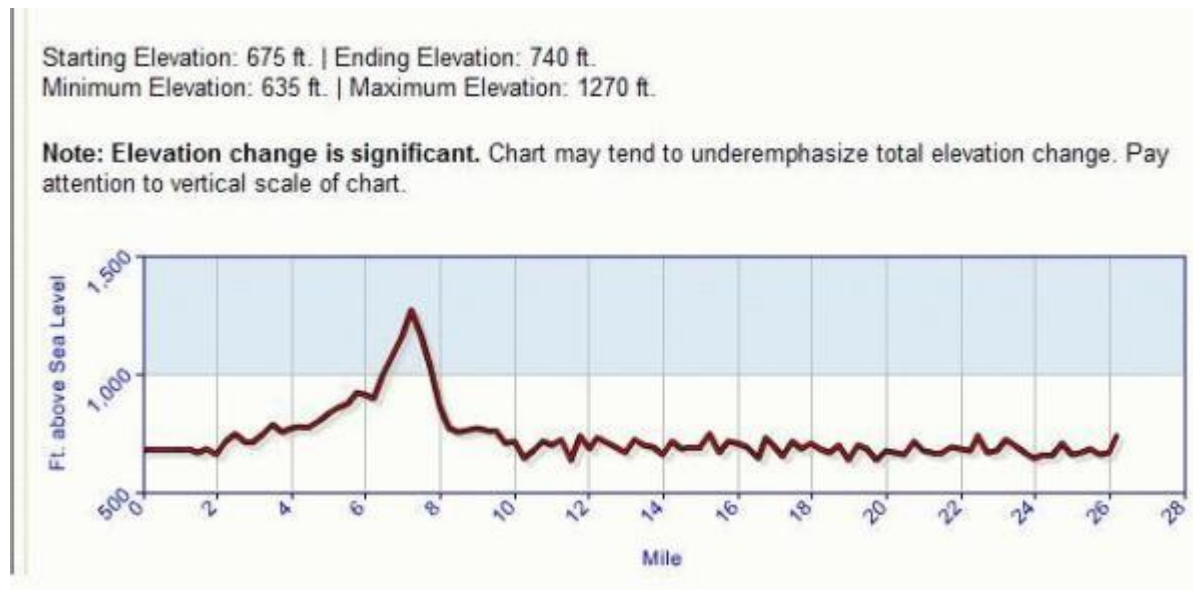


## Hatfield & McCoy Marathon – June 11, 2011

I really need to create a market for human waste. Seriously, is it really necessary to go three times in twenty minutes prior to the start of a race? Could it have been nerves? But what was there to be nervous about? The elevation chart?



Or, the weather forecast?

|                   | TEMP                  | FEELS LIKE | PRECIP. | HUMIDITY | WIND              |
|-------------------|-----------------------|------------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| ☉ Sunrise 6:07 am |                       |            |         |          |                   |
| 7 am              | 69°F<br>Sunny         | 69°F       | 0%      | 90%      | calm              |
| 8 am              | 71°F<br>Sunny         | 71°F       | 0%      | 87%      | calm              |
| 9 am              | 75°F<br>Sunny         | 75°F       | 0%      | 79%      | From S<br>1 mph   |
| 10 am             | 80°F<br>Partly Cloudy | 83°F       | 20%     | 67%      | From S<br>1 mph   |
| 11 am             | 85°F<br>Partly Cloudy | 89°F       | 10%     | 57%      | From SSW<br>2 mph |

Or, the calf cramps that bring me to a painful walk in one to three miles after starting a run? Or, the fact that I missed key workouts? Or, was it family honor? After all I'm a Hatfield descendant at the Hatfield & McCoy Marathon. I guess I really don't know, but I left the little blue building and lined up with the rest of the racers with a minute to spare.



There was supposed to be a shotgun start. We heard a little pop and everyone started and then there was a second louder shot, but neither had a countdown. We started in Kentucky at a Food City on a major road with lots of police support. As we ran, we could hear the water running down the rocks along the road and much chatter as people were discussing races, where they were from, and where they were staying. Others who had run the race before were comparing Blackberry Mountain to Heartbreak Hill.

It was 66 degrees at the start and much more pleasant than expected with an overcast sky. As we turned off the main road, we left some of the traffic behind, and were on much narrower roads. In some places, we had rock walls on one side and slow running stream on the other. We saw miniature horses, goats, roosters, and very tired dogs from barking at everyone. The race director advertised 23 water stops and delivered on his promise. Some had themes and one in particular really stood out. It had taken a hillbilly theme, with a still, wash tub, and music.

Many of the houses were built by the coal companies in the old days and were only a few feet from the road. While there weren't many people out cheering, the few were enthusiastic. Blackberry Mountain started around 6 miles into the race and went up to around mile 7. We could judge our progress by watching the police car ahead on the curves. I found it a little hard to control my speed on the descent and passed many people. It was almost more challenging than going up. The runners were getting very strung out, but at any time I could usually see someone ahead of me.

