

## Capon Valley 50K Trip Notes May 5-8, 2010

**“What is your favorite marathon?”** I’m often asked this question and it’s like asking what kid is a favorite. Yet this 50K always comes out among the very top of my 80-some as evidenced by it being my 4<sup>th</sup> trip to Capon Valley West Virginia. If I can find a way to be allowed entry again, I’ll go: We were so slow that I’m not sure they’ll leave the course open for us next year, yet there’s a few of us who might do it anyway.

### **Upsides to Capon**

- **Registration** fee is inexpensive at \$75.
- **Accommodations** are uniquely special and inexpensive and with a two night stay Capon Resort reimburses the registration fee.
- **T-shirt** is a nice design with high tech fabric.
- **Course** is challenging with a lot of elevation change and stream crossings in a gorgeous setting with dogwoods in full bloom and entertainment cannot be duplicated. (Evidence the “Deliverance” scene.)
- **Volunteers** are especially friendly and are earning funds for their local community.
- **Food** offered at Friday night packet pick up social, Saturday morning breakfast (small fee) and an amazing BBQ dinner after the run. Food at the fluid stations is more than one can imagine. My favorite is pbj sandwiches with Pringles stuffed inside.
- **Certificate of Completion** is available at finish. (No medal – some say ultra runners already collected too many before taking up ultras.)
- **Most Important** is that this is really God’s Country and a place some of us return to year after year.



### **Downsides to Capon**

- **Out of the way** with the closest large town being Winchester VA about 40 minutes away. It is about 2 ½ hours from Baltimore.
- **Hills and more hills!** You’ve got to love them. One report had 3600’ of elevation gain and another had 4200’.
- **Stream crossings and mud** are not everybody’s idea of fun. There is more mud on the far side of the stream for the back of the packers but some year’s there is just plain mud everywhere. Losing shoes to the mud is not uncommon. But some of us love it.
- **Medal** is not given.

**Who was there?** Never more than the maximum of 200 that’s allowed and this year there were quite a few no-shows for various reasons, one being that a competing 24-hour event took away some of the regulars. We missed our ‘fast’ friends. 152 started and 148 finished.

**Our group:** Here we are BEFORE with Lou, Jim, Diane, Diana and Annette. AFTER we were even more joyous in celebration of Jim’s completion of the run. Picture compliments of Diane.

**Congratulations to Jim** who has been to this race many times: Sometimes he was there and got lost (with others and for 11 hours!), sometimes he was



there cheering us on while he awaited surgery to fix his heart, sometimes he was there recovering but running part of it, sometimes he was there almost finishing, but this year, it was HIS! No one would deserve it more. We broke out the champagne.

With three other trip reports which I'll attach portions of below, there's no need for many words about the 2011 event except to say that we all agreed it was the toughest run we'd ever done but that we never got tired of it, and never wished it would end and want to return to again. It took us a record 9:26 to finish but finish we did.

**Weather this year** was next to perfect. Cool at start and not over 70 degrees during the day with just a touch of misting towards the end. There had been a lot of rain the days prior and as we were warned it was extremely muddy on the course. At one fluid station we were encouraged to use trekking poles since the next few miles would be "one continual mud pit" so they said. The stream crossings (I counted 38) however were no more difficult and certainly a bit easier than one year when we had heavy rains. On that note of stream crossings – you might remember that it remains a mystery to my how and why our feet feel so good and yet they are always wet and muddy. No soreness or blisters come about.

**Capon Springs Resort** is such the treasure that I like to stay a few extra days. Note some of the hiking opportunities in past year's reports. The food is fresh, mostly grown locally, and fed to us family style. The resort is all family run and reminds me of childhood camps. I won't go into why I so love the resort since it's fully covered in past years reports which are attached here. Were it a bit closer than the 6 ¼ hour's drive one way, I'd be there more often. And given the opportunity I'd stay a full week as the hiking in the area is some of the best. The next weekend would have been a treasure with their history weekend. Here's from their email about the 19<sup>th</sup> century experience highlighted with carriage rides, Victorian Ball and the rededication of the main house.



**Results.** There is no doubt we are not speed demons. There is no doubt that we totally enjoy ourselves and oddly never get into the mode "when will this be over with?" and we are not even done with the 50K until we are scheming to do another one. Yet my last year's 8:43 slowed to 9:26 this year with that time shared with Lou, Annette and Jim. The volunteers were stroked and thanked all we could for keeping the course open and they ALL encouraged us to return. Only one of the volunteer staff suggested that it might be difficult to stay open so long again; thus we are concocting an argument for an early start with an unsupported first hour. The sag wagon consisted of two women on horseback and they were with us much of the way. Diane didn't have to worry about the sag wagon since she was finished far earlier than the supposed 8-hour cut off. 7:53 which was excellent especially considering that she'd run marathons at Nashville and Gettysburg the weekend before.

Starting were 152 runners. Finishing were 148. We were thrilled to be counted among the finishers. In past years there have been slower runners and the percentage of finishers was not so high.

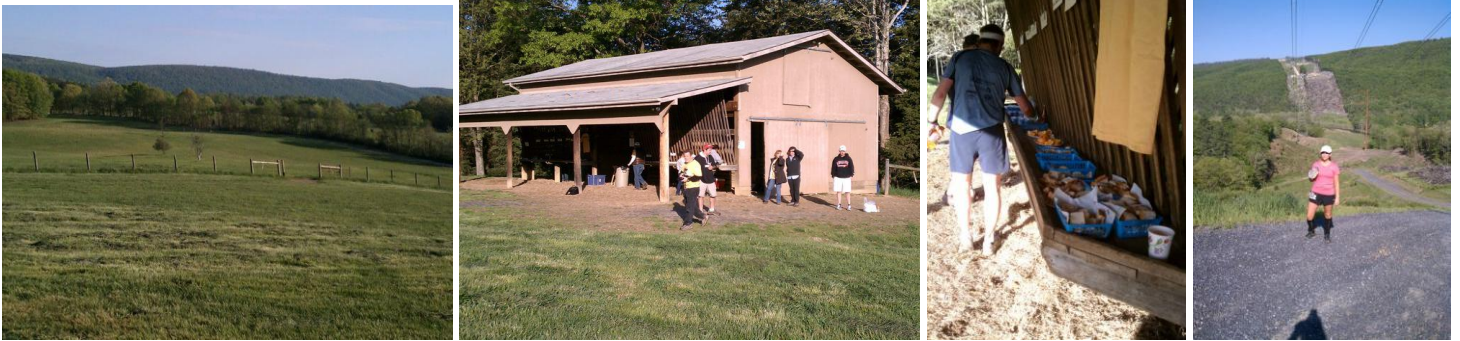


Here I am early in the 50K since I still had on a long sleeve. It had only been 6 days since doing the Gettysburg Marathon in 5:44 but I felt strong and with no glitches which is to say a lot for a gal on the cusp of age 66.

## Capon as seen through the eyes of Diane



This was Diane and Annette's first trip to Capon. The fire pit for sing-along and hot-dog roasting is across from the main house. While we were there a wedding was held at the gazebo. This stream was immediately outside our Hampshire House.



A typical scene of the mountains and pasture, when we weren't on strong hills. The Goleman barn is the first and the last water stop and look at the huge array of foodstuff offered. It is needed by the time we get to the power line though now that there's some pavement and gravel it's easier than the first year that had only deep ruts and mud.



We did have a lot of blue skies though it sprinkled later in the day. The sign says "Foot Traffic Only" before coming across another of the stream crossings.



There were homesteaders and cabins, colorful and glorious. Here's Diane with friends at the finish line where we're served a huge BBQ chicken feast. Back to civilization and some of the Capon famous water that first made Capon famous and where still folks drive long distances to fill up their containers with Capon water.



