



Running with Raven: The Amazing Story of One Man, His Passion, and the Community He Inspired

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In 1975 Robert "Raven" Kraft, a high school dropout and aspiring songwriter, made a New Year's Resolution to run eight miles on Miami's South Beach each evening. Over 125,000 miles later, he has not missed one sunset.

Along the way, Raven has changed the lives of thousands who have run with him--many of them hundreds of times. From all fifty states and dozens of countries, across all age groups and backgrounds, they come to run with Raven, and in the process find friendship, inspiration--and a nickname.

Among them is author Laura Lee "White Lightning" Huttenbach, who has logged over a thousand miles of Raven Runs. Here she explores the stories of dozens of others about why they started running with Raven--and why they keep coming back. Taxman, an accountant in his mid-60s, has done 1800+ runs. Dizzy, a middle school principal from Cuba, met his wife and his best friend on Raven Runs. Butcher, an ex-convict, credits Raven with saving his life. In an uncertain world Raven shows up, no matter what.

Quirky and appealing, tenacious and magnetic, Raven is a legend of the running world. As he says, "I may be the only thing that hasn't changed around here in the last forty years." Laura Lee Huttenbach reveals how one man's daily ritual has blossomed into an uncanny gift for weaving people together--and an invaluable reminder that the journey means little without the connections forged along the way.

"Raven left an indelible impression upon me, as he has countless others. I am certain that you will find his story as fascinating and enthralling as I have. Raven, long may you run." --Dean Karnazes, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Ultramarathon Man*

"An inspiring tale of unbreakable discipline and one-of-a-kind endurance." --Gerald Posner, bestselling author of *Miami Babylon*

Running with Raven: The Amazing Story of One Man, His Passion, and the Community He Inspired Details

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and the Community He Inspired Laura Lee Huttenbach**

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Shane says

This was an excellent book which I suggested to my running buddies. I agree with Raven in that running is "free". I understand that people join races for the experiences but the prices people are willing to pay are crazy. I hope they saved for retirement first. Anyway, this book is many stories within the story, I loved how he accepts almost everyone and doesn't judge those less fortunate. What a truly "rich" man in terms of life.

Beau says

The true story about a streak runner (number 7 on the Official U.S.A. Active Running Streak List) named Robert Kraft and a community of friends and followers he inspired. It was both inspirational and heartbreaking. Kraft has set up his entire life around his daily 8-mile run. I don't think he could stop if he wanted to. I believe he will stop only when it becomes physically impossible to continue.

I'm a runner who succumbed to multiple injuries about 1 year ago. Although the injuries were not that serious, for many months it was painful to walk. I'm in physical therapy now, and still not fully healed. After reading that Kraft kept his streak alive after being bitten hard by a rottweiler, while having pneumonia, after having his foot punctured by a nail, while being hospitalized for breathing difficulties, and many more adversities, I'm inspired to get back out on the road and stop feeling bad about my trivial problems--even if I have to do it with a slight limp.

Even if you're not a runner, you may enjoy reading about the history of Miami Beach, Florida, a son's struggles to take care of his mother with alzheimer's, and the respect a man shows for his community's homeless.

Jason Lilly says

I love books about interesting "regular" people who become passionate about something and follow that regardless of the consequences. These "regular" people usually don't match culture's definition of greatness, but as they follow what makes them come alive, whatever they are passionate about, they inadvertently change other people's lives and become great. Raven is one of these "regular" people. I keep using quotes because Raven is anything but regular. He's eccentric, funny, a good story (and joke) teller, and stubborn to a fault. But most of all he made a promise to himself to run on the beach every day and stuck to it in spite of

obstacles (both literal and figurative), illnesses, and injuries. This kind of dedication is admirable and encouraging. It gives hope to those of us who believe that even making one positive choice and sticking with it can have powerful consequences.

My only issue with the book is Huttenbach's writing style, a little sloppy at times, especially in moments in which it pulls away from Raven's story. Regardless, I enjoyed the book and would recommend it to anyone who loves running or just wants to read a feel-good story about a "regular" guy sticking to something he is passionate about, even if that comes at a price.

