

The **HURT** Story

(for *Ultrarunning Magazine*)

If a club is an organized group of people with a common purpose... with regular meetings... rules, including rules for membership... dues... officers... and so on, then the *Hawaiian Ultra Running Team* (**HURT**) is not one. Truth is, **HURT** is more myth than reality. It is a fabrication, a mirage, and maybe even a scam. What? You say, "I've seen the shirts... they say **HURT** in big, bold letters." And, you say, "I've heard the chant, '**HURT, HURT, HURT!**' as members of the club arrive at race aid stations. "**HURT** is real! **HURT** lives!" Well, you be the judge:

Many, many years ago, possibly back in the 1970's, while wandering around in a Hawaiian forest, a guy we'll call John reportedly came upon a golden tablet covered with curious, indecipherable runes and suggestive pictures. He had been wandering and dallying there with a gal we'll call PJ, who said to him, "I hope our spouses don't find out about this..." which had nothing whatsoever to do with the tablet. John brought the tablet down from the mountain to where some other mountain wanderers were gathered by the open trunks of their cars drinking beer and eating pretzels. He held it over his head and, in what may have been a reference to a sore knee, said the prophetic word, "**HURT!**" All around him were smitten with this proclamation. They bowed down to stretch their hamstrings and repeated the word, "**HURT.**" Later, a clever wordsmith we'll call Carl (the Punster), while under the influence of a great quantity of the aforementioned beer, gave it the present-day meaning: *Hawaiian Ultra Running Team*.

John was a real salesman. He was a guy who could sell hammers to folks who had no nails. The trunk-dwellers believed him to be their guru. As for the golden tablet, the rumor is that he cashed it in and used the proceeds to have T-shirts made which were emblazoned with the **HURT** crest. Being a marketing maven, he also hired scribes and poets to create the many slogans identified with **HURT** today. They include, "We wouldn't want it to be easy". He made a schedule of strange and tortuous runs, and traveled far and wide, evangelizing as he went, creating what is now known as the **HURT** story. He enlisted a motley crew of mostly aging, failed 10K runners including folks we'll call Ed (the Fish), Vernon (the Lawyer), Jim (the Doctor), Alan (the Knee), Vivian (Twin Peaks), Suzi (the Queen of Cunningham Gulch), and so on.

As time went on, increasingly, people sought membership in **HURT**. They inquired about the process and the rules (they probably just wanted a free shirt). John (the Guru) laughed. "Process? Rules?" he said. Every now and then, seemingly, randomly, a **HURT** shirt would appear in a mailbox... or hanging from a car radio antenna. How were the recipients chosen? Who did the choosing?

HURT shirts have now been seen around the globe. There have been reported sightings in Moscow, Paris, Amsterdam, New York, Boston, Los Angeles, Papeete, Auburn, Wrightwood, Silverton, and Frozen Head. They have been seen at the finish lines of the big ultras, where it is rumored that huge cash offers have been made for them.

The **HURT** crest began to be seen on race shirts: Haleakala – the Run to the Sun, City Lights Ultras, the Saddle Road 100K, the Tantalus Triple Trek, and so on. Philanthropic activities carried the moniker as well: trail building and maintenance, nature education, memorial funds, etc.

In the 1980's, so-called membership spread far and wide. Today, there are a few hundred folks who wear the crest. Of course, as in many secret societies, members don't reveal much about their elite group. As John (the Guru) told it, "You can't tell what you don't know", which is a variant of the more contemporary "don't know, don't tell".

Nearly all of the current members were sold a bill of goods. Some were minding their own business when they found themselves listening raptly to a **HURT** member talking to some innocent folk about elk in a meadow on the Continental Divide during something called Hardrock (never mind the blister as big as a lemon on the ball of his foot). Others stepped right into it... they volunteered. "Gosh, John... tell me about Western States"... "John, can you help me, I'm thinking of running Miwok?"... The reply almost always started something like this: "It'll be a lot of fun... you've already done a marathon... you just need to train a little..."

