

Why Do I Run?
by
Bob Murphy

Why do I run? For me the answer is quite simple. Until I was in my late 30s I was pretty much unaware that there was a “sport” of running. I went to a small high school in Vermont where the only sports available were baseball and basketball, and I was not much good at either. An acquaintance of mine tried to interest me in track when I was in college, but not having any knowledge of it decided no.

At the age of 36, I heard friends at work talking about “fun runs”. I had never heard the term before and asked about it. These were the Montpelier Fun Runs organized by Onion River Sports and Warren Kitzmiller every Tuesday, down at the Liquor Control Warehouse parking lot. I was interested, attended the last few of those events in 1976, and was hooked. It didn't take me long to realize that I had found a sport where I could do reasonably well.

I began to acquire a new group of friends connected to this form of exercise and competition. It didn't take long for me to join a running club. The one that most in the area belonged to was the North Country Athletic Club (NCAC), based (principally) in Littleton and Concord, N.H. Club shirts featured the profile of “The Old Man in the Mountains”, a symbol of the Granite State.

At the time I began my running journey, the most famous names associated with the sport included the likes of Bill Rodgers and Frank Shorter, and it seemed like EVERYONE wanted to run the marathon. It didn't take long for me to be swept up into marathon fever, and in 1978 I ran my first in 80-degree heat at the Plattsburg Marathon. It was overwhelming, and I was very emotional at the finish. I just knew I had to run more of them.

In 1980, I began to question why, as Vermonters, we were running races with a symbol of New Hampshire on our running shirts. So I and three others (Darragh Ellerson, Paschal Deblasio and Doug Jones) joined forces to start a new running club based in the Montpelier/Barre area. We talked about what to call it, briefly considering Northern Vermont Runners, but eventually settled on Central Vermont Runners. It didn't take long before the majority of NCAC members in the area joined CVR. Some retained dual membership for a while, but when it looked like CVR was here to stay, most dropped their NCAC alliance. That was good for us, but not so good for NCAC. Because Vermont runners were such an integral part of NCAC that club began a downward spiral after our defections and eventually disappeared from the scene.

But CVR was just getting started. Soon after our formation in 1980 we took over the fun runs, the Montpelier 10-miler and the Howard Bank 10k. The fun runs continue today, and the other two races eventually acquired new names: the Paul Mailman 10 Miler and the Capital City Stampede. The “Gang of Four” who started the club all contributed in various ways. I became the first club President, Paschal was the first Vice President, Darragh became the first Treasurer, and Doug was the first Race Chairman. Doug also was the one responsible for the initial version of the CVR logo, shown at the right.



A lot has changed since 1980, but much has remained. The fun runs have waxed and waned over the years, but are still attracting runners each Tuesday in Montpelier. Additional fun-run inspired

get together have developed and we now have various events throughout the year, including winter group runs, trail runs, etc. Races have come and gone through the years, but a core group have endured, and some are now close to 50 years in age.

Over the years I have participated in many races of various lengths from the Stowe Mini-Marathon (1.7 miles) to the actual Marathon, with some measure of success. I have particularly enjoyed the competition I have had over the years with those folks in my age group. The ones I finished behind have always provided inspiration for me to try harder. Sometimes that worked well for me and sometimes I found those who used to finish behind me eventually finished ahead, and were perhaps inspired by me in the same way. The competitive nature of running has always been strongly appealing to me.

So I have been running close to 50 years, and although age has been taking its inevitable toll on my body and the times I can run, I have enjoyed the journey immensely, and am pleased to have been in a club with such a great group of people. I have no way of knowing how long I can keep running, but have been grateful for the many years of CVR membership and comradeship that I have experienced. It has been an important part of my life, and I look forward to continuing it for as long as I can.