



# CHECKERS *CHATTER*

**ATHLETIC CLUB**

**JUNE 2005**

## TRACK PRACTICE MOVES BACK TO UB



After a brief sojourn on the Amherst bike path, track workouts returned to the UB Stadium. They will move once again on June 6th to Crosby Field where they will stay put until the end of the season. Pictures courtesy of Diane Sardes. More at the web site.



## SOCIAL/EVENTS CALENDAR

- |                    |                                                   |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Fri. 6/3 7:00 PM   | Bullfeathers Engineering Society 5K 694.5154      |
| Sat 6/6 8:00 AM    | Niagara Falls Race Walking Championships 875.6361 |
| Sat 6/4 9:00 AM    | Nunda 5K 585.476.2612                             |
| Sat 6/4 9:00 AM    | Brushes 3K Run/Walk 883.2278                      |
| Sun. 6/5 8:15 AM   | The 2nd Annual Beth El 5K Run/Walk 473-1770       |
| Sun. 6/5 9:30 AM   | Juneteenth 5K .836.9604                           |
| Thurs. 6/9         | Corporate Challenge 882.0712                      |
| Fri. 6/10 6:30 PM  | St. Joe's Godspeed II 5K 433.5792                 |
| Sat 6/11 10:00 AM  | Susan Komen Race for the Cure 5K 887.8594         |
| Sat. 6/11 4:30 PM  | Salmon Run 5K 751.6704                            |
| Sun. 6/12          | Placid Marathon & Relay                           |
| Sat. 6/18 11:00 AM | Jack's 5K 713.5654                                |
| Sat. 6/18 9:00 AM  | Donald R. Carroll Races 800.622.2686              |
| Sun. 6/19 9:30 AM  | Jog for the Jake 5K                               |
| Sun 6/19 11:00 AM  | Jamie LaBarbera Memorial 5K 731.3078              |
| Wed. 6/22 6:30 PM  | St. Benedict's 5K 838.2628                        |
| Fri 6/24 7:00 PM   | St. Gregory the Great "Great Race" 5K 565.2660    |
| SAT 6/25 9:00 AM   | <b>Checkers AC Buffalo Mile</b> 687.4352          |
| Sat 6/25 9:30 AM   | Kids "I Did It!" Run 822.0790                     |
| Tues.6/28 7:00 PM  | Tim Hortons Peachbud 10K, 5K, 1K 905.562.8669     |

**ALWAYS VERIFY DATES ON RACE APPLICATIONS**

### New Members

John Wrege  
 Ken Gonyea  
 Sue McNulty-Atwater  
 Patrick Morgan  
 Ayanne Tramont

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU, by Paul Wandel Checkers Interview with Billy Flynn

### BIO:

Age Group: 45-49  
Residence: South Buffalo  
Professional: Firefighter for the NFTA  
Personal: Widower with 3 children; Liam (18), Colleen (16), Conner (12)  
Running: 27 Yrs. Checkers Member: 8 Yrs.  
Interests: Boxing, Daily Reading, and Track Coach for St. Thomas Aquinas School



Finding time to run is no problem for Billy Flynn. Arising before 5AM and launching out for a daily training run in South Buffalo is part of a lifestyle that incorporates health, fitness and balance. **“Running is my time of tranquility and peace,”** the former president of the South Buffalo Athletic Club ponders.

Still coping with the recent loss of his wife Peggy to breast cancer 2.5 years ago, Billy's first priority and responsibility is being a full-time parent to 3 teenage children. He is a “hands on” Dad and is actively involved with their lives. **“We are a family.”** Peggy was honored at the 2003 Susan Komen Race for the Cure. **“It was just so emotional for me, but I attend the race every year. 75% of the raised funding stays here in Buffalo for cancer research.”**

Demonstrating their care for children in the South Buffalo community, Billy and Peggy started a kid's race in Cazenovia Park, 12 years ago when associated with the SBAC. The ‘Kids I did it Race’ is still an annual event, with the purpose of getting kids active and families involved. **“I like to get kids motivated.”**

