



# Endurance measured deep within

*"The 11th annual Angeles Crest 100-Mile Endurance Race will start in Wrightwood at 5 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 28 and finish in Pasadena. The run gains 21,000 feet and loses 26,700 feet in altitude for a total elevation change of almost 48,000 feet."*

— Press release announcing the event

**T**here are times in life, either through choice or circumstance, when we are presented with challenges that seem insurmountable, yet we reach down into our hearts and call upon unknown strength. These challenges, when met, change us forever and alter our view of what is important in life.

At 5 a.m. on Sept. 28, I lined up with 139 other runners in the cold and dark to begin a 100-mile journey. At the race's cutoff time some 33 long hours later, 96 runners had found the well of strength that exists in us all, and perhaps some, like I do, have a new understanding of ourselves and what we can accomplish.

Last July, I filled out the application for this race. I didn't know it then, but my journey had already begun. In the next couple of months, I would meet new friends, become intimately acquainted with poison oak, blackened toenails, turned ankles and minor scrapes. I would also spend a lot of time saying to my nonrunning friends, "Yes, I did say '100 miles.'"

All of us who chose to run this race did so for varying reasons. I wanted to test myself like never before. Others wanted to improve upon previous finish times. Still others participated out of the sheer joy they find in running.

"I love running. I love being in the mountains. And I love the trails," said eventual race winner Ben Hian, a 27-year-old physical education teacher from Encinitas. "Every race is fun for me, and every training run is fun for me. That's the bottom line of why I do it," he said.

RONNI ROSS



RUNNING



John McCoy / Daily News

high-tech handlebar-mounted lights featuring headlamps, quick-release handlebar clamps, watts of power. Above, night mountain-bike

can that  
on the  
ds have  
ad then  
LaBass  
bury  
mer  
night  
riding is  
cause

we don't have that much of a chance to ride in the daytime during the week."

Night riding also has a naughty, or maybe risky side to it. While it's not illicit, most backcountry parks are posted with "closed at sunset" signs so night riders get a little bit of guilty

See **CYCLING** / Page 13

Hian not only has completed the race three times before, but he crossed the finish line this year in 18 hours and 50 minutes and set a record by becoming the first male three-time consecutive winner. He is also one of only two people to ever have started and finished the race on the same day. His ultimate goal, believe it or not, is to finish the Angeles Crest Race 10 times in under 24 hours.

To prepare for the AC100, as it is so dubbed, Hian runs 120 to 140 miles per week, awaking between 3:30 and 4:30 each morning to work in his training. He has seen bears, mountain lions and snakes during his runs, but joked, "Usually I just see a lot of rocks and dirt."

The women's winner, Jennifer Henderson, also trained for the race by running about 120 miles a week. She crossed the finish line in 24 hours and 26 minutes. Though she is an elite marathon runner and a professional athlete, this was her first attempt at the AC100 and only her second race of this distance.

"I was very happy to finish Angeles Crest," said Henderson, 37, of Rancho Mirage. "This race is a mental-toughness builder because of the massive hill climbs. I don't think people can really understand what we went through out there."

Despite the grueling course, however, Henderson said she enjoyed herself.

"I like the people in the ultra-running community. Even if you're out to win, you support other people, unlike with marathons. And I really enjoy being out in the wilderness areas.

"I really had fun the entire way, until, of course, the end. Then I just wanted to get home and didn't know if I would."

See **RUNNING** / Page 13

# A journey of 100 miles of heart

**RUNNING** / From Page 12

But the knowledge that she was in the lead kept her going, and whenever she tired she just told herself over and over again to keep moving.

"Just wanting to see that finish line is motivation enough," she said.

Knowing the end is getting nearer is definitely a motivating factor. During my own 29-hour journey, the sun rose, set and rose again, but I realized that every step drew me closer to my goal. And the process, despite its difficulties, was worth the struggle.

In the early stretches of the run, fear of dehydration kept me drinking so much water that when it came time for the first of three mandatory weigh-ins, I had actually gained 2 pounds.

During the 20- to 40-mile stretch, a wave of nausea was fought off by eating the salt off pretzels.

After my stomach settled, I relied on stuffed pasta shells and Gu (an energy-replacement gel) that was carried in a fanny pack to maintain as much strength as possible.

At aid stations, my crew members

lovingly fed me bowl after bowl of chicken noodle soup and cup after cup of Coke to help keep me going. They would quickly wash my feet, change my socks, refill my water bottles and food supply and send me back out into the wilderness.

The first of three pacers began to run with me at mile 52. He was replaced by the second pacer at mile 58, who helped me continue through mile 74. The pacers were there to help me keep my legs moving and my spirits high, particularly in the dark hours.

As I embarked on the last 26-mile stretch (a marathon in length) at 12:45 a.m., I picked up my third and final pacer, my husband, Doug. This last portion of the race contains two agonizing climbs of 2,000 and 3,000 feet.

As we struggled up those mountains, I kept repeating to myself the phrase on a paper weight Doug had given me months earlier: "Never, never quit." I also began to hallucinate, and at one point tried to convince Doug that there was a man in white painter's pants stretching on the side of the trail. As we got closer, I realized there was no man.

By mile 89, we had reached the top of the last summit and the sun had come up again. Completely exhausted in those last miles, I used any technique I could think of to get me through. I visualized the finish line and the faces of all my friends I knew were there waiting for me. I meditated, I cried and I prayed.

When that finish line finally became a reality, tears of joy and relief were shed. Winning wasn't ever a consideration. But by digging deep into my heart, perseverance was summoned up that I never realized I had.

I now believe, for the most part, that we all share this ability to endure. It seems, however, that too often we let our lives be guided by the limitations rather than the possibilities.

*"The woods are lovely, dark and deep.*

*But I have promises to keep.*

*And miles to go before I sleep.*

*And miles to go before I sleep."*

— Robert Frost

Staff writer Ronni Ross' running column appears monthly in the *Daily News*.

## ONE DAY ONLY MANUFACTURERS' SHOW & SALE

**American  
Racing**  
Custom Wheels

**ARROW 93FM**  
ALL ROCK & ROLL CLASSICS



**BLACK  
ARMOR**

