

HENRY TUTTLE

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

WAIGHTS TAYLOR JR.



McCAA BOOKS • SANTA ROSA, CA



McCaa Books
1604 Deer Run
Santa Rosa, CA 95405-7535

Copyright © 2019 by Waights Taylor Jr.
All Rights Reserved

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the publisher of this book except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

ISBN 978-1-7337770-1-8
Library of Congress Control Number 2019940464

First published in 2019 by McCaa Books,
an imprint of McCaa Publications.

Printed in the United States of America
Typeset in Minion Pro
and Lucida Sans Typewriter

The trademark BOSTON MARATHON is a
trademark of the Boston Athletic Association.

www.mccaabooks.com

Dedicated
to
Jonah Raskin

*“Then where does the power come from
to see the race to its end? From within.”*

—Eric Liddell, *Chariots of Fire*

Part One

Santa Rosa, California

April 13–14, 2019

1

George

I JUMPED OFF MY BIKE and leaned it against the side of my grandfather's house. Still in my running togs, I was sweaty and really excited. I wanted to tell Pops about my ten-kilometer race this morning at Spring Lake Park. It was a doozy.

Not bothering to ring the doorbell, I went in and called out, "Pops, I had two clicks to go. I knew I had a shot at breaking forty minutes."

My grandfather shuffled in from the kitchen. I loved Pops, especially because he's not preachy. He doesn't talk to me like my parents, who are always saying, "Don't do this," or "Don't do that," or even worse, "If you continue, young man, you'll be grounded."

"So, George, you're still using 'clicks' for kilometers," Pops said.

"Yep. All the runners do it."

I knew what was coming next. Pops removed his glasses and looked at me like he didn't care about my latest running accomplishment. Pops placed his glasses back on and acted irritated. "Don't tease me, George. What happened in the race?"

"Don't rush me." I paused. "Okay, I ran two clicks in under eight minutes and broke forty minutes. I was in the zone. What do you think of that, Pops?"

"Pretty darn good for a fourteen-year-old. Congratulations. I'll bet in a few years your time will be thirty-four to thirty-six minutes or even lower. Think you can do it?" Pops asked.

“No problemo,” I said. “One other neat thing happened. As I ran over the top of the lake’s north dam, two swans flew by, flapping their wings. You know with that whoosh-whoosh sound. They sure are graceful.”

Pops laughed. “They sure are until they have to land.”

“Yeah, kinda like a controlled crash. Say, Pops, I know you ran a lot years ago. What was your best ten clicks time?”

“Oh, let’s see. Thirty-six minutes and change.”

I was confused. “Huh, what’s ‘and change?’”

Pops grinned at me. “It’s what an eighty-one-year-old man calls seconds in his finishing time, like thirty-six minutes, twenty-three seconds, when he can’t remember the seconds.”

“Cool! I gotta use ‘and change.’ It’ll keep the other kids guessing.”

“Maybe.”

“Pops, I heard on the radio yesterday that the Boston Marathon is next Monday. You ran it once, didn’t you?”

Pops shrugged as if he didn’t want to talk about it, but said, “Yes, 1979.”

“Did you win?”

Pops couldn’t stop laughing. “No way.”

“Were you bummed out?”

“Nope. I was forty-one years old. I was happy to finish in two hours, fifty-nine minutes, and thirty-six seconds. The winner was thirty-one-year-old Bill Rodgers, a world-class marathoner. His winning time was two hours, nine minutes, and twenty-seven seconds, a course record.”

“Gees, you remember the seconds,” I said.

“You never forget something like Boston. Rodgers was an amazing runner. He won the Boston Marathon four times. You’ll love this. When he finished, I was only fifty minutes and a little over seven miles behind him.”

I laughed, adding, “And nine seconds.”

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

“My, my, aren’t we being precise. Well, Mr. Precise, there’s another amazing runner that few people have heard of. Like you and me, he’s from Northern California.”

“What was so amazing? Did he break forty minutes in a ten clicks race?” I asked.

“Absolutely, and then some. He did it fifty years ago in 1969.”

