

LIVING

# Ultramarathoner, 62, tests his theories on his 100-mile runs

By Jerry Harkavy  
Associated Press writer

PORTLAND, MAINE — Long-distance running helped Bernd Heinrich develop and refine his theories about evolutionary traits that make it possible for some humans to run faster prey, like antelopes, into the ground.

The University of Vermont biology professor is an ultramarathoner, one of a tiny segment of the running community for whom 26 miles is not nearly enough.

At 62, Heinrich recently set out to defend his championship in the Maine Track Club's 50-mile race, relying on what he regards as a unique combination of skills.

The ability to sweat makes it possible for humans to run hour after hour without overheating and being forced to stop in order to cool down. Heinrich believes the capacity to focus the human mind beyond immediate pain and imagine rewards like winning a medal is a key to long-distance running.

Those skills have made humans well-suited to the sport, even outrunning faster animals like antelopes that possess high aerobic capacity but lack the endurance of some humans.

"The ultimate weapon of the long distance runner is the mind," Heinrich said. "When it gets painful, you have to think about the rewards up ahead. You have to keep that dream in your mind."

With a few exceptions — migratory birds, for instance — other animals are unable to look toward those kinds of long-range goals and stick with them, he said.

Heinrich's theories were spelled out last year in his book, "Racing the Antelope: What Animals Can Teach Us About Running and Life." He looks at a variety of animals — from camels and antelopes to bumblebees

and frogs — to gain insights that carry over into running.

"Running has given me a lot of my perspective," he said. "A lot of my research is related to exercise and endurance, temperature regulation, metabolic factors, what kind of fuel to burn."

By writing the book, which was reprinted this year in paperback under the title "Why We Run," Heinrich managed to combine his academic interests and the sport he has pursued for most of his life.

Heinrich moved from Germany to the United States as a child and ran track in high school and college. Aside from a few years when he set running aside, he continued to race or jog for

the fun of it, and his competitive streak remains intact.

He said it's obvious that his times are getting slower as he ages, even though he is able to maintain the same training regimen he followed when he was younger.

"It's interesting that when I'm running, I feel at the time that I'm just as fast," he said. "I feel that the clock is just going faster all the time. But the clock doesn't lie, and I just have to accept it."

Most remarkable about Heinrich, according to Don Allison, publisher of UltraRunning magazine, is his speed relative to his age as well as his longevity in a sport in which many runners burn out after only a few years.

Allison found Heinrich's theories on running unique, fascinating and thought-provoking, but noted that he lacked the scientific background to corroborate or challenge them. "It's a completely new angle," he said.

As a marathon runner, Heinrich recorded a personal best of 2 hours, 22 minutes in the late 1970s in California and had a couple of top-50 finishes at Boston.



AP PHOTO

Bernd Heinrich, 62, a University of Vermont biology professor, has used his running experiences to develop and refine his theories about evolution.

He was content with marathons until he noted that he was passing a lot of runners toward the end. He figured that his own physiological characteristics made him a better candidate for longer runs.

At one time, Heinrich held the U.S. records for 100 miles and 100 kilometers. He also held the distance record for a 24-hour run, completing more than 157 miles during that period.

At the recent Maine Track Club race in Brunswick, which drew a field of 22, Heinrich opted to run the 50-kilometer (31-mile) option, when it became clear he wasn't going to beat his earlier time in the 50-miler. He finished first in the shorter race in just under 4 hours and 5 minutes, more than an hour ahead of the runner-up.

His training for the race seemed no different than for runners half his age. He was running 100 miles a week before he scaled back to between 20

and 30 miles the week of the race.

In 1981, during his record-setting 100-kilometer race in which he averaged just over 6:38 minutes per mile, Heinrich tanked up on cranberry juice at various intervals. In his recent races, he has shifted to Gatorade and ice cream.

Heinrich, who has a retreat in western Maine, plans to keep on running as long as he can. He was sidelined a few years ago with knee injuries and arthritis, but the knee got better on its own and he was back on the road.

Despite his ultrarunning records, he doesn't see his performance as anything beyond what most people could achieve if they abandoned the couch potato lifestyle that comes with sitting in an office all day and not having to chase anything down.

"People need exercise," he said. "If we don't have it, we're in trouble."

## THE PEOPLE'S PHARMACY

Joe Graedon  
and Teresa Graedon, Ph.D.

# Sudden burst of lucidity remains a mystery

Q. My mother has Alzheimer's disease and hasn't spoken coherently for more than two years. She fell and broke her hip and was given a shot for pain. Like magic, she became lucid and responsive. This continued after surgery for several days.

We had a hard time convincing the hospital that she actually had Alzheimer's, but after several days she gradually slipped back into the mists and fogs of her brain. I wish researchers would investigate this amazing phenomenon.

A. Your experience is not unique. We have heard from several people that close relatives with Alzheimer's disease became amazingly lucid for short periods of time after receiving narcotic pain relievers.

One woman shared a similar story: "After suffering for several years with severe Alzheimer's disease, my mother required hip surgery. While in recovery, she spoke to me as if nothing was wrong with her brain. The day prior to surgery, she hadn't known I was her daughter. Trying to keep her calm, I had chattered to her about the fact I was moving, describing my new house."

