

*So, you think your workouts are tough?*  
*Read these stories and maybe they won't be.*  
*From Ultramarathon World and the internet*  
**STORY #1:**

**History:**

**the Great Cross-Canada Hike**

**Coast-to-coast in 1921: Charles Burkman,**

**Frank and Jenny Dill, John and Clifford Behan**

**Ultramarathon World**

**By Andre Walter Roy**

**Macleans Canada - Portrait of a Country**

**Halifax, Nova Scotia - In the cold, high mountain passes and rock cuts of British Columbia five strangely assorted figures-four men and a woman plodded wearily and determinedly westward in the first days of June 1921. They had come a long way. Their faces were tanned and burned by the sun and**

**wind. They were thin, leg weary and footsore. Their nerves were worn, and their minds bitter. To people they**

**met in the small mountain railway towns they made angry accusations against the other walkers, calling them**

**cheats and liars.**

**They were miles apart as they walked-two teams of two and one man by himself. At every whistle stop**

**telegraph keys excitedly chattered the news of their progress. All over Canada thousands of people anxiously**

**called newspaper offices and asked: "Who is ahead now?" . . . "How far to go?"**

**For this was one of the most memorable treks in Canadian history-an almost incredible hike of 3,645 miles**

**from Halifax to Vancouver, across Canada, in about four and a half months. It was started as a lark by two**

**young men with a feeling of wanderlust and nothing better to do. It ended in a gruelling, bizarre and bitter race**

**as five people wore themselves to exhaustion satisfying a clamorous country-wide guessing game as to who**

**could walk farthest and fastest.**

**From Saint John, N.B., to Vancouver they all followed the same route along the railway tracks of the CPR.**

**They walked through winter blizzards in the Maritimes and Quebec, snow and rainstorms in Ontario and the**

**cold and muddy spring of the prairies. One team got on the wrong track and walked a hundred miles the**

**wrong way. Others were pursued by wolves and fought them off with guns. They slept in Canada's best hotels and in trackside shanties. They were lionized by politicians and by socialites eager to share their limelight. They paid their own way by selling postcards to the thousands who came out to see them in cities**

**and hamlets. They suffered frostbite, blisters, hunger and exhaustion, and in wild stretches of mountain or bush**

**they were sometimes afraid for their lives. In return, they were widely acclaimed.**

## **Fame fleeting**

**Their fame and success ended as abruptly as it began--almost the moment they reached Vancouver--after they had walked from January to June. The long hike left none of them rich or famous. Today only a frenzy of old newspaper records commemorates their effort. But they were real Canadian pioneers in the freakish field that later witnessed such sadistic demonstrations as marathon dancing, flagpole sitting, goldfish swallowing and long-distance swims.**

**The great cross-country hike originated in one man's idle whim. The man was Charles Burkman, born in Port Arthur, Ontario, but who, in the winter of 1920-21, found himself in Halifax and out of work. He had a friend, Sid Carr of Halifax, and one day, footloose and thinking of adventure, Burkman suggested they start walking westward and perhaps find a job.**

**"How far?" Carr asked. Burkman hadn't thought about that. "Maybe to Vancouver," he said. And so the idea jelled, and grew stronger.**

**In early January Burkman and Carr walked into the editorial offices of the Halifax Herald and the Halifax**

**Mail and announced their plan to walk across the country--on the CNR tracks to Saint John, N.B., and then**

**they would follow the CPR tracks. They had arranged to have postcards printed, showing their picture and telling of their hike, and they intended to sell these to pay their way.**

**The newspapers seized on the stunt and offered to pay Burkman and Carr for reports on their walks, to be sent by telegraph from railway stations along the route. The Herald suggested they carry a letter of greeting from the mayor of Halifax to the mayor of Vancouver.**

**17 January 1921**

**On Monday, January 17, 1921, Burkman and Carr appeared on the steps of the Halifax city hall to start their trek. In a chill rain and fog several hundred people had gathered.**

**Hurriedly, Mayor J. S. Parker wished them good luck and handed Burkman a letter to be delivered to the mayor of Vancouver. Then the men set out, many of the crowd on their heels. One admirer, carried away by visions of the adventure, begged them to let him join the trek. Mile by mile, his pleas grew weaker until, after five miles, he sat down on a stone and waved them farewell.**

**Burkman and Carr planned to walk about fifteen miles a day until the weather improved. Then, in the spring, they intended to step up the pace to thirty miles a day. They had calculated that it would take them seven months to get to Vancouver. If they had any idea that the trip would be a mere stroll for pleasure, it vanished on the third day, when the temperature dropped to ten below zero. Frostbitten but cheerful, they**

walked all

day to reach Truro, Nova Scotia's rail hub, by evening. They had completed sixty-four miles.