“What did he do?”

“I’ll tell you Monday after the Boston Marathon is over, and that’s about all I can tell you. I don’t know his whole story.”

“Come on, Pops, who is this guy?”

“His name is Henry Tuttle. Maybe he’ll tell you his story.”

2

George's Bedroom

I WAS IN MY BEDROOM READING a book my mom had bought me. It was titled *The Running Dream*. Mom told me it was about a girl runner, so I wasn't sure I'd like it. I mean, I like girls but most are such slow runners. Since mom gave the book to me, I decided to give it a chance. It hooked me when I read that the girl lost a leg in an automobile accident and was determined to run again.

As I read, I couldn't focus on the book. My mind kept flipping back and forth to Henry Tuttle. Pops was a straight shooter. If he said he didn't know Henry's whole story, he didn't. But Pops had been vague, man, way vague.

I looked at my digital clock next to my bed—10:12 p.m. I closed the book, crawled into bed, and tried to go to sleep, but I kept thinking about Henry Tuttle. Was he for real? What was his story?

I must have fallen asleep because the next thing I remembered was being jolted awake by a man's voice calling out, "George." It really scared me.

I sat up, looked around, and didn't see anyone. The digital clock read 12:43. It was Sunday. I was about to lay down, thinking I must have been dreaming, when the voice called out again, "George, are you awake?"

"Who are you?" It wasn't Pops' or Dad's voice.

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

“My name’s Henry Tuttle. I understand you’d like to hear my story.”

I was spooked. “How do you know that?”

“I hear a lot of things.”

“Where are you?”

“Close by. I hear you had a good ten-kilometer race yesterday.”

How the hell does he know about my race? I thought, but I played it cool and said, “My grandfather told me you were an amazing runner but unknown to most people. He also said you were from Northern California.”

“Mostly correct, but I no longer live in California.”

“Where do you live now?”

“Ah, a good question. How about Wonderland, the Land of Oz, Narnia, Middle-earth, or Never-Never Land?”

Now Henry Tuttle’s got my interest. “Yeah, I’ve read the books about all those fictional places, and I’ve read all the Harry Potter books. I like fantasies. You know, with ghosts, wizards, sorcerers, magic stuff, and invisible things, but what’s that got to do with you?”

“That’s something you’ll have to decide after you hear my story. But I’m not a sorcerer or wizard. I do move around a lot, but when I went to high school, I lived in Weaverville, California, a small town at the foot of the Trinity Alps, about a hundred and fifty miles north of here as the crow flies.”

“Here? You know where I live?”

“Yes, Santa Rosa. How do you think I got here?”

“I don’t know. I’ve heard of Weaverville, but I’ve never been there.”

“You’ll know more about it shortly. Do I frighten you?”

“Sort of. Why can’t I see you? Do you have an invisibility cloak?”

He laughed. “You have read Harry Potter. Be patient. Can I have a glass of water? It’s been a long trip.”

“Okay.”

I went into the bathroom and got the water. When I returned, a man was sitting in the chair next to my desk. He was dressed casually in blue jeans, a gray flannel shirt, and a black jacket. He had dark hair. He turned the right side of his face toward me and smiled. I thought he was about eighteen years old. As I handed him the glass of water, he tilted his face to the left, and he looked much older. *What gives? This is getting weirder.*

“George, I know what you’re thinking. It’s all right. Everyone gets confused about my age. Please sit down and call me Henry.”

Well, he doesn’t look all that weird. “Okay. I’d like to hear your story, Henry.”

“Good. But first, there are a few things I’d like to tell you. My story starts in 1965, fifty-four years ago.”

“Wow, that’s forever ago,” I said.

Henry grinned. “Yes, it was. Are you in high school now?”

“Sure, I’m a freshman.”

“When I went to high school, you were frowned on if you wore jeans, and shorts weren’t allowed.”

I laughed. “Not today, Henry. The boys wear shorts and tee shirts most of the time. The girls wear shorts too, and tops that show off a lot of skin. It’s pretty jazzy. The boys like it.”

“Do you like it, George?”

