

History of Road Runners Club of America

Getting Started

The widespread Road Runners Club movement of today extends back into the late 1950s. Jogging for health and fitness was practically unheard of in those days. Competitive long-distance racing was an officially recognized Olympic sport, but with the exception of the New England area, there were very few distance races in the US. The athletes looked to the AAU (amateur Athletic Union) to provide races, in view of the AAU's self-proclaimed responsibility in this field. When it became evident that the AAU was not really interested, the athletes decided to organize and put on their own races.

The chief means of communication among distance runners in those days was a monthly magazine of race results (chiefly track and cross-country) called *The Long Distance Log*. It was published in the Philadelphia area by former Olympian Browning Ross. (For comparison of the late 1950s distance-running scene with that of today, the *Long Distance Log* in those days had a national circulation of 126!) In the August 1957 issue "Brownie" wrote an editorial proposing that American distance runners form a national road running organization, similar to the kind that already existed in several other countries. He suggested that the membership include not only runners but officials, race sponsors, coaches, etc. The group could encourage running and have an annual meeting, raise funds, coordinate schedules, recruit new sponsors, start a club publication, revive obsolete long-distance races such as the one-hour track run, etc.

Response was positive. A local club - the Middle Atlantic RRC in Philadelphia - was born in December 1957, and the New England RRC began in February 1958. February 22, 1958, was the natal date of the "Road Running Club of America" as it was called. Meeting in the Paramount Hotel in New York City, Ross and

nine others discussed general directions and laid down a basic organizational structure, patterned geographically on the various AAU districts for the most part. The rules of the Middle Atlantic RRC were adopted as the rules of the national body, with each district free to formulate its own by-laws as it saw fit. Election of officers for this first year was to be by mail vote in the immediate future, with Ross acting as provisional president in the meantime.

National championships were awarded as follows: 1) one-hour run and 12-mile run, held concurrently on a track, to the Central district (Chicago area); 2) a 15-mile road race and a 5-mile junior championship road race to New Jersey; and 3) a two-man 10-mile relay on the track to the Middle Atlantic RRC (reflecting the interest in interval training that had just become popular).

The Formative Years (1958-1968)

Momentum began gathering. By April 1958, a New York chapter of the RRCA had been organized, with 29 members. Within a few months of its beginning, this group staged a clinic on running, with world-renowned Percy Cerutti of Australia as guest speaker. It held its first race on February 15, 1959, with Joe Kleinerman acting as race chairman, starter, timer, and checker.

The Midwest RRC held its first meeting in Chicago in June of 1958. That very same month it conducted the RRCA National One-Hour Run and 12-Mile Championship, concurrently. As near as can be determined, this was the first time the one-hour run had been held in the US in some 40 years. By making this event a national championship and holding it annually each year since 1958, the RRCA reawakened nationwide interest in the race.

The second annual meeting of the RRCA, again held in conjunction with the AAU indoor and T&F championships, took place on February

21, 1959, at the Paramount Hotel, New York City ("RRCA suite," i.e., the mezzanine part of the lobby). Representatives from New England, Ontario, New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Ohio, and the Middle Atlantic area were present. One innovation adopted by the group was that the president, treasurer, and secretary of one RRCA district would be elected at the National RRCA meeting to be the national RRCA officers for the next year. The Middle Atlantic RRC group of Dick Donohue (president), Steve Thomas (treasurer), and Tom Osler and H.B. Ross (co-secretaries) was duly elected. Plans were also accepted to collect funds, purchase and distribute RRCA stationary and English RRC emblems, have periodic written reports sent from local RRCA chapters to the national secretary, distribute a newsletter, and provide RRCA membership opportunities for runners who resided in an area where no official RRC existed. Except for the chapter reports and the newsletter these steps were instituted within a few months of the meeting.

Also in February 1959 the Michigan RRC was established in Detroit by Hugh Jascourt and Frank McBride. The club soon revived road running in the Detroit area.

By December 1959, the Michigan RRC had 15 members, the Midwest RRC had 19 members, and the Middle Atlantic RRC was up to 82 members. New York and New England RRCs, as mentioned, were also operating.

RRCA national championships continued. The Midwest RRC conducted the National RRCA 10-Mile Championship in Chicago on August 28, 1959.

The 1960 annual meeting took place on February 20 in New York City (Paramount Hotel, as usual). It was decided that the 25 cents annual dues per member would no longer be collected for the national treasury. The possibility of the RRCA being incorporated was to be investigated.

Assuming RRCA leadership in 1960 was the New York trio of Ted Corbitt (president), Joe Kleinerman (vice-president- the first time this position was used), and John Sterner (secretary-treasurer).