It probably needs to be told that Diane and Annette would have been very glad to get to Capon no matter where it was. From Baltimore, normally a 2 ½ hour drive, they took more like 6 hours! One of the tales of the lost souls had to do with the driver of this pickup offering to take them to the road to Capon! Here they are – finally at the registration house and the small bridge leading into the last road needed to get to Capon.



Finally – at our Hampshire House and the view out the front.



Capon offers family style eating and the runners are at the same table – an easy way to compare notes. Always some famous Capon Water before sitting fireside in one of the many living rooms with fireplaces that are kept going 24/7. Then finally, here's Diane after some Spa services: both a massage and a soak in the mineral water baths. Thank you Diane for showing us Capon Valley through your eyes.

### **Selected comments from other runners**

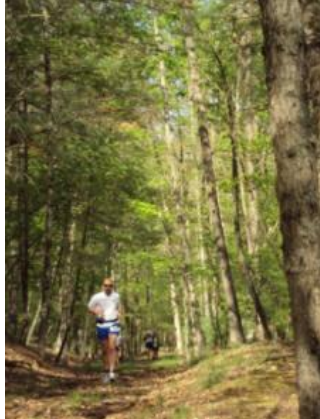
*Thanks for the most challenging, most beautiful race I have ever run! The trails were breathtakingly gorgeous, so well marked from beginning to end (which had to be a major undertaking for you to complete) and the stream crossings were just plain fun! My Garmin showed 4,200 feet of total ascent. Such a sense of accomplishment to finish it, and the variety of sights along the way contributed to an experience I won't ever forget! And one last note -- your volunteers were the friendliest I have experienced in any of my 55+ races. The aid stations were also stocked with such a variety of items including Advil I needed for a swollen ankle and delicious pbj sandwiches, skittles, m&ms, Pringles and assorted drinks including COKE!! The post race chicken was as delicious as promised! Thank you THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!*

*I had a great time this past Saturday running the race. What a beautiful place to run. Thanks to all the people that put this race together and for the volunteers being out there providing support. They were all really great people and friendly. You have some great folks in your town. There was one gentleman sitting out on his deck (lot's of pickup trucks in the yard) watching as we went by saying hello to everyone and asking if we needed anything and then further along another individual left out a cooler with water bottles and a nice sign encouraging the runners. Last was getting to the finish and walking in to that great meal and just enjoying everyone's company.*

***Pictures from the website***



The start at 7am. First woman finisher on some of the only pavement of the course. Women on horseback were both before and after the pack and looking after our safety.



One of six well stocked fluid and food stations. We would see one station twice, plus there were other stations for just fluid. Representative of the woods and soft packed dirt, pine needles or leaves we would encounter. There I am crossing a stream again looking carefully at my feet placement. Another stream.

***I'll let the last three year's reports tell the rest of the tale. But to remind you – this is God's Country!***

## Capon Valley 50K Trip Notes May 6-10, 2010

This was my third trip to Capon Valley West Virginia and I've made reservations for next year too. I go to participate in the rocky, hilly and wet 50k and also to luxuriate. I know, you don't hear many repeats from me (except for our annual Parisian treks) but this old time national historical register resort is unique and the trails are pure nature.



*This is ME with my head down carefully crossing a creek. Note that bib number being 26!  
If I got the Geezer Award, what did this little tyke at the finish line get?*

### **Results**

Though this was my third trip to Capon Valley but it was only my 2<sup>nd</sup> finish. I added about 5 minutes to my completion time this year coming in 43 minutes after the 8 hour cut off time limit and feeling very grateful that the organizers were so accommodating as to let me finish. Last year they allowed a longer time due to all the high stream crossings. Maybe this year it was because of the heat. Or maybe they were just feeling sorry for me since I'd gotten the Geezer Award. More likely it was my friendly pacer Lou telling me to just keep going and look strong and they won't pull you.



*Rain showers at the start which quickly cleared.*



*Here's the finish line.*

### **Update**

It would be hard to have much to say beyond my last two year's reports so I won't but I'll attach those reports to the bottom of this one or you can find them at [www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com](http://www.LibertyLadies.weebly.com).

Here's some other trip notes taken from Active.com –

Jim Melody (we were together for the first 7 hours) said: The volunteers and race organization are the best. The course is shaped like the figure 8 and was well marked and run-able. It was a great day with the temperature ranging from 50 to 60 degrees with cool breeze/winds that made it refreshing. Loved the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with Pringle chips at the 6 well maintained aid stations. And the chicken diner, salads and desert after are super. Better than any race I've been to. I stayed at the Capon Valley Resort and Farm which brings you back to the time when spring water and a relaxing resort was a cure for what ails you. The resort takes you back in time about 80 years and does not have televisions or telephones in the rooms. It is upgraded nicely while maintaining its original look and feel and offers golf, tennis, a pool, croquet (at which I excel), shuffle board, hiking trails and other activities and family style eating. They sit the runners together so we can share our experiences. It is a great group atmosphere. (More about Our Hero Jim later.)

Christi and Kevin said: This was my first ultra and trail run. The people (volunteers and runners) were amazing and very encouraging. It was a beautiful course and very well supported. The Capon Springs Valley Resort was also a wonderful addition to my trip and I thoroughly enjoyed my day before the race there. I would recommend it to anyone who desires to enter this wonderful community of runners!

Peggy Ankney said: This is a fantastic race, whether you are new to ultras or if you're a seasoned trail runner. The Ruritans organize a spectacular course on private trails, with lots of run-able sections and some formidable hills - a fast course. Plenty of creek crossings, though this year the water was relatively low. Well-stocked aid stations staffed by the Ruritans and at the end of the race there's a BBQ with chicken or vegetarian ribs. Has a nice party feel. Highly recommend it.

Since I wrote about this event in the 50-States Newsletter and a few are looking to register, on top of the many return registrants, I'd suggest early registration if you're interested. This event is capped at 200 though they have gone slightly over at times knowing that a good number will either not show or not finish. It is said that the small population in the valley has topped out of volunteers and thus they can't expand. It is also likely that the private properties we run through feel a need to restrict the numbers also. It really is pristine nature.

### **Shout outs**

Last year I was grateful to Lou Jones for pacing me. Poor fellow, he didn't mean to, but he had just completed the Umstead 100-miler and was slowed enough that I was able to keep up with him. This year he was sufficiently fatigued by some other races that I was blessed with staying with him again. Lou is a veteran ultra-marathoner and has finished all of the Capon Valley 50s so it would have been hard for the organizers to close him out at 8 hours. He also knows the course well which is a major benefit since others have gotten wildly lost on the course. (I carried a whistle, gave one to Jim, and a flashlight. More on that subject coming up.)

Jim Melody has tried four or five times to finish Capon 50k. One year he and friend Monica Nop got lost and were out on the course for 11 hours. The organizers were considering calling for a helicopter rescue mission. Thus I carry one of two whistles plus a flashlight. Jim was truly Our Hero for the weekend. He was running this year with a newly built/repared heart and he had only envisioned maybe going to aid station #3 but at #4 he felt fine, and he went as far as to aid station #5 which was 24.5 miles and 7 hours into the course. Best of all, he reported feeling good through it all. Better yet, he was able to manage two respectable hilly hikes the following day. Clearly Jim is sufficiently rehabbed!

Jack from Knoxville is always a hoot if not a real hottie. We'd hiked with him the following day last year. He's a professor in Knoxville moving to Toronto soon to be with a gal and her couple children. Good for him! Last year he hiked with us the day after the 50k when we managed some major hills all the while Jack carrying a pack full of beers.

Stephanie and John are seasoned and fast ultra-marathoners who had just returned from Big Sur's marathon the week prior. They are the brains of the group as evidenced by both being certified rocket scientists. Good looking and kind ones too. Stephanie looks about 30 and yet has a flock of grandchildren.

