

## Great Cranberry Island 5K Saturday June 19, 1982



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Downeast. Its all downeast....this Great Cranberry Island 5K footrace which is rapidly becoming to road racing what "McCabe and Mrs. Miller" and Vonnegut were to the ambivalent 1971 college graduate.

More than anything though, this race is an extension of the personalities of race director siblings - Larry and Gary Allen, who from Bangor to Bar Harbor, are (a) clearly ahead of their time and (b) rapidly becoming legends in their own time.

The fact that last year's winner, Michael Gaige, repeated the performance on June 19 of this year was not nearly as significant as the fact that over 400 entries were turned away and that despite the cultism that outsiders attempt to affix to the race, the bulk of the participants are downeasters..."a tight Maine field "

Larry Allen, a 27year old high school (Bangor HS) track coach and 2:39 marathoner (as is brother Gary), conceived of this race four years ago... "because this is a nice place to come run. The first year we had 70 people. We weren't sure anyone would come. In 1980, we had 130, then the third year, 150. This year it became crazy. We went 40 over 200 because it's hard to say no to friends."

A two mile one lane blacktop bisects the length of Great Cranberry Island. "That's part of the reason for limiting the race," contends Larry. "It's not a very big road. We start at the firehouse and go out and back."

On the day of the race, the first of four where, due to the absence of fog, you could actually see one another - the island's summer population of 300 is doubled. "The people of the island support us. They don't know what to make of it," adds Larry, "but they support us.

"The people are all for it," points out Charlene Allen, who, seemingly exudes as much energy as her sons combined. "They're kind of set in their ways, but most of them are for it. They pitch in and help out. I'm going to run in the race. But after last night, I don't know how."

"Last night", which followed last day was a 16 hour ordeal of a small coterie of dedicated roadies...many of who bivouacked the night in the fields behind the island's church. Race day preparation is complicated by the simple fact that it is a 15 minute ferry ride out to the island everything must be boated out, and by the fact that in June, it invariably rains on Saturdays. But, hey, these people are serious.

For some strange reason the skies were not of a precipitate state and Gaige, a 29 year old paralegal from Bangor, won the race in a record time of 14:51. "It was identical to last year," claimed Gaige, a 4:10 miler whilst at Lockhaven (Pa.) State College. "It was Gerry Clapper (A UMaine miler who has either won or finished second in all the races) and myself. Last year it was more tactical. This year we were shoulder to shoulder with a mile to go and then it was go for it. "I've got good mile speed and if I'm with anybody with a mile to go they have to run real hard to stay with me."

Sue Elias, a 19 year old junior at UMaine, was the first woman. She also set a course mark, running 18:08. Sue, a student of wildlife biology, is a five minute miler and will be back next year to break 18.

Despite an unfounded groundswell of opinion of the brother Allens' impending irreversible lunacy, they spent all of Friday and all of Saturday mobilized to insure a quality race. Proof of their seriousness is that they own the only digital clock in the state of Maine.

Real music, damn good music filled the ears, there was a positiveness, a Woodstock without the millions aura existed. A spaghetti dinner followed the race and the Allen's unique awards system is unmatched. Explains Larry Allen, "The first year we gave away lobsters. The second year - hand made slate - semi trophies. The third year we got an idea of the burnt out running shoes (used and abused running shoes of the world class, autographed by the abuser)."

In 1982, the awards were a fine collection of artwork donated by the native population. The winner, Gaige, received a valuable and beautiful John Heliker print. "There's a nationally renowned colony of artists on the island," submits Gary Allen, the younger (by two years) of the brothers, "Hey! If I've heard of them, they certainly must be famous." Each finisher received a rock - yes, a rock - an inscribed '82 Great Cranberry 5k rock...a piece of Cranberry granite, rocks endemic to the island, the size and shape of bowling balls, smoothed and rounded by the Atlantic Ocean. Each rock was numbered and used as a lottery

device to give away more of the local artwork in addition to last years burnt of leftovers, the central prize - one that belonged to a Bill Rodgers, "He ran in it... and it stinks," quipped Gary.

Great Cranberry Island, the central island of a group of five that comprises the town of Cranberry Isles, off the craggy coastline adjacent to big bucks Bar Harbor is a panacea, a break from the brain game.

The people are different... apposite different. Two days on Great Cranberry is a reaffirmation of life - a reason for existence as you live.

"Our goal is not trying to make money," confirms Gary. "We want to maintain the sanctity of the race. Make it important to get to the race. We could go mega, but we'd lose the charm. Why bother."

"When we talk 200 runners, we're talking 250," adds Larry. "There are 50 people that belong in the race. That make it what it is....local people."

Concludes Gary Allen, "I've been here 15 years. I was lobster fishing at twelve. I train year round on this stretch. Seventy miles a week to the shore and back. It's great ....there's no traffic to contend with.

"It's a funny little island. They see me running and think I'm loony (which is certainly open to prospective scrutiny). This is the fourth year of the race. We're gaining fast. Next year is the year."