Ted writes that "those were tough days, days of survival. The AAU acted one way in some districts and the opposite in other districts... Some AAU officials took the RRCA as a threat..." This was particularly true of the local AAU in New York. Instead of recognizing the good work the RRC was doing to promote distance running, the AAU there refused to admit the RRCA as a member and took the position that the RRCA was illegal. In other areas, however, most RRCs had no problem with the local AAU. On the national level the AAU – strongly influenced by its New York association – disapproved of the RRCA. Attempts by the RRCA to affiliate with the AAU at the national level were rebuffed by the AAU and it advised the RRCA to function solely as a social or fraternal group instead of conducting races.

Ted Corbitt was the first president to push an RRCA publication program. His modest "RRC of U.S. Bulletin," a one-sheet dittoed job, was a major contribution in that it began the desperately needed communication among RRC districts. Under his guidance, the RRCA published *The World's Fastest Marathons* by Nat Cirulnich and a one-page dietary review of the pre-race meal called "The Last Meal." These may seem insignificant compared to the relatively huge amount of literature available to the runner today, but in 1960 there was practically nothing for runners to read. Also around 1960, Ted conceived of his booklet on measuring road running courses. The required research on this project took years, and the booklet was finally published in 1964.

During Ted's tenure, the concept for the RRCA Standards Committee was introduced. This had the dual purpose of awarding certificates for achieving certain times at a series of distances and of accurately measuring road courses. The idea of an RRCA "national telegraphic run" (postal run) was discussed.

The five RRCAs were joined by two more – the Baltimore or Maryland RRC, headed by Frank Pflaging, and also the Tidewater RRC at the College of William and Mary (also called the Virginia Association RRC).

At the fourth annual meeting (February 21, 1961, in New York City), the 18 members who attended voted to stage an open national 10-mile track postal championship. Each RRCA district would conduct its own race, with the choice of dates being July 12, 15, or 16, 1961. *Track & Field News* seems to have been the first to institute national postal championships in this country, with its two-person 10-mile relay in the late 1950s. The RRCA's 10-mile open run in 1961 began this type of championship for regular long-distance races. Other RRCA postal championships were added in later years. The AAU began conducting a national AAU one-hour track run as a postal championship in the late 1960s. The membership tackled another problem that has been long neglected – sending qualified runners to major races in other parts of the country. Toward this goal a fund was started to send a runner to the 1961 Western Hemisphere Marathon in Culver City, CA. Kurt Steiner of the New York RRC eventually went.

Also in 1961, the RRCA dropped the practice of electing all of its national officers from one chosen RRCA district. Elected to the national office for the 1961-62 term were John Sterner of the New York Association (president), Hal Higdon of the Midwest RRC (vice-president), and Bill Marot of the New England RRC (secretary-treasurer).

Under John Sterner the publication of an RRCA newsletter continued. Also, a separate pamphlet- *Weight Lifting for Distance Runners*, by Nick Costes – was published by the RRCA in February 1963, and was given free to all RRCA members.

The Minnesota RRC, now the Minnesota Distance Running Association (MDRA), (number eight!), appeared early in 1961. In June 1961, Hugh Jascourt organized the District of Columbia RRC.

In the Chicago region the Midwest RRC, in an area that had seen only three or four distance races (cross-country) a year in pre-RRCA days, put on 14 races during the first half of 1961 alone, including the one-hour, 15, 20, 25, and 30K Central AAU Championships.

The first annual RRCA Marathon Championship was held in Atlantic City, NJ, October 1, 1961. This race remained the RRCA Marathon Championship until 1973, when it became a postal event championship. (At the 1977 convention in St. Louis, the marathon again reverted to a regular RRCA championship race.)

At the February 1962 annual meeting the runners (18 members and several “observers”) discussed the possibility of sending a runner to the 52-mile London-Brighton race. During the following months the word was spread via the Long Distance Log, small donations were sent in, and in the fall of 1962 the RRCA sent Ted Corbitt to England to run in the race.

Other action taken at the 1962 meeting included the reestablishment of the old rule of collecting 25 cents per member to cover national expenses, and assigning the newly elected officers to draft an up-to-date RRCA constitution. To bail the club out of its precarious financial condition, donations totaling \$28.50 were collected from those attending the meeting.

Officers elected for the 1962-63 were Hugh Jascourt of the DC RRC (president), Larry Grace of the NY Assn. (vice-president), and Bill Marot of the New England RRC (secretary-treasurer).

As RRCA president, Jascourt immediately tackled major policy questions, such as the RRCA's relations with the AAU and with the newly formed United States Track & Field Federation (USTFF). Some correspondence occurred in 1962 on a possible affiliation of the RRCA with USTFF, but many questions were left unanswered and no affiliation took place. The USTFF prohibited several of its affiliate universities from letting RRCs use the tracks, because RRC events usually were AAU-sanctioned and the USTFF had declared war on the AAU. Thus the RRCA, trying only to promote distance running, was caught in the middle, at least in some parts of the country.

