

## 39<sup>th</sup> Annual La Luz Trail Run

by Rodger Sack

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year that I have been race director of the La Luz Trail Run. Most of you may already know the story of how the club became involved with La Luz. The race had been coordinated by New Mexico USA Track & Field for several years and they decided to no longer support the race. John Bryl of Fleet Feet Sports asked if the club was interested in taking over the race and I said that I would give it a shot. As most of you are aware, this is one of the few races held in a federal Wilderness area. The race was first held in 1965, before the Sandia Mountains were designated a Wilderness area. When the area became a Wilderness area, the La Luz Trail Run was allowed to continue under a grandfather clause in the legislation, but with a maximum limit of 400 runners. However, if there were a lapse in the occurrence of the race, we would lose the right to continue holding the race.

I have tried to introduce changes to the race in the 5 years that I have been race director. I added finisher's shirts to award those that had made the climb to the top and actually finished the grueling 9-mile race. I added water bottles filled with water for all of the finishers. John Bryl volunteered to act as race announcer at the end and does a great job of announcing the finishers and providing other pertinent information about the runners, finishing order and also helping with the awards ceremony. Many runners like to hear their name announced to the crowds as they finish the race. I have tinkered with various starting dates for the registration process, finally settling on May 1<sup>st</sup> to begin the process every year and the race has always been held on the first Sunday in August.

Then along came the multi-year drought in the western US, resulting in closure of the Sandias the past few summers as a result of potential fire danger. The length of the closures has been increasing each summer and there was a good possibility that the race would not take place in 2004. However, the annual summer monsoon season arrived about 10 days before the race and saved the day.

The weather on race day was fabulous. I loaded up my truck and Eric Bocian loaded up his pick-up and we headed up to the Crest – arriving at 6:15AM. The Ham Radio crew arrived and took their spots along the trail. During the past two years a local scout troop has manned the two lower water stops on the trail and planned to do so again this year. However, on Friday before the race, the scoutmaster called and stated that they couldn't get enough volunteers and would have to cancel out this year. This turn of events sent Roxie Miller scrambling to find club members to carry water to these locations and people to man these spots on race day. Thanks to all the volunteers who stepped forward at the last minute to get this job done.

The race went very smoothly. Thanks to everyone that helped out at the start line, with packet pick-up on Saturday and all of those that helped at the finish line. A big thanks to Roxie for everything that she did, including entry of all the bib numbers and times in the computer on Sunday afternoon to help me get out the results by Sunday night – that's

why I wasn't able to attend the picnic. It took most of the afternoon to get the equipment put away and finalize the results.

**Highlights of the 2004 Race:** Excellent coverage by the press (Journal, Tribune and Channel 7). Joe Diaz (weatherman from Channel 7) ran the race and there was good TV coverage of the race by Channel 7. The journal did several stories on La Luz and we made the front page of the Sports Page on the day after the race. The favorites prevailed in the race: Simon Gutierrez (time of 1:20:54) for the men and Rachael Cuellar (time of 1:43:02) for the women. I was particularly impressed by the courage (or maybe that should be stupidity) of the shirtless male runner that finished with his bib number pinned to his bare chest. Another oddity – Charlie Young finished the race wearing a shirt (Charlie is famous for finishing races without a shirt – no matter the season of the year). Former Governor Gary Johnson finished the race, but was hard to recognize with his new longer hairstyle. Larry Johnson was the oldest runner at 84 years young and Channel 7 sports department did a great story on Larry earlier in the week. 11 year old Lillias Gordon was the youngest run finisher. A huge “**Thank You**” to everyone that helped make the race a pleasure for me.

Here is the **final** decision on the 2005 race (contrary to what was published in the Journal, temporarily appeared on our web-site, and was announced in the information in the packets):

**Registration for the 2005 La Luz Trail Run will be available on May 1, 2005.**

- **2005 registrations will not be sent to prior year entrants – no mail-in registrations will be accepted.**
- **Registration will be available on-line at Active. Com on 5/1/05 – starting at 8AM Mountain Standard Time and in person at Fleet Feet Sports at opening of business on 5/1/05.**
- **For the 2005 race, I will take 300 on-line registrations and 100 walk-in registrations at the Fleet Feet Store in Albuquerque.**
- **The 2005 race date is 8/7/05. A contingency plan will be developed in the event that the trail is still closed on 8/7/05 and this plan will be available next year.**

**I decided to keep the date the same as in the past to continue the tradition – the race will always be the first or second Sunday in August and race registration will begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. Fortunately the first Sunday in August 2005 falls on the 7<sup>th</sup>, which will be a week later than the 2004 race.**

I enjoy being the race director for this event – even though it takes a lot of time. I have tried to make the race available to anyone that wants to run it and am trying to make the registration process as fair as possible for everyone.

Good luck to those attempting to get into the race next year and enjoy your running on the trails.