Roger Roll was instrumental in encouraging Billy to connect with Checkers AC. Especially since his wife's passing. He has known, **“Checkers to be a community of caring people and the many friendships that have developed.”** Track workouts are great and help us to develop into stronger athletes, but Billy has discovered a benefit of higher value. **“For me, it has been the support and camaraderie of the group. I look forward to Tuesdays.”** No doubt at Checkers workouts... **“You meet people from all walks of life.”**

Sports has always been a part of Billy's lifestyle. Running and basketball in High School was followed by a 10-year career as an amateur boxer. **“I competed throughout the Northeast and Ontario and eventually transitioned into training other boxers. I'll always be competitive.”** His love for running eventually introduced him to long distances and the marathon.

Now a veteran of 10 marathons, Billy has qualified for the Boston Marathon five times. Participation in the 2004 race was unpleasantly memorable, as temperatures sustained in the middle 80s. **“It was the race from hell!”** His marathon debut was the 1994 Marine Corp Marathon (3:28), followed by very consistent performances in Chicago (3:17, 3:19), New York City (3:31), Twin Cities (3:19, 3:21) and Casino Niagara (3:10 PR).

Goals for 2005 include the Chicago Marathon and Checkers Cross Country this Fall. However, he cites a goal that eclipses his running pursuits... **“To raise a good family.”**

This South Buffalo native, parent and firefighter has a theme for life. It is demonstrated by his heart of leading, developing and giving to others in the community. His paraphrase of Mother Theresa best summarizes this theme. **“Do small things with great love and appreciation.”** And he adds... **“not to be known by others, even the person that you do it for.”**

## Casino Niagara Marathon

Sunday, October 23, 2005

Congratulations to all the Club members who have signed up for the Fall Marathon group. Coach Vicki Mitchell has a proven outstanding program designed to fit your marathon needs. We will be looking forward to seeing some impressive times coming from our members and at the same time enjoying a great accomplishment.

## Tuesday Night Track Practice Crosby Field

Attention members who are currently or are planning to attend Tuesday evening track workouts. Starting Tuesday June 7, 2005, practice will be moving from the University at Buffalo to Crosby Field in Kenmore. We will remain at Crosby until the last day of track, which will be Tuesday October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005. See Coach Bob Carroll for further information.

## NOTICE

Our new webmaster Jen Filipski is in need of a Checkers member to put our newsletter online once a month. This is how it works. The CD-rom which the printer uses for our newsletters would be sent to you after being picked up from the printer. We need someone to install it on our Checkers webpage. Our request is that you will be able to install it once a month in the summer and once every two months in the winter. Please email one of the following address if you would be able to help out. Thank you.

ftblgrl899@yahoo.com  
[dianesardes@adelphia.net](mailto:dianesardes@adelphia.net)

## STAG PARTY HONORING

Tom Donnelly

Saturday, June 11, 2005 – 7:00PM

At the **Swannie House**

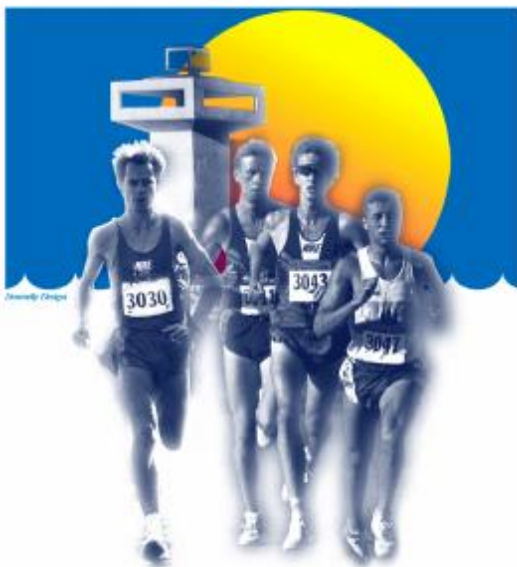
170 Ohio St., Buffalo

(Corner of Michigan and Ohio, behind HSBC Arena)  
Donation \$25.00 See Roger Roll for tickets.

