

Puff, Puff, Puff Yourself to Death



by Amos Arthur Holmes

This past week I made a most astounding discovery. I was walking through my garden when I glanced down and saw a hummingbird's tibia. Great Scott!! What would this mean to the world of science? I ran into the house and called the Smithsonian Institution. The curator, completely rapturous, asked me to bring the tibia to him immediately.

My discovery is now on display at the Smithsonian. It rests in this huge mahogany and glass case and is open to public viewing. The crowds that pass by seem a bit puzzled as a hummingbird's tibia is dreadfully small and the people believe they are passing an empty case. And if so, why the three policemen standing guard over it?

While I was at the Smithsonian I spent hours studying the various exhibits. So many strange and mysterious sights. But it was only when I sat on a bench that was placed beside the mall that ran in front of the Smithsonian that I encountered the most strange and mysterious sight I have ever seen.

JOGGERS.

They came wheezing past me in great hoards. A peculiar locomotion that puffed itself along until it disappeared over the horizon. Tall, skinny men who plodded past me with looks of determination and great agony. Amazon women who flowed past while monstrous bosoms quaked and shook and bounced.

As I sat there gazing in wonder at this multitude of masochists I reflected on possible reasons for this absurd phenomena. Insanity? Exhibitionism? Physical fitness? What major quirk in the thought process could lift one weary leg after another weary leg. . . over and over. . . forever and ever?

A mountain of a woman jogged past. Her face was chalk white and her lungs were bursting. Great rolls of fat were flying in uncoordinated fury. Her pants had fallen down and she struggled and floundered down that gravel path until her huge posterior was lost to view.

A man who looked as if he were suffering from tuberculosis, and whose bizarre advance was accompanied by torturous gulps for air, made me stand up, and cry, "WHAT IN THE HELL ARE YOU DOING TO YOURSELF?"

Some of this I could understand. The fat could possibly wish to become thinner. The thin might wish to become fatter. The tall to become

shorter. If you looked hard enough, and reasoned unwisely enough, you could understand most of the joggers.

But the ones who left me completely puzzled were the old people. Tall varicose-vein types. Wrinkled bodies whose gray tresses fluttered thinly as they ran.

As I sat there on that bench I noticed a man approaching me who was most assuredly in his nineties. His bald head was glistening with sweat and his bones were rattling in ominous protest. I hailed him and asked if he might answer a question or two. He stopped, still running in place, and adjusted his hearing-aid.

"Sir I said, "Why are you, at your age, out here jogging?"

"Because" the old man panted, "I ain't been doing too good with the women and I thought I might get in shape so that I could do better. It's as simple as that."

I looked him over closely. His false teeth were hanging halfway out of his mouth and he had a rash on the side of his face that was obscenely ugly. His thin arms melded into his thin legs to form a graveyard of bones.

"If you will excuse my bluntness" I said, "You are unbelievably hideous. How can jogging possibly help your bony structure, your false teeth that don't exactly fit, and that vulgar rash upon your face that is obscenely ugly?"

The old man smiled. You could tell he liked bluntness.

"Son" he puffed, "I don't jog for physical reasons. The therapeutic value is in what jogging does for my aspirations. If a female sees me jogging then she knows for sure that I'm not dead. If she sees my legs working then she has to consider the possibility that other things I own might be working also. Do you see what I mean?"

It was very hot and this caused his logic to be lost on me. But still I probed.

"Sir, is jogging satisfactory to you in every way?"

The old man frowned, and replied, "It's hell on pacemakers. This is my sixth pacemaker. Every other day, or so, I fall down while jogging and I almost die. They rush me to the hospital and install a new pacemaker. . . and hell. . . I'm out jogging the very same day."

I hate to feel superior. I hate it when I subject myself to the folly of believing that my thoughts are the wisest thoughts or the only thoughts. I sat relaxed on the bench and as the old man started jogging away from me, I called after him.

"GOOD LUCK WITH THE WOMEN."

"Thank you" he wheezed.