

# Viewpoints

## A note of gratitude

On the third Saturday in May, Ogden Valley was at its resplendent best. The prior week had seen some light showers that cleansed the air. The predawn sky was clear. Venus was bright in the low eastern sky. A quarter moon was directly overhead.

As 4,000 runners waited for the start of Ogden's marathon and half marathon, star gazing provided a pleasing distraction to the near-freezing temperatures.

Shortly after the rising sun began to warm the runners, the races began. By 7:31 a.m., the leading runner of the half marathon had reached Pineview Dam and was entering Ogden Canyon. Behind him, a continuous trail of runners wound around the northeastern edge of Pineview Reservoir, and reached within a few miles of the town of Eden.

An onlooker might be convinced that the environmental artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude had draped Ogden Canyon and State Road 158 in sheets of nylon — a multicolored reprise of their 1972 project Running Fence, which ran through Sonoma and Marin Counties in Northern California.

Upon entering the canyon, runners glimpsed the Ogden River which was approaching near peak runoff. The river would accompany the runners until the final mile of the race. The mere force of the water and the sound it created provided an illusion of speed.

Many were deceived into the perception that the water was racing ahead of them at a faster pace.

In actuality, all but the slowest runners were traveling faster than the river's pace, which was less than four miles per hour. Yet, power often triumphs speed. The river water would eventually reach its destination. Of the 2,000 runners registered for the full marathon, 300 dropped by the wayside and failed to reach the finish line.

In the Canyon, runners enjoyed the once-a-year experience of traveling the Canyon without competing with

mechanized transportation. In 1910, David Eccles' Ogden Rapid Transit Company began construction of a rail line up Ogden Canyon which would eventually reach Huntsville, where he maintained a home. Since that time, some type of mechanized vehicle has dominated the Ogden Canyon; the singular exception is one Saturday in May.

The runners weren't the only ones to enjoy a walker-friendly canyon. A few couples walked hand in hand.

Bikers coasted down the canyon road. These folks may have had little interest in the race, but they enjoyed the infrequent chance to

carelessly traverse Ogden Canyon.

The canyon is timeless and remarkable. An early 20th century travel guide for Yellowstone National Park promoted a side trip to Ogden Canyon with the description: "A few miles from Ogden is Ogden Canyon, a deep, precipitous and romantic gorge ..." The runners savored their opportunity to run through Ogden's gorgeous canyon, which absent a stream of automobiles was similar to the canyon of a different era.

By 8:30 a.m., the leading marathon runners had passed through Huntsville and Eden and were beginning to pass the slowest of the half-marathoner participants. The winner of the half-marathon crossed the finish line at 25th and Grant in downtown Ogden some 20 minutes earlier. At this point, runners stretched from downtown Ogden to Huntsville. The stream of runners would continue to flow past the finish line for the next five hours.

With the Ogden marathon and half-marathon, as well as the accompanying 5K and kids race, the Greater Ogden Athletic Legacy Foundation (GOAL) and hundreds of volunteers have created a gem for the city. I offer this note as a belated but sincere expression of gratitude for their significant efforts.

### Top of Utah Voices



### Michael Vaughan

#### ■ Commentary

Michael Vaughan is Weber State University's provost. He accepts e-mail from readers at [MVAUGHAN@Weber.edu](mailto:MVAUGHAN@Weber.edu)