Despite the scam, lots of interesting things have been accomplished beneath the **HURT** banner:

- Numerous road / trail ultras around the world.
- All of the 100-mile trail races (except for the brand new ones or anything beyond three loops at Barkley, which everyone knows is the legacy of a notorious liar and is way more than 100 miles),
- Multi-day events such as ten days of a-marathon-a-day in Russia and six days of Sri Chinmoy,
- Ultra relays across the State of Washington and around the Hawaiian island of Oahu,
- Group training extravaganzas such as three days around the Hawaiian island of Lanai, three days around the island of Oahu, and three days with Norm Klein at what we believe was an abandoned parking lot in Foresthill, CA,
- Fun runs that have included 40+ mile road / trail runs on the islands of Oahu, Hawaii, and Maui, and hill climbs such as the Hilo to Mauna Kea summit run (45 miles / 13,750 feet),
- Special events like the Ironman and Ultraman triathlons, a 4x100 (meters not miles) relay,
- Several years of running with teenagers while coaching high school cross country and track & field.

In addition to scamming, **HURT** is about tradition. Sacred tradition. For example, every piece of trail used by the organization is named after a member or someone they wish to publicly ostracize. Say a visitor named Wanda comes to Hawaii and runs with the group. Say she falls down a really steep and slippery section and bloodies her nose. That section might forever be known as Wanda's. Also, thereafter, falling on one's face and getting a

bloody nose might be referred to as a Wanda. Several of the most fun uphill trails done by the group are all referred to as “Mikes”, after a fun guy from Texas who was troubled by them.

Another important tradition is that while on the trail with other **HURTERS**, anything you reveal in word or deed, no matter how embarrassing, will be immediately shared with everyone on the planet. This is commonly referred to as the Law of Do Know, Will Tell. Then, there is the Law of the Muddy Butt. This simple rule concerns who pays for the beer. Of course, it's the person who falls first. Normally, guests are not apprised of this tradition until they fall.

During the early 1990's, AKA the Golden Years, **HURT** members mounted a furious campaign at ultra-immortality. Pulling out all the stops, they conquered Pikes Peak, knocked off the WS 100 multiple times, ran Angeles Crest and Quad Dipsea as a team, ran with the pigs at Arkansas, and mooned race directors and their families from coast to coast. In a shameless last-ditch effort to get into the **HURT** Hall of Fame, a guy we'll call Richard (the Curly) recorded the all-time slowest finishing time at a big 100-mile race in Colorado by sauntering in within 25 seconds of the 48-hour limit.

During those same years, other members tried desperately to retire. A senior member known as Gerry (the Gigolo) dislocated his shoulder at Quicksilver. Ed (the Fish) faked a back injury at Hardrock. A famous **HURT** race director we'll call Randy (the Broker) actually pretended to not know his name after only 25 miles of the WS 100.

And some **HURTERS** prefer anonymity. Some even seem ashamed of their affiliation. One guy who got a **HURT** shirt actually changed his name so folks wouldn't know who he was.

In the late 1990's, some of the original **HURTERS** began to show real signs of aging. They got lost, injured, bald, fat, and generally repulsive. This caused them to be replaced by younger, more attractive members, many of whom were female and blonde, some of whom were inexplicably given tighter shirts to wear in the rain. The old **HURTERS** kept on showing up, but they were usually ignored or left behind. Nowadays, **HURT** has a young, active membership and a senior auxiliary. These two factions hardly know and rarely see each other. When they do see each other, it's usually because the auxiliary is getting lapped. But, while the mantle is being passed, so to speak, John (the Guru) is silent about the future of **HURT**. What he does say is, “Hey, I'm XX years old... they're young, if they wanna have rules, let 'em make their own club”.

The author apologizes to the hundreds of **HURT** members worldwide who are not mentioned here. Unfortunately this magazine is cheap and, as we understand it, needs the space for advertising.