Keith is another seasoned ultra-marathoner and his wife Allyson always favors us with her volunteer endeavors and it's so very comforting to have a friendly, kind and knowing friend on the course. My first year's effort ended with Allyson finding me at an aid station and driving me back -- well before the finish line.

Janice who had run with me the first year (she finished) and her lovely teenage daughter came to volunteer and support and support they did. They came far out on the course to greet us well before the fluid stations and we were not only grateful with a big hug in return for their concerns and willingness to help but at aid station #5 they went back in and found that Jim was going to bail (wise move) and then ran forward to advise Lew and I that they'd be transporting him back. We had begun to worry and retraced our steps a bit to find him until they saved the day. And Jim. Who turned out to be totally fine.

### ***The event***



Here is the Starting Line. Again there was light rain falling on us two years of the three I've attended. It is on these grounds that some runners camp the night before. It is on these grounds that cold showers are available and probably very welcomed. A river runs through the park. Well, a river runs through the entire course. One year it was a mud field.

This is the first and the sixth (last) fluid/food station. It is the home of Ms Coleman who was the founder and creator of this run. Most of the organizers are women who are horsemen. They do a commendable job of raising money for their community. They do a commendable job of taking care of us in great style.



This is more typical of the other fluid stations. They are manned by kind hearted soles doling out everything from peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, liquids, bug spray and Advil. The first year I learned to add potato chips (Pringles) to the peanut butter sandwiches. I also learned to not dawdle at the fluid stations or Lou would leave me. He'd grab a handful of sandwiches and GO!





I don't remember seeing anything like this and had I looked down, I might not have crossed it. I found the picture on the Capon Valley 50k website.

I had to wait and hold onto someone's hand (sorry Janice) before crossing a stream bed the first year, but the next two years I used trekking poles and had some sense of confidence by using them. I'm told that some races do not allow trekking poles so I'm grateful this one does. It takes a great strain off the joints and in my case the problem hip was never a problem during this event.

Everywhere you look there are gorgeous scenes like this, plus dozens (I mean dozens!) of creek crossings. I wish there was a picture of the magnificent waterfall that came later in the course. We had to look off to our right to see it but it was memorable. Some of the fast runners didn't notice it at all – an expensive price to pay for being fast, don't you think? Well, I'm sure they don't agree.



This is Keith (red shirt) in one of the early streams last year. I think that was the year a young lady slipped, was being pulled downstream by the current when either Keith or a buddy reached down and grabbed her just in time to save her, or as they say, grabbed a handful of flesh at least. She was most thankful and said they saved her life, later to be known as "Saved by the Boob."

Some stream crossings were possible to tip-toe across on the rocks. One year the rain had been heavy enough that all the rocks were covered and we just got major wet. With shoes having stuck in the mud enough times, one rather liked the cold water to both wash the shoes and cool the feet. Oddly I don't think any of us got blisters despite continually wet feet. Interesting? Didn't we think that wet feet caused blisters? Not in trail runs where you're in lots of water.





Obviously this picture is from last year as you might well note since Monica is here in this picture and she missed the 2010 run. Rumor has it that she has a boyfriend that pre-empted the rest of us. Smile. Good for her but she was missed.

An example of the mud. This was likely the leader. Some mud pulled the shoes OFF! There was likely more mud created by the time I came around especially on the opposite sides of the stream crossings.



Lovely! There were some easy stream crossings like this picture but there were some with current where you really had to “spread your legs” even with trekking poles, as some kindly fellow yelled to me when I was having trouble standing upright. We all had a laugh at this term. I think he meant for me to “widen my stance.”



***Pictures of the Capon Valley Farms (resort) that we all so lovingly return to each year.***

In fact, when I stay on a couple days following the other runner’s departure, I am left without the table of runners and must be adopted out. Those new tables have always introduced me to veterans of Capon who have returned a time or two a year for 39 and 42 years. With their seniority they are able to get the Honeymoon Suite or the Log Cabin which accommodations are coveted. I’m totally happy with the Hampshire House but have inquired about a larger room next year if it’s not needed for a couple. This event is on Mother’s Day and the grand opening for the season and yet it’s not very full until late May so my chances are good of getting a room with a deck.



***Pictures of two of the guest houses, the music pavilion, the Wednesday and Sunday night dinner location high up on the golf course, the spring fed natural swimming pool, and a view of the golf course from high up White Cliffs trail.***

## Capon Springs WV 50K Trip Report May 8-12, 2009

### ***I went, I did, I conquered.***

You might remember that last year I'd met these delightfully lovely runners who convinced me to try this 50K, but they couldn't get me over the finish line in 2008. With their continued encouragement, I went again, and with their help, I finished this 50K (31 miles) technical trail run over hill and dale, through mud and pastures, a few miscues and added mileage, super high mountains, over dozens of stream crossings, in the heat and humidity, and finished in 8:38. I was thrilled. See the morning picture?



Conditions weren't much better than last year (see picture of last year's group, most returnees this year), there having been a lot of rain and thus swollen rivers. Thus the organizers gave us more than the 8 hour cut off time. Yet still, of 200 who entered, 126 of us finished. I didn't mind being at the back of the pack and was just grateful to finish.

### ***Would I do it again?***

For the first 7 or so hours of the run, I was certain that I had to return no matter whether I finished or not. It was that gorgeous. The stream crossings at times were upwards to the knees but I'd taken trekking poles and felt more secure and didn't have to wait for someone to hold my hand to cross the waters. But at the last 1 ½ hours, I was doubtful of finishing let alone wanting to return. Still, here I am now, looking forward to next year! Is this something like childbirth that you forget the discomfort? Before I left Capon Valley Farms, I reserved for next year, and followed up with asking the organizers if they were okay with me returning knowing that an 8 hour cut off probably wasn't in the cards.

Disclaimer: 2<sup>nd</sup> Liberty Lady Maricar did not go to this 50K and she's very firm that there's no mud and no hills and no 8 hour runs in her future! Yet she is learning to enjoy hiking in our practice sessions for our next goal of climbing Half Dome in Yosemite this July (in honor of her 35<sup>th</sup> and my 64<sup>th</sup>.) But next thing you know, she'll be doing a 50K in 7 hours . . . .

### ***Plenty of tourist sites***

I have to wonder why I'd ever leave Capon Valley Farms **(1)** with all the hiking trails, good food, restful atmosphere, but wonders abound in the area. Last year I stayed a few days in Winchester **(7)** and that's a possibility for 2010 again. This year I toured through Hagerstown, MD both before and after, plus picturesque Shepherdstown near to Harpers Ferry on the way home. One goes through Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, then back into West Virginia to get to Capon. Capon Springs is about 45 minutes east of Winchester, the closest town of any size. It's in the middle of no where as evidenced by the lack of cell coverage. It encompasses 4700 acres and has been in the same family for four generations with the fourth generation now working there. It is out of the way, restful, clean and healthy and I met a family that had been coming for 39 years and counted over 150 stays. (See **(2)** and **(5)** and [www.caponsprings.net](http://www.caponsprings.net).)

### ***Compatriots***



The friends who'd gotten me there in 2008 were returnees. Jim Mellody, Monica Nop, Alison and Keith, Stephanie and Debbie, all from DC area. I'd met first Monica and Jim at Myrtle Beach Marathon in February 2008, then Monica, Janice and Keith at Virginia Beach Marathon in March. They'd convinced me to try my first 50K. See the picture of our 'dirtygirlgaiters' which were a gift from Stephanie.



