A trip to the Outer Banks is almost always a relaxing event. At least it's supposed to be. Unless of course, you happen to be with a group of middle aged, highly competitive, Type A runners who descend upon the *Graveyard of the Atlantic* for the Flying Pirate Running Challenge Weekend.

The Running Challenge was comprised of the First Flight 5K on Saturday followed by the Flying Pirate Half marathon on Sunday. According to the press release -

The First Flight 5K is one of the most exciting 5K's in the area! The National Park Service graciously allows Outer Banks Sporting Events to offer a road race on park property, at the Wright Brothers National Memorial. This out-and-back course will have you running up and around the memorial and along the same path that Orville and Wilbur Wright took on their first flight!

And the half marathon -

The Flying Pirate Half Marathon, winding its way through the natural beauty that is North Carolina's Outer Banks, is like no other. The Flying Pirate is a point-to-point course and is the first half of the Outer Banks Marathon.

Attracting Reston runners to the area was easy. In addition to the cool pirate race shirts, finisher medals were to be distributed at the end of the 5K and the half marathon. Those who completed both races received a third Flying Pirate medal. Additional prizes were awarded to those with the best pirate costume. What's not to love?

Our gang arrived in the OBX on Thursday and Friday. The Northern buccaneers included Jim B. (fresh off of his amazing PR at the Bull Run 50 mile the weekend before), Jenny T., Jill T., Deb M., Ian L., Mike Mc., Tim C., Sarah D. (running her first half marathon) John Mc., Holly A.

and me.

After packet pick up was accomplished, we sat down for a delicious pre-5K race meal of wine and I forget what else. We got up early to head to Kitty Hawk where the race began. Over 700 participants ran, many in various states of pirate dress. The weather was perfect - sunny, somewhat cool and dry. And our very own John McGreevy came in first overall!! It was very exciting. Other "winners" included J-Tro (3rd place AG) Jill T. (1st place AG), Mike McCord (1st place AG), Jim B. (1st place AG), and Tim C. (3rd place AG). We stayed for the awards ceremony, collected all of our bling and returned to Corolla where we threw on our bathing suits and enjoyed a sunny day on the beach. Mike dazzled everyone with his kite flying and shell collecting skills and Ian practiced his "girl watching behind sunglasses" skills. Jim B. slept and Jill T. and J-Tro, in their cute bathing attire, provided a welcome sight for many men on the beach. Later we enjoyed a delicious meal of fresh fish and Jill's casserole and hit the hay in preparation for the half marathon.

We awakened to the sounds of a rainy deluge. To say it was wet outside was a gross understatement. The skies opened up and it poured the entire half marathon. We managed to finish, grab our bling (there was no hanging around after this race), meet up with the others and returned our frozen bodies back to Corolla. Age group winners in the half marathon included John MC (1st place, 6th overall finisher), Jim B. (2nd AG, 16th overall finisher), Mike McCord (2nd place AG) and Tim C, (3rd place AG).

After hot showers, we ate lunch and sadly began the process of packing up to return to Northern Virginia. Congrats to all of the Flying Pirate and First Flight challengers!

The races were very well run, the courses were quite scenic. The post-race food and activities were great. Even with the pouring rain, all who ran these races really enjoyed them. So much so, we decided we'd make it an annual event.