

Harry Potter Comes to Mt. Greylock

Members of the Western Massachusetts Athletic Club always knew Mt. Greylock was magical, with its mist-enshrouded War Memorial crowning the top and its winter-white hump inspiring Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. But this year provided firm confirmation: Harry Potter & Company chose Greylock Glen as a rendezvous for their first MAGICon. Planning had apparently begun after J.K. Rowling announced that Ilvermorny, the North American School of Witchcraft and Wizardry was hidden on Mt. Greylock. According to Rowling's *Pottermore* website, "It is concealed from non-magic gaze by a variety of powerful enchantments, which sometimes manifest in a wreath of misty cloud."

And most of us had no idea. We thought we were just making our annual Father's Day pilgrimage to Lady Greylock to run either 13.5 or 3.5 miles over the historic training ground of World War II's 10th Mountain Division. Those guys were tough—a hike up and an arrow straight ski down the Thunderbolt. We are not so tough. We used to run down the Thunderbolt but now have opted for a still challenging, but more circuitous route. Which is fine by me.

When we arrived at the Glen, there were four people setting up what looked like vendors' booths. I was mildly curious, but not really. Actually, I was more impressed that the town had spruced the place up, added some wheelchair accessible paths and mowed the grass. Before a long race, one tends to get tunnel vision and mine was narrowly focused on the uphill journey ahead. And the weather. Thunderstorms were predicted which shouldn't have been a big surprise given that out of the thirty-one days in May it had rained twenty-one, turning the Glen into soggy Brigadoon.

But magically, it didn't rain. The sun appeared and melted the mists to produce a 90 degree/90 percent humidity day. Clothing choices were hastily readjusted and in the melee my friend Barbara Sorrell realized just as the race had started that she had left her number in the car. She dashed up to the race officials and they granted her an invisibility bib so she could be legal. I tried to keep up with her as she had swept 30 miles of the notoriously rocky Manitou's Revenge course the day before, but was soon left behind. Apparently, her easy is not my easy.

The 3.5 mile uphill to the tower took forever. It was originally beaten down by those who were not concerned with the forgiving nature of switchbacks, and aside from maybe three sharp turns, was relentless. As always, the brooding mist swirled on top, adding to the otherworldly experience. However, the usual swarm of black flies had vanished. Perhaps with all the wizards down below, they had let down their guard against Muggles. And it seemed to me that the steep downhill was more forgiving this year, with parts apparently covered in pine chips. I think this only happened to me as others noted it seemed the same as usual. But, again, soloing in my own age group, added just for me I might mention, I needed all the help I could get.

I was also amazed there wasn't as much mud as there could have been, considering the fact that it had rained yet again the previous evening. But this was more than made up for by the slippery wooden bridges and the autumn-like cover of browned leaves camouflaging slippery rocks. Around that time I happened to glance at my race bib, curious as to what number I had

drawn. Despite reading it upside down several times it was unmistakably 311. My birthday is 3/11 and I must confess that number had served Jeff and I well as a phone code, bike lock combo, or any type of password we might need to share. SHHH!! I took it as part of the magic, a sign that Jeff was tuned in and running with me.

Soon afterwards, came what I term the *Sound of Music* section. The mists parted, the sun shone, the wildflowers bloomed and tall grasses flowed like so much green ocean. I was running downhill along smooth single track on top of the world, mountain views in the distance, gazing with the wonderment the Israelites must have felt as the Red Sea parted before them. Except there was no Pharaoh behind me. In fact, there was no one behind me at all. I was DFL, but oddly not minding it at all.

Finally, the Parking Lot 1 Mile Sign. Which apparently had nothing to do with my parking lot. A mile later I encountered the unmanned water drop, supposedly at 12.2. Oh well, the rest was pleasant enough and easy trails. As I crossed the final bridge, I knew I had been out too long. It was guarded by robed wizards and clearly part of an alternate universe. I had difficulty locating the exact finish as there was a band playing, giant bubbles and a serious quidditch competition. But no, there were the WMACER Club members, lounging under the tent, nursing their beers.

Once I re-oriented, it was as if I had stumbled into a big-time marathon finish, with refreshments, vendor's booths, kids' games...I was really tempted to buy a magic wand for future races, or maybe to induce some snow this winter, but I was too tired to walk back to the car and retrieve my money. I could have used that wand too, as my sneakers smelled strongly of swamp and it took an evening's downpour before they became acceptable housemates once more.

I wonder what Melville and Hawthorne (who also wrote about Geylock) would have thought? Not to mention all those soldierly ghosts? I am guessing they would have been pleased that Lady Greylock has acquired a 21st century literary connection. They would have felt right at home.

By Laura Clark