The next morning Truro turned out in hundreds to see the two men. They were showered with boots, clothing,

food and cigarettes by Truro merchants. The postcards, at ten cents each, sold by the dozens. It was noon

before they got away, and more than a hundred people followed them through the railway yards and along the track.

Most of the Maritimes newspapers had taken up the story, and the accounts of how Burkman and Carr were

being acclaimed on their route acted as a magnet to other walkers. In Dartmouth an energetic postman named John Behan read them and decided to start out after the Halifax pair. He wrote to the Halifax Herald

and proposed a father-son walk: Behan, senior, forty-four, and Clifford Behan, twenty-four, would walk to

Vancouver in six months-a whole month less than Burkman had estimated. They would pass Burkman and

Carr before Montreal, they promised.

Herald agrees

The Herald agreed to accept stories from the Behans, who fortified themselves with postcards, as Burkman

and Carr had done, and started out. Although in middle age, John Behan had been an oarsman and was fit for

the walk. Both he and his son had served overseas with the Halifax rifles. Since Dartmouth and Halifax,

across the harbor from one another, are constant rivals, the entry of the Behans into the trek gave Dartmouth

a chance to crow. The Behans were given a civic send-off in Dartmouth, pocketed a letter from Mayor Simpson to the mayor of Vancouver, crossed the harbor by boat and started walking.

Then, unexpectedly, the casual odyssey became a three-way contest when a well-known Maritimes foot-racer named Frank Dill threw his hat in the ring with that of his wife, Jennie. Dill, from Windsor, N.S.,

had enjoyed some local prowess as a runner; he worked in a Dartmouth iron foundry. He and his wife were

fellow sports; they fished and hiked together. They had decided to head for Vancouver too, they advised the

Halifax Herald, which by now had found itself a sort of official starter. The Herald welcomed the entry, for, in

addition to the fact that Dill was a public name, Mrs. Dill had women's interest. Although an angler and hiker,

she was by no means mannish, but quite small, dark, feminine and piquant.

Thus, three teams were in the race, and when the fact that it was a race became known to Burkman and

Carr, the first of a long series of emotional crises appeared. Burkman and Carr, plodding along the right of

way, were friendly enough. But when the Behans began to press on their heels, and then the Dills, that was

another thing.

"I won't be forced into racing across Canada," Carr insisted. And so, at Petitcodiac, fifteen miles west of

Moncton, N.B., he got on a train and went back to Halifax. Burkman went on alone, after a group of Halifax

sportsmen, in the throes of civic pride, collected five hundred dollars to spur him on. As January ended,

Burkman was at Welsford, N.B., the Behans were at Dorchester, having walked through a blizzard. They had

gained a day and a half on Burkman, and were still confident they could pass him before Montreal.

End of January

Frank and Jennie Dill appeared on the stage of the old Majestic Theatre in Halifax the last evening in January.

They made a big hit, Jennie in particular. The next morning two thousand people met in front of the Halifax

Herald building to see the couple make their start. Jennie created a sensation dressed in riding breeches, boots

with high leather leggings, and a mackinaw jacket and cap. In 1921 it was unheard-of for women to be seen in

men's clothing. The iron foundry had given Frank Dill's fellow employees the day off and they turned out with

banners and horns.

The popularity of the Dills far exceeded that of the others. At Shubenacadie the Ladies Aid of the Presbyterian Church insisted that they stay at the home of one of its members. In Truro their reception surpassed even the arrival of a circus. They were met by a parade of school children. They sold more than

two hundred postcards and left Truro loaded with dimes.

The Behans arrived at Saint John, N.B., on February 4, having walked forty-five miles in one day. They had

been royally received everywhere, except at Norton, N.B., where the station agent unexplainedly harangued a

crowd to incite violence against the hikers.

