

Who is Eddie Mulkey?

by Eric Sharpe

The past four years have brought nothing but warm, dry weather for the trail run that is quickly earning a reputation as one of the toughest 50 km in the Midwest. Considering that the Elk City Hiking Trail takes an entire day to hike one way, running on it any other way but dry would seem impossible.

Friday morning was warm, and it stayed that way all afternoon. By 9:30 p.m., most of the runners had been checked in, and those who wished food were fed. Our infamous pre-race pasta feed was, once again, a rousing success and no stomachs were sent away grumbling. We were pleased to see many returning faces, including Dennis Haig, Dave Dinkel, Bob and Rose Marston and Wes Monteith, plus many more. However, there were some new names on the entrants' sheet this year, including one Eddie Mulkey.

"Who is Eddie Mulkey?" R.D. Eric Steele was overheard chuckling to Scott Demaree.

"Eddie Mulkey!" Scott's head snapped around as he perked up. "I haven't heard that name in years. Now back in the old days, Eddie Mulkey was quite a contender. I wonder what kind of shape he's in? He might give Skippy a run for his money!" Little did they know that the illustrious Eddie Mulkey was standing right behind them and that he was going to be heard from again, very soon.

We set the starting time of both events one hour earlier this year, which implied an early bedtime. As I closed my tent flap, I looked toward the sky for clouds. There were very few; I began to get the feeling that our luck was going to hold out for another year.

At 5:00 a.m. I couldn't see a single star—it was definitely overcast and a little breezy. Silently we moved the vehicles down to the shelter, then Trailmaster Bud Baker and I set out to construct the aid stations. We had secured portable awnings to shield the volunteers from the sun this year, but it looked as if they were going to be keeping the rain off of their heads instead. We left the turnaround point shortly after the 50-km race had started and headed back to race headquarters (the Outlet Channel Shelterhouse). As we picked up speed, the first few raindrops began to splatter on the windshield.

It was a full-fledged shower by the time we arrived at the trailhead; that's when we saw the EMS crew searching for the entrance to the trail. All they would tell us was that someone had gone down. It wasn't until we got back to the shelter that we learned it was Bill Shirk who had fallen,

having broken his ankle. It took two other runners, a volunteer, and the EMS crew to get him out.

A steady rain continued throughout the morning and into the early afternoon. Although the rain eventually stopped, the wind remained and kept the temperature cool, despite the efforts of the September sun. Amazingly, Eddie Mulkey broke the five-hour mark, and in winning this year he smashed the old course record by more than 10 minutes. He finished in 4:54:33, almost one half-hour ahead of Michael Nowacki, who pulled in at 5:28:25. KUS members Phil "Skippy" Sheridan and Earl "Sandman" Blewett shared third place with a time of 5:37:40. Mindy Wilson was the first woman in a time of 6:16:03.

As the rest of the pack began descending upon the finishers' tent, it was obvious that no one had escaped the trail without at least slipping and sliding part of the way. Eric's mother Virginia commented that, as she approached the shelter for the first time, it looked as though some of the women were wearing brown, knee-high boots. Nearly all runners were caked with mud, at least from the waist-down.

Before all of the finishers were in, we learned that Bill Shirk had undergone surgery at the hospital in Independence. Eric sent one of the early 50-km finishers to the hospital to check on Bill. He reported that Bill was doing fine, but probably would not be running again soon. However, his wife Jan reluctantly, yet valiantly, finished the race after being urged to do so by her husband.

As the runners gathered in the main shelter to await the awards ceremony and enjoy some of the best chili this side of the Mississippi, stories of mud and slop were swapped. It was unofficially decided that next year we could do without the rain. With that in mind, we will try to plan a dry weekend for next year.

As always, many valuable lessons were learned this year; our meddle as a running club and event organizers was put to the test. We were short a chef, got soaking wet for part of the day, dealt with our first major injury, and ran on a the trail that was very sloppy. Yet, I did not hear one negative comment from any of the runners.

R.D. Eric Steele adds

Well, some courageous soul finally stepped up and broke the five-hour mark this year. And to think it was done in the first year we increased our overall cut-off time by 90 minutes because of the rain and the extremely slick rocks. Truly amazing!

The new question is: who thinks they can break four and a half hours? Surely, if a masters runner can break five hours, there must be a youngster out there who can break 4.5 hours. We are even considering putting prize money up next year for any runner who can accomplish this. For now, hats off to Eddie Mulkey for the first sub five-hour finish at the Rock.

Finishing their fifth consecutive Flat Rock 50 Km this year were David Dinkel, David Noltensmeyer, and Dennis Haig. Just think, only five more Flat Rocks in a row and these gentlemen shall be inducted into the Flat Rock hall of fame and given lifetime free entry into the event and their own cloth numbers.

Finally, loads of thanks to all runners, club members, volunteers and family members for making Flat Rock '99 another successful event. Special thanks to the Army Corp of Engineers who has been the backbone of our support down at Elk City Lake, to Delores and Bud Baker for their guidance regarding the maintenance and upkeep of our beloved trail, to the EMS for all of their medical support (much needed this year), to the Independence Visitor's Bureau for all of the maps and points of contact, not to mention the runners' bags and cool pencils, and to Independence-native Steve Kern for spending many hours weed whacking extremely overgrown areas of the trail in the last couple of weeks before our event. None of it could have been done without all of you—thanks again. Have a prosperous year; we'll see you at the Flat Rock 2000.

Flat Rock 50 Km

Independence, Kans. September 25, 1999
Trails

1. Eddie Mulkey,41,OK	4:54:33!
2. Michael Nowacki,43,CA	5:28:25
3. Phil Sheridan,42,KS	5:37:40
Earl Blewett,35,OK	5:37:40
5. Mark Crisman,35,KS	5:52:58
6. Damon Hennen,39,MO	6:16:03
6. Mindy Wilson,32,MO	6:16:03
8. Duane Frichtl,42,IL	6:20:21
9. Theresa Wheeler,32,KS	6:21:59
10. Dennis Haig,39,KS	6:23:32
11. Duane Grigg,48,MO	6:24:54
12. Casey Coen,28,MO	6:42:47
13. John Bowman,33,KS	6:43:26
Kurt Wiedenkel,33,KS	6:43:26
15. Jason Daniels,23,MO	6:54:49
16. Rex Friend,44,OK	6:58:28
17. Molly Gibb,38,OK	6:58:31
18. Jeffrey Skibbe,50,IL	7:01:34
19. Dave Noltensmeyer,50,KS	7:16:56
20. Jim Davis,57,KS	7:18:25
21. Fred Sacco,III,19,NE	7:18:41
22. Robert Risser,59,MO	7:18:46
23. Nancy Davis,47,KS	7:21:39
24. Thomas Lasater,42,KS	7:32:44
25. John Hargrove,54,OK	7:38:34
26. Gwen Heist,32,MO	7:43:48
27. Wes Monteith,48,TX	7:50:26
28. John Surdyk,43,OK	7:51:24
29. Steve Kern,42,KS	7:57:00
30. Jim Perry,OK	8:19:25
31. Bob Marston,48,MO	8:25:04
32. Martin Yecies,55,OK	8:41:37
33. Debby Spetnagel,34,MO	9:03:49
Jason Finney,27,MO	9:03:49
35. David Dinkel,50,KS	9:05:43
36. Nels Bentson,55,OK	9:05:55
37. Richard Golden,53,KS	9:33:32
38. Jan Shirk,42,KS	10:01:05
39. Rosemary Marston,51,MO	10:09:40
40. Wayne Webb,47,TX	11:04:44
42 starters	