## FUN RUNS WANTED

PLAN YOUR FUN RUN NOW WHILE THERE IS  
ROOM ON THE CALENDAR.

## The Buffalo Mile



## Checkers A.C. Buffalo Mile Saturday, June 25<sup>th</sup> Erie Basin Marina

This is just a reminder about this year's race. Scheduled races begin at 9:00AM. Plan to arrive at least 45 minutes before the start if you plan to volunteer for the race. If you plan on helping with registration, arrive between 7:30AM and 8:00AM. If you have any questions regarding volunteering or competing in the race please contact race director Jerry Irving at 687-4352.

Buffalo News Runner-of-the Year race

Darya Brach 6/1  
 Mary Casey 6/1  
 Lee Ann Dotzler 6/2  
 Anthony Martin 6/2  
 Daniel Voyer 6/2  
 Chuck Miller 6/3  
 Mia Symoniak 6/5  
 Linda Guglielmi 6/6  
 Bill Harden 6/6  
 Jennifer Herko 6/6  
 Pam Krieger 6/6  
 Kumar Madurai 6/6  
 Joannie Essler 6/7  
 Rachael Vella 6/7  
 Jennifer Hulme 6/8  
 Emily Neumann 6/8  
 Leah Neumann 6/8  
 Christopher Basty 6/9  
 Keith Bonas 6/9  
 Dennis Szewczyk 6/9  
 John McGuire 6/10  
 Emily Regan 6/10  
 Lisa Woodward 6/10  
 Amy Vigneron 6/10  
 Dan Burgio 6/11  
 Brian Januszkiewicz 6/11  
 Vicki Mitchell 6/12  
 Paula Arcara 6/14  
 Chip Skop 6/16  
 Larry Obisesan 6/17  
 John Baker 6/18  
 Helen Bueme 6/18  
 Ted Paget 6/19  
 Karl Shallowhorn 6/19  
 Mark Spelman 6/19  
 Donald Mitchell 6/20  
 Matt Ruddy 6/20  
 Ray Bailey 6/22  
 Sage Hurta 6/23  
 Thomas Keefe 6/23  
 Toby Mazur 6/23  
 Mark Guasteferro 6/25  
 David Wegman 6/27  
 John Ryerson 6/29  
 Linda Gerbec 6/30

## ***PR's***

David Spillman, Grand Island Half Marathon 1:43:24  
 Brenda Spillman, Myrtle Beach Marathon 3:13:08  
 Life 4/23/05 Kathie Evans Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:50:07 8:24  
 Life 4/23/05 Greg Lavis Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:35:47 7:19  
 Life 4/23/05 Paula Arcar Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:52:38 8:36  
 Life 4/23/05 Carolyn Nugent Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:26:41 6:37  
 Life 4/23/05 Jeff Camp Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:35:20 7:16  
 Life 4/23/05 Ray Ernst Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:46:26 8:07  
 Life 4/23/05 Dave Sada Grand Island 1/2 Marathon 1:46:37 8:08  
 Life 5/7/05 Dan Morris Holland Tulip Festival 5K 22:55 7:23  
 Life 5/14/05 Carolyn Nugent Pat Gallivan Race 5K 18:45 6:03

## President's Corner by Roger Roll

### Mistakes of the Trade

With track practice on Tuesdays going strong, with record crowds already in attendance, and Wednesday night practices soon to begin, here are a few thoughts and pointers to share with you.

Checkers AC is privileged to have outstanding coaches to guide you into becoming a faster and a more fluent runner while still being able to grasp the most important thing about our sport of choice, having fun along the way. Coach Bob Carroll, along with his assistants Becky and Tom have years of experience between them to share with you at the evening track workouts. In addition, world-class distance runner, and current Head Cross Country and Track & Field Coach at the University at Buffalo, Vicki Mitchell, will train those members who have signed up for the fall marathon training group. However, with all the knowledge these coaches share, you won't reap the benefits if you, the trainee, do not follow what they are saying or follow the routine they have painstakingly put down on paper.