In spite of these and other problems, the RRC movement continued. By January 1963, four more RRCs had appeared – Mid-Pacific (Honolulu), Rocky Mountain (Denver), New

Orleans and South Texas (Austin) – bringing the total to 13. The geographic distribution of these new RRCs made the RRCA truly national in scope. The US State Department and Track & Field News recognized or consulted the RRA.

Publication of an expanded RRCA newsletter was put on a regular quarterly basis during 1962, with the name changed to RRC *FootNotes*. Typical 1962 articles in *FootNotes* dealt with model constitution for chapter RRCs, how to measure road courses, how to organize an RRC, and a story entitled “Run For Your Life” about a 65-year-old former heart-attack patient who had built himself back up to running 10 miles nonstop at the Cleveland YMCA. From this latter article came the title of “Run-For-Your-Life” jogging events (fun runs), which later became so popular.

The February 1963 annual meetings in New York witnessed more progress. The RRCA went on record as being in favor of removing AAU age requirements for racing, removing current AAU medical requirements, and of not setting any limits on the range of air temperatures within which races could be held. The RRCA also voted to assist women’s AAU track and field committees in sponsoring long distance races for women, though the RRCA decided not to take any initiatives because of existing AAU restrictions on the women. A special committee of Ted Corbitt, Nat Cirulnick, and Sid Gendin was set up to make recommendations on a program of RRCA national standards certificates. Elected for the 1963-64 term (each chapter casting one vote) were Hugh Jascourt as president, Joe Kleinerman of New York as vice-president, Bill Marot as secretary and Dick Clapp as treasurer.

The year 1963 also witnessed a great increase in the number of RRCA committees that performed tasks in the name of the RRCA and rendered services to the local chapters and to individuals. Most of these groups did not get into full swing immediately, but at least a start was made. The 1963 committees were Fund Raising, Organization (to help start new RRCs), Information (mostly concerning races to be held in different areas), Coaching (to develop coaches

and make coaching available to long distance runners), Medical (a group of doctors or medical specialists to whom runners could write and receive answers), Officials (how to enlist and train race officials), and Standards (measurement of courses and awarding of certificates for certified racing performances).

Late in 1963 the AAU showed the first sign of acknowledgement when its executive director, Donald Hull, distributed to each AAU association and printed in the AAU magazine a statement praising the RRCA for its increasing contribution to distance running in the US. “The Amateur Athletic Union recognizes the contributions made by the National RRC in helping to develop a sound distance running program in our country,” Hull stated. He went on to say that in the last five years US road runners have been engaging in races every week, spurred on by the enthusiasm generated by the RRCs throughout the nation. Hull also noted that these runners, who race from six miles to the marathon, had over 600 races in 1962.

In their efforts to promote running, RRCs were beginning to pay a small bit of attention to the “forbidden groups” of youngsters and females. For example, members of both of these groups were allowed to run in DC RRC races. (In those days, as near as this editor can determine, a male had to be 17 years old to run more than two miles in an AAU-sanctioned event. There was, however, a great deal of inconsistency around the country in enforcing this rule.) By openly demonstrating that younger teenagers could comfortably handle distances longer than two miles and by working through the legislative process with the AAU, the RRCA was influential over a two-year period in bringing about a welcome change in AAU rules on maximum allowable racing distances for teenagers.

At the February 1964 annual meeting (in New York, as usual), Sid Gendin reported the work done by himself, Ted Corbit and Nat Cirulnick in setting up a system by which runners could win RRCA standards certificates on courses certified by the RRCA as accurately

measured. The RRCA went on record as advocating that doctors at races accept medical certificates made within 90 days of the race (under AAU rules only the "exam" given at the race was acceptable in those days). Other subjects discussed included allowing member clubs to vote by mail on major RRCA issues, a per capita basis for the dues of member clubs, RRCA championships (10-mile postal race, two-person 10 mile relay and marathon were to be continued), sending a runner to the London-Brighton race, the location of future RRCA meetings, assistance to embryonic RRCs, problems in financing *FootNotes*, ways to encourage graduating college seniors to continue running, and fund raising by local RRCs. The RRCA donated \$10 of its \$185 treasury to the Olympic fund. Officers elected for the next year were Hugh Jascourt (DCRRC) as president, Joe Arrazola (Rocky Mountain RRC) as vice-president, Terry Turner (New Orleans) as treasurer and Bill Marot (New England) as secretary.

