



Paul Vanderheiden

Wha....What is he doing? Is this that same guy who used to send pixs from his travels to the Grand Canyon or New Zealand or Fiji, and now, he's, he's, well.. he seems to be looking for something small... Well actually my friends, I am christening the Ninth Wonder of the World, the "World's Longest Urinal," located in the staging area for the New York City Marathon. I'd introduce you to my "friends," but you remember that old Jerry Jeff Walker song, "Pissing in the Wind."

So how are you? A good year for you? It was a good one for me. I set a record - I have not moved in 23 months, the longest I've had the same address since I left home for college and that was in 19...., oh never mind. I kind of like this whole stability thing. Maybe I'll even give up my PO Box... na!

WORK: Still at the bike shop though have been promoted to.. ta da.. Warehouse Manager. What this means is I carry stuff in one door, tell the computer we got it, then carry it out another door and tell the computer it left. Really exciting stuff, but it satisfies the Capricorn/anal retentive side of me. For fun though, I am still vending cokes and peanuts at Colorado Rockies games. I love this job; I'm working in the second nicest office I've ever had the fortune to occupy (the first being the seat of my raft). Coors Field is a beautiful ball park and the team exciting to watch. Unfortunately, working there is having the same effect as working on the river, it makes you want to delay growing up. But I do think about it, sometimes. I also work as a guard at the Denver Nuggets games, which means I get paid to sit where Yuppies are paying a hundred bucks a seat.

HOME: I've set my abode record in this old house in an old section of Denver called Washington Park. The park is a 1/2 mile away which is conducive for my running, and is an 18 minute bike ride to the ball park, which is a wonderful commute. So it is good to finally have a couch and floor to offer to visitors after mooching off other people for so long.

RECREATION: Running rivers has evolved into plain running. Still enjoy manning the oars; did a wonderful trip on the Middle Fork of the Salmon and some day trips in Colorado. But running has become my focus. I ran more races this year. I'm not competitive by any means, but I achieved a couple of PR's

in the 10K and Half Marathon that I figured would be beyond my grasp just a year ago. The problem is, it only fuels my fire to break a 3 hour Marathon. This year I ran two, the Disney World Marathon in January, and the New York City Marathon in November, both as fund-raisers for the Leukemia Society (which you probably already know since I hit you up for a donation). My goal for Disney World was to qualify for next April's 100th Running of the Boston Marathon. And the New York Marathon was unreal. I never believed, despite hearing about the 4 million people who line the course screaming encouragement, that a road race would bring the best out of such a diverse group of races, nationalities, and ages. It was an amazing experience, probably as close to an Olympic experience as I'll ever have. I have two Marathons planned for '96, Boston in April and Honolulu with the Leukemia Society in December. . Hell, I thought about running Boston as a kid watching Frank Shorter, so to actually be doing it... This is hard for me to believe - I'm actually planning on something a year in advance!

The Marathon has become my favorite race, because with a Marathon, you win when you cross the finish line whether it takes you 2 hours or 6 hours. The sense of accomplishment is unreal. I still have a hard time believing how emotional I can get about it. In New York, I was walking back to the hotel through Central Park, the day after the race, 24 hours after the start, when I noticed that the finish line clock was still running. I didn't think much about it when, about a mile and a half from the finish line on Central Park South, this 50-60 year old woman was walking with crutches surrounded by the Guardian Angels. A passerbyer tells me she has MS and this is her FOURTH year doing the entire Marathon, walking all night long. With her is Greta Waitz, a 9 time winner of New York, who crosses the finish line after her so she won't be the last finisher. I tell you, it chokes me up to think about her and her accomplishment which is far greater than mine, and that I am proud to have this connection with her.

LOVE LIFE: Someday I hope I have something to share with you here. Well... I do have a couple of girlfriends. There is this gorgeous 7-year old blond I met at the Nuggets games who flirts with me, writes me "like-notes," and brings me presents. And then there is Rachael Diaz, a beautiful 6-year old little girl that I had the great honor to meet through the Leukemia Society. I was matched with Rachael a year ago fall to run in her honor with Team in Training, the Marathon running fund-raising program I've become involved in. Rachael and the Leukemia Society have added to my joy of running, as has the response from my friends for their support of Leukemia Society, Rachael, and me through opening their wallets and their words of encouragement. The whole Team in Training experience has been very rewarding, filling a void that was started with my work with Friends of the River. I've met some great people: runners, staff members, patients, and their parents. In some ways, its very similar to the cause I believe in with FOR, fighting for the life of people (rivers) against a disease (dam builders, politicians, ignorance).

Well, that about summarizes my year. So stay in touch, either via snail-mail, e-mail, phone, or better yet, stop on by. Just give me a few hours warning so I can stick some home-brews in the fridge. We'll go to a ball game and I let you buy a coke and a bag of peanuts from me. Just don't wear some stinkin' Dodgers cap.