**Rule number one**, be patient when it comes to advancing from one training group to another.

You are placed into training groups at track according to your most current race time. Not the time you ran in collage or the time you dream about, but your most current time. This means you don't put yourself into a faster training group unless the coach puts you there, regardless of your notion that you are just as fast as the people in that group. If this is true, prove it at the next race and Coach Bob will gladly move you up.

**Rule number two**, the amount of intervals you're scheduled to do is based on your weekly mileage, not what the faster people are doing. If your mileage calls for, say 4 to 6 400s, do not do 12 because you see other members doing that many. Their weekly mileage might be triple of what you're doing.



## CHECKERS

ATHLETIC CLUB

78 Hillside Ave.,  
Cheektowaga, NY 14225



"I don't get it. If he's no faster than me,  
how come he always beats me?"

See Checkers web page at:  
[www.checkersac.org](http://www.checkersac.org)

President's Corner, continued from back page.

**Rule number three**, do the correct pace for your group, regardless if it feels too easy or too slow. Running the interval 5 secs faster per 100 meters is not going to make you a faster runner. Doing the correct pace and actually finishing the entire workout, without being totally wiped out is the key to improving your times. Besides, the quicker you arrive at the finish cone and the faster you do your recovery in-between only means less time to recuperate and the sooner you have to start your next interval.

**Rule number four**, have reasonable goals. If it is your first marathon, maybe your goal is just to finish not qualify for Boston. If your most current time is around four hours, maybe a goal of three is a little out of reach. With a 5K distance, improving your time by seconds is reasonable. Planning to improve by minutes could be an unreachable goal.

**Rule number five**, encourage the members of your group regardless if you're running mile repeats or running that rainy 18- miler. Remember, regardless of how good you feel today, there will be that day when you will struggle and the encouragement you receive will be an added and needed moral boost.

Now you can probably come up with more rules than I have mentioned here, but these are the few rules that I have personally broken or witnessed members, even seasoned veterans, constantly disregard. You will make mistakes along the way; it's only human, regardless if it is too many races in a week or running injured. That's how you learn your way around the ropes. However, if you take a moment to listen to your coach, read the workouts carefully, and do them properly, you will become a better runner and you will enjoy the trip there.

Good luck with the upcoming season and try to keep the mistakes of the trade to a minimum. Roger.

Know anyone interested in joining Buffalo's best running club?  
If so, clip and pass on a copy of our application form.

Please mail with check payable to **Checkers A.C.**, 78 Hillside Ave., Cheektowaga, NY 14225

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_

*Please print your name exactly as you do on race applications.*

Would you like to volunteer to:

Help with the newsletter? \_\_\_\_\_ Help with the web page? \_\_\_\_\_ Help plan social events? \_\_\_\_\_

Help take attendance at track? \_\_\_\_\_? Organize a fun run? \_\_\_\_\_

DUES: (circle one)

*Full-time*

*Student*

*Individual*

*Married couple*

*Family*

1 year: \$ 15 \$25 \$ 35 \$ 40

2 years: \$40 \$ 60 \$ 70

3 years: \$55 \$ 85 \$100

Annual Track Fee (If you plan on using the track for this season, please add \$15 to your renewal. \_\_\_\_\_)

e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

# The Meaning of Fries

By Bill Donnelly



Throughout the many years I was just a lowly Special Education teacher, I found very few people, friends or strangers, ever came to me looking for answers to Life's greatest questions. All that has changed in the past couple of years. Ever since I became a reader of gas meters for the company that shall remain nameless, but whose name rhymes with "Irrational Fool".

For you see, a meter reader does more than just punch out numbers into a hand-held computer. No, a meter reader travels the width and breadth of Western New York going into everyone's basements. I think it was Confucius who said: "Man who goes into neighbors basement peers into neighbor's very soul!" It was either Confucius or Sponge Bob Square Pants, it doesn't matter.