By February 6 Burkman was well into Maine-halfway to Montreal. He was travelling on the Maine Central

rails, over which the CPR had running rights. He had been caught in a snowstorm and thought he would have

to seek shelter, but a snowplow came along and Burkman fell in behind it to cover thirty miles that day. The

train crew pleaded with him to get on and ride but he refused. This happened to all the contestants many times.

The night of February 6 the Behans reached Fredericton Junction, N.B., while the Dills made Amherst, N.S.,

after walking at times up to their knees in slush. All through the next week there were heavy snows in New

Brunswick and Maine. The Behans one day made only eleven miles, the Dills ten miles.

15 February 1921

By February 15 Burkman had arrived at Sherbrooke, Quebec, having walked 650 miles in twenty-nine days.

The Behans were at Longpond, Maine, 531 miles in twenty-one days, while the Dills were at Saint John-275

miles in fourteen days. The Behans announced that they had given up hope of passing Burkman before Montreal, but said they would pass him in northern Ontario.

Walking in wild country, all five contestants often feared they would be attacked by animals, then shrugged it

off as unlikely. Suddenly, on February 15, the Behans had a taste of what was ultimately to confront all the

walkers. Pacing along a desolate stretch of track, they heard growling in the bushes to the side and three

wildcats bounded out. Jack Behan drew a revolver. The wildcats crouched a few yards away, crawling slowly. Then one leaped. Behan fired. The cat, wounded, prepared to leap again. Behan fired twice more and

the wildcat fell dead. Its companions vanished like wraiths into the bushes.

No wildcat, but a policeman, stalked the Dills outside Saint John. 'He took them for tramps and walked up to

arrest them for trespassing on railway property.

"This one," he said, placing a firm hand on Jennie Dill's shoulder, "can come along with me."

"Meet the wife," said Frank Dill.

The policeman looked at Jennie and then his face broke out in a grin. "Why, it's Jennie Dill," he said, as he

recognized the face from newspaper pictures. He escorted them into Saint John. Women flocked to see Jennie Dill, and her charm won everyone's heart. Before starting, Jennie had listened to friends plead with her

to give up the trip. Some said she would not last to Truro. But here she was, 275 miles later, and feeling better

than when she started.

19 February 1921

On February 19, crowds lined Montreal streets to see Burkman arrive. He stayed at the Windsor Hotel where

kings had stayed before him, and was host to scores of reporters. He had made sixteen changes of boots along the way, but found a broad-toed, heavy pair of shoepacks most comfortable. He had a few blisters-most

of his trouble was caused by socks. He said the toughest part of the walk was over, and thus proved himself a

poor prophet.

By the time Burkman left Montreal on February 21, the Behans were at Sherbrooke and coming fast. They

had covered those 650 miles in twenty-six days-a three-day gain on Burkman. The Dills were at Lambert

Lake, Maine, 385 miles from Halifax in nineteen days. Burkman lost time on the walk from Montreal to

Ottawa. The maze of railway tracks put him off, and by mistake he got on the Grand Trunk line instead of the

CPR.

On February 25 he finally reached the capital. He was taken in hand by P. F. Martin, MP for Halifax, and was introduced to members, Cabinet ministers, the leader of the Opposition, and to Prime Minister Arthur Meighen. Burkman was a likable young man who made friends easily, and in Ottawa he received hundreds of letters of encouragement from all over Canada.

As February ended, the standing of the contestants was: Burkman at Renfrew, Ontario, 926 miles in 42 days; Behans at Plantagenet, Ontario, 859 miles in 34 days; Dills at Lowelltown, Maine, 577 miles in 27 days.

### 1 March 1921

The Behans arrived in Ottawa on March 1. They had had hard going, especially in Maine, where they had hit the worst of the storms. At one place they had to crawl over a railway trestle on their hands and knees, for fear of being carried away by a gale. The Behans also made the rounds in Ottawa, met the Prime Minister, attended Commons debates. On the road again, they were pursued by animals, this time wolves. They did not have to defend themselves, however, and spent a night sleeping in a barn. They suffered greatly from the cold, and had to get up and walk around to get warm.