New friends include Lou Jones who got Monica into her first 100 miler and had just completed Umstead 100 miler himself and was my guiding light through most of this 50K, Jack Kilislian from Knoxville who hiked with us the day after and who I hope to see again in January, Seth Elsheimer who is a friend of a marathon friend and whose path I've crossed countless times but only met after the 50K, and lovely Faye who was seen using trekking poles in 2008 and encouraged me to try by using them again this year and who I'm most grateful for her kind words and advice.

### ***The event itself***

See [www.runcapon50k.com](http://www.runcapon50k.com) for more pictures. This was the 11<sup>th</sup> annual, my friends had been there at least five times, and Lou had only missed one year. Entries were limited to 200 and only 126 finished. Some might think finishing for the free BBQ chicken dinner would be worth it. (See course and facilities description at **(3)**.) I now realize that there were NO women in my age bracket and only a couple of men. My husband would say that the senior women were just smart enough to stay home.

You might wonder how I can feel good about my finish time of 8:38. Well, it's better than not finishing. And I wasn't at the very back, just close. And in view of friends who typically complete a marathon in 4 and 5 hours but who complete this event in 7 ½ hours, I can think my walking and hiking legs did pretty good not to mention my being the oldest woman by far. The woman winner came in around 5 ½.

It's interesting that the creators and organizers of the event are not runners at all. One is an accomplished artist, one is in a wheelchair, one rides a horse to check and mark the trail, and all are the most wonderfully kind and helpful people (all women I think) you can imagine.

Also nice to see are all the private property signs that we are allowed to run through and make ruts and create mud holes. We run across some lawns where I'm sure major repairs were required thereafter. We ran for miles along fast running streams, as evidenced by the 24 stream crossings that increased with rainfall to many more.

### ***At Capon Farms life is slow and easy***



Music starts an hour before the dinner bells followed by eating wholesome food with a group on picnic tables. They are known for their local grown fresh produce. They used to raise their own hogs and sell homemade scrapple but I learn the government's regulations made that difficult. (Now the hogs are just brought in for the children's



entertainment in the summer.) We are provided a great number of lovely trails in the surrounding hills. There's a natural springs pool, tennis courts, a fishing lake where you bring your catch to the chef who prepares it for your breakfast. There are no locks on the doors. People come from far and wide to partake of the natural spring waters and the spa. I bought the huge book about the historical significance of the resort.

### ***Some people will try anything***

The young gal in the dining hall picture had completed a half marathon, was searching for a full marathon and found this 50K and decided, well, why not? Youth doesn't conquer everything – she opted out at about the 4<sup>th</sup> aid station. Yet I suspect she'll be back.



## **Scenes from Capon and surrounding area**



Here's a picture of Jim at the main house in last year's 50K shirt. He was the main impetus to get me to try in 2008 as he'd tried 3 times and the last time they were looking at sending out a helicopter to find Jim and Monica after 11 hours with darkness approaching. This year he was resting his newly repaired heart and was at half of the aid stations. Clearly he has a BIG heart! Between Jim and Debbie, I felt very taken-care-of and protected and I'm sure that went far to get me through the event. Jim stayed on a couple days and we hiked the adjoining mountains. Next is a picture of me on the red trail that starts at the springs and gives about three hours of hiking with only one stream crossing, followed by one up on the Big Schloss of George Washington National Forest about 20 miles out of Capon, then me at Eagle Rock.

***The End - sunset over Capon's golf course. Until next year.***



## **Capon Springs WV and Winchester VA Trip Report** **May 9-13, 2008**

How did I get myself into this? Well, I met this lovely Cambodian woman while in Myrtle Beach Marathon in February. She was traveling with this real gentleman, both single, both from DC, and both the type of folks you just wanted to know better. A series of emails 'erupted' with another meeting during the Virginia Beach Marathon mid-March, and now this – an attempt at a 50K technical trail run. Was it their fault? It didn't take much to twist my arm.

### How did it turn out?

- I went. I didn't conquer. That's totally fine.
- My t-shirt might say "Starter" instead of the usual "Finisher."
- "Discretion is the better part of valor" per Shakespeare as reminded to me by one of my smart running friends.
- DNF could be changed to *DNS for Do Nothing Stupid*.

No matter, I am so glad that I started! That I got involved at all. But the 50K was very much more difficult than I'd ever imagined. It was made more so by the heavy rainfall the few days and night prior which resulted in many more and deeper stream crossings than I could have imagined (later counted as being 42 crossings on the entire course) coupled with mud which was often as deep as my shoes. All of which would have been okay were it not for the extreme hills where I often felt totally out of control, slipping on mud or rocks or both. Yep, I fell a couple times, but with no hurts or no injuries but enough to make me more cautious. (I'd also had a major fall a month earlier during a New York hike where I went head first resulting in considerable bruising and soreness and making me gun-shy.)

### Would I go again?

- Yes to be with my friends and to stay at Capon Valley Farms. Yes if I gave up the idea of finishing. Yes if I could use trekking poles as some folks did. Yes if I remembered bug spray, and if my bone density goes up to decent levels. Yes if I can figure out why my calves still hurt four days later.
- No to even trying to finish. (There's a reason there's only a handful of folks over my age and those are men who were probably in the group camping out the night before.) No if I had a cough that keeps me up at night. No if there were inches of record rainfall. No without bug spray.

I had been convinced to sign up by the fact that still another DC friend who I met in Virginia Beach was thought to be a similar marathon finisher as I. (That fact turned out to be not true. Her marathon finish time was while she was ill.) Though I'd thought she was near my speed, she turned out to be much stronger, especially on the downhill portions. She barreled down the hills while I gingerly made my way tiptoeing and trying to hold back. At about the half way point there was an opportunity for a ride out of the woods, so I took it. I would have held in another 4-8 miles but then I'd been captive until the aid station folks returned to base camp. So I happily quit after nearly four hours into the event, also suggesting that I might not have made the 8 hour cut off anyway.

I know – competitive runners can't say this, and in that way I'm lucky to be a new runner. I'm absolutely glad that I quit and I'm not disappointed at all. I quit without injury. I quit without being a pain in the tush to anyone. My first half of the 50K was totally and uniquely lovely and it was a memorable time. Just as importantly, I felt wonderfully well the following day and was able to do some light hiking around the resort area and then onto Winchester Virginia, my next destination.

Winchester is located about 45 minutes easterly and is known for not only where George Washington and Stonewall Jackson were made famous, but also Patsy Cline. It's at the very top of the Shenandoah Valley, and was settled by the Pennsylvania Quakers in the early 1700s. For civil war buffs, it's a very important site and driving tours abound. During the civil war, Winchester actually changed hands around 70 times during the four year conflict, and once 13 times in one day. Winchester is known as the "Apple Capital" and had just celebrated that festival the week prior with 300,000 visitors. At the same time

Winchester hosts the world's largest fireman's parade. Winchester had the first public water system in the U.S. and is still known as a "tree city USA" and was designed an "all american city" recently. Maybe that's why a non-resident, John Handley of Scranton PA, gave the town a huge high school and library? The library was the first structure in the area with electricity. A real oddity that I thought only Las Vegas was known for -- you can get married in Winchester in a day. All of which helped me decide to spend two nights in Winchester exploring the town and local sights.

Details of the trip follow. Sorry, maybe miscellaneous and disjointed, but isn't that me? Somewhere along the way I was eaten up by mosquitos . . . .

### **Fri May 9**

Left home early for a 6 hour drive to Capon Springs West Virginia area **(1)**. One goes through Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, then back into West Virginia to get there. Capon Springs is about 45 minutes from Winchester, the closest town of any size. It's in the middle of no where as evidenced by the lack of cell coverage but it encompasses 4700 acres and has been in the same family for three generations. It is out of the way, restful, clean and healthy and I met a family that had been coming for 39 years and counted over 150 stays. See **(2)** and **(5)** and [www.caponsprings.net](http://www.caponsprings.net).

