



Many runners in the Houston running community are familiar with the SunMart Texas Trails Endurance 50Mi and 50Km Races which are held every December at Huntsville State Park. However, fewer Houston-area runners seem to be familiar with the Rocky Raccoon Series that is also held in Huntsville State Park and offers distances from 25Km up to 100Miles. The Rocky Raccoon Series has a rich and interesting history. (To learn more about the history of the Rocky Raccoon Series go to the HARRA web site and click on Footprints.) Mickey Rollins, who has been directing trail races in Texas for twelve years, has announced his retirement from Race Directing this year. Mickey started the Rocky Raccoon Series in 1991 and was also involved with the creation of SunMart. Mickey has also directed the Bandera 28 Miler, Sunrise Trail Marathon, Hogs Hunt and Rocky Trail races. Outside of Texas, Mickey has managed aid stations at other major ultras including Western States 100, Vermont 100 and Arkansas Traveler 100. Mickey, who worked for 26 years as a history teacher and basketball/football/baseball coach at Marshall Middle School in Houston ISD, retired from teaching in 2001, and now resides in the small west Texas hill country town of Pipe Creek. In the future he plans to focus more time on his interest in old time rock'n roll and some country and blues.

The purpose of this article is to acknowledge and sincerely thank Mickey for his contributions over the years, and to welcome the new race directors who will ensure that the Rocky Raccoon Series will continue well into the future. Paul Stone of Bullard, Texas will be taking over Race Director responsibilities for the October Rocky Raccoon 25Km/50Km event, begin-

SPOTLIGHT ON THE RACE DIRECTORS:

Changes Underway for Rocky Raccoon Series

BY LINDA HURD

(contributions from Mickey Rollins, Paul Stone,
Joe Prusaitis and Peyton Robinson)

ning this year. In February 2003, Mickey and Joe Prusaitis of Austin will co-direct the Rocky Raccoon 100Mi/50Mi event, and Joe will take over as head RD for the 2004 event. Mickey will direct his final race on March 1, 2003 at the Sunrise Trail Marathon in McKinney Roughs near Bastrop, Texas. We wish Mickey much happiness in his retirement and success with his music interests.

Mickey 'Ultra-runner and Race Director' Rollins and the history of Rocky Raccoon.



**Photo: Mickey at 2002
Rocky Raccoon 100 Miler
Awards Ceremony (photo
by Peyton Robinson)**

Mickey considers himself a transplanted Texan. He was born in Ohio, lived in West Virginia when he was young, and eventually moved to Danville, Va. in 1952. Following high school graduation in Danville, Virginia Mickey moved to Texas to attend college. He has lived in Texas since 1962 with the exception of service in the US Navy (1966-1970), and teaching in New Orleans (1971-1975).

Mickey has been either running or walking since 1978. Like most people in the running community, he ran local road races. His road race PR's include under 39 minutes for 10Km, 1:01.25 for 15Km, 1:21.40 for 20Km, 1:45 for 25Km, and 2:05 for 30Km. His marathon PR is 3:02.15 and he completed three other marathons under 3:10. He also ran a road 50 Miler in 7:21.24 in 1991. Overall, he has completed 38 marathons and 49 ultras, including one 100 Miler and two 100 Km's.

The first race Mickey directed was a race for the Greater Houston Track Club in the 1980's. He was also RD for two years of the Texas Children's Hospital Run. It was not until the early

-continued- next page

SPOTLIGHT ON THE RACE DIRECTORS: -continued-

1990's that Mickey started directing trail races and ultras. Mickey started running ultras in 1989 at the insistence of his cousin who to Mickey's knowledge never ran an ultra himself. In 1991 there were very few ultra's in Texas, among them the Crosstimbers 50 Miler, the Palo Duro Road 50 Miler and the Jackson 50 in Dallas. Mickey sensed that there was a need for more trail and ultra races in Texas.

Mickey originally came up with the idea for Rocky Racocon in 1990 from Rudy Alvarez's first attempt at what is now known as the Sunmart Texas Trail Endurance Runs.

This race was Rudy's idea and Mickey helped with the organization, supplied many of the volunteers, and set up the aid stations the day before. It was at this race, the next day in 1990, that Mickey ran what is still his trail 50 mile PR: 8:32.

