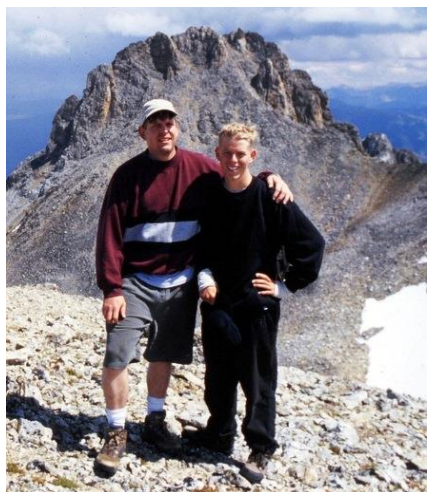


Discovering Running and the Outdoors



Me with oldest son in the Sawtooths,
1999

When I went away to college in Utah, in 1976, I did some semi-serious running for the first time since that aborted junior high track team experience. Early in the school year at midnight on one occasion I went running with a couple guys up around the Provo Temple for about three miles. I came back to the dorm exhausted and feeling dead. A girl who had my attentions would go over to the indoor track to run now and then, so I also went over as a way to spend time with her and later continued running on my own. For the first time in my life I started to enjoy running. I even left the track and started running up into the foothills on pavement above BYU, running multiple miles. Several times I would go running at night. I discovered that it was a wonderful way to clear my head and escape much of the stress of school life and girl frustrations.

I started to associate with a pretty serious runner who also lived in the dorms. He would encourage me and give me advice. On the indoor track I improved my personal best mile time to 5:32.8. He talked me into signing up for a 5K that ran on roads and ended in the football stadium. I started near the front with my friend and kept close to him for the first half mile or so but then I crumbled. There was no way I could keep up that pace, I started crashing. I was such a running rookie. I slowed down and was passed by a couple hundred trained runners. I held on and was able to pass several runners during the final stretch on the track in the stadium. The race had humbled me but still I looked at the hundreds of runners who I had beaten and it felt like an accomplishment. But I would not run another race for 27 years. (I've always wondered how good I could have been at that young age if I would have continued training and racing.)

After my two-year Mormon mission to New York, I again returned to college in 1979. Even though my roommates didn't run, for some reason I picked it up again and started to run fairly regularly, probably about 10 miles a week. I made a bet with one of my roommates that I wouldn't miss a day of at least running a mile. He couldn't miss a day reading the scriptures. The first one who missed had to pay up. One late night after returning from a date, he asked me with a grin, "did you run?" I hadn't and in anger went out of the house close to midnight getting in my mile run, mumbling about that "stupid bet." But running was getting easy. I was very proud about my first very long run, a ten-mile run from Provo to Springville and back. I was stunned at the ease of doing that run. It felt like I could keep running for a very long time.

That summer I received my first running shirt. During 1980, there was a fitness program on campus related to the 150th birthday for the Mormon Church. If students would run 150 miles over a period of months, they would receive a t-shirt. I signed up and tracked my miles for the first time in my life. I reached 150 miles well before the deadline and was proud of actually running 150 miles. It seemed so very far.

What about the trails? Going to school in Provo, Utah the mountains were right out my back door. In 1980, a former girlfriend invited me to hike to the top of Mount Timpanogos with her. I knew she was trying to persuade me



Rock Canyon

to come back to her and I wasn't interested, so I declined the all-day adventure. But the idea of climbing to the top of that high mountain always stayed with me. A year later, during a break from school, I became adventurous and for the first time hiked up Rock Canyon to what now is the Squaw Peak 50 course, about a seven-mile round-trip hike. It felt like I had hiked up into the wilderness with no one around. The feeling was incredible and I dreamed about someday spending multiple days exploring this back country that I never really knew existed, not far from my isolated city existence. This made a deep impact on me.

School and life became busy and I again dropped running for several years as I started a family and a career. For athletics I played basketball nearly every week and softball in the summers. Around 1984 while working for IBM in upstate New York, I became acquainted for the first time with a serious marathoner, a man in his late 40s, Ron Breon. This guy was amazing. I considered him to be old, but he could outrun everyone I knew. How was that possible? Ron would lead a small number of runners several times a week for a run after work. This group would run what I considered a very long loop of four miles around our town. One day I decided to join in, thinking I was in pretty good shape. Ron ran with ease, never tiring. I struggled terribly to keep up and fell way behind but completed the run. I was humbled and never joined in again, but I always remembered watching Ron run. He put in my mind the amazing thought that someone who was "old" could be in such outstanding fitness, outrunning others in their 20s. Ron once said that the secret to being in shape was to never get out of shape. I had not learned that yet. Every couple years, I would pick up running, and do a few miles a week, but it would never last more than a couple months. Instead I played basketball.

Basketball was my sports life in the 80s. While working for IBM in New York, I invited my IBM basketball buddies to play each Saturday at the local Mormon Church. We played hundreds of games over the years together with some great battles on the court when church tournament time came. Enough of my friends participated that we fielded two teams and battled each year. But our chief rivals were a team of younger college guys from Cornell University in Ithaca. They were always cocky and we loved putting them in their place. One of my proudest games was the year the three-point line came to be and in our tournament game against Ithaca I was in a zone hitting shot after shot, sending those boys home whimpering.

