
MILITARY SPIRIT RUN AT DDC

by Ron Poorman

November 22, 2000. At 24 degrees, the temperature was only slightly warmer than it had been before dawn two days ago at 22 degrees. But, then I wasn't standing outside two days before. In any case, it was one of the coldest days of the coming winter season. Steam from a coffee cup was hardly enough to warm up anything. Dawn had yet to break. In spite of all the supposed advantages of returning to standard time the last weekend in October, it was pitch black.

Nevertheless, there was a lot of activity in the parking lot across the street from the dark DDC Headquarters building at 6:00 AM. Scattered across the lot were groups of military men and women stationed at the DDC New Cumberland installation. No one was still. Everyone was engaged in some kind of warm-up activity, warming up the muscles and trying to warm up the body for the DDC's first Military Spirit Run. Voices could be heard in hushed conversation and some efforts to encourage the assembled. Layering was *in* on this day, for sure.

The Spirit Run was the brainchild of DDC Commander, BG James Pillsbury. We had been hearing about the event for a few weeks. Those of us who work daily with military counterparts had been hearing of their training efforts in preparation leading up to the four-mile run. While all of the services have physical fitness requirements, they are not all the same . . . and everyone does not consider him or herself a runner. Some started training with one mile runs. Others, already used to two or three mile runs, increased their daily distance to the required four miles.

A few brave souls had come out to show support for their military spouses. BG Pillsbury's wife Becky was there, family hound in tow. Naomi McKelvey, wife of installation commander, CAPT Chris McKelvey, was there too. Shortly before 6:30, BG Pillsbury gathered the troupes together, said a few words of encouragement, and, as they say, they were off.

BG Pillsbury led the way down the dark street past the Fire Station and running fell into a rhythm. BG Pillsbury's group of multi-service officers and enlisted under the DLA flag formed the first running unit. The rest of the runners were made up of tenants at the New Cumberland installation. Each tenant unit ran behind its own flag, with the Marines, Navy, Air Force and Army all represented. The military cadence rang through the cold morning air.

The course took the military runners along warehouses, through the housing area, past the golf course and along a perimeter road bordering a sharp bluff overlooking the Susquehanna River. As the runners followed the rise of that road, the sun finally nudged its way above the horizon. Now that the sun was beginning to lighten the mood as well as the sky, the group took on more and more the air of a celebration. Back at the DDC Fitness Center, a small crowd had gathered to celebrate the event. Refreshments were ready. It was decided that cold water wasn't needed. As the units approached the Fitness Center, each slowed into cool-down mode, and once there, all hurried inside for warmth.

Judging from the participation and the mood of participants, the Spirit Run was a success. Some even talked of next year's event. After all, when something is a year away one can afford to be enthusiastic.

BG James Pillsbury, USA, (front center) leads the run. SSG Joseph Steed, USA, carries the DLA flag.

