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X -Country on Foot

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LAVERNE, OKLAHOMA--- The race on this day is somewhere between 51 and 52 miles, from Balko to Laverne across the sun baked Oklahoma Panhandle. "It's the best way to see the countryside," he says. No big deal for the LA to NY Race leader Rainer Koch who told us later that he kind of likes it this hot. "Yes it is hot but it's still more of enjoyment than the cold weather."

Boise City, Guymon, Balko, Laverne, Buffalo. Drive those straight roads and you'll travel close to 200 miles. Rainer and a small group of ultra-marathoners run anywhere from 23 to 60 miles every day for 70 straight days. "We average "There is an average of about 43 miles per day," says Koch. Rainer ended stage 30 at the Country Inn in Laverne like he'd just run around the block. "How you feeling," asks a reporter. "Fine. Thanks." is his quick reply. The first thing he does, mix himself a can of beer with a can of Coke. "It's really a fresh drink," he says. "Not to bitter. Not too sweet."

Dan and Lynda Crocker played host to racers who include Peter Bartel. He's not running. He's riding a scooter across the U.S. "I am now in the 70th year of my life," he smiles.

The Crockers bought their little 10 room motel never dreaming they'd meet so many interesting people; athletes and adventurers. "From 4 or 4 countries," says Dan. "Probably 40 states at least." "I think the weather in Oklahoma during summertime is so warm but you have a warm heart," says a member of one of the support crews.

Their route follows approximately the same one Oklahoma legend Andy Payne ran in the first of these races in 1928. 3,200 miles, this Summer of all Summers. They've only held 9 of these events since. Fewer than 250 racers have ever finished. Oklahoma is halfway, under a heat dome, and no shade in sight. Rainer Koch and those behind him will run like this until the end of August, if they can.

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