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M^{arquette} on the Move

by Dave Foley

UPPER PENINSULA CITY A SILENT SPORTS HAVEN



The Marquette Bicycle Path following several miles of Lake Superior shoreline is a magnet for bikers and runners.

PHOTOS BY DAVE FOLEY

You gotta go to Marquette." I heard that from student friends attending Northern Michigan University, my cross-country ski buddies and folks that mountain bike. When my wife, Cyndy, signed up for the Ladies of the Lake Sea Kayak Symposium, I put my kayak next to her's on the roof of our Jeep, strapped my bike on the back, and packed our camping gear.

With a population of just over 20,000, this lakeshore community isn't big enough for traffic jams or claustrophobic-inducing blocks upon blocks of downtown buildings. Most of the city streets look like the builders chose to put up houses around the trees rather than buzz cut the forest and create subdivisions. Marquette has managed to avoid the glitzy, neon prefab look of most 21st-century cities. The fast-food restaurants, big-box stores and chain motels, instead of being in the downtown area, are clustered along U.S. Highway 41, which skirts the city to the south.

Busy multiuse paths

After setting up our tent on a rustic site in Tourist Park, a forested campground on the north side of town, we biked to Presque Isle Park. A paved bike trail follows the up-and-down roadway along the perimeter of this 323-acre park which, except for a few acres, has been left wild. While the cyclists are restricted to the 5K outer trail, runners and hikers can use a system of marked trails through the park's interior.

Leaving the park, we continued south along the Marquette Bicycle Path that parallels the beach. This asphalt pathway obviously is a magnet for runners, bikers, walkers, along with the occasional roller blader and roller skier. The lake was never far away, and we pedaled past swimmers taking an evening dip, playgrounds crowded with kids and parents, as well as a spirited beach volleyball game. In the midst of the hottest summer in memory, it was clear that the beach was the place to be. With six miles of sandy shoreline within the Marquette city limits, there was room for everyone.

The bike trail, almost 13 miles in length, swings down the Lake Superior shoreline than curves inland running toward the west side of the town and

Runners enjoy the lakeshore pathway that winds along Lake Superior's shoreline.



then north. Where there isn't a paved pathway, bike lanes have been painted on city streets making most of the town easily accessible to cyclists.

The next day, while Cyndy joined 100 women paddlers for the symposium, I continued to explore Marquette. Being home to Northern Michigan University means the town has a large contingent of fitness-minded folks, so it is not surprising I discovered four high-end bike shops.

Mountain bike invite

Marquette County has a limited number of paved roads other than the busy thoroughfares. However, the rural Marquette area is spider-webbed with miles

of dirt paths and two-track roads snaking through the forests. For the adventuresome biker, this amounts to having unlimited places to explore.

"Most mountain bikers favor the South Marquette Trail System," said Brian Dietsch, an employee at the Quick Stop Bike Shop. With three loops each five to seven miles in length and 30 miles of trail overall, this network provides challenging riding over rugged terrain. Trail descriptions at the site help riders to choose a route to fit their abilities.

North of town, along County Highway 550 to the village of Big Bay, mountain bikers will find a series of paths in the vicinity of Harlow Lake. Though



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The Ore-to-Shore bike Race in August draws more than 2000 riders.

some routes are over easy-rolling terrain, there are some steep sections with stairs. The trail markings occasionally become dubious, so this is best done with someone knowledgeable about the trail network.

My visit, on the second weekend of August, coincided with the Ore to Shore Mountain Bike Epic. More than 2,000 riders headed to starting lines in Negaunee and Ispheming to compete in either the 48-mile Hard Rock or the 24-mile Soft Rock. A drenching rain on the night before the race, created mudholes and standing water sections that added more stress to already grueling races. Marquette also hosts the Superior Bike Fest on the last weekend in June, which features road bike races of 25, 55 and 80 miles along with eight- and 25-mile mountain bike competitions, as well as downhill slalom, uphill climbs and obstacle courses for cyclists.

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Marquette Marathon makes comeback

To get the inside information on the running scene I talked with longtime officer of the Upper Peninsula Road Runners Club Bill Sved.

"We have lots of runners here but no real organized running community," he said. "Other than the Big Bay Marathon relay in May, we don't have any high-profile races. However, with the paved paths and numerous trails branching off them, runners can put together long runs within the city limits without having to double back."

After a hiatus of 10 years, the Marquette Marathon, sponsored by Ringside Fitness, has returned. The race, which is the only marathon run on pavement in

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the Upper Peninsula, followed a fairly level double-loop course with a single-loop option for half marathoners. A number of runners were delighted to once again have fast course in the U.P. and certified as a Boston Marathon qualifier.