The Dills had seen nothing more dangerous than a deer on their travels, but they had one near mishap in Maine. They were walking, one on each rail, with a stick between them for balance. The track was downgrade, with a sharp curve. Suddenly they felt the rails vibrate beneath them. Glancing back they were shocked to see a locomotive bearing down on them. They jumped just in time. The engine had been coasting downhill and the engineer could not see them for the curve.

Back in Halifax, interest in the race was intense. One Halifax man bet a thousand dollars the Behans would catch Burkman by March 12. It had become known that Burkman was having foot trouble. He had reached North Bay by March 8, but his boots were in bad shape and he lost a day getting new boots.

The Behans arrived in North Bay on March 10. Nothing was heard of them for several days and it was believed they were taking a short cut to pass Burkman. But they were merely keeping quiet so as not to inform Burkman how close they were. They failed, however, to overtake him by March 12.

### 13 March 1921

On March 13 Burkman finished a sprint in which he walked seventy miles in two days. He had made himself a roller-skate contrivance which he placed against one rail while he walked on the other. This gadget had a couple of rods with handles, and by leaning against it to maintain balance Burkman could walk along the rail at a steady clip. Necessity was the mother of this invention as the rock ballast on the tracks in Northern

**Ontario**

was so coarse that to walk on it was almost impossible.

While the two leaders were neck and neck, the Dills had reached Ottawa. As almost everywhere else, their reception surpassed anything experienced by their rivals. The women of Ottawa flocked to see the little woman who had taken on a man-sized walk.

Then on March 14 the Behans overtook Burkman at Azilda, Ontario. Burkman, passing through Chelmsford, had arranged with the telegraph operator to wire him at Azilda if the Behans, on their arrival at Chelmsford, planned to carry on farther that day. The Behans talked the operator into believing they were staying in Chelmsford for the night. Then they quietly slipped out. Burkman, getting word that the Behans were spending the night at Chelmsford, decided to spend the night at Azilda. The Behans arrived in Azilda late at night and went to the same hotel where Burkman was staying.

About 2 a.m. the hotel proprietor awakened Burkman and told him the Behans were there. Burkman caressed at once and started out. The Behans rose at 4:30 and took after him. They caught up to him at Larchwood, a few miles along the road. The men shook hands, and they walked along together. They covered fifteen miles before stopping for breakfast. For the rest of the day they walked, neither able to pass the other. The railway was double-tracked; each took a track, and they raced abreast.

The middle of March saw the positions as follows: Burkman and the Behans at Pogma, Ontario, Burkman after fifty-seven days on the road, the Behans after forty-nine days; Dills at Ottawa, 871 miles in forty-two days.

**18 March 1921**

The third week of March saw heavy storms in northern Ontario and the hikers had to work for every mile.

The Behans and Burkman struggled on together for three days, neither able to gain a lead. On March 18

Burkman finally gave his opponents the slip by getting out ahead at Woman River.

Then followed three days that the Behans were silent. Were they using their strategy of not giving their position away? The truth was that they were lost. They had been told by an Indian guide that a side track, which ran through logging country, joined up again with the CPR and would cut off one hundred miles.

Instead, it ended at a camp fifty miles in the hush. The only way to get back on the CPR was to retrace their steps. They walked an extra hundred miles and wasted three days. They loudly blamed Burkman, saying that he had put the Indian up to tricking them to take the short cut.

Meanwhile, mile by mile, the Dills were gaining. They were not without thrills either. On March 22 they were walking along the track near Rutherglen, when a wolf came bounding behind them. Jennie Dill had a revolver in her belt. As the wolf sprang at Frank, she drew the gun and fired. The bullet stopped the wolf. Frank killed it with another shot.

By the time the Behans got back on the main line the Dills were at North Bay. Burkman had kept silent for four days, but on March 26 the Behans again overtook him at White River, 1,497 miles from Halifax. Now, as the Behans and Burkman fought for the lead and the Dills began to press on their heels, an element of intrigue was added to the other fantastic trivia of the cross-country sideshow. Mrs. Dill caused a flurry when she revealed that she had received two letters from Charlie Burkman. She claimed her husband was jealous-he thought Burkman was holding back so the Dills could catch up to him.

### Surprise departure

At King, Ontario, Burkman again gave the Behans the slip. He moved out in the middle of the night when the Behans were sleeping. The temperature was eleven below zero and he thought this would discourage them from trying to catch him, but when he was ten miles out he was surprised to hear Jack Behan hail him. They walked together the rest of the day and stopped that night at Heron Bay.