Ron S says

Character study of a man that's been leading an eight mile run every night along Miami's South Beach since 1975. Robert "Raven" Kraft hasn't missed a single run, despite hurricanes, illness and loss. Anyone is welcome to join him each night, and thousands have, from around the world. Part of the charm of the story is that Raven's memory is every bit as obsessive as his running (plus he keeps lists, records and admits to being a hoarder) so there is an incredible wealth of material for the author to work with here. In over 40 years of running, virtually all of Miami has undergone radical change. Raven has seen it all, and keeps running through it. A great read for fans of "The Orchid Thief" or "The Lost City of Z."

Kevin says

I really enjoyed this book. What an inspiring story. Anyone who has ever done any distance running, or has even considered such a thing, would be inspired by Robert "Raven" Craft, not only because he runs eight miles each and every day, but because he appears to be a kind and caring individual. In this age of egotistical mega-millionaire athletes, it's refreshing to read about someone who seems to have a "gift"...not only of the ability to run every day, but also to be able to related to all those who join him. I thought the author did a great job of describing who Raven is and what he stands for.

Deborah says

I love getting to know interesting people, and Raven certainly qualifies. The author does a good job of making him more than just an odd character. This book will surely inspire runners and non-runners alike. It's one of those books I wish could continue past the end. I always say I've never seen a happy jogger, but I may have to stop saying that now. Raven's dedication almost makes me feel like running.

Care says

Running with Raven is an incredible biography/character profile of Robert "Raven" Kraft. Well-written and touchingly personal, the book describes the life thus far of Raven, a Miami South Beach native most known for having consistently run eight miles along the beach every day since 1975. Huttenbach explores Raven's childhood and life leading up to his 1975 New Year's Resolution and introduces dozens of the "Raven Runners" who have joined him for anywhere from a partial run to hundreds of runs - each runner who finishes the eight miles receives a special nickname from Raven. The life of the man is inspiring

astounding in itself, and Huttenbach does an incredible job presenting a look into who this man really is.

While perhaps not the most lyrical of stories, the biography is in-depth and enormously touching. As the author herself has joined Raven on hundreds of runs, she does not shy away from expressing her affection for everything related to Raven while also not being afraid to describe and explore some less-savory aspects of his personality and character. The book includes hundreds of interviews from various Raven Runners from over the years, creating a sense of community within the book that reflects what the author describes about the runs themselves.

I was touched and inspired by this book and by Raven's incredible life story and would highly recommend this to everyone. Less scientific and more accessible than Christopher McDougall's *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* (also a fantastic book) and about a man who seems more down to earth and easily emulated than the Mexican ultrarunners that star in that book, *Running with Raven* is a great read for anyone even remotely interested in trying running or just wanting to be inspired.

Thanks to the publisher for an ARC in exchange for a fair review!

Lindsay says

Struggling to get into my own running routine, picking up *Running with Raven* could not have been more timely. I devoured this book in less than a week. It was an easy read, thoroughly entertaining, inspiring and heart-warming. If you're not dying to find a community of activity partners by the end of the book, you may have missed the point.

Huttenbach is creative with her words, original and enthusiastic with her storylines and well-attuned to complexities and nuances each member of the Raven club brings to the group and the reader. This was not only a pleasant read but entertaining and interesting. Every turned page brought a character (a real person!) that comes to life out of the pages. Her approach to storytelling makes you feel as if you were on a lounge chair hanging out with the author as she recounted her epic adventures in Miami. *Running with Raven* deserves attention; you'll feel inspired to be a better person and ready to lace your sneakers up.

Throughout the book, you get to a level of candor and intimacy with White Lightning and Raven. You can tell the author is comfortable in any situation, asks all the right questions in order to fully understand each person, and keeps asking until the facts are clear and the truth is understood.

For anyone looking for a fun vacation or beach read, or a motivational kick in the butt, go get this book!

Mitch says

A heartening tale of a man(who goes by the name of Raven) who has run 8 miles each day for over 40 years. While appearing corollary to a difficult and trying early life, the runs become a greater voice for newcomers to "find" themselves. Each day new members can earn their "nickname" and meet others searching for meaning and community in a seemingly meaningless and distant present world.

