirm details for linking up Friday morning and to prepare her for crewing. I went to bed around 9:00 and was asleep by 9:30 pm.

DAY 6 (Friday: Symco to Shawano): Woke up early, had breakfast, and drove to Symco (where we would meet Kathie) with Joe and Vernell. Arrived a little before 7:00, said "hello" to Kathie, moved my "stuff" from Joe's van to Kathie's van, and said "good-bye" to Joe and Vernell. They were on their way to a weekend gathering with relatives in southern WI. The weather was looking good. It was cloudy and in the 70s. The forecast called for rain and/or thunderstorms. I was happy about that --- I'll take rain over hot sun any day! Drove to the day's start (4 miles from Symco) with Kathie and was on my way by 7:10 am. The morning's scenery was similar to Thursday's -- rolling hills and quiet backroads with farms everywhere! For the first couple hours it stayed cloudy and relatively cool --- I kept up a steady 4.5 mile per hour pace. Around 9:30 I heard a couple loud thunder claps, and it soon started raining. It started slowly, but gradually got heavier. I loved it! Compare to running in the heat, running in the cool rain felt wonderful. It kept up for about two hours. Then, as I was approaching Clintonville it started to slow down, and by the time I had 20 miles in (11:45) and stopped for lunch, the rain had stopped. I got into the van, and Kathie and I headed for a fast food restaurant in Clintonville. After a restful lunch and some more foot maintenance, we went back to the start of the afternoon run. The temps had dropped into the upper 60s and it felt awesome. I was on my way by 1:00 pm. At about 1:30 I was joined by Linda (Jarvey) Sharon and her daughter Michaela, who drove from Green Bay. Linda was going to walk with me while Michaela biked along. She had volunteered the support earlier in the week, and I gladly accepted. With their company, I picked up the pace a little, and the afternoon went by quickly and smoothly. By 4:00 pm I had 32 miles for the day and decided that was enough. I was about 2 miles short of Shawano, so I had made up a couple of the miles I "lost" on Thursday. It was the best day of the Run so far! I hopped into the van with Kathie and we headed for her house on Shawano Lake a few miles on the other side of Shawano. Linda and Michaela went back home to Green Bay. When I arrived I took my usual quick shower, checked my feet, and relaxed. Kathie and her husband Kevin made a fantastic dinner. After dinner we were joined by Carol (Jahnke) Kane and Kim (Allen) Szela. We visited for a while, around 8:30 they left and I headed for bed. Before turning in I checked with Karen (Mortier) Mayer to be sure she was "on track" to crew for me the next two days. She was on her way from Chicago and would arrive much later in the evening. We confirmed the time and place to meet in the morning. I was in bed and asleep by 10:00 pm.

DAY 7 (Saturday: Shawano to Oconto Falls): Saturday dawned sunny, but cooler and less humid than earlier in the week. Once again my feet and legs felt revived after a good night's rest. I was up at 6:00, had a quick but filling breakfast, and met Karen who arrived at the Allen's house early. After saying "good-bye and thanks" to Kathie and Kevin, and getting my "stuff" loaded in Karen's car, we were headed to the day's start point by 6:45. Arrived at 7:00 and took off soon thereafter. I resumed my alternating running-walking routine, with stops for water every half hour. Got to the outskirts of Shawano within 1.5 miles and took a "short cut" Kathie had told me about on Friday. This allowed me to avoid downtown Shawano and probably reduce the distance by two miles. At this point, short cuts were a definite blessing. I was running across Wisconsin, but I didn't say I was going to do it the "long way!" I was able to keep up a 4.5 mile per hour pace for the first couple hours. By 9:00 I was past the turn-off for Kathie's house and heading toward Gillett. With the cooler, drier weather the morning felt great, even though the sun was starting to heat things up a bit. I slowed to a 4 mile per hour pace and by 11:30 had 18 miles in for the day. I decided this was a good point to stop for lunch, as it was a key "turn-off" point. Based on looking at some Wisconsin maps and talking with Carol Kane and others Friday night, I found a route using county roads that would save me another 3 miles in getting to Oconto Falls. If I kept on state highway 22 and went through Gillett, I would have to deal with a lot more traffic. Karen and I found a restaurant for lunch in Gillett (just 4-5 miles away). After a relaxing and filling lunch, and my usual foot maintenance (still only the one tiny blister), we headed back to the afternoon run's start point. Waited there a few minutes so Linda and her daughter Michaela could again join me for the afternoon's run. Got started at 1:00 pm. The sun was high in the sky and the temps were back up in the mid-80s, so I used the "Lawrence of Arabia" technique again that had worked so well Thursday. But, with the gentle, rolling backroads and many farms that dotted the area, the scenery was great, and the traffic was almost non-existent. I was able to keep close to my 4 mile per hour pace. With the company of Linda and Michaela, the time again went by fairly quickly and I was soon approaching Oconto Falls. I planned to stop at a key intersection in the center of town. About a half mile away we passed by Linda's mother's house and she came out and took some pictures. As I got closer and closer, it seemed like the entire Run was almost over! Although I had another 17-18 miles to run Sunday morning, that would be anti-climactic. I now realized for sure that I was actually going to succeed, and almost perfectly on my planned schedule. I finished at 4:05, having covered 29 miles for the day. It was time to celebrate! Carol Kane had come to watch me finish and was nice enough to offer to buy us (myself, Karen, Linda, and Michaela) a drink and some food at a nearby Pub. I quickly accepted and we had a nice "informal" celebration for about 45 mins. Then we each headed home with the intent of meeting at 7:00 at a local tavern for the "official" celebration planned by Susan (Ellner) Krumrei. Karen dropped me off at Susie (Elliott) Winters' house, where I showered and took a short