The next day the Behans turned the tables and slipped away on Burkman. About one mile out they had their first glimpse of Lake Superior and at Peninsula they were told that the special train of the Duke of Devonshire, Governor-General of Canada, was due in ten minutes. They waited, and when the train stopped they asked to see the duke. They were gruffly refused, but Jack Behan slipped aboard and saw the duke's secretary, who became interested in his tale and arranged for the duke and duchess to receive the two men.

The Governor-General autographed their books and they received gifts from the duchess.

The end of March saw the Behans leading at Jackfish, Ontario, 1,596 miles and sixty-five days out of Halifax.

Burkman was a short distance behind, and the Dills were at Woman River, 1,310 miles and on the road fifty-eight days.

The first of April brought another intense storm. The station agent at Middleton warned the Behans but they disregarded his advice. They made only sixteen miles that day, and the storm was so bad they again had to crawl over trestles. Burkman was not heard from after this storm and fears were felt for his safety. However, he suddenly walked up and slapped the Behans on the back in the post office at Cavers, Ontario. The Dills were making good time. They did sixty-two miles in two days to reach Woman River and they were



doing  
over thirty miles on most days.

**4 April 1921**

The three men in the lead were walking together on April 4 when they were attacked by wolves. It was near Ruby, Ontario, and they were still going after dark. They heard wolves howling behind them and the men held them off by shining flashlights. Someone had told the Behans there was a shack about four miles along the track and they made for there, the wolves at their heels. At the shack they barred the door. There was little sleep as the wolves howled all night.

This was wild, sparsely settled country, but the Lakehead cities were near. On April 6 the hikers reached Port Arthur. Hundreds were at the station to greet Burkman, while the Behans were met by former Nova Scotians who took them to Fort William. While the leaders were at the Lakehead the Dills reached Franz, Ontario, having struck warm weather. Fair-complexioned Frank Dill was suffering from sunburn.

On April 8 the Behans passed the halfway mark of the journey. This was Savanne, Ontario. Burkman was about eighty miles behind, while the Dills were at Peninsula, after doing forty miles in a rainstorm. They were making better time than any of the others. The Behans now had a two-day lead on Burkman, who nevertheless had a two-day rest and was eager to pass his rivals.

On April 13 the Dills lost time getting boots repaired. They were entertained at a party given in Cavers. When they left Cavers the wives of the telegraph operators motored to Gurney, eleven miles along the route, cooked dinner in the open, and had it ready when the Dills arrived.

**14 April 1921**

About this time the Behans began to have trouble with blistered feet. On April 14 they walked only seventeen miles. Burkman was not heard from for four days. It was rumored he was injured falling from a precipice on a short cut. He finally turned up at Raith, having been injured when he slipped on a rail and sprained his hip.

On April 20 the Behans reached Winnipeg, eighty-four days after leaving Halifax. The same day, Burkman walked forty-five miles to reach Kenora, while the Dills finished the day at English River.

Past the halfway point in their trek, the walkers began to exert even greater efforts, and the strain told on all of them. On April 28 Burkman walked all night, and covered fifty-five miles before stopping to rest at Portage la Prairie. In Winnipeg two days earlier, he had stopped only long enough to pick up summer underwear. On

May 1 the Behans were at Elkhorn and the Dills were in Winnipeg. By May 5 Burkman started travelling at night to avoid walking in the heat of the day. His first night he walked forty-eight miles.

Then, on May 5, a sandstorm caught all the hikers. The Behans, however, made Regina; Burkman was at Virden, forced again to get new boots, and for a few days he was slowed down once more. On May 9 all Canada thrilled to hear that Frank and Jennie Dill had caught up with Burkman at Broadview, Saskatchewan.

The Behans were at Ernfold, 161 miles ahead.

The record of the hikers up to this point was: Dills, average  $25 \frac{2}{3}$  miles per day; Behans, average  $25 \frac{1}{2}$  miles per day; Burkman, average  $21 \frac{2}{3}$  miles per day.