The RRCA Standards Committee, after about four years of planning and preparation, formally went into operation in June 1964. The committee had the dual responsibility of certifying courses as accurately measured and of awarding certificates to any runner who achieved certain specified times in three races on certified courses during the calendar year. The chief purpose was to bring about a reasonably accurate measurement of race courses, instead of the hasty car odometer or cruder methods commonly in use at the time. The program was slow to catch on. Nevertheless, it forms the basis for most of the awareness of accurate course measurement. In 1965, the AAU established its own Standards Committee. Many of the same people served on both the RRCA and the AAU committees. Later, in 1966, the president of the RRCA and the chairman of the AAU LDR Committee decided that henceforth the AAU Standards Committee would handle all the certifying of courses, and that the RRCA would continue to award RRCA standards certificates to runners. Thus, today,

the courses are USTAF-certified, though originally they were RRCA-certified.

In 1964 the first joggers' events in the US were instituted. At the time they were called "Run-For-Your-Life" (RFYL) events. Now known as fun-runs or by various titles, these runs were launched by the District of Columbia RRC and the Baltimore Run-For-Your-Life group. The main attractions of these fun runs were that they were aimed toward physical fitness and were open to both sexes and all ages. Since 1964 these organized runs have spread to other areas and have played a major role in the running boom of the late 1960s and 1970s. The beauty of the venture, in 1964, was that it was conceived as an exercise or fitness program, rather than open competition. As such, it did not fall under the jurisdiction of the AAU. This meant that no AAU sanction was needed, and all sorts of people who the AAU normally prohibited from running could take part. For example, in those days a female had to be at least 14 years old before she could run in any AAU-sanctioned event, and regardless of her age the AAU allowed no female to run more than 1½ miles. But girls of any age were welcome in the RFYL two-mile events. Simply, anyone who was or who had ever been a couch was outlawed for life by the AAU, and the RFYL program gave these people a chance to run.

As a direct outgrowth of the 1964 RFYL events, special women's and Masters (men of age 40 and over) races sprang up in Baltimore in late 1964. (That autumn also marked the first AAU Ladies Cross-Country Championship.) These Baltimore women' and Masters' events, enthusiastically promoted in the early years by Gabe Mirkin and Walter Korpman, have continued to the present time.

As near as can be determined, they were the first of the popular Masters races that are held all over the country today.

At the 8th annual meeting in New York, February 20, 1965, the clubs voted to move the 1966 meeting to Boston, to be held in April on the day before the Boston Marathon. The many other items of business included the unanimous appeal of a Masters and sub-Masters program,

whereby national records could be established on RRCA0certified courses for 15 different distance events for age categories 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, etc. through 60 and over. A women's auxiliary RRC was discussed and approved, and Sara Mae Berman accepted the job of drawing up plans. Officers elected for the forthcoming year were Hugh Jascourt as president (beginning his fourth term at the helm!), Jim Ferris of Honolulu as vice-president, Scott Hamilton of Alaska as treasurer, and Bill Marot again as secretary.

In the fall of 1965, the RRCA held its first National Women's Cross Country Championships at 2-1/2 miles, in spite of loud AAU objections regarding the distance. During the following years more and more long runs for women gradually appeared, sponsored by other groups as well as RRCs. The RRCA Marathon Championship on October 25, 1970 served as the first RRCA marathon championship for women. Sara Mae Berman led six female starters home in 3:07:10. This was possible only by holding the entire affair as a "closed" meet, i.e., open only to RRCA members, since AAU rules prohibited: 1) women from running marathons, and 2) men and women from running together in the same race. (In fact, females had been quietly accepted as official starters in many races with no repercussions.) At the April 1972 annual meeting a women's division was added to all RRCA postal championships.

In one respect, October 1965 marked a significant setback for the RRCA: Dick Haines resigned as editor of *FootNotes*. Only one issue of *FootNotes* (April 1967) was to appear during the next eight years.

RRCA interests in sending athletes abroad came to the fore again early in 1966. The AAU had not responded to Morocco's invitation to send a team to the world-famous International Cross Country Championships. The RRCA therefore took the initiative, raised \$5,000 and sent the first US team ever to compete in the 53-year history of the race. It was strictly an RRCA team, picked and financed by the RRVA. The team came in fifth.

Again in 1967 the USA was invited, and again the AAU did not respond. This time the RRCA wasn't able to raise the funds. What money it did raise was earmarked for the 1968 US team. With some cooperation from the AAU, a team was sent in 1968. Since that year momentum and interest picked up, sponsorship (domestic and foreign) began to help financially, and the RRCA has not had to assume the burden of sending the US team to the race.

Moving the annual meeting to Boston turned out to be a good idea. The convention of April 18, 1968, had the best attendance ever, with 10 of the 12 active RRC associations present: New York (6 votes), New England (1), Middle Atlantic (5), DC (3), Midwest (1), Missouri Valley (1), Cleveland (1), Mid-Pacific (1), Alaska (1), and Minnesota (1). The treasury was moving up into the realm of "big money" with \$211 on hand. Don Stockard's Organization Committee had produced a fine RRCA publicity brochure. This was the first piece of promotional literature in the nine-year history of the club and was urgently needed. Considerable discussion was devoted to the concept of a Women's RRC, which would be part of the RRCA but would act autonomously on most matters.