Kayaking gem

With Lake Superior on the city's eastern and northern border, resident kayakers

have ample paddle opportunities close at hand. Within a couple of hours of paddling, I had glided next to monstrous ore boat loading docks, past marinas packed with pleasure boats, along sandy beaches and next to rocky cliffs.

Among local kayakers, launching into Middle Bay near the beach on the north side of Presque Isle Park and then heading

to Partridge Island is a popular excursion. And it's only a 45-mile drive to Munising and the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, which is considered by many to be Michigan's premiere paddling destination.

Dave Foley loves living on a lake at the edge of a forest, but if he ever became a city dweller, he would likely move to Marquette.

Editor's Letter

Continued from page 4

halfway point hearing my brother-in-law say, "You only have a marathon left to run!"

I hadn't gotten that far before the soreness in my quads started to worry me. It took me 4.5 hours to cover 25 miles. At 50K (31 miles) I was about 45 minutes behind what I had run, just three weeks earlier, at the Chippewa Moraine 50K (where, it should be noted, I started too fast and paid dearly for it in the final 10 miles). I started the Ice Age 50 moving more than four minutes per mile slower than I averaged at the sloppy fun Trail Mix 25K in Bloomington, Minnesota, on April 16. I had trouble convincing myself that this was a good thing; that it meant I was running conservatively and smart.

Perhaps unavoidably I had a bad patch mentally. It lasted about 10 miles. I didn't snap out of until about mile 36, at which point I resigned myself to the fatigue and remembered U.P. ultrarunner Danny Dehlin say, "It's usually about five or six hours in that I realize it can't possibly hurt more."

In an essay included in *A Step Beyond: A Definitive Guide to Ultrarunning*, Peter Gargarin wrote, "Any experienced ultrarunner can relate experiences of being dead to the world one moment, only to be full of energy a half-hour later. When you do get it back together again, it feels wonderful."

It was neither wonderful nor unexpected to have my Garmin GPS watch battery die with more than 15 miles to go. I had to run the next 8 miles "naked," not knowing how I was progressing. Rather than panic over being stripped of a technological crutch, I shrugged and embraced my more natural state as a runner. Consequently, I found my stride on that stretch of winding trail.

At the Emma Carlin Trail turnaround, I grabbed a cup of flat Coke and

a triangle of PB&J on Wonder Bread and stupidly asked a volunteer, "Where do I go from here?" I was pointed back the way I came.

I faltered a bit on the 3.2-mile return to the Horseriders' Camp aid station. But upon arrival I was surprised to be told, with just 10K to go, I was at 8 hours 15 minutes.

"Well, I probably won't break 9 hours," I said.

"No, you won't," Adam, my brother-in-law, confirmed. "But if you don't break 10 hours, I'm gonna have to kick your"

The rest was understood. So I borrowed my wife's old Garmin and climbed and climbed out of the aid station, taking nearly 19 minutes to cover the next mile. I knew I'd need to pour it on if I wanted to finish under 9:30 and escape Adam's wrath.

The backup Garmin couldn't retain a signal, but the clock was running. Over the next three miles, I took some risks on the steep downhill littered with loose rock to get chugging at a sub 8 minute per mile pace. (Finally, I understood why my training program for this ultra called for speedwork.) "What a comeback!" yelled one guy as I passed, obviously remembering my earlier zombie shuffle. The other runners I passed expressed similar amazement and offered encouragement. If not for the five hills in the final 1.5 miles, which I walked from force of habit, I might have caught a few more than the 10 I did pick off.

I finished in 9:26:27, 72nd overall out of 222 overall and 15th out of 33 in my age group. Not too shabby. Despite my late surge, the second 25 miles took nearly 30 minutes longer to cover. The discovery of that "other gear" I didn't know I had made up for that, though.

I wouldn't have done nearly as well if not for my wife and brother-in-law, who did a phenomenal job crewing for me. At

nearly every aid station, they refilled my water bottle, resupplied me with gels, made me eat potato chips and pop one or more sodium capsules. Thanks to them and the brilliantly stocked and staffed aid stations, I experienced no cramping or stomach issues. That is no small feat.

And speaking of feet, no blisters! I left the course with a couple bruised big toes from repeatedly stubbing them and will probably lose the nails that had finally grown back. I suspect that's a recurring case of plantar fasciitis in my right heel, which I felt coming on more than a week before the race. That will take awhile to rid myself of. But in all, I survived the ordeal in remarkable shape.

I'm not eager to repeat it. But I could get swept up by all the exuberance and cringe-worthy recollections in the race reports written by other Ice Age 50 runners on blogs, Facebook and Daily Mile. If I keep reading those, that imaginary mugger could wind up chasing me to another far flung finish line.

Joel

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