15 May 1921

The middle of May saw all contestants driving themselves grimly. The Dills were only a day and a half behind

the leaders. Burkman, who was suffering from sore feet, was falling behind. At almost every town the Dills

were besieged by photographers and reporters. They put on a sprint to Calgary and walked fifty-two miles at

one stretch, which cut the Behans' lead to forty-one miles. However, they now lost a day in Calgary which

they greatly regretted later. So many easterners wanted to entertain them that they found it hard to refuse.

The Behans thus gained a day's walk.

By the night of May 27 the Behans reached Lake Louise. They had suffered from nosebleeds caused by exertion and the fact that they were unaccustomed to higher altitudes. They slept on the station platform at

Lake Louise and this almost cost them the race, for Clifford Behan caught a chill.

The pressure began to tell on the walkers' nerves. When Jack Behan heard that the Dills had walked fifty-two

miles in a day he was not only skeptical, but outraged. He claimed it was impossible for a woman to perform

such a feat. He said the world's record for walking for a woman was forty-seven miles in one day, held by an

American woman. Jennie Dill, however, proved capable of even more.

Behan was beginning to show the results of the long grind. He had lost fourteen pounds and was constantly

tired. The Dills now were really driving. They left Morley on a Saturday morning and made Banff by night,

having walked forty-two miles. Jennie was so exhausted she couldn't even talk. However, the next morning

they left Banff and actually arrived in Field, B.C., a few hours after the Behans had left.

31 May 1921

May ended with the race drawing near its end. The Behans were at Glacier, 3,225 miles in 125 days; the Dills

were but a few miles behind, being on the road 118 days; Burkman was at Banff. Clifford Behan's back

had  
been bothering him since the cold sleep on the platform at Lake Louise. The pain became so severe he  
could  
hardly move. Clifford insisted that his father keep going. He said he would go to Revelstoke by train  
and seek  
medical attention.

When Jack Behan arrived in Revelstoke he found his son in bed in the YMCA. A cold had settled in  
the  
muscles of his back. But he insisted on getting up, going back by train to where he had abandoned the  
hike  
and then walking to Revelstoke to catch up with his father. Thus the Behans pressed on, and by June 4  
they  
were back in their stride.

That day they walked fifty miles in fifteen hours to Kamloops. Burkman likewise was now fired with  
ambition  
to catch up and he walked hundred and forty miles in three days.

When the leaders were at Spatsum, the Dills were at Kamloops, forty-seven miles behind. Burkman  
was at  
Sicamous, eighty-eight miles behind the Dills. At this point Jennie Dill accused the Behans of cheating.  
She  
claimed that, according to the times the Behans reported being in each town, they must on one occasion  
have  
walked thirty-three miles in four hours. The Behans made no reply to the charge.

**12 June 1921**

June found the Behans at Haig, with only eighty-nine miles to go. The Dills were at Kanaka, with 149  
miles  
remaining, with Burkman reaching Kamloops on that day. On June 12 the Behans by an all-night hike  
arrived  
in Vancouver and nosed out the Dills. They walked sixty-one miles in twenty-two hours and were  
exhausted  
to the point of collapse. The Vancouver Sun reported that the hike had left its mark and "It was hard  
to  
determine who was father and who was son."

The time of the Behans from Halifax to Vancouver was 3,645 miles in 136 days. The Dills arrived on  
June 14  
and were declared the winners. They had gained five full days on the Behans. Burkman was still  
eighty-one  
miles out and he arrived in Vancouver on June 16.

Jennie Dill was terribly thin at the end of the hike, and all the hikers were deeply tanned. None had an  
ounce  
of surplus weight. This was the end of the great cross-Canada hike, but it wasn't the last heard of the  
intrepid  
hikers. Jack Behan took his defeat hard and challenged Dill and Burkman to race from Montreal to  
Halifax.

He claimed that he was the fastest walker, that Dill had been held up by his wife, while he had been  
held up  
by his son.

The others took him up, and in Montreal and Halifax interest was intense. Sportsmen in Halifax put up a thousand dollars to be awarded as prizes. The start was set for ten o'clock the morning of July 5, but the previous evening Burkman decided to withdraw. Behan and Dill were still hurling challenges, so it was decided that the two of them would race.

### Hot in Montreal

The weather was the hottest Montreal had seen for years. At the start on the morning of July 7, the temperature was over a hundred.

The hikers walked along the streets to the tracks of the Grand Trunk Railway. They walked thirty miles to St.

