

The Fred Bigelow “Virtual” 100K Challenge A Comox Valley Journey

2020 has been the kind of year that has challenged our sense of normal, almost to the point of breaking. Many of us have day to day struggles with staying focused; our goals have had to be reformulated or completely recreated. In the case of athletes; runners, bikers, swimmers, skiers, paddlers etc.. the difficulty comes when all of the events they have trained for are gone in one full swipe. Too bad, you say, for those elite folks who lost out on the Olympics (Tokyo in July) but it goes much deeper than that. The other end of the stick is the common athlete who enters sporting events to use as a goal to keep them on their fitness path. In some folks it can be their whole reason to be. They may not win, or even place well in their age category, but they have solace in their everyday because they are going to go and workout! They have something to train for.

When Brigadier General (retired), Comox Airport CEO and Comox Valley Road Runners board member Fred Bigelow died this past September it is doubtful that he fully realized how many folks loved and respected him. How many he mentored. Fred loved the Comox Valley and all it had to offer; going out to run, bike or paddle whenever he could. He led many eager new runners through their first steps in their new sport at both the local 5K Running Clinic by CVRR or Thursday Night Trails by Extreme Runners. He had his own running group as well that he loved to challenge with night running in the bush or navigating new trails with map, compass and GPS. Fred Jagger and the Running Stones is still together and put on a lot of kilometres during this challenge. Fred and his equally active wife, Sarah, have a strong supporting cast of family, friends and colleagues, in the Comox Valley and beyond. Many of whom actively honoured Fred’s life by doing exactly what he did... get out there!

So back to 2020 and the lack of goal events and the need for focused workouts. Bring on the Fred Bigelow Virtual 100K challenge, a Comox Valley Road Runners event. It is something Fred would have whole heartedly participated in. It delivered a month of dedicated training for all who entered and has a strong charity component as well. Net proceeds are divided equally between the Cumberland Community Forest Society and the United Riders of Cumberland. These were Fred’s choices and organizations that carry significant influence in some of the very best forest management and recreation around.

One of Fred’s favourite lines when he thought you did well was, “You don’t suck”. It might sound understated but if you received it from Fred you really got a compliment. In keeping with this Fred’ism the 100k Challenge is awarding all participants who achieve the 100K November goal a metal shoe tag with You don’t suck hand stamped on it. A special mantra for folks to know that Fred is with them and that they have really achieved something special. These are being created special for this event by fellow runner Fiona McQuillan Onneken. Her business Metal Mantra Jewelry and her organic farm Fireweed Farmstead are at her home in Merville.

GPS, Compass, Navigation, Planning, Maps.... these were second hat for Fred. He was always super prepared. In his honour his friends and fellow competitors Kathy Campbell, Sarah Seeds and Lynne Swift re-created a fabulous MOMAR (Mind Over Mountain Adventure Race) Orienteering course. Set up adjacent to the Cumberland Lake Campground at Comox Lake it provided participants a great way to add distance to their month and hone their navigation skills at the same time. Thanks go out to Bryan Tasaka of MOMAR for the map use.

Achievers are all over the place. You would think 100k would be enough to keep our sport enthusiasts busy for 30 days but no.... although many reached the goal distance with half the month still to go, they kept going. Gordon Harris stands out for riding his bike over 100K on the very first day of the challenge! He finished with 545 kilometres on his tires and on his shoes! In the end, out of 144 participants 114 achieved the 100K goal and then some. An amazing 15 passed the 200K mark, 9 passed the 300K mark, 2 got in to the 400+ category and incredibly 4 participants made it well past the 500K mark! Do they have the race's namesake in mind? Yes! Fred is on their shoulders..but.. they have found their own excitement in the goal. The sense of achievement is palatable when hearing and reading the comments. This event has challenged folks that find it easy to rack up the mileage but has also inspired those that don't. It has gotten people up off the couch or out of the slump they have found themselves stuck on (or in) and got them moving.

Well done folks.....You Don't Suck!

For more info www.cvrr.ca

See photos, comments and routes on the free app Strava, (search Fred Bigelow 100K Memorial) or #theFred100 on Instagram and Facebook

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CVRR Fred Bigelow 100K Memorial