As I approached Matewan, WV, the half way point, the sky darkened and it got cooler. There was also an occasional clap of thunder. It was a pleasant surprise, since the forecast called for a sunny morning. I was glad we drove most of the course the day before. The little town of Matewan was very busy with activities for the annual Hatfield-McCoy Festival. The route was a little confusing as it ran down closed streets, past vendor booths, and through the set-up for the Matewan Massacre Reenactment. I thought

that it would be difficult to run through the half marathon finish line, knowing that I would have to continue on, but it wasn't a problem. I was feeling very good and was running better than expected. It also started to rain which felt cool and smelled so fresh.

The next stretch of the race was my favorite. We were running in a steady rain with the sun shining bright. My sunglasses had fogged over so I had to take them off to see the three vultures with outstretched wings in the top of a tree. When we drove the course the prior day, this was the section that Julie initially thought was a rail trail since it was so narrow. The pavement gave way to gravel and then dirt. The markers were painted on poles and there were few houses towards the end. Yes, there was an end. The road came to a growth of trees with a small opening that lead to a golf course. On race day there were streamers to guide the runners to the golf cart path. Even in this remote section, they had water stops and restrooms. They also had signs welcoming returning runners from prior years. I noticed a girl coming back on to the trail just ahead of me. She was wearing bright green shorts and was kind of a beacon to follow. She was slowly pulling away but I was able to keep her in sight. The rain had stopped after about 3 miles and it was pleasant running without any cars around and just the sounds of birds.



The golf course path was also enjoyable and we even crossed a swing bridge. There was a runner just ahead of me on the bridge. It was bouncy which challenged my tired legs, and the wide spaces between the slats seemed like a trip hazard. I heard a "ping" and watched a golf ball fly by. I imagine it was a little distracting to the golfers to have people running on the golf course. We continued along the river and came out on a private road.

I think this was the start of the real race. There were about 8 miles left and the sun came out bright and I could see steam coming off the pavement. I caught Ms. Green Shorts and passed her. For the rest of the race we would take turns passing each other. The temperature was climbing into the mid 80's.

There was a van full of teenagers that passed by cheering for the runners which lifted our spirits. The route was kind of anticlimactic at this point. We were back on public roads with light traffic and a couple of water stops were self serve. Around 23 miles I started to feel chilled and thought that probably was not a good sign, so I started a series of run walks. We had one last hill, at least that's what someone had painted on the road, although it did have a devilish smiley face with it.





When I saw the finish line I had recovered some and made a respectable dash to the finish, where I was greeted by “Randolph McCoy” and “Devil Anse Hatfield”, complete with shotguns. It was also nice to see my brother at the finish line. Each finisher got a cold, wet hand towel that felt so good. In addition to a medal, each finisher got a quart mason jar, a.k.a. sipping jar. Inside the jar was a piece of wood with an engraved plaque showing the runner’s finishing place. The top three in each age group got a special engraved label to attach to the jar lid.

My sister, who walked the half-marathon with Julie, was first in her age group and I was third in my age group. I guess my bib number (262) was a good omen for the 26.2 mile race.



## Epilogue

Ms. Green Shorts finished about a minute behind me.

The race was written up in Runner's World a couple of years ago and was a featured run this month. It offers a lot: spaghetti dinner the night before, BBQ lunch after the race, medal, sipping jar, cold wet cloth, 23 water stops, and a chance to learn a little history. They had people from 40 states + DC.

There were about 450 registered participants in the races and about 300 volunteers.

There was a lady from the UK pulling a tire to raise awareness for something.

A local guy was running the Hatfield & McCoy race and his twin brother was running a "shadow marathon" in Iraq at the same time.

The winner of the half marathon was a 12 year old boy. His parents said that all he likes to do is run. They have to tell him to go in the house and play some video games or watch TV.

After lunch and getting cleaned up, we went to city hall to watch a movie about the Hatfield-McCoy feud and one about the Mine Wars. We walked about a mile to the Dairy Queen and passed by the finish line just as a person was finishing in 8:49.

After our DQ snack, we stopped by the finish line again and talked with the race director. They were getting an update on the last runner who ultimately finished around 11 hours. "Devil Anse Hatfield" and "Randolph McCoy" were still in costume at the finish line along with several other volunteers.

When we told the race director we had driven down the narrow/trail part of the course, he told us we couldn't have done that two weeks ago. It had been very overgrown and they'd spent a lot of time clearing the path. They also had to replace several boards on the swing bridge.

We wrapped up the day with pizza on second floor balcony of the B&B where we stayed.

## Julie's Addendum on the Half-Marathon

The day before the race we drove most of the Half-Marathon and part of the Marathon route. The course markings were large blue footprints on the pavement (kind of fun). At about mile 3 we came to a paving crew... they were putting down a fresh layer of asphalt. Not only were we going to have the hills and the heat to contend with, the heat was going to be magnified by the brand new black asphalt. I wondered if it was also going to be 'sticky'.