Johns, and both men were nearly prostrate with the heat. The next morning they started out, but at Foster,

Quebec, Dill collapsed. The temperature was 104 degrees. The doctor refused to let him continue. Behan readily agreed to give up the contest.

What became of the contestants in this gruelling test? Frank Dill died in Halifax in 1928. Jennie remarried and

died in Halifax in 1941. Burkman had a ticket from Montreal to Halifax, but never used it - he simply dropped from view.

At eighty John Behan still claimed that he and Clifford were the only ones who walked all the way, and he

was sorry then that they had. "We came home broke," he said, "our families in debt, and we couldn't get work.

We had to move to the U.S. to pay our debts."

Like all the walkers, Behan's fame ended when he stopped walking.

(Ultramarathon World: <http://fox.nstn.ca/~dblaikie>) (UW: 1ja00a) (date)

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## STORY # 2

From Scottie, our expat New Yorker, now living in London...

>>> Scott Burgess <[gscott\\_burgess@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gscott_burgess@yahoo.co.uk)> 02/10 8:29 AM >>>

\*\*\*\*\*

Monday and Tuesday in the Devon countryside. What a great 2 days of ultra-ing! I won't say "ultra-\*running\*" although I did run quite a bit, or as much as I could ... but between the severe mud, the gale-force rain-lashing wind (always in my face, needless to say), and frigid water up past my knees \*on the trail\* (thank God it wasn't a couple of inches higher .... BRRRRR!), I made 35 miles in 11 hours (over 2 days).

Oh, and the route-finding. Stopping every 20-30 minutes (10 minutes when feeling insecure) to check my drenched maps just to make sure that I wasn't getting hopelessly lost, as is my wont. Thankfully, I never did, though there were a couple of occasions when I had to backtrack 30 minutes or so (down the hill, across the muddy field, past the angry cows/sheep, check the fence to make sure it's not electrified, and be on my way).

Exotic locale? Not quite. Ultrarunners can have adventure anywhere, even in the prosaic Countryside of Devon ... especially when 'adventurous' weather cooperates. Did I ignore the

weathercast warnings of '50-70 mph winds and rain'? Naaaawwwwww! Hey that's part of the fun, innit?! At least, it's part of the fun before, and *\*especially\** after, such an experience. In the midst of it? ... Well, from my comfy warm chair, beer at my side, I *\*swear\** I was having fun yesterday and the day before!

**\*\*\*\* Observations \*\*\*\***

**1) English Mud (Types of):**

- \* Slippery.* Slippery downhill prevent you regaining the time you lost going up.
- \* Heavy.* Mostly found in farmers' fields. May be mixed with cow/sheep shit. Over a pound can accumulate on each shoe, with deleterious effects on pace.
- \* Odiferous.*
- \* Deep.* Pasty liquid up to the ankles. Can suck shoes away.
- \* Sticky.* Minimally deep, but very adhesive. Adheres to clothing in a post-punk fashion statement.

**2) Favo(u)rite moments:**

- ? The look on the poor landlady's face at the B&B when a mud-covered Yank checked in after the first day's running. After washing my shoes, tights, and jacket in the shower, and throwing away my socks (you know you're an ultrarunner when ...), I cleaned that hotel room as obsessively as a murderer covering his tracks. (Couldn't bear to let the nice old lady down ...)
- ? The farmer in the truck glimpsing me and laughing her head off as I was about to move off road onto the trail on day 2. *\*She\** knew what 'trail' (read mingled cowshit/mud/downed trees) conditions I would encounter in the next few hours.
- ? Twice on the second day: Frigid, rushing water covering the trail to mid thigh depth. These are the moments when you say to yourself ... "now *\*this\**, this is ultrarunning!" After you say that, you say ... "I can't wait to get home."

**3) Main lesson:**

When you come back from a run and you say to yourself "Wow ... that was an *\*experience\**!" ... *\*That's\** a successful training run. There have been times when I've been disappointed with myself although I did a much greater distance ... not this time. This run taught me that I'll take an 11 hour, 35 mile "experience" spread over two days against knocking out a routine 24 miles in 3 hours on the road any day. (Not that I've ever run 24 miles in 3 hours...)

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(gee, it's good to be back)  
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