

The View from Checkpoint 13

Saturday night, June 16th, Jill Doble and I staffed Checkpoint 13 of the Moraine Adventure Relay from 8pm to 1am. There was drama, excitement, suspense, there was even a drive-by shooting (OK, it was just Harold with his camera). We enjoyed meeting many of the participants who came over to chat while they waited for their team members to complete stage 12. We also met some local residents out for a stroll who regretted that they hadn't brought any money with them – it seems that our checkpoint on Jesse Thompson Rd at McCowan bore an unfortunate resemblance to a lemonade stand (another fundraising venture?).

Early in our shift, Marnie from Team 7 came over to thank us for being part of the group of volunteers running this event. She and teammate Martin were waiting for Stacie to be the first competitor to arrive at Checkpoint 13. Stacie came charging down McCowan about 8:40, then less than 10 minutes later, was on her bike flying off towards Checkpoint 14. Team 7 was in the lead.

All was quiet as a teenager on her bike came along the road. Jill quipped, "You're going the wrong way". Just then, there was a loud, sharp bang. Jill and I hit the gravel and checked for bullet wounds. It turns out to have been the loudest tire blowout ever. And so well timed! That was enough of an adrenaline rush for me for the evening.

John, from 3-person Team 4, reported that the bike ride through the sands of the Ganaraska was brutal. Given the heat at that time of day, he nicknamed it the Gobi Desert and swore that he had seen camels. Teammate Denise told us that she wouldn't have wanted a larger team. They were all in training for much more challenging competitions. (Yikes!) As Bob completed stage 12, Denise and John cycled off. Bob, who was doing all the running sections (60km total), said that it was a wonderful event and he was having a great time. With one more section to complete, he headed off by car to checkpoint 14. These are definitely not the kind of people that I meet everyday! Apparently this is what you have to do to look good in spandex.

We also chatted with Christine and Ryan from Team 5, a biologist and an engineer from TRCA, as they slathered on bug repellent. It was darker and buggier than they had expected, due to extra time spent earlier in the day exploring parts of the trail that were not actually on course (i.e. being lost). They left their gear in readiness and headed back to Station 10.

Things were pretty quiet for a while, with Jill and I swapping stories and Harold dozing in his car. Stan Butcher phoned to let us know that Team 7 had completed the course just past 10:30 pm. Shortly before midnight, members of Team 3 came to wait for their teammate to complete the run to our checkpoint. Peter Attfield, at (the cushy indoor location of) Checkpoint 12, had alerted us that Peter from Team 3 was his way. While they waited, Ashley and Kyra debated

who would do the next stretch, since they both wanted to. The question was resolved when Ashley curled up at the side of the road and fell asleep. As time wore on, we were getting concerned about where Peter and his dog Jefferson could be. Under good conditions, a 7 km run would be a 30 minute jaunt. At dark, in the woods, it might take 45-60 minutes. Finally, after 80 minutes, about 12:50, to our great relief, we heard a bark. As Peter completed the section, his first words were, "I can't tell you how many times I got lost!" It seemed that getting lost was a bit of a trend at that point. Harold and others were trying to navigate teams 4 & 6 back on course.

As the earlier stages were completed, volunteers from those checkpoints were joining us. Jesse Thompson Rd was a lively place after midnight. Wilma and Brian Millage, Judy and Bob Comfort, as well as our replacements, Noel and Judy Carey, were all gathered around Jill's citronella candles (our stand-in for a campfire). Jill and I had technically finished our shift but we didn't want to go home yet. Sure Team 3 had come in, but where was Christine, and Team 1? How could we leave now? About 1:10, there was a mighty cheer as Jacob cleared the trail gate and crossed McCowan Rd. Jacob, probably about 12 years old, was a member of Team 1, The Shaw Connection. His family was very pleased to see him and extremely proud of him. Christine and Ryan from the TRCA came in at the same time. Teams 1 and 5 were now on their way to the next stage of the relay.

There were still two teams yet to arrive at Checkpoint 13 but it was time for me and Jill to head home. We had a lot of fun being part of this event. Count me in next year!

Susan Sellers

