

Running America 08

LESLIE, FOR BE A GOOD ONE

Sept 15, 2008



Me, Charlie, and two of his friends who are part of the support crew (and whose names I can't remember – I'm sorry!)

All weekend I was excited about getting to run with Charlie and Marshall of Running America. On Sunday I baked cookies, Snickerdoodles and chocolate chip cookies.

Got myself ready, and headed to Lodi to meet with running group 5 at the corner of Highway 12 and Highway 88. The website said they would be there between 1:30 and 6:00 -- big window! I got there at 1:15. It was strange just pulling off the road beside a field and waiting. Then the doubts began. What if I'm in the wrong place? What if I missed them? Tim checked the website from home, assuring me that they had not passed me by. But even then I was unsure. There were supposed to be 5 people in our group, but I never saw anyone else.

So I waited for 2 hours and finally a car drove up, and a woman asked "Are you here to run?" Hooray! Out came Kate, Ameera, and Liz, all part of the production crew. What a relief to be in the right place! They interviewed me (why are you here? what do you think about 2 men running

across the country? why do you run? etc.) and then we waited for the runners. As we waited, more of the production and support staff showed up. I gave them the cookies and still we waited. Then Charlie (sans Marshall -- he was running alone, I was told) showed up and off we went.

So running with a famous runner who's running 70 miles a day is different in many ways. First of all, I was worried about keeping up, but I was joining a runner who'd already covered 50 miles for the day (amazing!) and we ran at a nice easy pace, which I guess is part of how you manage to do 70 miles in a day.

Then there's the film crew. We ran behind a pickup truck with a camera man and a sound guy sitting on the tailgate, recording the entire time.

So I saw Charlie's Twitter updates, and he wrote that yesterday was one of the hardest days (well, there's only one day to compare it with). Temps were approaching 90 degrees. And running 70 miles a day takes its toll on your body. But he could not have been any nicer to run with. If yesterday what I was was Charlie having a tough day, I can't imagine how he must be when things are going well. We talked non-stop for the entire hour or so that we ran together. We have a lot in common -- both sober, both parents of teenage boys, both loving running. And the conversation meandered from the event to politics to patriotism to parenting, and on and on. Here are a few observations:

Charlie is very open about his sobriety, and feels that running supports his recovery. He has a core group of guys he's run with in North Carolina for years.

I asked him if our pace was ok, and he told me that it all felt awful, whether running or walking, at that point, so he just keeps running.

He misses his family and hates that he's missing his son's cross country meets. Both of his sons

are runners and will be meeting him in Ohio and running with him into New York.

A crew member showed up with a plate of lasagne which was not accepted (at least at that time).

Stomach difficulties were making food an issue.

He mixes his running with distance cycling, loving both, and feels that cross training helps improve his running.

He can't wait to meet more runners as he continues across the country.

I saw on Twitter this morning that he thanked me for the chocolate chip cookies, and said if anyone wants to bring some chocolate cake, he's up for it!

At times while running, Charlie pulled out his phone and answered text messages (he told me his replies are super brief!), as he has to multi-task during this event. There were 3 RVs and several cars and vans along the route as his support vehicles, and Charlie was gracious to everyone who was helping him. (When I'm in pain, I'm of the "don't talk to me" mindset, so I'm still pretty blown away at how friendly and kind he was!)

After 4-1/2 miles we parted ways. Charlie gave me a big hug and said he'd love to run together again. I was offered a ride back to my car, but it became a logistical challenge, so I opted to run back. Because I was so distracted by my new friend and the whole crew, the way back looked very unfamiliar at times, which was unnerving as I was running on the side of a highway in a pretty rural area. But it gave me a chance to think about the event and it also allowed me to put in 9 miles yesterday, bringing my weekly mileage to (drum roll, please)

FIFTY MILES!!!

That's the most miles I've run in a week in my entire life! (But it's still 20 miles short of what Charlie ran yesterday. And the day before that. And today. And tomorrow. And so on...!)

If you're a runner, I'd encourage you to check out the Running America website, and if you can, get out there and run. It's a once in a lifetime experience and not to be missed!

be-a-good-one.blogspot.com/2008_09_01_archive.html+%22Running+America%22+project,+Charlie+Engle,+Marshall+Ulrich&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=40&client=safari