Raven, while not a perfect individual, seeks to build up the good and meritorious characteristics in others. Runners after completing a run of 8 miles get added to "the list" and have a new name based on personal

accolades and traits.

A must read for those into running, seeking a broader fitness community, or the transcendental meaning found in day-to-day habits.

Dane says

I was asked to read and review the book Running with Raven: The Amazing Story of One Man, His Passion, and the Community He Inspired and I gladly said I would. I have personally run with Raven a handful of times and was intrigued to learn a great deal more about him than I already knew.

The book chronicled Robert Kraft's life, the man who has run 8 miles on the beaches of Miami, every single day since January 1st, 1975. Well, almost. The first thing I learned which I did not know is that claim is not technically true. I will say he has run every single day since that New Year's day 42 years ago but there is a slight discrepancy to say it has been 8 miles every day. Without ruining the book, I will leave it at that.

When you complete an eight mile run with Raven, he gives you a nickname based on what he learns about you during the run. I first ran with Raven seven years ago where he bestowed upon me my own nickname. I noticed something about him that day which made me really desire to learn more about what makes him tick. It wasn't the running. It definitely wasn't the streak. It was something else.

Raven has become a cultural icon not just because he runs every day. There are actually people who have longer streaks than he does (not many but a few) and for the most part, I think running streaks are a bad idea. Rather, his status comes from the fact he is committed, self-disciplined, generous, aware, wants to building a community, and desires to have others join him. It is these factors which really draw in those who like him most.

The book details how Raven was probably ripped off by a songwriter for Johnny Cash. You will learn of his strained relationship with both of his parents. Inside the pages, told by the author who has run hundreds of runs with Raven, there is so much more than just a guy who runs every day. He is opinionated, stubborn, and sometimes seems to be tilting against windmills because of a decades old slight, but by and large he is a collector. Of miles, of newspapers, of trinkets (yes, he is a bit of a hoarder) but most importantly, of stories.

Through debilitating pain, a stint in jail, numerous torn muscles, lacerations, and something like 30 hurricanes, Raven will be on Miami Beach every evening to get in his 8 miles. Someday the streak will end and that is a little sad to think about. Not because the streak is that important per se but rather what it means to Raven.

I hardly consider myself a friend of Raven's; at best an acquaintance. However, I have told him in our small chats that the streak doesn't define him. He could stop tomorrow and I doubt anyone would be less desiring to go for a run with him when he started it back up. I know it wouldn't diminish my desire.

But Raven really doesn't want to stop. In fact, it might mean even more to some of the people who run with him than it does him. And in the book you meet many of these people. You learn their stories and how they become intertwined with Raven's. He has officiated weddings on his run, saved numerous lives in the ocean, and watched Miami Beach grow up around him.

You can imagine a book that talks about a man running the same stretch of beach for 40+ years could get monotonous. But in actuality, it doesn't focus much on the run per se. Sure it details the particulars of the course he runs, and highlights a variety of the runs he has done because a variety of things have happened on that run. Yet, the book never drags, due in part to the subject matter and in part to the excellent writing by the author, Laura Lee Huttenbach, who I have met myself on occasion.

One assuredly does not need to be a runner to enjoy reading this book. They just have to have a heart. And if you go run with Raven, you will also have a nickname.

Alice says

How absolutely refreshing not to be holding a glossy magazine biography in hands. No mainstream. No photoshop applied to trivialize, and to accommodate the reader. Happy times, unhappy times, sorrow, pain... it is all there. Raven's original motivation for running is not played down. The book discloses how his perseverance and determination gave things a turn into something unique and adorable. Raven and the book's characters appear very genuine. The oblique, the stranded are given shelter in the book. In this way the book is very political. The nicknames alone make it a real fairytale. A fairytale we are all invited to be part of. I consider the book extraordinarily well written and very sensitive.
Alice from Zurich, Switzerland

Edwin Howard says

RUNNING WITH RAVEN by Laura Lee Huttenbach is the remarkable story of Robert "Raven" Kraft, who has run on Miami Beach every day for over 40 years. His "Raven Runs" are a one of a kind experience and many people have changed because of them. Huttenbach, or as Raven has nicknamed her (as he does everyone who completes a run) White Lightning, has lovingly chronicled the life of a man who found peace in knowing that every day he will run.

