

Thursday October 15
Copperfield's Books @ Montgomery Village
7pm ** FREE!

Run at Destruction, by *Lynda Drews*

Earlier this year, an email caught my eye from a runner in the Green Bay area. Lynda Drews has written a compelling account of a true incident that happened in their close-knit running community, and she was looking for running clubs to speak to about her book. She will be running the SF Nike women's marathon in October, so would Empire Runners be interested in sponsoring an author's talk while she's in town?

I read some of the advance press on the book, and realized that it's being promoted as a book of interest to true-crime fans and well as runners, so I wasn't sure if this was exactly what the club should undertake. I contacted Copperfields Books and they agreed to co-host the event with Empire runners, basically meaning that they will provide the place and order a lot of books, and we can get the word out that this is of interest to a lot of people. We can hear the author and buy some books (\$15.95) at our local independent bookseller.

Lynda Drews joined the first running craze in the mid '70s. Her husband Jim was a collegiate All-American in track and cross-country at the University of Wisconsin. He qualified at the Olympic marathon trials in 1979 to represent the US, only to have his dream disappear when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, prompting the US to boycott the 1980 Moscow games.

The Drews and their loose group brought the Bellin Run into being in 1977, and continues today as one of the top 10ks in the country, drawing 16,746 runners in 2009. Of the first run in 1977, Lynda Drews writes that 700 runners showed up "and within the top 40 runners, 20 were personal friends of Jim's and mine from college." At that first Bellin, Jim himself clocked an impressive 30:41 – just 10 seconds behind the winner, Olympic medalist Frank Shorter. The next year, Jim ran even faster, finishing in 29:56. But again it was only good for second place. Nineteen seconds earlier, another well-known runner, Bill Rodgers, won. The Drews hosted the post-run party, too.

As the story opens in April 1984, the author is looking around the start area of a half-marathon for her best friend and training partner, Pam. Ten pages into the story, at the end of her 1:39 half, the author learns that Pam is dead from an accidental drowning. As the story unfolds, the plot thickens (mystery writer lingo) as we learn of other evidence, not the least of which is Pam's husband's infidelity with another wife in the group. The victim's husband is eventually charged with murder and stands trial, which is deftly told from the viewpoint of several key players, to a surprising conclusion. The media attention turns up the heat, as the trial becomes the only news in Wisconsin for months (with only a brief mention that Reagan is re-elected).

Accident? Murder? Suicide? You're the jury.

This is not a book about running. It is a story of a close-knit group of runners with no structure or officers, no dues or membership, just a need for the camaraderie that develops after countless hours running together. There are lots of references to running and racing, including Grandma's marathon, which is near and dear to several ER hearts. Many long-time Empire Runners can relate to the road trips, parties, rituals and deep friendships that are formed in the course of their life on the run.

- *Paul Berg*

"The fact that the characters in this true story are runners may be incidental. But the book reads like a fast-paced marathon, the end of which is never certain but is worth all the pain and emotion that gets you there."

--*Joel Patenaude is the editor of Silent Sports magazine.*