I ran this memorable one-mile race during my second year in the Peace Corps, teaching in Port Loko, Sierra Leone. I had started jogging two years before as a way to lose and control my weight. By this time, I had gained a few pounds back and had a bit of a belly. In the Krio language, I was told, "Yu get belle" (which was a kidding around way of saying that I appeared to be in the early stages of pregnancy, which was a bit impossible considering my gender.

Still, when one of the two British teachers working with us made fun of my less than svelte physique, I challenged him to a race, and we went at it a few days later. While I won (and he never referred to my chubbiness again), I blew the chance at a less than six minute mile because I slowed down toward the end, allowing him to think that he was catching up, so that I could break his spirit with one final kick or dash at the end of the fourth and final quarter-mile lap. I still wonder what my final time would have been.

In either event, it was my fastest one-mile race.