



HASHING FOR HOPS

I drank beer and ran several miles with a bunch of hooligans By Kevin Piaskowski

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Convening in the parking lot of an unspecified hardware store, passing around “vessels” filled with delicious beer and cracking sexually explicit jokes at any given moment, the Eugene Hash House Harriers will really throw you for a loop if you’re unfamiliar with the tradition (or if you can’t take a joke). The “hounds” do their best to follow the madcap path laid by the “hare,” and once they reach the end, it’s time for more fraternizing.

If you find yourself on your virgin hash in Eugene, expect to partake in drinking songs, mischievous antics and trickery. As the hare takes off to blaze a path with chalk and flour (and tricks, dead ends and beer checks), the hashers congregate, and one hasher, Barely ManBelow, spells out a very simple set of rules: “There are no rules.” Also, don’t be surprised if you catch flashes of intimate body parts. And be prepared to sludge through smelly swamps and brave dense woods of poison oak and blackberry thorns.

They’ve defined themselves as a drinking club with a running problem, but if you asked any of them, it’s really all about the camaraderie. “This is the fucked-up family I never had,” says Badass Tongue Tricks (“Bad” for short). If you show up to a hash, don’t expect to know anyone’s

real-world names; in fact, don’t even bother asking. At a hash, no one cares what your job is or how much money you make; status is completely irrelevant. “No one takes themselves too seriously,” says Tequila Cockingbird, who just recently celebrated her two year “analversary” of hashing complete with oil wrestling.

Hashing itself is a global tradition that originated in Kuala Lumpur in 1938. Barely ManBelow, who’s been hashing for 18 years, explained it in simple and potentially inaccurate terms. Essentially, a bunch of British colonial soldiers and expatriates would meet up for weekly runs, but they got really bored of just running so they added beer to the mix and modeled the runs after the age-old children’s game hare and hounds. The tradition spread across Asia and then the rest of the world. You can now find hashers in nearly every city in America.

You don’t have to be a running enthusiast to join the party; many hashers walk or jog the entire way. Hashers come in all shapes and sizes, but the one essential item they have in common is a love for being weird. “You have to be able to laugh at yourself,” Barely ManBelow says.

On top of it all, it brings out people’s true colors. “You see people at their best and worst,” Barely ManBelow says.

“You develop a lot of trust in people.” In a sense, it all comes down to the community that the Eugene hashers have created. “The social aspect is great,” Badass Tongue Tricks says. “It’s a great way to release and be a kid — a kid that drinks beer.”

If you happen to be an avid runner, you’ll be right at home with many of the trails splitting into the more grueling “eagle” routes. And if drinking isn’t your thing, then you shouldn’t feel it’s a requirement — it’s not. But of course, if you’re really looking to focus on running rather than pranks and a few hours of nonstop mindless humor, then the hashers may not be for you. There are plenty of other running clubs in Track Town USA to keep those legs moving.

For instance, The Moonlight Five run is hitting Springfield on June 1 and features a 5-mile LED-lit course. On June 8, the Eugene Airport hosts Eugene Active 20-30’s 5K on the Runway. On June 22, Junction City sees the annual Pink Buffalo Stampede 5K and 10K. And for those who don’t mind getting filthy, on June 29, head over to Mt. Pisgah for The Dirty Dash, a 3.5 mile race featuring an endless supply of mud — yes, mud. So if serious running isn’t your forte, rest assured there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy yourself on the run. ■

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