

## Birthday Presents & the A.R.E.

By: Ginny Mosher

When couples have been married for a length of time the annual birthday gift can become less than exciting, but not at our house. For the 2008 event my husband gave me an adventure I'll treasure forever. A week at the AREEP Trail Running Camp!

Early in the spring, ARE Event Productions released brochures announcing their four day long "Trail Running Camp" for July. Lo' and behold my picture was on the cover. Inspiration struck and my birthday '08 present was decided. The comments from friends and family included: "How many hot dogs can you eat?" "The oldest girl scout!" "You can't outrun a bear!" and so forth. But I loved it and immediately recruited my good friend Carol Trombley to also attend and on July 17, 2008 we set off to camp Dippikill Wilderness Retreat in the Adirondacks, two 'senior-master' runners in a sea of adventure.

Anticipating our getting lost enroute, the sponsors set out a banner several miles from camp with human traffic control – a good sign and helpful before the lightly traveled dirt avenue up a mountain. Greeting us was a sea of pink and green "Staff" shirts and a welcome hug from Josh and Joe our host and camp directors.

Registration and handouts preceded the half mile hike to a cabin sans plumbing and power only thirty yards from "the necessary" and a greeting from our five fellow bunk mates. My upstairs -assigned to the loft- bunk and air mattress offered toilet paper, our purple shirts, power bars and water bottles... the *camping* portion of the week was obvious early.

First run: down, down, down, up, up, up, up - only Cathy got lost - the trail running portion of the week was equally obvious... and this was a birthday present!

The dinner at the *White Pine Lodge* dispelled the hot dog/hamburger comments. The boys (Joe, John and Dennis) presented the first of several gourmet meals; in point of fact every meal was absolutely fantastic every day!

Each day was packed with energy and enthusiasm and information from 6:45 AM to after 9PM. Yoga sessions with Sarah (the double knot expert) building the core sessions with leukemia survivor and "body perfect" Chris, running chiropractic guru Dr. Bob Irwin highlighted the week. There was constant opportunity to play as well. The pond was 'only' a seven tenths of a mile hike away and feature a full waterfront of activity. I swam, Carol kayaked, and everyone had well supervised and organized and instructional things to do, even late. Things were so busy, I missed a planned canoe ride because the next trail run was a mile away and one couldn't miss that!

By the end of camp everyone was a friend. Approx. 60 happy souls working their tails off and having a "ball" in the heat of an Adirondack summer. It doesn't get much better than that.

Tim VanOrden a 'raw-vegan' who has as much energy and vigor as Josh (I didn't think that possible) and Dick Vincent the guru of running trails made a special impact on us and made it a comfortable challenge for every skill level and every age of athlete.

Closing activities started with a talent show featuring very special -not necessarily talented- performers entertaining well into our last night to prep us for the early morning **Froggy Five Miler**.

This final run was five mile of very technical trail devishness. Rocks, narrow venues, hills, slopes, climbing boulders, gravel, 'stuffed frogs' to find and a blinding speed finish to a really great week.

Cheering counselors, hugs, congratulations, tears, laughs, exhaustion, sweat, pride, completion... what a birthday present.. what a running camp....WOW!

I would like to extend personal thanks to; Joe B., Dr. Sara, Josh, Dennis, Joe H., John, Paul, David, Chris, Sarah, Brennan, Brian, Dick and Tim for making my camp so successful.