“Well, yessss. What’s not to like?”

Henry shrugged. “Things seemed to move slower back then. No computers, no cell phones, no internet, no ——”

“Whoa, Henry. How boring. No Facebook, no Instagram, no YouTube, no nothing. What the heck did teenagers do back then?”

“You’d be surprised. We kept ourselves busy, and I’ll bet, like you and your friends, we were always in and out of trouble. I hope you’ll learn some things in my story about how we were different, yet so alike in many ways. You still interested?”

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

“Sure, but it better not be boring. I bore easily.”

Henry smiled at me and said, “You remind me of someone in my story. See if you can guess who it is. But before I start, could you lay my jacket on your bed? It’s warm in here.”

“Okay.”

He took off the jacket and handed it to me. I laid it across the bed. It was a nice jacket—black, maybe leather.

“Thanks, George. Get comfortable. Remember, it’s 1965 when I was fourteen years old like you are now.”

Part Two

Weaverville, California

1965–1969

3

Henry Tuttle

“HI, HENRY. NICE BACKPACK. New, huh?”

I was stooped over, checking to see if my sneakers were double-tied, and looked up. It was Charlie, a third grader, walking toward me. He was bashful, small for his age, and kept to himself. I always tried to be nice to him. I figured, why not? Besides, it was only two weeks until graduation, and I couldn't wait to start high school. Elementary school, especially eighth grade, had been a bore.

I stood up and said, “Hey, Charlie. Yeah, Mom bought it for me. The old one looked like a piece of junk. You like it?”

“Yeah, especially the color. Green's my favorite color. I'm good with colors.” Charlie eyes fluttered nervously. “Can I ask you a question?”

“Sure. Shoot.”

His mouth opened but nothing came out. Finally he said, “Why do you like to run so much?”

His question stopped me. I had to think. People frequently asked me that, and, try as I might, I couldn't explain it too well. I guess I wasn't sure myself, and I wasn't smart enough to figure it out. My parents and sister sure didn't get it.

I finally said, “That's a tough one. You probably wouldn't understand, even if I told you.”

I was surprised when Charlie said, “I think I will. I'm smart for my age. I make straight As.”

“Okay. Not much to do where I live up on the mountain. When I was seven I started running the three miles from my house to the main road to visit some kids and play. At ten, I started running to school and back home most of the time. I don’t know, running just seemed to come naturally. The more I did it, the more I liked it, and the more I ran. It made me feel good. That’s about it.”

Charlie’s eye twinkled. “I get it, Henry. I like to draw. I do it all the time, even in class, at recess, and in the cafeteria. But my teachers get mad at me in the classroom and tell me to stop. I can’t. It makes me feel good.”

I smiled. “You’re a smart boy, Charlie. That’s it. It makes us feel good. I gotta get going. See you tomorrow.”

I started jogging toward the school gate when I saw them—Billy Badson and his three creepy followers. Billy, an eighth grader, was the school’s bully. I knew what was coming because he had bugged me before about my running.

“Hey, here comes Henry Turtle,” Billy yelled. “Watch him waddle home.”

His buddies joined in and jeered at me, “Waddle. Waddle. Waddle.”

Billy always had the last word and added, “Can’t wait for the Turtle to get hit by a car. I love turtle soup.”

I ignored Billy and his buddies and kept running. I knew he couldn’t catch me. I was five feet, eight inches tall and lean. He was about the same height but pudgy. Whenever I saw him on the playground, he would start huffing and puffing at the slightest exertion.

Things finally came to a head with Billy a few days before graduation when I saw him bullying Charlie.

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

Billy pushed Charlie down, stood over him, and hollered, “Get up, pantywaist. Fight like a man. The Turtle’s not here to protect you.”

I couldn’t watch any more. I ran over, pushed Billy back, picked Charlie up, and said, “You okay, Charlie?”

“Yeah. Thanks, Henry.”

I turned to Billy and said, “Okay, Billy, I am here. Try me on for size.”

“Damn you, Turtle,” he said, taking a swing at me.

I deflected his punch and punched him in the stomach.