What matters is that many people believe that having "peered" into so many neighbors' souls, I have become quite wise in what makes people tick. Actually, I have just seen a lot of really messy basements (you wouldn't believe how many people just throw their dirty clothes down the basement stairs – or do you do that?) and really strange collections (beer can collections lead the list, but they are often in disarray, having been knocked over by errant dirty clothes jettisoned down the basement stairs).

Noticing that people were asking me more and more questions, I started keeping a list of all questions asked me over the past year. Leading the list is: "Do you want fries with those burgers?" That one is easy, and I simply reply: "Why of course, and you can super-size me while you're at it." This exchange is not what this article is about, I just want you to realize I did keep careful tabs on all questions asked, and this one led the way with 297 incidents recorded.

Not far behind, a less important question, since it does not deal with food, was: "Oh all-knowing meter reader, what is the meaning of Life?" Come to think of it, the answer could be all about food, for example, see number one most asked question of me above. But I feel that is not what these people want to hear, so I get an all-knowing look on my face (Diane says it's the same look I get when I have really bad gas) and I tell them the following story about the Cole's race Back in the Day. The following is the way I usually give my answer.

Listen Grasshopper, the Cole's race was one of the early races started by the owner of Cole's, Dave Schatzel. Cole's is the very fine eating and drinking establishment located on Elmwood Ave. just south of Forest, not far from Buff State. The race was held in late summer, and was about 2.8 miles. We lined up at City Hall and ran straight down Elmwood to finish in front of Cole's. People have asked why we didn't just make it a 5K, but we didn't think much in terms of kilometers, it was simply the distance from City Hall to Cole's. I believe it was run from the early 1970s until the mid to late 80s. If you go to Cole's to this day, you can see all the individual winners listed on the wall near the back.

Like many of the races Back in the Day, Cole's also had a team competition. I believe this competition led to the formation of many of the running clubs we see in Buffalo today, and Cole's was the cornerstone of team competition. This was because of the Cole's team trophy, which would be retired by the first team to win it three years in a row. You wouldn't think that would be so hard to do, would you? The fight to win that trophy drove clubs desperate to win it, led to clubs being created, and saw runners being lured from one club to another, all for the glory of winning the Cole's team trophy.

Along with the question as to which came first, the chicken or the egg, we in the Buffalo running community wonder which came first, the Belle Watlings or the Buffalo Philharmonic A.C. I know the Belle Watlings started calling themselves that name in 1969, and the BPAC came along shortly thereafter, but which registered their name with the AAU first is a burning question that may never be answered, simply because no one cares. Anyway, the Philharmonic jumped into the Cole's team competition in a big way right off the bat, and after two straight wins in the early years, the trophy looked to be theirs.

Dick "The Founder" Sullivan of Belle Watling fame saw things differently. He put together a crack team of "old fellows", with a youngster or two, and won the next year, denying the BPAC their glory. The Watlings won again the next year, and were ready to retire the prize when something unexpected happened. Checkers A.C. was born.

As I mentioned in a previous article about Joe Jordan and his bar on Hertel the club was named for, he got the idea to start a running club after his running buddy Matty Hellerer won the Cole's race in 1974. Checkers of course came along just in time to keep the Belle Watlings from winning the third time, but after Checkers won twice, they had a split in their own club. Checkers' member Randy Halm and others wanted a Buffalo club that would represent the city in out of town races, and he took the top Checkers' runners and other area runners and created the Greater Buffalo A.C. They wore all black outfits, and were known to others outside the club as the Darth Vader club.

Of course, they won the Cole's race the next two years, but before you knew it, Checkers put back together a crack team, and finally won the race three years in a row to retire the trophy. That was in about 1983, and I would guess you could still see it at Checkers. I know Joe Jordan has a picture of the celebration he'll show you if you want to see it.

So much for running clubs in Buffalo, what about the meaning of Life, eh Grasshopper? Back to the Cole's race of 1974. The race was in the morning, and off we went. I had a particularly good race that day, coming in third place behind Matty Hellerer and Fred Gordon. On the way into the bar to get our stuff, I heard Dave Schatzel tell Hellerer and Gordon that he was arbitrarily making them Expert Class, so that made me the winner of the open division. Matty still got his name on the wall as winner, but I would get a nice big trophy.

