

ARCHIVES

## Fitness Files: He's on a running streak

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By Carrie Luger Slayback

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"You gotta write about Raven," my running friend Murph told me over Starbuck's coffee. "He's a guy I met on business trips to Miami Beach Raven's amazing - a 'streak runner.' Never missed a day since 1975.

"I run eight miles along the beach with him at 5 p.m. He's got a photographic memory. Over the years thousands have run with him. He meets them once, remembers their names, birthdays, and hometowns. He has been on NPR, Runner's World, and ESPN. Call. He'll talk to you."

Streak runner, according to Streak Runners International, involves running at least one mile each calendar day.

I called. Raven answered.

"Is this a good time?" I asked.

"I've got 15 minutes until my run starts. We'll talk," he said.

*You've run almost 15,000 days in a row. Why?*

**Raven:** In my life, I've started lots of things and quit – jobs, school, women. Decided to stick to something - run one year, which turned into 41 and still goin'.

*What do you get out of running every single day?*

**Raven:** Consistency. Take one day off, there's a reason to take another.

Also, I got determination, confidence. Before my running streak, I was shy, a lot quieter, a loner. Now I have confidence.

I'm healthier, little lighter than I'd like, but that's OK. I tell people you don't see any old fat guys.

Runnings given me a community of friends from all walks of life. New people show up. I interview them and give 'em nicknames like Taxman, Transporter, Poutine, Thunder.

*You're real name is Rober Kraft. How'd you get "Raven"?*

**Raven:** Wore nothing but black since I was 15. Started running in '72 with some boxers from the 5th Street Gym. They named me.

*You run the same course every day?*

**Raven:** I have four different courses, along colorful Miami Beach, All start and end at the 5th Street lifeguard stand. Visit Florida. Join us.

*I read in RunningLife that your lifeguard pals smuggled you out of the hospital so you wouldn't miss a day of running. What happened?*

**Raven:** Oh, that was a long time ago – 82. Work crew been dredging the beach. As I ran under the pier, somebody stood up in front of me, I looked around, crashed into the pilings. Covered in blood. Took me to the hospital, had a concussion, 18 stitches. They wanted to keep me, but I said, 'Get me to the beach I'll be all rights.' Friends got me out, 8:30 at night. I finished the run.

*I read that you have a girlfriend.*

**Raven:** Yeah, Priscilla, but I call her Miracle. Sexy. A genius. Been together 19 years. She's a professor of photography, knows native plants, champion pool player, water skier, and a baseball fanatic like me. Best thing that ever happened besides buying my condos

*I saw that you've got a documentary coming out.*

**Raven:** It's done. Mary Beth Koeth funded it on Kickstarter, \$30,000. She's getting it into film festivals. You can buy it soon. Great music. I wrote it all, except one song by Phillip Clarkson.

*What do you see as your future?*

**Raven:** I'll always write songs and look for the big one on the charts. Wrote one hit, not credited to me. I'll always run, do pullups, but I've got spinal stenosis. My mom had it. Take pain pills every day. Hope in the future to have a procedure, insert a device to reduce back pain.

*You're a real celebrity?*

**Raven:** Maybe a local celebrity .... Well, I've been on national radio, TV and running magazines, and I just filmed a Burger King ad ... could be more than locals.... One of the biggest things running's done for me - I used to be the shyest kid in school. Hid rather than give a speech. Today I'll host a banquet, give a motivational talk to a crowd. But the celebrity thing isn't most that running gave me. It's that I'm a healthy 65-year-old.

End of interview.

Nobody had mentioned Raven's age until now. By his phone voice, I'd have put him in his 40s.

We old runners have aches and pains, but getting out, huffing, puffing, socializing, retains a bit of the buoyancy of youth. Hope Raven's streak lasts another four decades.

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Newport Beach resident **CARRIE LUGER SLAYBACK** is a retired teacher who, since turning 70, has ran the Los Angeles Marathon, placing first in her age group twice.