

[*16] I read an article a few days ago about how walking faster amplifies the health benefits of a good walk. I used to walk quite briskly, a mile in 16 minutes or so during my final years in Pittsburgh (I actually timed it once for reasons too embarrassing to explain.) Now I think it's closer to 20 minutes. Age is a factor in that, of course, but more importantly I think is the level of inner intensity, the grief-fueled angst—what I've called constructive rage—that amped up my walks during the first several years after my wife Carol passed so suddenly and unexpectedly. In any case, I'm as skeptical of that article's claims as I am of pretty much everything that comes through the media that way, whether it's medical or political or sports-related, all prone to the one- or two-day media circus-cycle we have become culturally addicted to.

I recalled the other day, thinking about this, when speed-walking was an Olympic sport. Maybe it still is. But back in the 60s it was all the rage. I was a high-end sprinter in high school, so I was addicted to speed. I took to this weird way of walking immediately, loved everything about it—all the hip-swiveling, elbow-windmilling, duck-waddling elements of it, one's body like a finely tuned machine maximizing all of its energy to cover ground faster. And I was good at it. I have no idea how fast you can cover a mile that way, but I'm sure it's way faster than 16 minutes. I think I will try that mode of walking one of these days, when no one is looking (it is so out of fashion now it might appear more like lunacy than life-extending exercise.)