Now, one reason Cole's was such a popular race was that Dave threw quite a party the night of the race. We all came back, and the upstairs was open to the runners for some really great food and all the beer you could drink. This was the forerunner of how

most races are done in Buffalo now, but you didn't find this kind of treatment anywhere else after a race in 1974. We got our awards, and mine was a big silver bowl donated by the No-Name Bar, a fine establishment right down the street. The bowl was probably aluminum, but it was engraved with the No-Name name on it, it was the nicest trophy I had won, and I was happy as a clam.

We ate and drank and partied for hours, and I was hanging with the Belle Watlings, whose motto was "race hard, party hard!" Then Mike Miesczak entered the picture. Mike was an excellent runner Back in the Day. He was best at short distances, but he did quite well in the marathon. I remember him doing a 2:45 in Boston, and once he put it all together in Skylon, and ran a 2:39. As my brother Tom says of runners Back in the Day, and he ran a 2:35 (with a lot of change on an easy course) we always considered ourselves middle of the pack runners with those times. Of course, with my time being way better than Tom's, well, I just grin and shake my head yes, "we" were middle of the pack runners compared to Zimmerman, Gordon, Hellerer, and others (ME).

Yes, Mike was a good runner, but his claim to fame was he somehow convinced Nancy Dragoo to marry him. Nancy was the top area female in middle and long distance. She too ran a marathon in 2:39 (for the sake of continued married bliss, I will not say whose time was faster – also, I don't know). Nancy still holds records in races across the state, but she and Mike do not compete anymore. They are retired Buffalo school teachers (they would not know the answer to the question concerning the meaning of life!), but you may see Nancy running her three miles a day near her home on Grand Island, or playing golf. Mike too enjoys playing golf, or skeet shooting at the gun club up there. By the way, skeet is the term Grand Islanders use in referring to the mosquitoes that inhabit the swampland that is Grand Island, and those skeets are big enough to shoot.

Anyway, back to Cole's, and how Mike plays into it. He was a regular at the No-Name Bar, and he ran representing them. He was under the impression that the No-Name Bowl was to go to the best runner from that Bar, which was Mike. I guess somehow I convinced him that in no way was I letting that fine trophy leave my person, he accepted that, and left. We continued to party, and soon Sully said it was tradition for the winner of the No-Name Bowl to take said bowl to said bar and have said bartender fill it with said beer. Have I said enough? I thought this an excellent idea, and proceeded to the No-Name, with the Belle Watlings promising to follow.

At the bar I found Mike nursing a beer by himself. I told the bartender of the tradition of him filling my trophy. He said, Yeah, right! Seems he had run the race the year before, so he knew better, but since it was such an inventive story, he filled up the bowl. That's a lot of beer, so to mend fences, I asked Mike to partake with me. We got it halfway down, and still no Watlings. Realizing they were not coming, I decided to head back to Cole's, half filled bowl under my arm.

No-no said No-Name bartender, there is an open container law here. The Irish in me wouldn't let me waste good beer, so I chugged it. Then I realized it was time to meander home. I lived close and walked home, though I don't remember getting there (ah, the folly of youth). I just know I woke up quite hung-over, and worse of all, there was a big dent in the side of my bowl.

A few years later when I was recovering from an injury, and Tom was coming into his own, he beat me in Skylon. He knew he would, had taken my No-Name Bowl, had printed on it "The Donnelly Cup", and brought it to Checkers for the post-race celebration. I went along with it, but he had to have the bowl filled with beer and drink it all to keep it. Couldn't do it, but sometime during that night, he managed to lose my prized No-Name Bowl.

What, you say, has this got to do with the meaning of life? Every time I tell this story to a young Grasshopper, He forgets what he asked me in the first place, and he hops away. Perhaps still thinking me an all-knowing meter reader. Well, I'm going to keep reading meters until I finally get into the basement of a certain skeet shooter on Grand Island. He was there that night at Checkers. I suspect if I look under the dirty clothes on top of his collection of beer cans and running trophies, I just might find a certain No-Name Bowl. And that's what life is all about.