At near 3pm I met friends Jim Mellody, Monica Nop, Alison and Keith, Stephanie and Debbie, all from DC area. I'd met first Monica and Jim at Myrtle Beach Marathon in February, then Monica, Janice and Keith at Virginia Beach Marathon in March. They'd convinced me to try my first 50K. Why? See **(8)**. I did start. I didn't finish. We all drove together for a 5pm packet pick up at Yellow Spring's Ruritan Park, then returned to sit with other runners at the 6pm Capon Springs dinner. I think they stayed up. I crashed. I was still nursing slight injuries from a fall a few weeks earlier during a hike, a cold from Nashville's wet and windy marathon start, and too much birthday celebrating the three days prior.

### **Sat May 10**

Left in three cars for a 7:30am run briefing in preparation for an 8am start of the 50K. See [www.runcapon50k.com/2007RUN.htm](http://www.runcapon50k.com/2007RUN.htm). This was the Tenth Annual event and my friends had been there at least four times before. I think some 25-30 either didn't finish or didn't start and it was said that about 115 completed within the 8 hour cut off (looks like due to 'ties' that 140 finished.) Some might think finishing for the free BBQ chicken dinner would be worth it. My legs didn't agree. See course and facilities description at **(3)**. I later realized that there weren't a handful of participants my age or older and those were men like the one we ran with who had done the race 8 times and we thought must be 110 years old but turns out he was either 58 or 63.

Many of the runners showered in the outside public showers and hurried off to home. Even though I'd only completed a bit less than half of the course, I was glad to stay at Capon Springs. During the day I'd managed to have breakfast, lots of snacks to include peanut butter and jelly sandwiches on the course, lunch at Capon, lunch at Ruritan with the runners, dinner back at Capon, and then decided to hang it up instead of attending the late night hot dog roast at the bonfire. I suspect some of us gain weight at these races.

### **Sun May 11**

Dinner bells go off for the 8:30am huge and hearty breakfast with everything you can imagine available and seconds too. Before lunch at 12:30pm I'd managed to tour the grounds, find internet connectivity in the Meeting Room, cell coverage by climbing up on top of the mountain behind the golf course, walk the creek bed and find the sanitation facilities plus the springs source and bio filtering, go around the stocked fishing lake, and buy a couple mementos.

Meals are huge and no one would ever go hungry. My last lunch was roasted duck, roast beef, dressing, veggies, salads, applesauce, home made breads of both rolls and sweet breads, choices for dessert, cookies, etc. I'd already consumed a breakfast of fruits, juices, oatmeal, eggs, sausages, pancakes, sticky rolls, etc.



The weather had been cats-and-dogs raining the few days earlier plus all night before the run on Saturday. During the run it changed to drizzle which is always better than heat except that we suffered through mud which easily came up over the ankles through a lot of the course. Weather cleared later Saturday but drizzled again on Sunday, clearing for my early afternoon drive to Winchester, reverting to heavy rain by Sunday late afternoon.

My choice B&B was a recommendation by Barbara (Bubbles) from the race committee. Had I known that the historic Washington Inn had been converted by Wyndham to a historic landmark hotel, I might have stayed there, but it's newly opened and the Old Waterstreet Inn (6) was very pleasantly my home for 2 nights. See [oldwaterstreet@aol.com](mailto:oldwaterstreet@aol.com) noting that I chose the largest and brightest room called the Winesap room, complete with fireplace, heating bathroom floors, a shower with multiple shower heads, and lovely antique settings. It was one of those rare occasions when the pictures on the internet site didn't do it justice. Just as good was the huge and glorious breakfast, far too much to eat, which resulted in packing up the sausage and pecan whole wheat pancakes for a later snack. The B&B is within a couple blocks of the Old Historic Town, close to the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley with its Glen Burnie Gardens, and also the historic houses like Belle Grove and Long Branch. The town holds numerous first and historical significant headlines, including being George Washington's encampment and one of the oldest English speaking settlements. More on what's in the area at (7).

### **Mon May 12**

The rain never quit and the newspaper headlines talked about 3" of rain over the weekend with a total of 7" from the last few days. No wonder it was muddy at Capon. There is flooding everywhere. I finally decided it was enough rain and I didn't want to walk in it any longer, nor the gusts to 40mph, so I got into my car for a car tour. South on highway 11 are found a few historic towns to include Middletown with its Wayside Inn where I stopped and toured. Wayside is the oldest continuously operating inn in America. Nearby was Stephens City with its Newtown History Center which wasn't open. Into Strasburg, where I walked the city which didn't take very long, I also went into the Strasburg Inn where we later figured out Tom had stayed twice on his way to Front Royal, Shenandoah, and the Crooked Road blue grass festival route. Strasburg would have taken longer were I interested in antiques because its center is said to be the largest antique center in Virginia. I tried to see Cedar Creek Battlefield but there really wasn't much there, it being a new park, but I learned its one of the largest re-enactment battlefields in the country. Belle Grove Plantation wasn't all that exciting but probably had been all weekend prior with a yearly beer tasting festival. Remnants of tents and rows and rows of port-a-potties suggested there had been a major crowd at this historically significant plantation.

In Winchester I walked the old town again, both in the rain and later at dinner time when the rain had finally reduced to a drizzle. I was wearing both my rain slicker with hood plus a running jacket underneath and the 44-48 degree temperatures always felt colder. For heavens sakes, isn't this May?

The visitor's center is surrounded by some old homes called museums plus a huge gorgeous and lush park that was severely flooded. Featured were films on civil war history and the town's tourist opportunities. I suppose this is one of the best areas to visit if you're a civil war buff. The Handley High School and the Handley Library were some highlights for me – both donations by Handley who wasn't even a resident. The Handley Library is said to be the best example of beaux-arts architecture in Virginia. Ole Handley sure got a big tombstone in the Mt Hebron Cemetery, which held both union and confederates and was a good walk through plus opportunity for many pictures, rain or not. The high school was one of the hugest and most dramatic architectural examples of a school I'd ever seen and set on what I'd first thought was their own Central Park. After a dry-off in my room, I happily headed out to tour more and ended up in a 1900s brewery pub for dinner and of course some local brew.

### **Tues May 13**

The biggest and best rated museum in the area is the Shenandoah Valley museum, famous for being designed by a noted architect Michael Graves, and also for the complex including the Glen Burnie

Historic House from 1794. The property is on 6 acres of manicured grounds with formal Chinese, water, rose, parterre, herb and vegetable gardens with fountains, statues and shady passages made from flowering crab apple trees. The museum was closing when I came through on Sunday, closed on Monday, so this morning on my way home was the only time to see it. I'd prayed for some dry time to see the gardens because I was sure that I was beginning to mold. The sun erupted, but the bugs didn't go away and I continued to get eaten up.

Itchy me had a major breakfast at the B&B and was standing at the museum door when it opened at 10am, taking the complete package of house tour, garden access, plus museum with video films. It was well worth it and should have been given more like 6 hours instead of 2 ½. But it was important that I depart -- to get home to see Tom, to clean up and repack for the Green Bay Wisconsin Marathon departure on Friday, and if only to rest up!

**Participants:**

Keith #75, age 53, 6:51 (with wife Allison for support)  
Debbie #76, age 50, 6:53 (who was doing a triathlon the next day)  
Stephanie #81, age 51, 6:56 (a real live rocket scientist)  
Monica #97, age 43, 7:27 (who, with others above, had done a 100 miler recently)  
Janice #105, age 45, 7:46 (who did a 24 hour run two weeks prior)  
Diane Taylor #110, age 51, 8:03 (from Nashville, with Robin who was nursing an injury)  
Faye Hawn #113, age 54, 8:10 (part of Tortoise and Hare couple, used walking poles)  
Diana Scratched after 3:50 on course, close to half way point  
Jim Mellody Had run 3 times before but nursing an injury this time.

