

Frank Foye's thoughts on HRH

I have been reading with great interest the discussion on the future of HRH running. Although I haven't run with the club in many years and most of the hill runners have no idea who I am, I thought it might be of interest to understand why and how the club came into existence.

In the 1990's I owned a health food store (Gram's Natural Foods, no longer in existence) at the WalMart/ Laneco shopping center in Clinton. I was a beginner runner participating in some 5k's and hoping to run in longer races. I loved running and the way it made me feel, what it did for me physically, mentally and emotionally. I was hooked. I began to run longer and train harder. I lived on Little York/Mt Pleasant Rd and ran from my doorstep. I mapped out runs of 3, 5, 7 and 10 miles. The hills of Hunterdon were beautiful and totally challenging to the mind, body and spirit. I subscribed to Runners World and soon found myself enrolling in a personal coaching program that would map out the training regimen to complete a marathon. I talked to people in the health food store every day about the rigors and benefits of running. I loved running. I began to run in local races and noticed running clubs participating but I was intimidated by those clubs because they all seemed like elite type runners. I was a 9 to 10 minute a mile runner. I could never run with them but I thought how nice it would be to have someone that I could do a long run with that was in my league. And so the idea was born. I put out a monthly newsletter for the health food store and decided to use that as a forum to find other runners in the area that would be interested in gathering on a Sunday morning to do a local run. Our first run was out of the WalMart shopping center in Clinton. We decided to meet at the health food store

and run down Pittstown Rd. The weather was terrible and only two of us showed up to run. The following week there were four. Joanne Low (who has since passed away), Elwin Guthrie, myself and one other runner. After we ran we had some bagels, coffee and fruit in the health food store. On my way home that day I passed someone who was running on Cooks Cross Rd. I pulled the car over and asked if he (Dale Johnson) would be interested in running with some other runners. And so it began one person at a time. Dale was a much better runner than the others involved but always ran along with us. We began to attract better runners like Wes Knowles, Jim & Cathy Crossin. We ran routes from my house, Wes house, the Crossin home, Dales house and Elwin's house. It seemed like every time we ran at someone's house they would have a new friend or two that wanted to run with us. We added runners of different ability. Bev Atkinson started out running with Joanne and myself and before long she was winning races in her age group. Each guest always provided coffee and something to eat, a bathroom to use and more importantly someone that would run along with you. No one was ever left behind. We always tried to gear our runs so that we could all run together for the first couple of miles and then the good runners would break away only to join back up with the group at the end so we all finished together. We found ourselves getting a little more organized and decided we should come up with a name so we could tell people who they were running with. We met at Frank's Pizzeria in the Walmart Plaza had some slices and the Hill Runners of Hunterdon was born. Wes Knowles designed the logo and I had some shirts printed up so we could identify ourselves to others as we ran. The logo was meant to be simple because that is who we were. Just a few runners getting together to spend some time together and log in a few miles. We were running the hills of hunterdon and it was magnificent and so were the people we ran with.

I am sure every one of us has a story that sticks out as we ran but I want to share two quick ones that have never left me and I think might explain my feeling on the vote about a merger. One early Saturday morning I was running the back roads of Clinton with Pastor Andrew Paton. The sun was just coming up and poking it's head above the hills. It was dead quiet, there were no cars on the road and the only sound besides our breathing was the animals on the farms. It was absolutely spectacular. Andrew told me a story as he so often did about the beauty and serenity that we were experiencing. He came to this country from South Africa to accept a position as a pastor in a small church here in Clinton. He had never been to the US before and his first trip would have his plane arrive in Newark, NJ. For those of you that have landed in Newark you know that it is not a pretty site as you pass the refineries, warehouses and run down neighborhoods. Andrew looked out the window and asked his wife if the plane had crashed, thought that maybe they died and were now on their way to hell. But as we ran a few more steps, took in the beauty around us, he told me that he wondered if he had died and went to heaven because this was as perfect as it could be.

On another memorable run I had the privilege of listening to Bruce Marshall tell a story, as we ran, about the trials and tribulations of trying to qualify for the Boston Marathon. Like anything in life we all have dreams and we also have obstacles that get in our way of those dreams. I listened intently as he described his dream of qualifying and I felt the pain as he told of the failures. He told me of the race that qualified him for Boston and how he almost didn't make it. He described how he felt when he approached the finish line checked the official time and knew he was going to make it. I could feel the tears begin to roll down my cheeks because I know the feeling of failure and I know the glory of success.

I tell you all of this because this is what the Hill Runners of Hunterdon is all about. It was designed for the common runner to have a companion to run with and enjoy the benefits running has to offer. If the club didn't fill your needs than it was OK to go somewhere else. We had some really good runners but everyone checked their ego at the starting line. No one ever felt left out or not good enough. We helped sponsor some races, did some fundraising for local groups and really formed some group cohesiveness by participating in things like "the river to the sea race." The club has survived and grown because of the leadership and dedication of some amazing runners whose passion for the sport attracted the right quality of members.

I think it would be a shame to dissolve the Hill Runners of Hunterdon. I vote NO for the merger.

Thanks

Frank Foye