## "Just another Boston memory." by Mark Gunther

I'm writing this about one week after the 109<sup>th</sup> running of the Boston Marathon, trying to get it all down while it is still fresh in my mind. My friend Joe, whose story it really is, declined to set it down on paper claiming that it was, "Just another Boston memory." This was his fourth Boston Marathon, so I guess he's entitled to that opinion. This was only my second (my first really), so I guess I'm a bit more easily impressed than my friend, the seasoned veteran.

Anyway, the reason for writing down this particular story is because I think it captures the heart and soul of this race. Of course, for any serious amateur runner the Boston Marathon is the pinnacle of a running career. Now, I'm aware that every runner in this race has his or her own story. Probably, one just as poignant as the other. But, again, there's something about this incident that sums it all up for me.

First, though, a bit of background. The story probably begins at the 2003 Steamtown Marathon in Scranton, Pennsylvania. That is the race at which Joe and I qualified for Boston. We also ran with our friends Marcus and Merle. Marcus, as a better runner, was kind enough to lay back and pace us through the first 20 miles. He went on to run a 3:21, just missing the men's 40-44 Boston cut. Though he denies it, Joe and I still believe that had he not paced us, he would almost certainly have qualified. However, this isn't so important for Marcus. He's qualified and ran Boston before, and makes a habit of not running any marathon - not even Boston - twice. Anyway, that year, Joe and I ended up running nearly identical traces finishing in 3:24, and qualifying in the men's 45-49 group. It was my 9<sup>th</sup> marathon (only half of them worth mentioning) and, needless to say, I was thrilled to be going to Boston.

Well, I went and ran the unbelievably hot 108<sup>th</sup> Boston marathon on 04-18-2004. Unfortunately, I became ill and had to drop-out just after the half-way mark at Wellesley. Its difficult to put my disappointment at the time into words. I'd never had to drop-out of a race before, so I was kind of stunned. (Joe, on the other hand, ran a somewhat miraculous 3:46 in 85 degree heat). I remember flying home the next day on a plane full of Boston finishers, and not talking to a single one. So, I started planning for the following year.

Now I'd usually run only fall marathons, so training for a Spring race, through the often formidable Western New York winters, has been



kind of tough. But, with the help of a really great local track club and a good group of Saturday morning runners, it hasn't been that bad. We run with a group of runners every Saturday morning at 8:00am. This group has been meeting in various forms for over 25 years. If Joe is out-of-town, there's always someone to run with: Marcus, Mike, Pete, John, Merle, Gordon, Diane, Mary Claire, Julie, Paula - too many to mention. My wife, Colette, has always been very supportive of my running, but, in truth, she just doesn't get distance running. Sometimes, I'm not sure if I get it myself, except that I know that the social aspect of it, the friends, the early morning conversations, the bad jokes, and the general camaraderie have become very important to me. In fact, without having run Steamtown with a couple of friends, I'm not sure if I would have had the mental stamina to qualify.

Anyway, back to Boston. I never think about taking pictures, but Joe is always snapping away. In fact, he's become the unofficial photographer for our Saturday morning running group, taking a summer group photo and a Christmas picture. It's become a regular thing and we look forward to getting our pictures and seeing the changes in the group, year-to-year. Last year at Boston, Joe bought a couple of drugstore throw-away cameras and took a bunch of pictures at Boston Commons and the Athletes Village. He put the camera in his clothing bag and retrieved it after the race. This year, however, he had a better idea. He bought some throw-away cameras and a self-addressed, postage paid, mailing envelope. He then wrote a brief note with his name, mailing address, phone number, e-mail address, and a few particulars about himself and his race goals. All of this went into a small plastic bag.