Note: I couldn't find but maybe a handful of runners my age or older – and all were men. Maybe the seniors were the ones who were smart enough to not start? But there were a handful of men my age and older who finished.

## ***Itinerary 2011***

### **Thu May 5**

Am Depart via auto to Capon Springs area **(1)**  
Approximately 5 hours drive - Directions from Winchester, VA: Take Rt. 50 West for 12 miles. Turn left on Rt. 259. Continue for 14 miles to Capon Lake. Turn left on Rt. 16, Capon Springs Road, crossing bridge, and continue for 4 miles to Capon Springs. (Allow approximately 40 minutes.)

6:00pm Dinner - first meal of Capon Springs

Hotel Capon Springs & Farms **(2)** and **(5)**  
P.O. Box 0 • Capon Springs, WV 26823 Tele: 304-874-3695 [www.caponsprings.net](http://www.caponsprings.net)  
No cell, no alcohol (but okay to bring to room or sneak into the hot tubs)

### **Fri May 6**

6:00pm Packets available until 9:00pm. Also on Saturday at 5:30am

### **Sat May 7**

6:30am Run Briefing – note earlier start time

7:00am Start of 50K at Ruritan Park, River Road, Yellow Spring, WV  
[www.runcapon50k.com/](http://www.runcapon50k.com/) - 13<sup>th</sup> annual

**From '09** Event Description: Welcome to the Eleventh Annual Capon Valley Run on our wonderful course of woodland trails filled with natural beauty. You will certainly enjoy our breathtaking scenery and quiet country atmosphere. The course is hilly, and the footing is generally excellent – very runnable. There are a number of stream crossings, and just a few rocky areas (more course description at end.) Maps will be available on race day, and the entire trail will be clearly marked. Runner completion time limit is 8 hours. Participation Award for each runner, along with first man/first woman and top ten runner awards. This year there will be (5) \$100 Visa Gift Certificates awarded in a raffle drawing for the first 25 finisher's.

RUNNER QUOTES: “We had an absolutely fantastic time... We have never run in such beautiful country... The most fun we've had in years... One of the most scenic runs I have ever run... Can't say enough about the volunteers, friendliness, cheerfulness and support... Congratulations to you and your staff on another great event... Course was spectacular... Aid stations were most excellent... Great trail marking... My favorite run... We'll be back every year... just a quick note to thank you for one of the most extraordinary experiences I've ever had. This was my first ultra, as well as my first trail run and I couldn't be happier right now.”

TOILETS with running water available at the Ruritan Park. Free outside SHOWERS also available at the Ruritan Park. Plenty of snacks and drinks for the runners at 7 aid stations (approximately every 5 miles) and at the finish. Free homemade barbecued chicken dinner for each runner after the race, and additional dinners may be purchased for \$10 each. Vegetarian food is also available. Our COUNTRY STORE serving the community for over 50 years - check it out - wonderful old country atmosphere - gas, ice, snacks, drinks, etc. LODGING: Plenty of free flat parking for campers. Or stay at the historic Capon Springs Resort (who reimburse you \$75 entry fee with a two night stay) or one of the several B&B's in the area. We will have BREAKFASTS for purchase Saturday morning at the Ruritan Club.

NO VEHICLES PERMITTED ON THE COURSE or at aid stations; however, transportation will be available for spectators, volunteers and for any runners unable to continue. We will carry marked bags to the aid stations as requested. Sanctioned by USA Track & Field. Limited to 200 participants.

Course and Facilities Description See **(3)**

### **Sun May 8**

Depart to NJ

**Pack:** Coffee pot and coffee; trekking poles; fuel belt; wine; water jugs to fill; hair dryer; bug repellent; soaps/shampoo.

(1) **Capon Springs** (info from '08 race) is an unincorporated hamlet in Hampshire County, West Virginia, USA. According to the 2000 census, the Capon Springs community has a population of 95. It is located on Capon Springs Road (West Virginia Secondary Route 16) along Capon Springs Run. Originally known as Frye's Springs after its discoverer Henry Frye, and later established as the Town of Watson on December 12, 1787, the town was renamed for its medicinal spring. The springs were believed to carry such healing power that half an acre sold for \$900 in gold in the late 18th century. After West Virginia seceded from Virginia in 1863, it had to pay Virginia for the loss of the springs during Reconstruction. The historic Capon Springs & Farms resort is located here and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

(2) **Capon Springs & Farms** - Since the 1840s, guests have journeyed to Capon Springs seeking rest, relaxation and rejuvenation. Nature's gifts of woodlands, water and food provide the perfect setting to experience the bounty of resources here. When Lou and Virginia Austin acquired the property in 1932 with the sole intention of distributing the water, little did they know they would slowly resurrect the resort, with the help of over one hundred loyal co-workers. Their dedication and commitment continue through the generations to provide a safe comfortable haven for visiting families and friends. A sign hangs on the outside wall of our Main Building. It was made by long time Capon guest Merv Regener of York, PA. Here at Capon Springs we strive to make you feel at home during your stay with us. The use and trust of the honor system, coupled with the family atmosphere and tranquil serenity of Capon itself, makes Capon Springs one of the most special places on earth. As our grandfather Lou Austin used to say, "Once you've made your first trip to Capon, you're considered an old friend."



**FACTS:**

- Capacity: 200 adults, 50-75 children
- Property size: Approx. 4700 scenic acres
- Pets: Not permitted on Capon grounds
- Dress: Strictly casual; no neckties please!

**WHEN IS CAPON OPEN?** From about the beginning of May to the end of October.

**HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO STAY AND WHAT'S INCLUDED?** Basic: from \$80-140 per person per night, depending on where you stay and when you visit. Rates include everything, except for golf, spa services, taxes, and gratuities.

**WHAT KIND OF LODGING FACILITIES DO YOU HAVE?** We have 10 guest lodges ranging from 2-20 rooms in them. We also have two private lodging facilities for couples, a Honeymoon Cottage and restored Log Cabin. While every building is different, all rooms have their own entrance, with common hallways and/or stairways to the rooms. Except for the Main building, all rooms have their own private bath. While we do not have air conditioning in any of our facilities, ceiling fans provide cooling comfort

during some of the warmest summer temperatures. Some guests prefer to stay in the same room in the same building year after year. Others enjoy trying out each of the different cottages. Every location has its own charm and benefits so it is up to each guest to see which one best matches their needs and preferences. If this is your first time, try whichever one meets your room requirements and then see what other options are available after your first trip. Visit our Rooms & Cottages page for more information.

**HOW MANY NIGHTS DO WE HAVE TO STAY?** The majority of our summer guests continue to stay for a full week, Sunday to Sunday. Numerous opportunities for shorter stays or even one night visits are available throughout the season.

**PEACE AND QUIET/CAPON CURFEW:** So that all may have a restful night's sleep, we ask that you honor our curfew by returning to your room and being quiet by 11:00 pm. We also ask that you please use headphones with all radios and musical equipment.

**ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:** Capon is a great place to gather with friends and socialize. While we do not provide alcoholic beverages in our dining room or allow them in public places, you are welcome to enjoy them in the privacy of your own room or porch.

**NO SMOKING POLICY (NEW):** In keeping with Capon's family friendly and healthy atmosphere, smoking is now prohibited in all indoor areas, as well as the Main Front Porch. If you do choose to smoke elsewhere, we ask that you be especially considerate of your neighbors.

**CONNECTING WITH THE "Outside World":** There are no phones, TVs or Internet access in guest rooms. Cell phone access is limited. Pay phones are located in the Main Building and in the Meeting House. TVs are located in Rooms 3 and 4 in the Meeting House. Wireless DSL internet access is also available in the Meeting House.