rest. Susie and her husband Jerry had offered their house for me to stay in for the night. I then went to the small “victory party” at “The Udder Bar” in nearby Spruce. About 12 classmates showed up and we had a good time until around 10:00 pm. It was great to see a couple classmates I had not seen or spoken to since graduation. Karen dropped me off again at the Winters’ house for the night and I was asleep by 10:30.

DAY 8 (Sunday: The Finish: Oconto Falls to Oconto): Woke up to a perfect morning! The weather was awesome --- temps in the mid-60s, partly cloudy, light breeze, and low humidity. This was the weather I had wanted all week! After a nice breakfast and short visit with Susie, Karen picked me up around 6:40 and we headed to the day’s start point. I was on my way by 6:50. It was so great to be on the final leg of my journey, with perfect weather to enjoy. I quickly settled into my usual run-walk routine. I could have gone faster, but decided to take it easy and really savor these last few hours “on the road.” I kept up my steady 4 miles per hour pace. The route was scenic, passing through “farm country” again, and the traffic was sparse. When I was approaching the outskirts of Oconto, I started noticing “visitors.” Dan Jung was waiting in his car as I approached. Carol Kane joined me on her bike, having parked her car at the waterfront and biked to meet me. Then Linda and Michaela drove up and waved. The last 2-3 miles seemed to “fly by.” Having passed through the center of Oconto, I headed for the waterfront on Green Bay (an extension of Lake Michigan). When I got close I noticed there were cars everywhere. It turns out there was a big fishing tournament going on. I arrived at the water’s edge and walked out on the pier. It was 11:30 – I had covered another 16.5 miles, making 218 miles altogether! Then as promised, I took off my shoes and jumped in the water to celebrate! The water was perfect. It was truly a moment to savor. After about 5-10 mins of splashing around, I reluctantly emerged, hugged my friends who were there and dried off. Susie and Jerry Winters drove up. We then took several pictures of us all, said our good-byes, and I headed with Karen to her parents’ house on the outskirts of Oconto Falls. After getting cleaned up, eating some lunch, and making a quick stop at my nearby farm, we headed to Milwaukee where Karen dropped me off at Terri’s brother’s house, on her way home to Chicago. Had a long night’s rest and slept in Monday morning (felt strange not having to get up and run). Then went to the airport and flew home to Virginia, getting in a little after 7:00pm. The big adventure was finally over!!

EPILOGUE: Without a doubt, this Run was the most rewarding, challenging, and memorable running experience I’ve ever had. I thought I could do it, but I did not know for sure. I had to find out (I really believe I was “called” to do it). Combining the Run with a large fundraising goal, enlisting the support of my high school classmates, and careful detailed planning, starting a year in advance, were critical to my success! Knowing that so many people were “cheering for me” and counting on me, kept me going (especially during those worst hot and humid days). I learned several things: 1) A

'journey' run such as this is not something I could ever do alone ---- it takes a "team effort." 2) I can run 30 miles a day and recover well enough to do it again the next day (and the next,..). 3) Fundraising is harder than running! 4) You can never do enough detailed planning, and you must have back-up plans. 5) Runs like this are often harder on family members than on the runner himself. 6) The weather is always unpredictable, so you must be ready for any kind (luckily I had trained in the heat and humidity of Virginia). 7) Wisconsin is a beautiful state when you see it "up close and personal." Upon returning home, I took two entire weeks off from running to really let my legs rest and recover completely. Since then I've resumed my regular daily routine. Each day my legs feel a little less sore and tired, and a little more fresh and energetic. I look forward to getting back some speed and soon running a few shorter local races. Then we'll see what lies ahead!