

# ***RUNNING A MOUNTAIN***

by

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On a crisp July morning in the Rockies, seventeen determined runners met at Echo Lake Lodge, thirty miles west of Denver, Colorado. The event, the first Annual YMCA "Mt. Evans Run." A narrow paved road winds its way from Echo Lake for fourteen rugged miles, to the Summit Restaurant, located above 14,000 feet. The highest roadway in the United States attracts tourists from all over the world. About 99% of the tourists depend on the reliable horseless carriage, to get them to the top. The other 1% are made up of hikers, bicyclers, and for the first time, joggers.

The run, itself, surpasses the "famed" Pikes Peak Marathon by one mile on the ascent. It has a vertical rise of over four thousand feet.

Runners participating in the Denver Central YMCA event were from the Colorado Roadrunners Club, Pueblo, Colorado YMCA, and the YMCAs of Metropolitan Denver. Necessary liability forms were filled out and a pre-run briefing was given. Aid Cars were stationed along the course in case any of the runners needed water, additional clothing or a couple of breaths of oxygen. The YMCA photographer got everyone together for a group picture (a "before" shot, not knowing if an "after" group picture would be possible). Anticipation was high, as we all approached the starting line. Only two of the seventeen runners had made the run before, so most of us lacked the knowledge of how to pace ourselves for an up hill run, that might take us over three hours.

The "Mt. Evans Run" was organized with emphasis on participation, promoting physical fitness, and finishing within the three hour time limit. All finishers received a completion medal, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd places being recognized.

The starting whistle was sounded at 8:00 a.m., sharp, and all were off for a fourteen mile, up hill, experience. Those runners with similar early paces grouped together and discussed the difficulty of the miles ahead. A seven minute mile pace, was held on the gradual up grade for the first nine miles. Thick pine forest gave way to timberline shrubs and boulders, as we neared 12,000 feet. Unfortunately, as the view became more spectacular, the desire to gaze, decreased. At Summit Lake the runners were fairly well scattered out, but leads started to change as the

stronger runners slipped ahead. A few fishermen looked up from their leisure to watch us pass, not really understanding what was going on. Tourists driving up, would stare at our small band of maniacs. Our t-shirts seemed to read "Colorado—Land of the Crazy Joggers."

From Summit Lake, the worst lay ahead. Although we caught a glimpse of the Restaurant, high above us, in the distance, there was a good six miles of switchback road ahead, with curves that terraced, one on top of the other. Some storm clouds moved in, keeping visibility at a minimum. One curve became another, destroying each time, the hope that the finish line was there.

The young female official at the finish line was a sight for tired eyes. She quickly recorded our finishing times and gave us words of congratulations. The early finishers were on hand to congratulate us also, and to hand us a warm jacket or sweat shirt, for the temperature had dropped to the mid 40's.

Fifteen of the seventeen runners came in within the three hour mark. The winning time being 2 hours, 6 minutes, 15 seconds, second place was 2 hours, 7 minutes, 59 seconds, and third place was 2 hours, 12 minutes, and 40 seconds. Oxygen was administered to a couple of finishers at their own request, to relieve some nausea and dizziness. Pictures at the finish line were few, for the clouds had really rolled in, so thick that our "Y" photographer was knocked down by a truck coming into the restaurant parking lot, our only casualty of the run. Fortunately he was not hurt, just bumped by the large mirror on the vehicle.

The Summit Restaurant was a welcome place to sit down and talk over the event. Some obvious questions were asked of us by some tourists and employees of the place as we enjoyed a cup of hot tea. Officially, it was the first organized run up the mountain, and it was felt by all, that it should be an annual run. Many felt it was an ideal conditioner for the Annual Pikes Peak Marathon, a twenty-six mile up and down affair, held every August, near Colorado Springs.

After a short stay in the restaurant we loaded our group up in the Aid Cars and headed down the mountain through the thick layers of clouds. All of us were quite satisfied to ride down, instead of run, this time.



**Start of Mt. Evans run**

**1st place winner Zephyr Isely of Golden, Colo., coming across finish line at Summit**