"Under powerful post-anesthesia pain medication, she looked me in the eye and asked questions about how the move went, commenting in detail about what I had told her the day before, and asking about our dog by name. And yet within several days, she didn't know who I was and never did again."

Neuroscientists don't have an explanation for this kind of temporary improvement. We agree that it deserves study.

Q. I hope that you can help me. I never took pills before, but now I am swallowing far too many. My hair is falling out at an alarming rate, and I wonder if it could be due to any of the medicines I take.

My hair was always thick until last year, when I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and high blood pressure. I take methotrexate, Calan, clonidine,

Prempro and Prozac. When the pain is too severe I take Feldene.

This distressing condition is not a family trait, which is what the doctor has implied. He shrugs and says the dose of methotrexate I am on is not high enough to cause hair loss. Is there any solution, or do I just have to shut my mouth and put up with it?

A. Almost every medicine you are on has been linked to hair loss. Your doctor will need to investigate drug-induced hair loss to see if there are appropriate alternatives for your medicines.

To help you start this conversation, we are sending you our Guide to Hair and Nail Care, which lists many medicines that can cause hair loss. Anyone who would like a copy, please send \$2 in check or money order with a long (No. 10), stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Graedons' People's Pharmacy, No. H-31, P.O. Box 52027, Durham, N.C. 27717-2027.

Blood pressure pills like Calan and clonidine can contribute to this problem, but it is important not to stop taking them suddenly. Your doctor might be able to prescribe different medications that don't have this effect.

Q. Is there any way to tell if you have the flu instead of a bad cold? I suffered for three weeks last month. My doctor said it couldn't be flu, so he wouldn't prescribe any medicine for it.

A. There is now a rapid flu test that can tell within six hours if someone has influenza. If the result is positive, there are effective flu medicines, such as Tamiflu or Relenza, that can help overcome the infection within a few days.

In their column, Joe and Teresa Graedon answer letters from readers. Write to them in care of King Features Syndicate, 888 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10019, or e-mail them at [pharmacy@mindspring.com](mailto:pharmacy@mindspring.com) or via their Web site: [www.peoplespharmacy.org](http://www.peoplespharmacy.org). Their newest book is "The People's Pharmacy Guide to Home and Herbal Remedies" (St. Martin's Press). © 2002 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

## A 60-second interview with Peter Jennings

ROSE, from E-1

What's your favorite spot in New Orleans to hang out?

My wife says I'm not allowed to tell you, and since she's with me, let's just say that was a great service at the Baptist church.

What goes through your head when the wheels of your plane touch down here?

Thank God I made it across Lake Pontchartrain again.

I noticed that New Orleans is mentioned only once in the new book and that was in relation to the national murder rates. Is that the best we

could do?

New Orleans has Wynton Marsalis and the legacy of Stephen Ambrose; you don't need me.

What's the question you are asked most often at book signings and appearances?

I wish it was about the possibility of war in Iraq, but these days it's about ABC and CNN.

What question annoys you most?

Almost all of the above.

How about this one: Who would you rather play golf with, Dan Rather or Tom Brokaw?

Can you imagine either of those guys playing golf?

Seriously, do you three ever hang out and talk football and chicks?

Can you imagine any of us talking chicks?

What do you think of Al Roker's new look?

I'm happy for his tailor.

Any thoughts on The New York Times' assertion that the Fox network's influence swung the most recent congressional elections?

Don't believe everything you read in The Times. The New York Times, that is; The Times-Picayune is another story.

Maybe that was a set-up, but who do you think is the most annoying newsman (or woman) on TV today?

Let me think about that. I'll get back to you.

I'm a daily press guy. I can't quite place my finger on it, but I think there's a difference between you and me. Could you help me here?

No, but based on this interview, I assume you need help.

Catch Chris Rose live on the Web each Tuesday at 3 p.m., or leave a comment anytime in the Chris Rose forum, both at [www.nola.com](http://www.nola.com). You can e-mail [crose@timespicayune.com](mailto:crose@timespicayune.com); call (504) 826-3309 or (504) 473-6544; or fax to 826-3186.

## ON HEALTH

Carolyn Susman

# Treatments can't stop early labor, doctor says

Common treatments to help prevent or stop pre-term labor — including bed rest — appear to have little impact, according to Dr. Robert L. Goldenberg of the University of Alabama.

Goldenberg points out, in an article in the November issue of Obstetrics & Gynecology, that despite advances in obstet-

rics, the rate of premature births in the United States has not decreased in the past 40 years and in fact has increased slightly.

Spontaneous pre-term labor causes about half of all pre-term births (less than 37 weeks gestation), and is a leading cause of newborn death. While the exact cause of pre-term labor is often unknown, there is strong evidence that intrauterine infection may play a role in very early pre-term labor.

## Osteoporosis therapy

A new type of therapy, using a unique class of synthetic compounds, may someday protect men and women from the bone-weakening disease osteoporosis. Researchers reported in the Oct. 25 issue of Science that early studies of one of these

compounds called estren successfully preserved and even restored bone mass in an animal model without the side effects associated with sex hormone therapies.

If you have questions or comments, write Carolyn Susman at The Palm Beach Post, P.O. box 24700, West Palm Beach, Fla. 33416, or e-mail [csusman@pbpost.com](mailto:csusman@pbpost.com). Distributed by Cox Newspapers



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