He fell down and moaned, trying to catch his breath.

I moved toward his three buddies, who backed away, and said, “You guys do this again, you’ll be sorry. I’ll give all of you more of the same.”

I turned to walk away and saw a large number of kids looking on, including my twelve-year-old sister, Mary.

One girl called out, “Way to go, Henry. Billy’s had it coming for a long time.”

The other kids started cheering.

Uh oh, I thought, here comes the principal.

He glared at Billy and me, looked at the large group of kids, and said, “Recess is over. Go back to your classrooms. Henry, Billy, come with me. I saw the start of the ruckus from my window. You boys are lucky school’s out in two days.”

When we got to the principal’s office, he didn’t ask us to sit down. So we stood in front of his desk, and he said, “Billy, this isn’t your first time in my office. It better not happen again or you’ll be expelled. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” Billy said.

“Good. Henry, remember, you’re not responsible for school discipline. That’s my job with the help of the teachers. I’ll also expel you if this happens again. Do you understand?”

I said, “Yes, sir.”

“Good. I will tell Principal Krauthammer at the high school about this incident.”

Billy sounded sorry but who knows.

When I got home, I told Mom and Dad what had happened, hoping Mary hadn’t told them. She could be a snitch.

“Henry, you should have gotten a teacher to handle the situation,” Mom said.

I was feeling pretty low. “I know, but I couldn’t stand the way Billy was treating Charlie.”

“There’s something else you need to know,” Dad said. “Billy’s father has a drinking problem and has a hard time keeping a steady job. Give Billy a little slack. Maybe he needs a few good friends.”

Afterwards, I thought a lot about how I had treated Billy.

7

Coach Dawson

SCHOOL STARTED AGAIN after the holiday break. I turned fifteen years old in February, and track season was due to start in March. Some boys suggested I try out for the team, but I wasn't interested. Long distances were my thing.

One afternoon, the track coach called out to me as I prepared to run home. "Henry, hold up. I want to talk to you."

Coach Dawson was also the school's biology teacher. Most of the students liked his biology classes, especially the labs where we got to cut up slimy things, like frogs. He had a round, pudgy face and grinned and laughed a lot, even in biology class. He wasn't my idea of what a good track coach would look like. He was a short, stout man with wide shoulders. He looked more like a shot putter than a runner. But a friend of mine, who was on the track team, said he was a good coach.

As he walked over, he looked serious for a change. "How you doing?"

"I'm fine, Coach Dawson."

"Henry, the whole school knows you run a lot. I know you run home after school most days. It's six miles, right?"

"Yes, and I also run to school."

"Twelve miles a day. Aren't you running mostly uphill going home?"

"Yes, sir. About a 1,500-foot climb."

"Twelve mile a day. How long does it take you to run home?"

“Depends on whether I run easy or have to hurry. I don’t time myself, but I do look at my watch to make sure I’ll get home on time when I’m in a hurry.”

Coach looked impatient. I realized he didn’t smile all the time. “Henry, what’s your best time when you have to hurry?”

“Oh, thirty-three minutes. Maybe a little faster or slower.”

Coach paused. I figured he was calculating my running pace. “Five minutes thirty seconds per mile. Can you go over to the track with me?”

“Okay, but I have to run home soon.”

“Won’t take long. Follow me.”

When we got to the track, Coach asked me, “Have you ever run a quarter mile—one lap around the track? It’s 440 yards.”

“No, sir.”

“Do me a favor. Take off your backpack and run one lap as fast as you can. Okay?”

I wanted to cooperate with Coach, and I thought he might be upset with me if I said no.

“Sure. Where do I start?” I asked.

Coach drew a starting line across the inside lane by dragging his foot in the dirt track. “Right here. I’ll say, ‘Ready, Set, Go,’ and you run as fast as you can back to this spot. Give it your all.”

I toed the line and took off when Coach said, “Go.”

I wasn’t used to running such a short distance, and it seemed funny to finish so soon. Coach timed me with his stopwatch. I was breathing hard, but I didn’t feel too tired.

Coach kept staring at his stopwatch. I couldn’t resist and asked him, “How’d I do?”