I also picked up tennis and participated in a great IBM doubles league. I got better and better and would frequently get in a couple sets before work during the summers. Both of these sports would motivate me at times to get back out and run. I enjoyed running along the beautiful Susquehanna River that flowed near our home. But my big problem with running back there was my competitive spirit. Each time I ran, I had to compete against the clock. I just couldn't run for enjoyment. I had to push myself harder and harder until it was just too painful and not enjoyable at all.

My IBM friends somehow got me to play golf for the first time in my life. I was terrible at first but we had fun hackers tournaments and later after moving to Tucson where I could play year round I excelled. However, I retired from that sport around 2002 when a buddy's drive sent me to the hospital in an ambulance. For some reason I just gave up that sport after that. It was too dangerous.

In the early 90s, I took up mountain biking, well before the masses did. We now lived in Tucson, Arizona and I explored the miles and miles of dirt roads in the desert. I learned from mistakes and once went out too far and ran out of water in the hot afternoon. I was miles away from any home but to my luck or providence, I came upon a full water bottle in the road that saved me and I learned a very important lesson about safety.

I entered a 110-mile perimeter bicycle race that went all the way around Tucson. I rode it on my heavy mountain bike, suffering from painful ITB in my knee, but made it to the finish in about seven hours. When I visited Utah, I persuaded my brother-in-law Ed to ride a trail with me. We drove up to Guardsman Pass at the top of Big Cottonwood Canyon, riding along the Desolation trail to Dog Lake, down to Big Water, and down Millcreek Canyon to my dad's home in Salt Lake. (Those who have run the Wasatch 100 understand the meaning of that route.) Along the way my pedal came loose and we still laugh about the memory of putting a stick in the pedal hole and making our way to Desolation Lake where another biker had a tool that helped fix the problem.

For the next several years, each summer, Ed and I would go on multi-day mountain biking adventures in the hills and mountains near the Uintas. We would strap about 40 pounds of bags on our bikes, travel 20-30 miles each day and camp for the night. These were amazing adventures to me. I was finally doing what I dreamed, to just go off in the mountains for multiple days, covering far more miles than what was possible on foot (so I thought). Ed and I would play a game we invented called, "Cabin Golf." We would bring a nine-iron with us on these trips and make up a golf course in the wilderness using a tin can for the hole. We had some really wild obstacles to get through.



Ed playing Cabin Golf on a bike trip

On one trip, we were riding fast down a dirt road on Duschene Ridge and I hit a ditch wrong, flew over my handle bars, and hit my head hard on the ground. Ed came back and rescued me, and I realized that I had lost all my short-term memory. I looked at the horizon and asked, "Are we in Utah?" I then asked, "How did we get up here?" Ed thought I was joking at first but then became concerned. I tried to remember things and could remember that I had six kids. But I had him take out our map to show me where we had traveled that day. Within a half hour, the memory came back and we camped for the night. But the next morning when I went to get on my bike, it broke in half. We gave the bike a proper burial and spent the rest of the day running and riding our way down to Heber. I soon gave up mountain biking for good, but Ed kept it up and became an elite Tri-athlete.

Fast forward to 1995, age 36. I was then out of shape and overweight. A friend invited me to go on a three-day 45-mile backpacking trip in Paria Canyon on the Utah/Arizona border. I was still very inexperienced in the outdoors, had never done any serious backpacking like this before, but I agreed to come. The adventure opened my eyes to a brand new world I had hardly imagined before. I was a city guy carrying a very heavy backpack just trying to keep up with experienced outdoor guys. I learned things like filtering water, cooking over backpack stoves, and how stupid it is to carry a backpack weighing over 50 pounds. The long hike was spectacular! I never dreamed there was a place like this so close to home. By day two, I was in terrible pain. By the end of the trip, my ankles were totally swollen and I could hardly walk for the next two weeks. But I made life-long friendships with David Hansen and Brad Clements who opened my eyes to the remote mountains and canyons around me.



Paria Canyon

I would join in with this group each year for a new backpacking adventure. Carl Hutzler also joined us on later adventures. Our sons came at times and we experienced amazing times in the outdoors. However, each year, I was pulling up the rear of the group. I would try to quickly get in shape by running a few weeks before the trips, but at times I would tip the scales at nearly 230 pounds. In 1996 this group took me to the top of [Kings Peak](#), the highest peak in Utah. I was still just a baby in the outdoors, wearing heavy waterproof boots that tore my feet to shreds. [See Carl's website about our backpacking adventures](#)



Me (BYU shirt) in Yellowstone, in 1997

In later years we hiked miles in places like [Yellowstone](#), [Escalante River](#), [Sawthooths](#), [Tetons](#), and many other fascinating places in the years to come. With each year the guys helped me become more seasoned in the outdoors and I learned new things from them every year.



Brad, me, and David on Kings Peak trip in 1996