

READINGTON RUNS – (originally printed in the Readington News Jan 08)

Bruce Marshall

Living amongst us is one of the icons of the New Jersey running community. Dave Faherty moved to Readington in 1996, and those who know him and his wife Judy are all the richer for it. He is an institution when it comes to running in this part of the United States – both in his accomplishments and through his years of coaching.

A marathon is 26 miles, 385 yards. Dave has completed over 160 marathons and ultra marathons (races greater than 26.2 miles). This includes the New York City Marathon an astounding 28 times and the historical and prestigious Boston Marathon on 24 different occasions. In addition to most of the local races, Dave was able to travel around the country as the captain of the AT&T Marathon Team competing in marathons in Houston, Los Angeles, San Diego, Las Vegas, Myrtle Beach, Portland (Oregon and Maine), and Kansas City. Dave had a chance to experience the European running scene when he ran the



marathon in Venice Italy, finishing as the 1st American Master (over 40). His marathon PR or personal record came at the difficult New York City marathon in 1980, where he ran 2:37:40, finishing 244th out of 16,000 finishers. But he had previously finished as high up as 9th at New York and won the Mad Anthony Wayne NJ Marathon outright in 2:39:46 at age 38. He has clocked an unbelievable 72 sub 3-hour marathons – a time that 99% of all runners can never hope to achieve.

He ran for Bergen Catholic High School where he was the state parochial cross-country champion in 1962 and went on to compete for Iona College. He coached cross-country and track at Bergen Catholic and later at Pequannock. He currently teaches mathematics at North Plainfield High and volunteers as a coaching assistant for the cross-country and track teams.

Dave and Judy are long-time members of the competitive Sneaker Factory Running Club, as well as the local Hill Runners of Hunterdon. Every winter, they traditionally host a gigantic winter club run and whatever the weather, the attendance is huge. Certainly this is partly due to the knowledge that some of the best runners in the state will be there, but mostly because they have so many friends who admire, respect, and just like the unassuming and modest Faherty's. And any friend of theirs is someone you want to meet. Of course, many in attendance are enticed by the prospect of Judy's world-famous scones!

A visit to Dave's house is like visiting a running museum, and indeed there is a treasure trove of running memorabilia to be found and appreciated. Almost immediately you are drawn to the Olympic Torch, which Dave carried through three states in 1984.

There are bookshelves filled with innumerable literary works on running, coffee table books of some of the classic marathon events such as Boston, how-to manuals, and one pictorial on the New York City Marathon including a photo of the original 170 runners who ran the very first one in 1970. Dave is among those, of course.

Speaking of New York - if you encourage him, Dave will pull out an unobtrusive wooden box containing one of the prized "gold" watches that Fred Lebow – the former President of the New York Road Runners Club and founder of the NYC Marathon - used to buy on the streets of Manhattan in the early days for the Top 10 finishers.

But one item is my personal favorite. Like most of us, refrigerator doors are repositories for notes, magnets, and the odd photo. There's one of Dave some years ago approaching the finish line at the NYRR 24-mile race, part of the Winter Distance Racing Series, as he finished in the top 5. Very clearly BEHIND him is Amby Burfoot – who would go on to win the 1968 Boston Marathon.

But it is his enthusiasm and love of running that overshadows his running exploits. Soft-spoken, many times he has offered support, encouragement, and advice to the likes of everyday runners like me, and believe me, it means a lot. He has been battling injuries over the last few years, and in particular, trying to overcome knee surgery and lately, back pain. Even though he is reduced to a pace that pales in comparison to that which he ran in his heyday, he has never conceded defeat and continued to run. He is an inspiration to runners young and old.

Yes; there are many talented and very active runners in Readington Township. But we are all rookies next to the incomparable Dave Faherty. He is revered throughout New Jersey running circles, and has earned the respect and friendship of numerous runners – beginners, veterans, and elite athletes.

For more info on the Hill Runners of Hunterdon, visit www.HRHNJ.org, or contact Bruce Marshall at BGMarshall@earthlink.net.