“Henry, you ran five seconds faster than our team’s best quarter miler. I’d like you to join the track team.”

“I don’t know, Coach, I like to run longer distances.”

“We have one-mile and two-mile races.”

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

“Yeah, but I mean my daily long ones.”

Coach scrunched his eyes like he was thinking hard. “Okay, we can do this. School’s out at 2:45. We practice most weekdays during the season. You’ll be finished by 4:00 and can run home. Most track meets are on Fridays or Saturdays, and you’ll have Sundays off. And this summer, you can run longer distances as much as you want. How about it?”

I smiled at Coach. “Yes, sir, I’ll do it unless my parents say no. I doubt they will.”

“Good. Practice starts next Monday. We meet in the locker room. Henry, you’ll be a great addition to the team. Oh, what’s the longest distance you’ve run at one time?”

“I don’t measure them exactly. I guess maybe twenty miles.”

Coach shook his head. I think he was impressed.

At track meets, I ran the 440 and either the one or two-mile race, and I anchored the mile relay team. I won all the races I ran, and I have to admit it, I really enjoyed it.

The last track meet of the season was held at our school. Coach gave out the running assignments and said to me, “Henry, you’ve already set a new district record in the mile. Today, I want you to run the two-mile race and give it your all.”

I smiled. “Yes sir, I’ll do my best.”

After the starting gun sounded, I was in first place at the first turn. I heard the timer call out 4:46 after four laps, one mile. I was able to hold my pace and had a good kick left for the last 200 yards. I finished well out in front. The crowd cheered so loudly I didn’t hear my time.

I was jogging around the grass infield when the public announcer said, “Ladies and gentlemen, Trinity High School’s Henry Tuttle, the winner of the two-mile race, set a new district record of nine minutes and sixteen seconds.”

Coach came up to me and said, “Henry, jog in front of the stands and wave at people. They’re going nuts.”

I felt awkward at first because, while I liked to win, I felt embarrassed at all the adulation.

When I saw Mom and Dad and Mary, I waved at them and felt better. I was waving at the crowd in general when I saw Jane. She waved and smiled at me. I stopped in front of where she sat and waved and smiled at her. I could tell she was trying to say something to me, but I couldn't hear her. The girls sitting around her all talked to her at once. I couldn't hear them either, so I didn't know what they said, but I hoped it was something nice.

I know it sounds funny, but they made me feel good. Then I realized I was a freshman, and Jane was a sophomore and a year older than I was. No way she'd be interested in me.

After school let out for the summer, I started running long distances most days and working full time at a gas station. On the last day of June, a car pulled up to the pumps. I recognized the car, a Buick. It belonged to Jane's father, Dr. Wong. He came to the station often to buy gas. But today, Jane was driving. She was excited and said, "Hi, Henry. Guess what?"

I had no idea, so I made a wild guess. "You got your driver's license."

She looked surprised. "How'd you know? I got it yesterday when I turned sixteen."

Now I knew her birthday was June 29. I did the calculation, and, hoping to impress her, I fudged a little bit and said, "We're the same age for four months. My birthday was in February."

She laughed. "Henry, don't be silly, birthdays mean nothing. Fill it up, please."

I wanted to say, *It sounded like your sixteenth was important*, but I said, "Will do."

Jane came to the gas station often. I figured her dad must drive a lot. We would talk and kid around while I pumped gas

The Boy Who Ran to Glory

and wiped her windshield. I was getting a little better with the girl thing. At least I thought so.

Finally, I worked up the nerve. I looked in her car window and said, “Jane ... uh ... would ... you ...” I was freezing up, and then I blurted out, “Would you like to go to a movie?”

She got out of the car slowly, put her hands on her hips, and stared at me. I thought she was angry.

She laughed and said, “Henry Tuttle, what took you so long to ask me out? Of course I’ll go to a movie with you.”

I felt like I was blushing from my head to my toes. Oh, I’ve got so much to learn. We went to see *Frankie and Johnny*, starring Elvis Presley. We liked the songs but thought the story silly.