**DINING:** For information about our dining facilities please see Meals, Bells and Music page. Below.

**SPORTING EQUIPMENT:** Ping Pong, Croquet, Shuffleboard, Soccer, Tennis racquets and balls, bamboo fishing poles, a volley ball, badminton racquets as well golf clubs and golf balls are available for your use at no charge.

**Meals at Capon:** One of the highlights for most Capon guests is the food. Made from scratch recipes passed down through the generations create mouth watering meals and desserts. Fresh baked breads, rolls, cookies and pies pour out of the coal fired brick oven. We serve family-style or buffet-style meals (with a set weekly menu) where the only limit is your appetite. We will show you to your table at your first meal and usually that will be your personal table for the rest of your stay. Dress is politely casual: please no neckties, bare feet or bathing suits in the Dining Room.

Breakfast is served from 8:30-9:30 am. The music begins at 8:00 am; flag ceremony is at 8:25 am and the bell rings at 8:30 am for breakfast.

Lunch is served from 1:00-2:00 pm. The music begins at noon and lasts until lunchtime. The bell rings at 12:30 pm as a "get-ready reminder" and then again for lunch at 1:00 pm. Lunch on Sunday is 12:30-1:30 pm. (Bells and music are advanced by half an hour midday on Sundays.)

Dinner is served from 6:00-7:00 pm. The music begins at 5:00 pm and lasts until dinnertime. The bell rings at both 5:30 pm and 6:00 pm.

Monday dinner, Wednesday lunch and Thursday dinner are served at Sunset Lodge on the hill along the Golf Course. Follow the road at the end of the porch of the Main Building and bear right. Parking is available at the Lodge All the remaining meals are served in the Dining Room, located in the Main Building.

Box lunches are available for hikes, trips, or on departure days. Please order lunches by 7:30 pm the night before you need them.

Coffee is served in the Main Building from 6:00 am until breakfast -- early risers will find it in the hallway across from the store. Then it is moved to the Front Porch. Between meals, coffee is available in the store. After-dinner, coffee and tea are again served in the hallway across from the store. And, of course, coffee is served at every meal.

Our Dining Room is generally reserved for our overnight guests. If while you are here, you wish to have company for a meal we encourage you to check with us. Generally the outdoor meals – Monday dinner, Wednesday lunch, and/or Thursday dinner — are the most flexible. However, we understand that sometimes none of these times will work and we will do our best to arrange a meal in the Dining Room. Please check with the office for more information.

(3) **Course Description** - The course is situated on wonderful woodland trails filled with natural beauty. You will certainly enjoy our breathtaking scenery and quiet country atmosphere. The course is hilly, and the footing is generally excellent – very runnable. There are a number of stream crossings, and just a few rocky areas.

#### Ruritan to Aid #1 – 3.6 miles

When you leave the Ruritan, you will run on some pavement, crossing a few back yards, and then you will cross the river on a cement bridge. You will then run onto wooded dirt trails with several creek crossings. There are 2 steep but relatively short hills, and then you will run on a remote rolling gravel road with no traffic through the woods to Aid #1.

#### Aid #1 to Aid #2 – 7.2 miles

You will leave Aid #1 on wooded dirt paths and run back onto the remote gravel road with no traffic. The course leaves the road and enters wooded paths, and you will run up and down some good (but not long) hills. There are a few short stints on the gravel road, and you will run all the way down hill to the Cacapon River. After the river (drinking water is available) you will run on wooded paths up and down several significant hills. You will run along a power line where there is a significant down hill. After you leave the power line, you will run on a wooded path up a long hill to a gravel driveway, where you will run downhill to Aid #2.

#### Aid #2 to Aid #3 – 3.9 miles

You will leave Aid #2 on a beautiful 2 track dirt path (an old railroad bed) along a lovely creek, and there will be several creek crossings. You will leave the railroad bed and climb a good hill to a retired grass air strip. You will turn right on a paved road, running down hill for a very short time into Aid #3.

#### Aid #3 to Aid #4 – 4.3 miles

You will leave Aid #3 on a wooded dirt path, with a bit of mud and a few creek crossings. You will cross a wonderful field with spectacular views onto another wooded path (with a creek crossing), and after you pass a hunter's cabin on a very old road, you will begin the most significant climb of the day, climbing almost to the top of North Mountain. Once you reach the top, you will slowly begin downhill on wonderful old wooded dirt roads to Aid #4. This is probably the most difficult section of the course.

#### Aid #4 to Aid #5 – 5.7 miles

You will leave Aid #4 running down hill on a dirt path into the George Washington National Forest, and you will follow this path (with one road crossing, and a few creek crossings) until you reach the Tuscarora Trail (Big Blue Trail). At the Tuscarora Trail you will turn right on the trail, which is maintained by the PATC, and is marked with blue paint. The trail is down hill most of the way into Aid #5. There are a few short uphill, but it is mostly downhill.

Aid #5 to Aid #6 – 3.2 miles

You will continue on the Tuscarora Trail with some serious up and down hills for about 2.5 miles. Shortly after you cross the power line, you will leave the blue marked trail, going left on a short winding trail which takes you into a landowner's barn, which is Aid #6.

Aid #6 to Finish – 3.1 miles

You will return on the same trail that you ran from the Start to Aid #6, except for one short diversion to eliminate a difficult hill on the way back.

**(5) Article** by LANA M. LOMBARDI of the Capon Valley Chronicle, June issue

A Touch of Nostalgia

Change is everywhere. We can't get away from it. The young are hungry for more, better and faster while the more mature are just plain exhausted. Is there anywhere on this planet that allows an individual to slow the pace down enough so we can re-evaluate the direction life is taking us? The answer is yes and it's called Capon Springs and Farms in Capon Springs, West Virginia.

The resort is purposely designed as a haven in which one can escape year after year and find little to no change taking place. The environment is safe, clean, healthy and peaceful. The rooms have no televisions or phones – that's deliberate. The meal times are scheduled and all the food is home cooked – from scratch – with the menu rarely changing. Each day of the week you know what is going to be waiting for you in the dining room. You don't have to rush to the dining hall in order to get a table because your table – the one you were escorted to the very first day - is the table at which you will sit for all your meals every day you are at the resort.

The entire property is designed to create quiet spaces that most of us rarely find in today's fast moving lifestyle. There are fountains and other sources of fresh water running throughout the resort. You hear birds chirping, maybe for the first time since your last get-a-way. There is even a curfew. At 11PM residents can begin to move back toward their rooms or mini-lodges to either turn in for the night or take a quiet evening stroll. But whatever their choice, all guests know that the property is going to be peaceful until breakfast.

Doesn't it sound too good to be true? It is a place where all your basic needs are taken care of and you don't have to be involved except to show up.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Capon Springs resort offers you the rare opportunity to slip back into a time when the world just didn't turn quite so fast. The rooms, clean and comfortable, are designed with rest and relaxation in mind. Although the resort has no control over cell towers, even cell phone reception is poor in this section of the county. Everything about the resort and how it is set up is designed to remove as many distractions as possible. It's a way to halt life just long enough to smell the roses once again.

What does one do for fun at Capon Springs? Do people get bored? Jonathan Bellingham, grandson of Lou and Virginia Austin, laughs, "You sleep well and soundly, read, sit in the sun, swim in the pool fed by natural spring water, get a massage, soak in warm baths that are kept at 102 degrees, play golf, ping pong, go for nature walks, join watercolor classes and even wellness classes. There is even a campfire sing-a-long in the evening where everyone can enjoy a great hot dog on the most spectacular homemade bun this side of heaven. I might add, you don't come here to lose weight", he laughs.

