

Weekly Posting of the Conservative Cow Doctor

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The Perfect Excuse

Saturday, June 18th, God placed me at the starting line of the Big Horn Run. (This was my first major race since fracturing my fibula and dislocating my ankle on March 7th.) My trophy wife, four friends and I were lucky enough to be six of the 300 selected to run the 18 mile course through the Tongue River Canyon. School busses hauled us from Dayton to the start line at the headwaters of the Dry Fork River on top of Wyoming's Big Horn Mountains. After the two hour bus ride, runners crowded on the logging road for the start gun when a most humbling thing happened.

A race volunteer asked the 18-milers to step aside and let the 100-milers pass. These elite athletes had left Dayton 24 hours earlier, had run to the top of the Big Horn Mountains, and were staggering through our staging area for the final 18 miles of their 100 mile race. In their presence, I felt like a running pansy—how I imagine it feels to be a spineless, moderate Republican whose only claim to fame is compromise and getting along. (I had to squeeze a political message in here somewhere.)

Each ultra-marathoner carried a far-away gaze, as if the image of us fresh entrants never penetrated their exhausted state of consciousness. Running, walking, or plodding, each determined step brought them closer to the finish. Contrary to the excuses I had previously held to be true, I saw runners both older and bigger than me. “Wow!” I quietly thought to myself. “They are incredible. I have to do that.” Suddenly, the starting gun barked, and the 300 of us 18-milers charged up the first hill on our four hour trek back to Dayton. It was a great run.

For me and my friends, running is a social event and after the race we six gathered at our barn on East Pass Creek to barbeque steaks and treat our scrapes, strains and sprains with barley-based, anti-inflammatory, growlers from Sheridan's Black Tooth Brewery. As I finished my steak, my friend, Rob, asked if he could pour me another cold IPA. “No,” I shot back. “I better not; I'm training for a 100 miler.” The barn fell silent. My trophy wife rolled her eyes—a response meaning she thought this was yet another of my many fantastic ideas and she couldn't wait to join me. (I saw this same look when I mentioned running for public office in 2006.)

Over the next few days, I thought about the time commitment to train for a 100 mile run when a thought struck me, ‘I don't have to actually ever run 100 miles to say ‘I am training for a 100 miler.’” It was the perfect excuse. If someone offers me a fourth piece of peach pie alamode, I respond, “Yes, I'd better. I'm training for a 100 miler.” If Druann asks me to mow the lawn, I say, “No, I probably shouldn't. I'm training for a 100 miler.” It's not that I am lying (more politician references); it is the listener who

mistakenly infers someday I am going to actually run 100 miles. The more I thought about it, the more impressed I was with the universality of this excuse—it applies to anyone in most any situation. Even non-runners can use it if they use excuses of shorter distances like the 5 or 10K. However, there is a bottom limit. Avoiding doing the dishes because “I’m training for a 40 yard dash” will not yield positive results. In a rambling way, this finally brings me to my point.

America is facing an obesity epidemic and last year 12 states ballooned above an obesity rate of 30 percent. Just as the American economy is about to fold from debt, our healthcare industry is about to collapse under our very own weight. As you would expect from Washington, and just as nonsensical as borrowing our way out of debt, last week the First Lady declared victory in her war on childhood obesity now that McDonalds includes apple slices in Happy Meals. Apparently, progressive mothers, fathers, and spousal equivalents relying on parenting advice from childless psychologists fully expect their children will choose apple slices over fries. (Parenthood is much easier if you are delusional.) Don’t be disappointed when the mini-bottom in the car seat shoots back, “Better give me the fries; I’m training for a 40 yard sack race.”