

BROOKLYN HASH HOUSE HARRIERS

"IT'S THE BEER, STUPID"

RUN 128 9/22/97 HARES: JM "FLUFFY" NELSON & JM CARDINAL O'CONNOR
START: GRAND ARMY PLAZA ONIN: THE GATE/5 AV. & 3 ST.

SCRIBE: JANET SLOBODIEN

I'd like to explain why Brooklyn hashes should be mandatory for all, not just for me. It was Monday, a mere few days after their last trail in Brooklyn, but the joint masters were at it again. As a fellow Brooklynite, I had been instructed that attendance at any five hashes does not excuse me from any other. Jerry had assured me earlier that the trail would stay in the 'hood. Of course, that's what he said about his previous trail, none of which went anywhere near where I live. That required me to get a car service with him from a random street corner and still walk part of the way home because the driver tried to rip me off, despite what Jerry claims was a huge tip that he'd already given him (albeit mistakenly). Despite my suspicions I decided to give it another chance, but I'd find my own way home, thanks.

I arrived at Grand Army Plaza to find a group of regulars that I'd have to quantify as some. But not enough, considering the fact that the weather as well as the location was perfect for a run. Jerry, explaining that he set the trail by himself, made even more excuses than usual for the trail. Apparently the nice weather and since-disappeared sunshine had encouraged him to set lots of falses (none marked) and to get generally "carried away." The pack very hesitantly took off to the commands of "on-on," "go that way," and "leave already!"

We welcomed the official arrival of autumn where I suppose is appropriate, among the trees. As expected we went directly to the park over sidewalk construction and a high fence. I had to apply pressure to my bleeding finger for the rest of the trail. We quickly determined that it gets very dark early in these newfangled seasons, particularly in wooded areas! We also agreed that it is not safe in these areas in the dark--ever. Therefore, we decided to stick together for the duration. With a few breaks at checks for scampering over fields and wooded hills, the marks were all obvious—once we were actually stepping on them. The pack marched along in single file over dense underbrush and narrow paths trying not to trip over each other until we reached a check near the bandshell.

Our arrival was heralded from the nearby darkness by the music of the neighborhood bagpiper. Due to the nature of his instrument, he had been asked to remove himself from his place of residence. That request came from his neighbors. Nevertheless, he continued to entertain us as we searched the surrounding park, streets, playground, and sky for a sign of the trail. After we had each checked each direction individually and as a group, caught our breath, stretched out the kinks, chatted, complained, and checked some more, we were definitely ready to move on.

Yoshi and I finally plodded down Prospect Park West, following the sound of—I don't know, perhaps a dog barking. Then Don, who must have been heading for the subway, returned to tell

us that the rest of the trail did in fact exist. One needed only to go out of the park, down to the next avenue, left for a couple of blocks and there was the mark on the other side of the street. I clung to my inexplicable faith in the common sense of the hare and assumed that we had simply missed a few dozen marks leading to that point. As it turned out, the first marks had been across the street from the check, carefully placed on a construction site. I don't know how we could have missed dabs of white flour on the street-long pile of concrete rubble!

We hurried on, hoping to make it in before winter. Too much fresh air was apparently starting to get to us. Roy ran back to the pack with chalk just in time to prevent Eva from marking a check with something she had pulled out of a garbage can. We continued down the Slope, getting so close to the Gowanus Canal that Yoshi could smell it. And he ran on with new-found purpose. It turned out to be merely a detour to get our heart rates up again. We turned back toward Fifth Avenue and the on-in at The Gate. This new tavern has the distinct advantage of being within walking distance of my apartment.

Inside, we were greeted warmly by the esteemed David Byron-Brown (aka Homey), who early on had followed his unfailing instincts leading him to the nearest phone. I was pleased to learn later that he and his wife plan to move to a building just a bit closer to my own home. We seem destined for more convenient on-ins in the future.

Aleks arrived as a civilian dressed in runner's clothing just in time to join us at the tables outside for the down-downs. The singing was subdued since we drank simultaneously for our individual but equally heinous sins, and we haven't yet mastered ventriloquism. There were plenty of complaints about what we were given to drink, but, to me, the beer tasted like wine. Not good wine, mind you. Not good at all, actually, when you're expecting lager. We retreated to the warmth inside the bar and some Better Beer. Eventually the pizza arrived, proving that John had in fact bothered to order some.

Steve(n) polled everyone for advice relating to the unfortunate intrusion of ethics into his job search. I'm afraid we offered him little wisdom, since no one admitted familiarity with the less scrupulous options. As hashers, we should realize that although some may actually claim to conduct the rest of life in an honest manner, no one ever mastered the trail by taking the moral high ground. Each of us has attempted a few shortcuts, sprinted down a few false trails, all to get to the same place that we could have reached through hard work, perseverance and faith in our hares to reward our efforts. The reward? A good beer in a cozy bar with friendly people, followed by a leisurely stroll home in the refreshing fall air.