



By Ron Haworth

Zoo Mania

Five Outrigger Canoe Club 'cheetahs' and one 'rhinoceros' comprised our six man road running relay team sponsored by Mid-Pacific Road Runners one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning in November 1969.

The early morning risers met in the Outrigger lobby at 3 a.m., a dimmed domain usually empty at such an hour but for OCC mascot 'Hobie Cat' on the prowl for the stray neighbor mouse. The runners were easily identified wearing 'why me' expressions and white T-shirts with a large Outrigger logo on the front. But as with any major sporting event the assembled included a supporting cast consisting of directors, producers, and even one extra with room temperature IQ and camera.

On hand with pen and pad was *Forecast* Editor Jerry Ober as well as Dr. Bob Smith with a bulging medical bag containing labeled vials of witches brews and crayon colored pain pills. The rumor our escort van was equipped with oxygen proved false and unnecessary, but what was missed was the masseuse who had her car towed on Hotel Street.

Cline Mann was all business with flash light and clip board and would be charting the location, hour and minute each runner passed the baton during the 38 mile race.

Olympian (British) distance runner Stan Hattie drew the short swizzle stick and was coach (the newspaper ad for the position went unanswered) and had already 'driven' the course to aid Cline in planning a strategy of faultless baton handoffs.

Overseeing the mayhem was Bill Brooks claiming the title 'Race Coordinator'. This 'extra' was to arrange post press, television, interviews should they be required (they weren't) for the five 'cheetahs' Yama Chillingworth, Gil Hicks, Billy Head, Mike McMahon, John Zeaszeas and Freddie 'Rhinoceros' Hemmings.

Still... Silent... Sympathetic

The grueling trek would begin and end at the Honolulu Zoo (missing the aforementioned wildlife) and it was a rocking scene with lions roaring in concert with mocking baboons. Was it heckling or feeding time? Only the tortoise pit was still, silent, and sympathetic.

Such a racket it attracted a policeman to investigate a possible riot but by then the 36 runners from OCC, Mid-Pacific, Windward Athletic, Castle and Kailua High School, and the U.S. Marine Corps and their various vehicles filled with wives and lovers and sleeping babies were in a 'hazard light' crawl convoy. The pain jaunt had begun.

Mike McMahon was stretched and hyped and was first off the starting blocks with a measured gait through Kapiolani Park and up Diamond Head Road where the first flawless baton change was made (and recorded by Cline) to Head at the Amelia Earhart plaque, marking a symbolic pioneer beginning for an adventurous morning.

Head ran through a sane and slumbering Kahala before reaching the Wai'alae Golf Course where Hicks leaped from the escort wheels to continue the 'chase' along Kalaniana'ole Highway to Aina Haina.

Trailing the field, Zeaszeas was queued to push past



OCC Road Running team: Top: Mike McMahon, Gil Hicks, Fred Hemmings, Jr., Bill Head, John Zeaszeas, Yama Chillingworth. Bottom: Bill Brooks, Stan Hattie. Photo: Ron Haworth.

Hawaii Kai where he handed off to workhorse McMahon to run Koko Head and scenic Hanauma Bay 'toilet bowl' coastline to Blow Hole squinting into a rising (if dismayed) sunrise as the creeping convoy moved at an even slower pace on the two lane road that defies progress and change.

The observant reader might be asking, "Where's the Rhino?" Hemmings and Chillingworth had yet to leave the wheeled stable while McMahon was already two legs to the wind. Race rules were few and loose but did stipulate that no leg could be shorter than 2 1/2 miles and each runner had to endure no less than 1/6 the total distance. Ahh, fear not... Coach Hattie had saved Hemmings for 20 furlongs when he could hear and smell the Sandy Beach surf, knowing he would breathe them like an elixir and gallop with quarter horse speed.

Strategy Successful

Hemmings, his nose twitching like a rhino lumbering to wallow in a mud hole, passed two runners on the Sandy straightaway, after which, Chillingworth took the baton and with long legs climbed with fluid grace up past the Makapu'u Lighthouse and past Sea Life Park before relinquishing to a rested Head at Shriners' Club. Then it was flat going for Hicks running the Waimanalo and Sherwood Forest stretch without incident as Robin Hood knew they carried no coin.

What lay ahead, however, was as daunting as what had once loomed before covered wagons on the Oregon Trail where the Rocky Mountains saw-toothed the horizon.

The Pali Road!

Broken into three segments by coach Hattie, Head took the first and ran to near Castle Hospital (not a bad pit stop at this stage of the race) and transferred the baton to Hemmings who kept the steepening uphill pace in 'rhino' gear and finally puffed his relief at Castle Junction where McMahon was tasked to scale the Pali and run through the tunnels where he finally fell into the welcome arms of Dr. Bob Smith and his medicine bag of magical fruit loops. McMahon was pau for the morning after running three demanding legs and no longer feeling his own.

The comparatively easy downhill to Bishop Street fell to Chillingworth, Hicks, and Zeaszeas and our team was securely in fourth place leading the U.S. Marine Corp and Kailua High School. Confident... they were tempted to dawdle at the Hawaiian Electric Plant and seek an illegal socket which might offer a quick jolt of energy to recharge their dying batteries to garner bronze.

Ala Moana Center had yet to open when Billy Head

slapped the baton into anchor 'rhino's' hand who was to run his third leg of the morning folly. Ober wrote for *Forecast* "it was a sight at the time never before seen in Waikiki." Hemmings, never confused with Chief Lightfoot even when showered, lumbered like his namesake down the middle of Ala Moana Boulevard and Kalakaua Avenue to the astonished stares of visitors not yet fortified by morning coffee.

Curtains in hotel rooms parted and fearful guests stood on lanai worried what thundering herd was pulsating 3.2 on the Richter scale. But 'rhino' scented his element and the siren of the Waikiki surf winged his stride and he crossed the Honolulu Zoo finish line to the trumpet of a bull elephant in a time of 3:56:51.

The tortoise gallery blinked in awe.

Coach Hattie told any who would listen he was pleased with the outcome and thought it well worth the grueling hours of training and race torture; easy enough to say for a guy who didn't run.

Hicks praised Hattie. "He was a great coach and improved our performance by bringing out the best in all runners."

Koa Log Shavings

It was Freddie who envisioned himself more a 'rhinoceros' than 'cheetah' and was willing for me to poke fun at the image. And The Koa Log gives him a big 'mahalo' for it enabled the story to be told in the spirit he remembered, and hopefully left chuckles in its wake as it has in his memory.

"Just missed bronze", he reminisced. "It was a great team effort considering the competition."