

Crazy Bob: The Kind of Guy He Was

By Richard Barnum-Reece (owned the race from the late '70's – 2007)

So people want to know about Crazy Bob. Who was that Crazy Bob anyway, a guy asked after getting eaten alive, avoiding rattlesnakes, fending off angry bees, following a haunted man with a walking stick who wouldn't move over on the path up Death Row that allows no passing except if you step aside.

Crazy Bob was crazy, I reply. For example, he had a tattoo that no one except those who belonged to his church knew about. He kept it hidden under his lower front lip and only when you'd passed the test did he show it to you.

He showed it to me once when I hadn't seen him in two years. He'd been in Sitka, Alaska, mining for gold, and then he was there, right across the room. I was trying to impress a woman with whom I'd fallen in love and he thought that was - well, yes - special, so he flashed the secret tattoo across the room in my direction.

The woman immediately got up and walked out of my life.

That was just the kind of guy Crazy Bob was. He didn't believe in conventional courtesy. He did what he wanted to do. He liked to "rattle some cages."

And now he's dead.

I named my son after Crazy Bob because I thought so much of him. As my boy grew up, I constantly counseled him to be like Crazy Bob: the boss of yourself, the king of your universe, the magic man in a magic show. No Deals.

Then he grew up and told me he wasn't planning to show up for our summer vacation together.

I swallowed hard. Now, I reasoned, isn't that a perfect example of what Crazy Bob would want him to do? Think for himself; run his own race; eschew what he was instructed.

You've got to hand it to Crazy Bob. He may be dead but he's still having an influence on the living.

Take Crazy Bob's Bair Gutsman for example. It's 11 to 13 miles depending on how often you get lost. If you don't get lost you're disqualified.

Arne Hultquist, who reminds me of Crazy Bob more than any other living person, is the president of the Mt. Goat Track Club. That's the group that really controls the damn race. If you want to get into the club you're automatically disqualified from membership; if you have absolutely no interest in joining that club or any other you're a member.

Not long ago I showed up at a Rainbow Family Gathering on the North Slope of the Uintas. After wandering around among the thousands of people who had gathered from across the land, I was struck by how many folks would say, "Welcome home!" rather than the traditional: "Hello." I was also taken by the strange and wonderful sight of a man screaming and yelling about how screwed up all these "damn hippies" were.

And the hippies - doctors, lawyers, advertising people, laborers, tradesmen and women - all smiled.

Contrarians were welcome. There was a guy talking to two young girls, intently explaining his philosophy. He was completely naked; there was a young girl bare chested doing yoga in the meadow; a dog sitting by a log chewing on a bone; the sun shining down after, only a week before, a snowstorm blanketed the high mountains.

A place Crazy Bob could call home.

We started the race to commemorate Crazy Bob because we loved him despite his contrarian, hippie ways. We hoped others would come run, walk and crawl the race as a memorial to someone they loved; or as a celebration of a life they cared for - including their own.

For some 25 plus years we've carried on the tradition.

And we plan to do it as long as the Rainbow Family gathers on those long, cool, magical summer days ... maybe longer.