

Bright future for Gunn High soph; runs 25 miles uphill in mountains

There I sat staring at my typewriter wondering what I was going to use for a column.

Then the phone rang.

I recognized the voice at the other end as that of Bill Alhouse, Palo Alto realtor and former assistant baseball coach at Stanford.

"If you've got a few minutes I'd like to tell you about an amazing young athlete who will someday be making headlines on all the sports pages.

"His name is Gordon MacMitchell. He just turned 15 and is a sophomore at Gunn High School.

"He was one of nine students from Gunn whom I helped drive to the mountains last weekend on a ski trip.

"Our group spent the night at Twain Harte before continuing on the next morning for the ski slopes at Dodge Ridge. At that time Gordy told me he wouldn't be skiing because it wasn't good for a trackman's legs.

"Then Gordy said matter-of-fact like, 'I've got to get in my running, so I'll meet you up there.'

"I asked him, 'Gordy, do you know how far it is to Dodge Ridge?'

"'Yes,' he replied. 'It's 25 miles.'

"I then tried to point out to him it was all uphill and he'd be running in high altitude, starting at 3,500 feet and finishing at 6,500.

"I could see I wasn't going to talk him out of it, so I told him we'd be passing him half-way and we'd pick him up if he didn't feel he wanted to continue.

"Well, he took off early the next morning. When we caught up with him a few hours later, he was running strong. He indicated he planned to continue.

"After being on the slopes for several hours I became concerned about Gordy. I had just about made up my mind to drive back to see if I could find him when he came jogging into the parking lot. It had taken him approximately five hours to cover the distance.

HUNGRY AFTER LONG RUN IN MOUNTAINS

"Gordy said he was tired but not exhausted. What he wanted most was some food. He said, 'I'm starved.'

"The old timers at Dodge found it difficult to believe what this kid had done."

Alhouse concluded with, "Walt, I don't know anything about track but I've got to believe that young MacMitchell, with his determination, is going to be a champion."

Clay Henry, track coach at Gunn, calls MacMitchell a "fantastic prospect."

He said, "With his determination there's no telling how far he will go. He runs from 15 to 20 miles every day.

"It wouldn't surprise me if he busts Dick Hunter's school records of 4:25 in the mile and 9:26 in the two-mile by midseason.

"And it is very likely he will qualify for the state high school meet this spring."

The runner Gordy would like to emulate was one of the finest middle distance men in the world back in the early 1940s and would have likely been a star in the 1944 Olympics if the war hadn't canceled the games.

That would be his dad, Les MacMitchell.