Aspects of interest would be: lengthening the allowable distance that women could run in AAU-sanctioned events, increasing the participation of females in running and sending an RRCA team to the Women's International Cross-Country Championship. The subject of a Women's RRC was passed on to a subcommittee for further study, and eventually was dropped.

The idea of having five working vice-presidents, rather than one, was instituted in 1966. Officers elected for the forthcoming year were Scott Hamilton, Jr., (Alaska RRC) as president, Jim Ferris (Mid-Pacific RRC) as first vice-president, John O'Neil (Cleveland RRC) as second vice-president, Bill Tropa (Middle Atlantic RRC) as third vice-president, Nat Cirulnick (NY RRC) as fourth vice-president, Sara Mae Berman (New England RRC) (first woman officer in RRCA history!) as fifth vice-president,

Bill Marot (New England) again as secretary (his sixth term), and Don Stockard (Alaska RRC) as treasurer. Thus the first RRCA president to live west of Washington, DC lived 5,000 miles west, as Scott Hamilton moved to Honolulu shortly after his election.

One of Scott Hamilton's most productive moves was assigning Dick Haines to head an RRCA task force on "Growth and Development" and Hal Higdon to lead a task force on the "RRCA Program". Both men delivered excellent reports with many valuable suggestions, all of which were published in the April 1967 *FootNotes*. Haines' group recorded: (a) a few basic RRCA changes (name, emblem, organization); (b) several new administrative procedures (a national membership directory, member processing, publicity and public relations, and presidential messages); and (c) promotional activities (membership committees for all local RRCs, mailing list extension, holiday events and newspaper-radio-TV ideas).

Higdon's report recommended that the RRCA provide more of a flow of information (*FootNotes*, composite race schedules, national registry of members), provide certificates and awards, give an award similar to the AAU's Sullivan Award for outstanding runner of the year (an RRCA Hall of Fame and an award to an outstanding official were also considered), offer organizational help to new RRCs, provide a way to finance better runners to top races, and sponsor races – particularly postal races – on a national level.

No sooner was Hamilton settling into his president's job then he had to resign in October 1966 for a professional position in Viet Nam. The RRCA first vice-president, Jim Ferris had to resign a month earlier for business reasons. Consequently, John O'Neil, RRCA second vice-president took over the reins.

O'Neil's early efforts revolved around the 1967 International Cross Country Meet (Wales) and the RRCA newsletter, one issue of which was published in April 1967. Also by April 1967, Pete League had compiled the first official RRCA registry – a list of every member of all RRC

associations. This up-to-date list showed a total of 1,085, including 226 members-at-large.

The 10th annual meeting of the RRCA took place on April 18, 1967 at the Hotel Lenox in Boston. The year-long effort of the Organization Committee, under John Brennan and Bob Schul, were immediately apparent. Eighteen RRCs were members of the RRCA, and a dozen other groups had gotten started. The policy of vice-presidents representing geographic regions was introduced. Elected to office in April 1967 were John O'Neil as president, Alden Bryant (East Bay RRC) as secretary, and Hal Canfield (member-at-large, Knoxville) as treasurer. Vice-presidents were Bill Taylor (East), Norman Brand (North), John Brennan (West), Ed O'Connell (South), and Marilyn Carman "5th Vice-Presidnet," in charge of women's activities.

Tom Coyne, as RRCA director of communications, began work on that long-neglected subject and served in this capacity from 1967 to 1973. One of his main functions was to answer letters of inquiry (several per week) about the RRCA. He also instituted another service: the publication of complete race schedules. These were later produced by the regional communications directors on a quarterly basis.

The RRCA held a National RRCA Cross Country Championship for men over 40, at Catonsville, MD, on October 8, 1967. Jim Hartshone won over runners from 10 states and Canada. A second RRCA Cross Country Championship for men over 40 was again held at Catonsville on October 6, 1968, with divisions for 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, and 70+.

The April 1968 annual meeting again was held at the Hotel Lennox in Boston. The Credentials Committee approved 19 RRCs (a new record) as paid-up member clubs. Insurance for RRC members – during races and while traveling to and from races – was discussed. Tom Osler's book on training, *The Conditioning of Distance Runners*, had thus far earned \$400 for the Middle Atlantic RRC. Any remaining profits on the book were to be donated to the LD Log. Nat Cirulnik's fifth

Annual Marathon Guide had been published. Elected RRCA president for the fiscal year was Aldo Scandurra of the New York Association.

