

Out Alone Stories

Zen and the Art of Getting Lost

By Pat Woods

It was a lovely summer's afternoon several years ago. I intended to go for a short, relaxing run, under 1 hour, on the familiar trails off Hyannis Point, near my house. I took a water bottle, no food (short run, don'cha know) and my trusty lab-shepherd mix dog. Well, wouldn't you know it, there was some sort of a mountain bike race on and my quiet, relaxing run was being continually interrupted by crazy mountain bikers in serious race mode. So, I thought to myself, "Self, you know these trails really well, why don't you run some of the other nice, quiet trails so you can avoid the racers and then you can rejoin the main trail."

So...I started running. It was great at first. Nice and quiet, just me, the trail, the trees and the dog. Now I don't know about you but I tend to "Zen" out on the trails and sure enough this happened and by the time I mentally returned to a state of consciousness in the present, I had no idea where I was. All I knew was that I was on a trail, somewhere on the North Shore, or the Lower Mainland, or maybe Mars, nothing looked familiar.

So I tried the Lassie trick with the dog. You know, "Find your way home, boy, which way is home?" He just looked at me as if to say, "How should I know, this is another fine mess you have got us into!" Of course I had no phone, no food and had breezily called over my shoulder to my husband as I ran out the door, "Gone for a run, hon." He would have no idea where to look for me. Heck, I had no idea where to look for me! So, I tried to analyze the situation and come up with a plan.

Wait for Search and Rescue? Nah, I know quite a few of those guys, too embarrassing. "Think, self, think, how lost can you be? Why not keep running and eventually you will come upon a trail that looks familiar?"

So...I started running. After several hours I started to feel as if I was in a combo of the Twilight Zone and the Blair Witch Project. By now, the low blood sugar to my brain was barely supporting any thought processes, let alone any sensible thoughts. Hadn't I run past that trail before? Why were the trees laughing at me?

Six and a half hours later the darkening forest finally spit me out in disgust somewhere down by Deep Cove. I still had to then stumble home and to face my worried husband "Where have you been?" he demanded. "Um, halfway to Hope, I think" was all I could muster for a reply.

P.S. The dog was also disgusted with me.

The Flip of a Coin

By Mike Heiliger

Bad decisions make great stories. I was not alone but I was on an incredible trail and I was incredibly stupid!!! So here is my trail tale.

Many moons ago my buddy Bruce and I rode our mountain bikes on an epic adventure from Woodfibre to Port Melon following the gas pipeline easement. After taking the ferry to Woodfibre, we checked in with the 1st aid staff, informing them of our plans. We had to notify them of our safe return or search parties would be sent out. I know this story should be about running the trails but let me assure you, there was very little riding, only pushing and carrying over terrain that only a mountain goat would enjoy! The scenery was magnificent, blue mountain tarns, craggy peaks and not another soul. Did I mention that we had no means of communication or maps?

When we reached the apex of the trail, it was the point of no return. We either turned back now or pushed on knowing we had to make it to a payphone before dark to call off the dogs. We decided our fate with the flip of a coin. Onward and downward! Before long, we reached a large body of water. Unfortunately, it was Salmon Inlet. We missed a turn many miles back, now we were hooped. There was no way we would make it back in time to call off the search parties! Our luck changed when a passing fishing boat gave us a lift to Clahom Falls at the head of the inlet. The only person at the logging camp was a security guard who let us make our most important phone call! After assuring the Woodfibre staff we were ok, we called for a float plane to come and pick us up. American Express, never leave home without it! I now have a VHF radio and tons of maps! (and maybe a little more sense).