During the next spring (1991), Mickey thought it might be useful and fun to have a training series for ultra runners like the warm-up series which existed and still exists for the Houston Marathon. Mickey came up with the name "Rocky Racocon Trail Series" from the Beatles White Album. The trail at Huntsville State Park was eventually named Rocky Racocon after the event. Over time the distances would get longer at each event, and a shorter run would always be offered. Mickey started with 11 & 22 miles in October 1991 at Huntsville State Park followed by The Rocky Trail 45 Miler in November at Inks Lake State Park near Burnet, Texas. The next trail series run was 25miles in January 1992 at Huntsville State park, then 30miles in March and then 37.5 miles in April, with shorter distances also offered each month.

For the 1992-1993 season, Mickey finally decided to turn each run into a race, and he added a 100 miler, the "Rocky Racocon 100 Mile Trail Run", in February 1993. The October event became the shorter 25k/50k event. The idea for the 100-miler came to Mickey as he was driving back to Texas from the Vermont Trail 100 in 1992. He felt it would be good for Texas to have a 100-miler.

42 runners registered for the 1993 inaugural event of Rocky Racocon 100-Miler. On race day, 34 runners started, 29 runners finished within the 30 hour cut-off and 19 of the 29 finishers received the Sub-24hour buckles. Don Aycock and Susan Gimbell were the overall male and female winners, and it took several years before these records fell. Since that first year, Rocky Racocon 100 has grown in size and popularity. Mickey believes the success of Rocky Racocon 100 "is as much because of good press from so many who have run it over the years, as from the fast times. The course is an excellent first trail 100 although there is a lot of night-time running and a majority finish under 24 hours." Just last February, Ann Heaslett of

Wisconsin set a new womens' 100mile trail record of 15:57:20 on this course.

Over the years the Rocky Racocon-100 event has attracted ultra runners from within Texas as well as from beyond the Texas borders, including a few from other countries such as Canada, Mexico, England and Germany. Texas is fortunate to have a 100mile race, as not all states can claim to have one. During 2002, twenty-nine 100-Mile races have been or will be held in the following states: Hawaii, Texas, Alaska, North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming, Ohio, California, Colorado, Vermont, Washington, Utah, Minnesota, New York, Arkansas, and Kansas. California leads the pack with four different 100-mile races.

2003 will mark the tenth anniversary of this event. The 100-Mile course is considered "gently rolling" and consists of five 20-mile loops within Huntsville State Park. Cumulatively, the course includes 60miles of dirt Jeep Road, 32.5 miles of Forest Trails and 7.5mile of asphalt bike trails. In terms of elevation, the lowest point on the course is 310 feet at the start/finish area alongside Lake Raven and the highest point is 370 feet. In traversing the 100 miles, there is a somewhat deceptive total of 5,375 feet of climbing and 5,375 feet of descending! The course cut-off remains at 30 hours and aid-stations are plentiful and well-stocked. In 2002, a 50 mile option was added to the February RR100 event.

Mickey explained that directing RR100 has not been without its challenges over the years, especially from the weather. One year there was freezing rain and ice during the event. Another year, a tornado wreaked havoc in the park four to five weeks before race day. Mickey and John Cook (owner of SunMart Petroleum Wholesale) along with four others worked to clear the jeep trails of debris and fallen trees. Prisoners from the nearby Huntsville prison were brought in to clean up the bike trails that are used for the course.

Mickey indicated that earlier this year he realized that it was time to retire from race directing, as it was getting to be too much like work. The race directing became harder for Mickey when he was no longer able to run himself and he still misses running a great deal. He remarked that he was fortunate to have Paul Stone and Joe Prusaitis step forward to take over the October and February Rocky Racocon events respectively. He has not yet found someone to take over the April Hogs Hunt 28.7 mile event at Huntsville State Park, and it will not continue in April 2003. (Note: If you or some you know is interested to take over Hogs Hunt, please contact Mickey at micracon@flash.net).