Coasting Along (1968-1973)

The RRCA received a much-needed publicity boost in the fall of 1968 when an article by Hal Higdon on running appeared, first in the New York Times magazine and then reprinted on Pageant, a popular national magazine. In early 1969 the RRCA national postal competitions were realized when Pat Lanin of Minnesota took over as national coordinator. Pat rendered a fine service to the program in this capacity for the next several years. Rules were improved and a standard procedure was established.

The 12th annual meeting of the RRCA, held April 20, 1969, featured another improvement: the site was moved to the new Boston Prudential Building, located precisely at the finish line of the slightly rearranged Boston Marathon course. The new RRCA constitution, prepared by Norm Brand, was ratified by the membership and was published in full in the June 1969 LD Log. Officers elected for 1969-70 were Ed O'Connell, president (the first New Englander to hold this office), Kurt Steiner, vice president (East), Hal Canfield, vice-president (South), Tom Coyne, vice-president (North), John Leppi, vice-president (Central), John Brennan, vice-president (West), Arne Richards again as secretary, and Norman Brand, treasurer. Thus the position of a vice-president for women's affairs was dropped, an RRCA Central Region was created as per the new constitution, and each of the five vice-presidents represented a geographical region of the country.

The RRCA and the National Jogging Association (NJA) (was American Running and Fitness Association, ARFA, now American Running Association, ARA) explored the possibility of a merger in 1969 but decided to remain separate.

Many member RRCs were delinquent in their RRCA dues in 1969, and the records list only 10 paid-up clubs.

Ed O'Connell was reelected RRCA president at the April 1970 annual meeting. Vice presidents were Kurt Steiner (East), Pat Lanin (North), Hal Canfield (South), John Leppi (Central), and Ed Romary (West). Wayne Van Dellen became secretary, and Norm Brand was reelected treasurer.

An RRCA national age-group committee, with Game Mirkin as chairman, was appointed to coordinate programs of RRC-sponsored age-group running throughout the country, for ages 9 and under, 10-11, 12-13, and 14-15. The first age-group highlight of 1970 was an RRCA Eastern Regional One-Mile track championship held in June near Washington, DC. Eight separate races were held – one for each age group for boys and girls. About 112 children took part. This meet was put on a postal basis the following year. Now known as the RRCA Meet of Miles, it has grown steadily every year.

In November 1970 the New York RRC hosted the first RRCA Age-Group Cross Country Championships, and it has hosted this meet every year since. By 1978, between 3,000 and 4,000 runners were taking part. Barry Geisler and Kurt Steiner did a tremendous job managing this event.

The boys' national postal age-group one-mile track championship, by mutual agreement, was switched from RRCA-sponsored to AAU-sponsored for 1972 and 1973. As with the RRCA course certification program, the theory behind the switch was that the better known AAU name would attract greater participation. In both cases, however, this hoped for advantage was not fulfilled. The 1974 age-group postal one-mile track championship reverted to RRCA sponsorship and has remained an RRCA event since.]

At the 14th annual meeting in April 1971, the RRCA had about 14 paid-up chapters. The RRCA Hall of Fame was officially established. This was the culmination of an idea discussed at the RRCA Eastern Regional meeting the previous October and originally mentioned in Hal Higdon's 1967 *FootNotes* report. It was designed to recognize people who had made outstanding contributions to long distance

running in the US. At the April 1971 meeting, five people were nominated and duly elected to the RRCA Hall of Fame: Clarence DeMar, “young” John Kelley, H. Browning Ross, Leonard “Buddy” Edelen and Bob Campbell.

Vince Chiappetta of the New York RRC was elected RRCA president for 1971-72. Other officers were Ed Romary (VP-West), Arne Richards (VP-Central), Hal Canfield (VP-South), Pat Lanin (VP-North), Neil Weygandt (VP-East), Paul Fisher as secretary and Norm Brand again as treasurer.

The major highlight of the 1971-72 year was the RRCA’s attainment of Allied Body status with the National AAU. This had been a perpetual RRCA objective since the club began 13 years earlier, but the application had been consistently rejected by the AAU. The main advantage to the RRCA was that chapter RRCs could now conduct races open only to RRCA members without receiving any flak from the local AAU or without having to join the local AAU.

The 15th annual meeting of the RRCA took place on April 16, 1972. The records do not show the number of the paid-up chapters. A women’s coordinating committee of Nina Kuscsik, Sara Mae Berman, Kathy Switzer and Pat Tarnawsky was designated to work with race sponsors and others to promote competition for women in distance running. Many other subjects were discussed. Vince Chiappetta of New York was reelected president. All other officers from the previous year were also reelected except that John Brennan replaced Ed Romary as VP-West.