At the start of the race, there was Joe snapping away. The plan was to take a full roll of film at the start and the beginning of the race and then to hand it to someone in the crowd. As many people know, the roadside crowd support at the Boston Marathon, all along the course, is legendary. Many of these fans have watched the start of the race for many years, spanning several generations. So, the race begins and it takes us about six minutes to get to the starting line. Joe is snapping away: taking moving shots of the crowd, the runners, holding the camera aloft on the steep initial downgrade - hoping that something turns out. When we've run together for about a mile or so, Joe takes the last picture, stuffs the camera into the bag and picks out a young boy in the crowd. He thrusts the bag into the boy's hands and says something like, "Take care of this for me. Read the note in the bag." We run on.

Joe had another good race this year, finishing in 3:44. I stayed with him through 14 miles and had to slow down. It was another hot one this year, and I was not as well trained as my friend. After I let him go, I decided to enjoy a "victory lap." That is, not knowing if I'd ever make it back to Boston, I decided to take it easy and have a good time. From Newton Lower Falls on, I must have high-fived everyone on the course. The Boston College students gave me a big lift on Heartbreak Hill. My wife and our close friend Kerry (who *does* get the distance running thing) were waiting for me at about mile 25. From that point on, I was waving to the crowd and blowing kisses to the finish. I finished in a slow but exhilarating 4:06. Of course, this year, I was able to accept my finisher's medal. It means a great deal to me, and will probably mean more in the years to come.

Well, three days after the race, Joe got the following e-mail:

*From: Paul*

*To: Joe*

*Subject: The Bag with Cameras*

*Dear Joe:*

*Just a quick note to say that the bag you handed off is in safe hands with us, the Newman family. You handed the bag to my son, Aidan, who could not believe what it contained. After some initial confusion, and then a quick reading of the notes, it became the highlight of his and our day.*

*"The hand-off," as we now call it, has inspired a whole lot of discussion in our house. As Hopkinton residents, we watch the marathon every year. We watch for people that inspire us -- the wheelchairs, the people with disabilities, the old, the young, the funny, the seemingly out-of-place, the patriotic -- to name a few. And every year somebody else catches our eye. This year, you were one of those who surprised and inspired.*

*Running a marathon is surely a big accomplishment, and we hope you made your time (my wife looked it up, but I do not recall if you made the 3:30 you had desired). A bigger, more interesting accomplishment, is that you trusted the people of our little town to send back your cameras. I must say that most would have figured a way to carry the cameras to the end of the race, and left it at that. But you took a different path as a complete stranger, handing off a bag of memories, to yet another complete stranger, and trusting, maybe even hoping more so, that they would be sent back to you and not discarded. A simple act of trust in the human spirit.*

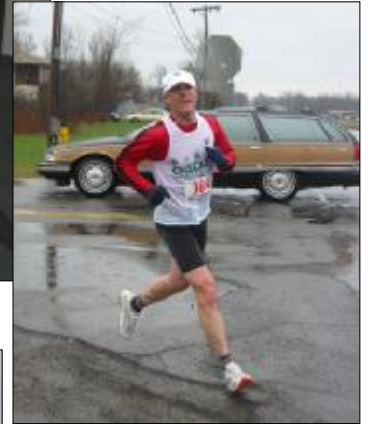
*It is good to know that some people simply do just trust in others.*

*It is school vacation this week, and between that and all else, the mailboxes have been just a bit off the beaten path. Anyway, we'll put the cameras in the mail this weekend. And well, thanks.*

*Regards, The Newman family, Paul, Tracy, Aidan and Noah.*

Just another Boston memory? Perhaps. As I say, everyone who's run this race probably has a basket full. I'm not entirely sure why this particular incident should have made such an impression on me. I think perhaps it typifies my experience of the running community at large. Fast, slow, young, old, men, women, race participants, volunteers, and crowd support. One cannot contemplate the running experience without all of these pieces coming together. Whether at the world's greatest marathon or a local 5-K race, over the years there's always been this sense of community. The loneliness of the long distance runner? Not for this old, slow guy.

Pictures from NCC 5K, T-of-T Aquatic Center, and Grand Island Half Marathon. Courtesy of Diane Sardes and Joan Crouse. See the web site for lots more. Take a good look. We have pictures archived from 2002 to the present.



## PICTURE PAGE

