

# MAUI MARATHON MONOLOG

By Hugh Foster

The apprehension that accompanies a pre-race marathoner was considerably offset by the relaxed atmosphere at the Maui War Memorial starting line and the aspect of a new experience to those of us who were first timers in the Valley Isle's annual event. One received indication and subsequent pleasure that this, indeed, was a small-town race and as such designed to be more fun than grueling.

An approximate starting field of 500 runners out of 760 entered, the largest yet, set out from Wailuku at 6 am to joyfully jog to Kaanapali, 26 miles 385 yards to the west. However, the internal gyroscope that demands validation for miles of training and the competitive urge in all of us started to take over during the initial surge of the pack in the first miles of the race. The start, uncrowded by Honolulu standards, was tempered by the hill leading up to Wailuku town, then a fast left turn started us on the gradual 6-mile downhill to Maalaea.

The chill of the morning air and darkness provided a false sense of security as many runners settled into a very fast early pace, aided by the downgrade and 20-knot tailwind. Whatever time was gained during this stretch was to be given up in the later stages of the race. On the long and gradual approach to McGregor Pt. and "the Pali's," the sun rose and signaled the fast paces must be slowed into reasonable strides. "The Pali's," the series of short up-and-down hills on the Honopiilani Hy., brought many to their knees, as they required runners to go from "goat gear" to "freewheel" and back again.

Once down from these undulations the course flattened and we began the grind to Oluwalu. The only nice thing about the 40-knot crosswind that blew a few runners from the highway was that it kept temperatures down during this part of the run. At Oluwalu we were diverted to the paralleling cane-haul road for the final 10 miles. During this stretch there were no cars, no crowds and

plenty of sugar cane and it got downright lonely in some parts except for the welcome relief of the aid stations which were two miles apart at this point.

Then came the surprise! The gradient of the cane road insidiously became steeper as we approached Lahaina town. Could they be serious? The last six miles . . . uphill? They were serious, and at a point many usually breeze through, the "Wall" appeared. As many started to entrench themselves into the "survival" pace, exist from aid station to station, and turn the "switches" off, the historical Pioneer Mill Sugar Cane factory had another surprise! They felt it was a great day to water down the dust and provide genuine "stick to the feet," Mississippi-brand, patty cake adobe mud that added several pounds to an 8-oz. racing flat. At this point if there had been any traffic on the cane road they would have stopped for hitchhikers. Fortunately there was enough equipment parked to return the mud to its rightful owners and provide a scraping surface for the next hundred yards.

During the last arduous miles to Whalers Willage it appeared that the cane road had no end and that we all, like Sambo, were to turn into butter. But slowly as we bore on in compound low gear, the Village came into sight and the last half mile was lost in unconscious joy. The carnival atmosphere at the finish aided recovery as did the free-flowing beverages, with most of us glad that we finished and responded to the challenge of the course.

Kudos to Valley Isle Road Runners for an excellent job on aid and organization, making this, one of the best of the "small town races." It belongs in all marathoners' portfolio of experience.

TIMES: Hugh Murray 3:05; Hugh Foster 3:17; Bill Stricklin 3:30; Jon Kelleher 3:59; Leslie Ferguson 4:16; Cricket Stricklin 4:30; Scott Ferguson 4:53; Bruce Ames 4:59.