At the 16th annual meeting (April 1973), the RRCA included 15 paid-up RRCs, totaling about 2,000-2,500 runners. The national postal championships were expanded to 10 different distances, and the races could be held at any time during the calendar year. Each distance would have six divisions: junior (age 19 and under), women, open, ages 40-49, 50-59, and 60+. (In 1978 this was cut back to six different distances.) Gar Williams of the DC RRC was elected president.

The Renaissance (1973-1978)

The three-year period of Gar Williams’ presidency, starting in April 1973, witnessed a tremendous surge in the growth of the RRCA. This was the beginning of the RRCA “modern era.” RRCA growth during 1973-76 extended into areas where the organization had few or no programs in the past. For instance, in the Central and Southern regions vast interest was kindled and many new clubs were established. Nick Costes, the VP-South during 1975-78, became a legend by spreading the “RRCA gospel” throughout the South.

Prior to 1973 communications between the national leadership and the chapters had dwindled to a trickle. The new administration took several actions that brought the RRCA closer together and developed an excellent communications network. *FootNotes*, the RRCA newsletter that later grew into a newspaper, was revived and put on a regular quarterly schedule. Edited by Tom Coyne, the newspaper grew steadily in both editorial content and paid advertising. The USTFF helped out considerably by printing and mailing the first few issues as a free service to the RRCA.

Regional newsletters were also started by several vice-presidents during this time. These letters were designed to keep the club presidents abreast of what was happening in their areas. Nick Costes’ Southern Report became the best known of these, not only in his region but throughout the US. Added to the improved communications was the revived composite race schedule. This was subdivided into five parts, one for each RRCA region, and was published by regional communications directors. Additional communication was accomplished via the president’s personal phone calls, letters, and a special president’s newsletter, which was published periodically and sent to all national officers and chapter presidents.

The recruitment and establishment of new clubs became much more aggressive during the new administration. A packet of papers, dubbed the “RRCA Kit,” was put together and sent to

anyone inquiring about how to start a local club or RRCA chapter. The kit gave people a step-by-step plan and was instrumental in getting many new clubs started.

Early in his term Williams saw the need for a "How To" compendium of information and administrative guidelines for club administrators. To meet this need, he compiled and edited the first RRCA handbook. Two editions were published during the 1973-76 period.

The RRCA Personal Fitness Program was developed, under the direction of Joe Fleig. This was designed to motivate beginners by setting mileage goals and then giving awards based on the attainment of these goals.

In 1974, the age group Meet of Miles was again made an RRCA-conducted program, as mentioned earlier. A four times 880 and four times one-mile postal relay were also added, but have since been discontinued on a national basis. A national RRCA Cross Country Championship (not age grouped) was introduced and has been conducted each year by the New York RRC.

Runners from West Germany, Switzerland, France, and other European countries joined with the RRCA to establish an international RRC in April 1974.

To help cope with the traditional problem of finances, an RRCA marketing program was initiated in cooperation with *Track & Field News*. This program provided a steady source of income to the RRCA. Another new source of funds, inaugurated at the 1976 convention, was the sale of booths for displays at the RRCA annual meeting. Several annual awards were established during 1973-76 to honor RRCA workers and talented runners. These awards include the Road Runners of the Year (male and female), Rod Steele Award for the outstanding chapter worker, Journalistic Excellence Award, and the Scott Hamilton Award to honor the outstanding club leader. The custom of sending certificates to those inducted into the RRCA Hall of Fame was begun. The Standards Achievement Awards were expanded to include awards for women, in keeping with the RRCA's

leadership in promoting distance running for women.

On the publicity front a new brochure describing the RRCA and its programs was designed and printed. The RRCA received national attention in magazines like *Glamour* and *Women's Sports*.

A new benefit that the RRCA worked for and obtained for local chapters was tax-exempt status. Under a group exemption, the RRCA was able to grant 501(c)(3) status for those chapter clubs desiring it (and qualifying). This meant that such chapters could accept tax-deductible contributions, as well as qualify for other privileges such as non-profit mailing via the post office. However, midway through Williams' term, this status was revoked by the IRS and changed to (c)(4). Later it was reinstated.

Constitutional revisions were made at the 1974 annual meeting so that the RRCA constitution would more realistically reflect the changing times. A major change, which Williams successfully promoted in this regard, was allowing competitive clubs to join the RRCA as long as they also conducted running events. Previously, only totally non-competitive clubs like the DCRRC, NYRRC, etc. could join. This particular revision was enacted over the vehement opposition of a conservative, "old guard" element within the RRCA, but has been extremely important in the subsequent growth of the RRCA membership.

A cadre of state RRCA representatives was created to assist the vice presidents in recruiting and servicing the RRCA chapters and potential chapters. Some excellent state reps and RRCA workers were discovered thanks to this program.