Enjoying his retirement from teaching and race directing, Mickey plans to devote his time and energy to writing, recording and singing old time rock and roll. Partly due to the lack of plentiful venues for "new" old time music on the radio, he has encountered difficulty in finding promotion for his music for two years now. In addition to old time rock and roll, Mickey also

-continued- next page

THE NEXT RACE? TRAIL RUNNING

enjoys writing some country and some blues - from the 50's, 60's and early 70's. **For those interested, he has a website at www.Rockyscoolcatsband.com/, where one can learn more about and purchase his music on CD and cassette tape. Mickey has produced 4 CD's to date.**

Paul Stone to Take Over as RD for the October Rocky Racoon 25Km/50Km Event



Photo - Courtesy of Paul Stone: Paul and Abby just after Paul finished his third Badwater ultra in July 2002

Paul Stone, an experienced ultra-runner and race director, has stepped forward to take over Race Directing responsibilities for the Rocky Racoon 25Km/50Km event which will be held on October 26, 2002 in Huntsville State Park.

Paul is 40 years old and began ultra running in 1992. He has completed approximately 75 ultra marathons during the past 10 1/2 years, including three Badwaters; four 100-Milers; a 48-hour run; and the 670-Mile Trans Texas Run for the Homeless in 1993. Paul and his wife Abby reside south of Tyler in the small town of Bullard. Paul is associate editor of the Palestine Herald-Press, an East Texas daily newspaper, and he is also certified as a personal trainer through the Cooper Institute in Dallas. Additionally, he is race director of the East Texas Ultra Runners 50K/25K trail runs held in Tyler State Park the second Saturday of February each year. Paul's wife Abby, who is also an ultra-runner, assists him in directing the races. Abby completed her first 50Km ultra at 2001 SunMart, and is currently training for her first marathon, the New York City Marathon.

Regarding taking over the October Rocky Racoon event, Paul remarked that "Huntsville State Park is a place where people like to run, and Abby and I plan to offer a quality event to runners and walkers of all levels. There will be no strictly-enforced time limits or anything like that. With SunMart less than two months after our event, this will give Houston-area runners and others a good idea of where they are in their training. Most of all, we enjoy socializing with and getting to know all the different runners. We think hospitality is a large part of putting on such an event, and we want people to have a positive experience in October."

Noting Mickey's contribution to ultra-running in Texas, Paul added that "Mickey has provided ultra runners so many racing opportunities through the years. We did not want this race to go by the wayside. October is such a great time of the

SPOTLIGHT ON THE RACE DIRECTORS:

-continued-

year to be on the trails. We hope to take all the positives of this race and build on them."

Anyone wishing to volunteer can contact Paul at 903-894-3788 or pstone@palestineherald.com

Joe Prusaitis to be Co-RD for the 2003 Rocky Racoon 100-Mile Event



Photo by Joyce Prusaitis
Joe and Joyce Prusaitis

Joe Prusaitis, another experienced Texas ultra-runner and race director, will co-direct the February 2003 Rocky Racoon 100 Mile event with Mickey, and take over as RD in February 2004.

Joe began running road races 15 years ago, and trail races 5 years ago. He has completed over 200 road races from the mile to the ultra marathon, including 33 marathons. He co-directed the Motorola Marathon a few years, and currently sits on its Board of Directors. Since running the trails, he has completed over 50 ultra distance events, including thirteen 100-Mile finishes. He is partial to the more challenging events such as Hardrock and Barkley.

Recently, he has created the Rocky Hill Ranch 50K/25K event held in late April just outside Austin, and has just offered a very tough challenge in the Bandera 100K/50K/25K trail race to be held in January 2003. He was instrumental in the creation of the 'Hill Country Trail Runners', a new runners club centered around Austin and the surrounding hill country.

Joe's focus on running and race directing is bent more toward having fun. He enjoys running and creating events more challenging than the norm. Rocky Racoon 100 will remain the fast easy race it has always been, while Bandera will be its opposite. This may be the first trail race in Texas **NOT** recommended for beginners.

Joe is assisted by his wife Joyce with directing these races. Joyce is a trail runner and has been running for over ten years. She has completed 25 marathons and many ultras, including a win at the Crosstimbers 50Miler. She will be running her first 100 Miler, the Arkansas Traveler.

Concerning the Rocky Racoon 100, Joe commented, "Mickey has created a quality event as Texas's only trail 100 Miler. He has a great team of volunteers and aid stations that have worked the race for years. I intend to continue his tradition of low key, but quality support. I expect that little will change. We are always in need of additional volunteers for pre-race and race day support as well as pacers for the 100 Mile runners". **Contact Joe at jprusaitis@austin.rr.com to volunteer.**