

EXERCISE PHOENIX

By James Collins

Phoenix was hot. Phoenix was well over 100°. I arrived for a conference on manufacturing engineering to represent my company and look for opportunities to generate more business. The conference was busy and exciting. Food and drink were everywhere but there was no opportunity to exercise. At the end of the day's activities and before the scheduled dinner was to commence, I went to the main desk and asked them for directions to the nearest park where people went where they had walking trails. They were very courteous, sat down, and gave me a detailed map, which took me to a Park about three miles away, where many of the locals went in the afternoon for a walk. I changed to my casual clothes, followed the directions and arrived at a parking lot across the street from a large park with several hills. I parked the car in the middle of the lot, walked to the edge and observed the park and its layout. Starting at my left was a wide road, which circled around and climbed up to the hill in front of me. The signs prohibited cars on the roadway but there were dozens and dozens of people from individuals to groups of four and five walking from the parking lot on the road up to the top of the hill. I assumed that the top of the hill had food stands, chairs, benches and entrance to various walking trails and views of the city of Phoenix.

Directly in front of me was a steep slope with little or no grass, which rose to a height of about 60 feet. It looked like a challenge. I decided this would take a little spurt of energy to run up the slope directly and avoid the long roundabout slowly rising roadway. I took off my glasses, squared away my hat and started at a dead run. The initial start was a very flat slope, which rapidly grew to a rather steep incline. As I sprinted up the slope, I noted many chipmunk holes, but thought nothing more about it. As I arrived at the top of the hill, I was breathing a little bit hard, but felt invigorated. A middle age man wearing cowboy boots and a cowboy hat walked over to me and smiled.

"Son, you're from out of town aren't you?"

"What, am I wearing a sign?"

"No, but you just ran up this hill while all the natives take their time and walk around the road on the right. Nobody runs up that hill, except someone from out of town."

"Why is there something special about the hill? Did I just break some kind of a custom?"

"Did you notice all the holes in the side of a hill on your trip up?"

"Yeah, I saw a lot of chipmunk holes but we have lots of them at home."

"Back East, they are chipmunk holes. Out here they are rattlesnake holes."

"Are you kidding me? I didn't see a single snake in that entire run."

"That is because you are about a half-hour early. In the heat of the day with full sun, snakes stay in the

holes. A half hour from now that Hill will be crawling with rattlesnakes. That is why nobody walks on that hill. You are a very lucky man. Today might be the day for you to play the lottery."

I finished my walk on the paved road, that afternoon and got all the exercise I needed. I thought about what the cowboy had said and bought a lottery ticket. I did not win anything. I guess I used all my luck on the run up the hill.

THE END