

## The New Era of Gin's 26-mile Hike

April 21, 2012



The faces are young and fresh, the number is 19, and the successful rate is 100%. Not in a million years would Gin imagine his inaugural hike more than twenty years ago survived his passing. It has flourished to become one of the most popular and anticipated annual CMCNY events. Congratulation Gin!

*Wait, not now Chi!  
Got to talk to my girl first!*

**By Chi S. Chan, RPCV**  
*Azerbaijan 2009-2011*



Helen and I hiked almost the entire 26 miles together. She was really an excellent hiker, with so much energy, even at the end. I credited her for pushing me to my limit. If I hiked alone, I would not have been able to finish the hike in 11 hours.

In the morning, four of us; Sandy, Seita, Helen and I took off right after we arrived at the Tuxedo Parking Lot at 5:45am. It was still very dark. At the foothill of Black Ash Mountain, the sun began to rise. The world around us was very much alive in the bright morning light. I was in a merry mood, exultant with the fever of spring and the delight of morning, happy to be on the 26-mile hiking trail again. Seita, as his usual self, did not care to stay with us GIRLS! We lost him right after the RD trail. Right by the Bald Rocks Shelter, Sandy pointed out the blood stains left behind by Mr. Chen. Sadness and guilt overcame me, how much I wish that I was there with him when the accident happened. Mr. Chen was, is and will forever be my mentor. I wish for his speedy recovery. Soon we left Times Square; Sandy accelerated and went ahead of us. Helen and I remained as a unit nearly until the end. It was at the Water Dam that I finally lost her.



*They called us the "First Wave"*

From Times Square to Red Cross, Helen and I did not talk much. For five miles, we probably said one or two sentences to each other. We were much focused. At one point, I felt bored. For the past two years due to my commitment with the Peace Corps, I did not take part this annual CMCNY event. I had forgotten how monotonous it could be hiking on this long winding 26-mile trail. As I watched Helen's ponytail swinging back and forth, my mind began to wander. Suddenly, I heard Helen's loud scream, and saw something alive scurry across the dirt trail. It was a



*Hurry up Chi!*

green and black snake about 2 feet long. Helen's scream frightened the snake as well; the poor creature darted across the trail, disappeared underneath a pile of dry leaves at once.

*"What the hell is that?"*

I visualized the terrified snake shaking under the cover.

An hour passed, we reached Palisades Parkway at 11:20am, a very good timing. We decided to take a short break by the road. So far, Helen and I had been very disciplined, we seldom took breaks and if we did, it usually lasted no more than 2 minutes. I found my body already adapted to this type of strenuous exercise. My legs were tired after climbing all the hills in the morning, but once I sat for a minute, the fatigue went away. The short break helped, but if I took a 10 minutes break, I knew I would be in trouble. My body would slow down and it would take at least half an hour to warm up again. For my selfishness, I did not even give Helen a chance to finish her banana, and rushed her to move on.



*Hello, I am just a snake dear!*

As we all anticipated, the most challenging part of the 26-mile hike was the hills leading to the Scutt Memorial and Irish Potato. The cliffs on Scutt Memorial were always my biggest fear. Looking down to the overhangs, I felt my leg muscles tightening. Thirteen years ago my first 26-mile hike with Gin, he showed me a trick to stop cramping. I remembered what he said and tried very hard to fight the cramp. It worked! On the most dangerous section, Helen and I just sat on our bottoms, inched our ways down to the cliff floor. Thank God it did not rain or we would have very wet behinds! On our way to the Irish Potato, we caught up with Sandy, soon we saw Seita too. Four of us arrived at the parking lot of the Fire Tower at 12:20pm. Leo from the 6-mile hike team left us precious water there. Two can of "Red Drink" were reserved for Seita and James. Before today, I never heard of this high energy drink. I took a sip from Seita's can and disliked it almost immediately. Water was still my beloved drink, cool, refreshing and with a taste of nature. Love it!



Four of us rested for less than ten minutes and headed out to the Fire Tower. As a general rule, we were allowed to use the paved road instead of the dirt trail. The paved road was steep but compared to the dirt trail, it was a much easier climb. Sandy began to slow down, Seita, Helen and I went ahead without her. There was a lilac shrub along the trail. Its lavender flowers were in full bloom. I could

smell its sweet fragrant in the air. Its presence added a little excitement to my hike. Each year, I looked forward to seeing her. Here she was, beautiful as ever!

Right before the Big Hill Shelter, we met a group of the 6-mile hikers. Some new members said hello to me, and I was embarrassed for I did not know them. However, I did recognize Karen, a sweet and friendly young girl I met few months ago. We took another short break at Big Hill Shelter, and Sandy caught up with us. Seita pull out a plastic bag and inside were 15-20 small tangerines, all peeled. They were juicy, refreshing and delicious. Thanks Seita! We left the shelter around 1:20pm.

In the afternoon, Helen was still full of energy. She was killing us. Sandy gave up on her. Seita and I kept running after her. Finally, Seita complained to her and took the lead. I was relieved! The yellow trail right after the Big Hill Shelter seemed longer than we had expected. It went up and down as well. At around 3:45pm, we arrived at the Water Dam at Seven Lakes Drive. Right by the lake were three CMCNY hikers; our president, Cindy and Ada. They were relaxing by the lake. We exchanged greetings briefly and carried on. Again, here by the Water Dam, we had a choice; we could pick the long paved road or the short steep hill. Helen wanted the challenge; she picked the trail along the lake. Seita and I took a detour, preferred to hike a little bit longer but to avoid the steep hill. By the end of the paved road, we waited for Helen to show up, assuming that she would be slowed down by the hill. After a minute or so, still no sight of her, Seita and I decided not to wait any longer.



*Not to worry, next year,  
we will be one of them!*



*Drink, drink, did you  
drink? Drink some  
more, it is free!*

The last two miles of the 26-mile trail remained a challenge. By now, our bodies had already been tested to the limit. Most people would slow down and complain about the everlasting hills. Here in front of me was a narrow meandering path leading upward to a mountain top. The sun had been playing hide and seek behind clouds whole day, and it finally decided to come out and stay. Its rays casted a brilliant glow on the mountain top, illuminating every

flora on the hillsides. Trees with emerald leaves were shivering and sparkling, cheering and celebrating the arrival of spring. Suddenly, I was full of energy, climbing up to the hill

effortlessly. Seita was having a difficult time to catch up with me. I left him there and was content that finally, I was alone.

It was a strange feeling to hike alone in the forest. My mind began to wandering again, this time, I thought about Mr. Chen, how much I missed hiking with him. I looked up the hill once more and I saw a familiar figure silhouetted against the late afternoon sky, a slim shadow of Mr. Chen climbing up to the Blauvelt Mountain alone..... What was he thinking? Why did he never quit the 26-mile hike? What motivated him? What was he trying to attest? The questions I pondered for the longest time. Today, I seemed to have the answers.



*Next time when I see  
you, you are dead Chen  
Feng!*

I could hear the traffic ricocheting below me. Five minutes or so, I should be at the Tuxedo parking lot. Helen was already there waiting for me. She finished the hike at 4:50pm, eight minutes ahead of me! 5:10pm, another strong hiker, Chen Feng showed up. He was a funny fellow; kept updating me all the interesting stories about CMCNY. Seita finally reunited with us at 5:20pm.

It is a good year, a year full of youngsters, all inspired by Mr. Chen. I am glad I made the decision to come back or I would have missed this special day.

“Nothing Ventured Nothing Gained”  
- Edmund Hillary



*This is my all time favorite  
picture of Mr. Chen.*

Stay with the adventure. See you all next year, or many more years to come!