"My grandfather was very wise and understood how important it is to get off of life's treadmill to re-evaluate or at the very least, get some well-deserved rest. He wanted our guests to have at least one place on the planet where safety dictated that children can wander anywhere on the property and be safe, where respect for one another is encouraged by positive peer pressure that moves everyone who stays here to do the right thing every day, all day while at the resort." Jonathan continues, "There is no preferential treatment at the resort.

It doesn't make any difference who you are or what you do outside this property – all are treated equally here. Where in this world can you just be yourself with no expectations except to be honest and neighborly? That's why people come back here two or three times a year and others spend every vacation here year after year."

When Lou and Virginia Austin, Jonathon's grandparents, purchased the property in 1932 where the spring was located, their purpose was to maintain the water bottling business. Purchasing the spring's water source just happened to include remains of the once thriving resort and the nearly 5000 acres surrounding it. Initially they tried to support the property and themselves by selling bottles of the legendary healing waters that flow throughout the Capon Springs property. While running the bottling company, friends and family kept coming up to stay with them because the property was so beautiful and peaceful. The Austin's had not intended to re-build the resort, but by the late 30's they began to put money back into the property and the resort just kind of evolved from there.

During these early years, Lou was going through a spiritual transformation. He began to recognize that God desires to work through us and be a spiritual partner in all we do. He knew that Capon Springs was a gift that he had been entrusted with and he wanted to show his gratitude to God for being his personal spiritual partner. He wanted all his business dealings to be operated according to God's standards – not the standards of the world.

These personal revelations left a permanent imprint on this third generation of family owners. Lou's philosophy of life became the foundational inspiration for the newest family members when they wrote the following Mission Statement for the Resort - "To sustain Capon as a business and as a home, we share our heritage with guests, primarily through a summer resort. We expect the best of ourselves and look for the best in others." This Mission Statement is Lou's grandchildren's way of building on his legacy.

Jonathan says, "Everything here at the resort is based on the honor system. If a guest comes into the snack shop and doesn't have the right change or has left his wallet in his/her room, they can take the soda or snack and just record their purchase on the wall. They can pay for it later or when they check out at the end of their stay."

He continues, "When a guest comes here they enter an environment where everyone, guests and staff, operate from the best part of who we all are. I know that sounds impossible, but it's been going on here since the early 1900's."

He adds, "Recently one of our guests stated to me that "I wish I could be this way in the outside world." What a testimony to the character of the family and staff who run the resort year after year.

According to Jonathan, "The families who come here year after year also do not like things to change at the resort. They get a little bent out of shape if the menu is tweaked or we add too many amenities. We, the younger family owners, had to learn what grandfather already knew. People like the resort just the way it is."

"People even got upset when we replaced the old metal shower stalls that didn't allow you to bathe without banging your elbows with the larger, more modern stalls. We have learned to make only the changes that are necessary to keep the resort well functioning. Our guests do not come here to experience what other resorts provide. They come here for the Capon experience."

One of the long time guests, Pat Roushakes, arrived just as Jonathan and I were completing our time together. She had brought her water color class out from Washington DC that day to introduce them to the resort. Pat regularly escapes her busy city life by coming to Capon Springs. She has been coming here for her family respites for over 30 years.



When asked why she comes back so frequently, she laughs “Oh, I come back to see Jonathan. Seriously, coming here is like coming home to visit family. It’s like having a very large extended family when you become a repeat guest like me. All the children know each other and actually grow up with one another on these vacations. My children are all grown now, but they still look forward to coming back here at least once a year.”

Why does she come so often? She smiles and says, “I just need the Capon experience in my life. It’s hard to explain to someone who has never come here. Even packing is simple. I throw in some jeans, t-shirts and a hat and I’m ready to go. The moment I come over that mountain, I think my blood pressure drops 20 points.” she laughs. “When I leave here I am absolutely rested.”

“What makes the Capon experience so unique are the people. This is a place where you can put the world behind you the moment you drive onto the property. You are safe and free to drop all pretenses. If you bring your children and take your eye off a child for a moment, there’s no need to panic. Someone else is watching the child – someone who cares. The people who come here really care about each other.”

I keep hearing the phrase “Capon experience”. What exactly does that mean? Pat smiles and says, “I can’t really describe it. It truly is something you have to experience for yourself.”

Capon Springs and Farms just celebrated 75 years as a resort the first week of May. Jonathan muses, “It was interesting to hear the same theme in all the comments from the guests who had been here at least 75 times. The people who were asked to share their experiences at the resort were from every walk of life imaginable, yet all were emotional in their comments about this place. They may have used different ways to express their fondness, but the bottom line somehow ended up the same. They really love it here.”

There is a tremendous amount of historical information on this very special resort, but after spending time with Jonathan, guests and running into previous staff members of the resort, it seemed more appropriate to communicate the heart of Capon Springs and Farms. Facts are easy to obtain, but the heart attitude that built the resort and maintains the character of the resort isn’t recorded in any history book. One has to either know some of the people who bring heart to the organization or one has to actually go experience it personally.

The name Capon Springs and Farms should really have the word family in it somewhere. That is how everyone refers to each other – whether guests, staff or owners – everyone considers themselves a family member. Harry B. Thayer once said, “As are families, so is society. If well ordered, well instructed, and well governed, they are the springs from which go forth the streams of national greatness and prosperity - of civil order and public happiness.”

For all readers who have worked at or been guests of Capon Springs and Farms, the above quote will be meaningful. If you have not yet had the “Capon experience”, consider experiencing a visit to the resort. Once you do, you will then understand the above remarks about family.

### **Winchester Tourist**

**Old Town:** Winchester is a lovely small city with an historic center. The Old Town streets are lined with brick sidewalks, beautiful homes, historic buildings, and different styles of architecture, so just strolling around is enjoyable in itself. In quaint Old Town you’ll find many specialty shops, small galleries, a variety of restaurants (both casual and upscale), outdoor cafes, and nightlife.

**Dining:** Winchester has an excellent variety of local restaurants to fit all tastes and budgets, and many of our very best are within walking of the inn. There are many chain restaurants here as well. Our ethnic choices include Italian, Mexican, Chinese, Brazilian, Thai, Japanese, and Indian.

Theatre and concerts include • Winchester Little Theatre; • Shenandoah University concerts and Summer Theatre shows; • Wayside Theatre in nearby Middletown

Historic Interest in Winchester and nearby: • Glen Burnie historic home and garden tours (home of Winchester's Founder James Wood); • Abram's Delight museum, George Washington's Office and other historic buildings; • Civil war battlefield sites and reenactments; • Belle Grove Plantation; • Historic Long Branch

Museums: • Patsy Cline Museum • Museum of the Shenandoah Valley

Annual Events: • Apple Blossom Festival each May; • Historic garden tours in April; • (Nearby) Mountain Heritage Arts and Crafts Festival (25 minutes away) every June and September; • Apple Harvest Festival each September; • Hot Air Balloon and Wine Festival in October; • First Night each New Year's Eve

Shopping: Old Town has unique shops and small galleries selling gifts, pottery, books, original art and framed prints, furniture, antiques, gourmet items, wine and specialty beer, home décor, fine linens, candles, jewelry, clothing and more.

Antiques: Winchester has several antique shops that carry a wide range of quality antiques, used furniture, and flea market items. In addition this is good base for area antiquing. Just 20 minutes away there are 2 large multi dealer antique warehouses (in Strasburg, VA and in Bunker Hill, W.Va.) and 10 minutes away is Red Schoolhouse Antiques in Millwood.

Outdoor and sports in Winchester and the area: • 5 public golf courses, miniature golf a few miles north of town; • Hiking nearby (15 minutes to Sky Meadows State Park, 30 minutes to the start of the Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge hiking); • Fishing in the Shenandoah River;

Wineries: Winchester is a good base to visit many VA wineries and scenic drives. map of winery locations is available.