Immediately the reader can tell that Raven profoundly affected the writer, Huttenbach. Her passion and delicate care when describing the life of Raven is profoundly apparent. She seamlessly takes stories he tells and couples them with other interviews and weaves together Raven's past. All the while, she throws in Raven's quirky sentiment about life all along the way, reminding the reader that while the streak is important to Raven, he is also a one of a kind person in so many other ways. The running streak has another component that seems equally important to Raven and the book expands upon it. Raven relishes the opportunity to meet people and each new person he meets seems to enrich his life even more. A fascinating individual who, after reading RUNNING WITH RAVEN, I want to find a way to get down to Miami Beach and run with Raven. Thank you to Kensington Books, Laura Lee Huttenbach, and Netgalley for a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Jackie says

This was such an amazing and inspiring story of how one life can change and influence so many others! He has been running 8-miles a day for 40 years!

Raven seems to be such an unassuming figure, using running to battle some of the challenges in his own life, and yet the story here is really about how this incredibly humble man stuck with something for so long and

influenced thousands of lives along the way.

In this modern day and age where attention spans are brief and personal connections are hard to come by, I found Raven's story to be so inspiring that through commitment to an idea, you can not only change your own life, but create a community that values each other.

Owen says

First, this could be rated 3 to 4.5 stars. Raven is a character and a streak runner, running every day, with a 40 year streak. He is an interesting person with a running obsession. Like many runners, he is driven to run. He just decided to do it every day, no matter what.

The book paints a picture of an interesting / obsessed man. Those who join him to run some of his runs are interesting and different. So there is a "parade" of people who ran with Raven. You get a little idea about and find out about a lot of runners. You understand that all sorts of people run, and running together typically builds friendships.

Overall it's interesting, but not fantastic. Raven gives everyone who runs 8 miles with him a nickname. More than 2,500 have run with him and each nickname has a story. These are short and typically amusing. So, not a must read, but an easy book to pick up, put down for some time and then return later.

Justin Thompson says

BOOK REVIEW: Running with Raven by Laura Lee Huttenbach

Running with Raven tells the story of Robert Raven Kraft, whose streak of running 8 miles a day on Miami beach began way back on January 1, 1975. That is over 15,000 consecutive days and enough mileage to go around the earth five times. What drives someone to live such a disciplined and dedicated lifestyle, despite debilitating back pain? The book digs deep into Raven's past and present to answer these questions. The short answer is, Raven has always found peace and comfort while running along the shores of south Florida. Over the years, he also found comraderie and friendship, which takes us to another central theme of the book.

At the time of publication, over 2600 people have completed the 8 mile run. At the finish line, Raven graces each new runner with a nickname that will stick with him/her for all future runs. As you can imagine, over the 40 year streak, many fascinating characters have emerged. This book takes a close look at many of them. (Taxman, sleaze buster, Mary Beth Koeth aka yellow rose, chapter 11, gringo, true story Lori, butcher...to name a few).

Raven encourages fellowship amongst the runners and embraces individuality. What you see are prison wardens running with ex cons, law professors running with the homeless, Italian reality tv stars running next to pilots, and yes even socialists running with conservatives. And they all (mostly) get along and enjoy each other's company. It is a reminder that we as humans, no matter our backgrounds, interests or beliefs, are far more connected and close than we realize.

I have two additional takes to share. First, I really enjoyed learning about the backgrounds of the runners profiled. This book is a much needed reminder that each and every one of us are special in our own unique way.

Second, I want to thank Laura (White Lightning) for writing this book. I can't imagine the time and energy it took to collect all these stories and piece them together into such an entertaining story. It makes me happy Raven's story is being shared on a larger scale.

Regardless if you love running or have never run a mile in your entire life, you will most definitely enjoy this book. It is not a book about running. It is a story of love, pain, and perseverance. We all can relate to that.