We picked up our packets and T-shirts at the Spaghetti dinner Friday night. If you were registered on the Hatfield team, your t-shirt was printed in red. Those registered as McCoy's received t-shirts printed in blue. After we ate, someone dressed in costume came out carrying a gun and introduced himself as Devil Anse Hatfield, the head of the Hatfield clan. He started explaining how the feud started. Then another person wandered into the cafeteria and interrupted him. He wanted us to know that Devil Anse wasn't giving us the whole story. He introduced himself as Randolph McCoy, the head of the McCoy clan. The two of them went back and forth telling the history of the Hatfield-McCoy feud.



Saturday morning, the owner of our B&B shuttled us to Food City where the race started. (Free shuttles were also available from downtown Williamson.) We took our traditional photo at the start line, and one with "Devil Anse Hatfield" and "Randolph McCoy", then lined up at the start line about 10 minutes before the race. Shirley and I were standing there talking when we noticed everyone ahead of us was moving. We hadn't heard a countdown or a shotgun. That isn't unusual at the large races, but we were pretty surprised not to have heard the start at this one. As we approached the start line, "Randolph McCoy" shot his gun into the air. We were off – heading down Rt. 119. There were many conversations going on – more than normal. It was fun finding out where others were from. A semi honked his horn as he passed by to cheer us on.

The crowd thinned to one lane fairly quickly and we were followed by a fire truck to keep the right lane closed.

I heard a strange noise & turned around to see the TyreGirl. She was actually pulling a tire behind her. When we talked with her, she told us that she was from the UK and this was the 21<sup>st</sup> marathon in which she has pulled the tire. I believe she was doing it to promote being "green", but it really wasn't very effective. I wonder how she did when she got to the 'trail' portion of the marathon.





At about mile 2 we turned off the major highway onto a two lane road. The police stopped traffic one direction at a time (the same way the paving crew was handling traffic the day before). The weather was still cooperating when we got to the fresh asphalt. It was about 70 degrees and overcast. We passed a man with a 50 States + DC and the 13 Canadian Provinces/Territories shirts. He had done all of them 7 times. He had an interesting run/walk style. He was running 3 steps and then walking 3 steps. We tried this technique a few times during the next 10 miles. It seemed to

pick up our pace a decent amount with only a small increase in heart rate. There were families on their porches and some at the side of the road. We gave a few kids 'high-fives' as we walked by. In addition to the families out supporting us, the people in the cars that drove by would wave.



Somewhere around mile 5 it got darker, cooler and very windy. Luckily it was a tail wind. The water stops had bottled water and bottled PowerAde that was poured into cups. At the next stop, most of the cups also had a few twigs, leaves, and other debris. As we passed the site of Randolph McCoy's home, the wind died down and it started raining. As we went up Blackberry Mountain, it rained very hard. This was a new adventure for us. By this point we were pretty spread out and

could usually only see 1 or 2 other participants. At the top of the mountain, a mom & her little girl got out of their car to give us our water/PowerAde. The mom got out her umbrella, the little girl just carried hers. We stopped to chat with them for awhile. As we descended Blackberry Mountain it stopped raining. The water stop at the bottom (across from Rev. Anderson Hatfield's home site which is where the Hog Trial was held) was also passing out paper towels.. Shirley dried her glasses and commented that it was the cleanest they had been in weeks. We chatted with these friendly volunteers for awhile and then continued on.



The next section of the route was along a creek where we saw a couple of mallard ducks that didn't have all their coloring. (They were almost white.) We were glad that it remained overcast for so long, because we were fairly certain it would feel like a sauna once the sun came out. But at this point we had completed about 9 miles and decided we'd be able to handle an hour of the 'sauna'. At mile 10, I decided to use the port-a-let along the side of the road. It was very tippy but fortunately it did not tip over with me inside. We passed Eagle Creek Road and the Hillbilly themed water stop. Next we passed the site where three McCoy's were tied to pawpaw bushes and shot.



We were nearing the end of the race when we crossed a bridge over the Tug River and entered Matewan, WV. As we walked through downtown Matewan we were able to 'window shop' at several of the booths set up for the festival. I have to say this is the first time I've been able to shop while walking a Half Marathon. The baked goods looked pretty inviting. We found our way through the remains of the Matewan Massacre reenactment and completed the last ¼ mile to the finish. I was greeted at the finish with a volunteer who placed a cold wet towel around my neck and then put a medal around my neck. Then we were directed to a table where volunteers were passing out the "Sipping Jars" with our finishing number plaque inside. They also asked our age so they could place any age group award 'discs' on top of our jars. Shirley was first in her age group. They had water, PowerAde, grapes, oranges, and energy gels. We wandered around a little bit, then got on the bus to return to Williamson where the Marathon finished.

It was now getting pretty hot. We didn't see Tom or his brother Steve, so we headed back to our B&B. After changing into dry clothes we went back downtown with our race numbers to get our BBQ, coleslaw, chips & a drink for lunch. We were both amazed at our finishing time (just under 3:26) considering the hills and the number of times we stopped to chat with the volunteers. It was a good race that I would recommend. The volunteers were great! Be prepared for the heat! We were lucky that we only had to deal with it for about ½ an hour (and during our afternoon walk to the DQ).