Several other significant administrative happenings took place during 1973-76. The Allied Memberships with the AAU and USTFF were formalized. The annual policy was changed to have the meeting move from city to city. A bidding procedure for hosting the meeting was established. Exhibits and clinics became a regular part of the annual meeting.

In April 1976 Stu Brahs and Jeff Darman of the DCRRC were elected co-presidents of the

RRCA. The new leaders immediately added new elements of stability and constitution to the RRCA national administration. The computerized *FootNotes* mailing list was reorganized and made much more efficient. *FootNotes*, still edited by Tom Coyne, began a noticeable increase in the number of pages, variety of articles, etc. Its staff was enlarged as its growth progressed.

The batch of papers known as the "RRCA Kit" was refined and rearranged into two pamphlets: "How to Start a Running Club" and a concise, updated publicity brochure on the RRCA. The RRCA's financial status, notoriously previous throughout the club's history, began to show improvement. Publicity became more systematized and received greater attention. A change in tax law enacted by the Congress mad RRCA chapters eligible for 501(c)(3) status again, and Darman and Brahs immediately followed up and obtained this status for all RRCA member clubs who wanted it.

The RRCA records program (national road race records) was formally established in late 1976, with Dale Stiles of New Orleans as committee chairperson. Other new committees were also formed, such as the President's Advisory Committee, Convention Site Selection Committee and a Boston Study Committee (Boston Marathon improvement).

Another noticeable improvement during the Brahs-Darman term was in the greater national role that the RRCA began playing. The co-presidents became national spokesmen on sports legislation that the Congress was considering. Ties with other national sports organizations (USTFF, USOC, AAU) were given more attention.

Growth in RRCA membership continued to accelerate during the Brahs-Darman year. The number of chapter clubs went from 60 to 92 during their one-year term. Individual membership increased correspondingly. Many of the new clubs were from the South, Central, and Western regions.

The co-presidents also oversaw the movement of the RRCA convention out of Boston, as the membership at the 1976 meeting

had directed. The Boston era (RRCA annual meetings from 1966-76, in connection with the Boston Marathon) thus drew to a close as the 1977 annual meeting went to St. Louis.

The St. Louis Track Club did a fine job hosting the 1977 RRCA convention. The excellent attendance and well-organized St. Louis Track Club effort vindicated the decision to begin rotating the convention site. The membership made several changes in the RRCA constitution and general rules, deleting or improving antiquated portions, clarifying ambiguous wording, removing special references to the AAU (thus placing all national sports organizations on an equal basis) and establishing a new RRCA Executive Board. The old board consisted of all the past RRCA presidents. Such a board was impractical in that some of the many past presidents had disappeared and others were no longer involved or interested. The board now consisted of the current year elected officers plus a past president to be elected by the president and confirmed by a majority of the officers. A new position, vice-president for administration, was added.

Jeff Darman was elected president for 1977-78. Darman continued and improved upon the policies that he and Stu Brahs had instituted the previous year. *FootNotes* and RRCA publicity, for example, continued to grow. The RRCA continued playing an important role in sports legislation activity and in liaison with other national sports organizations. A special RRCA committee to pursue athletes' rights and to maintain liaison with Congress was set up.

The RRCA's financial status became more and more solid. Much of this was due to Darman's increased emphasis on selling display tables for the convention, and his various innovations, such as the rental of the *FootNotes'* Mailing list, the Connecticut Mutual "Run For Life" program, the Perrier-RRCA Road-Runner-of-the-Year deal and others.

Added improvements made since the 1977 convention included: the restructuring of the postal events, the new RRCA logo (female and male runners together), one-hour-run

certificates, meet-of-miles growth and a special inquiry packet that the public relations director uses. Chaired by Phil Stewart, the RRCA National Championship Committee, whose guidelines for RRCA championships were printed earlier in this chapter, was organized and brought to fruition. Darman also selected an official RRCA awards dealer who would offer dependable service and a wide variety of RRCA (and other) awards.

More committees were formed as the RRCA's role continued to expand. Examples of such committees, besides those handling some of the innovations mentioned above, are a legal staff and a sports medicine committee. RRCA growth continued to accelerate phenomenally.

Jeff Darman was reelected president (for his final term, as specified by the constitution_ at the 1978 RRCA convention hosted by the Baltimore RR. This meeting further reaffirmed the benefits of rotating the convention site. At the 1978 convention the RRCA Executive Board adopted a policy of refusing to accept sponsorship money for RRCA national programs from cigarette companies or producers of "hard" liquor. (The Board was deciding on a six-figure offer from a large national whiskey corporation.) The RRCA National Championship program for various road championships was formally accepted. A strong Athletes' Bill of Rights was adopted. Also adopted was a resolution endorsing the addition of women's distance events (5K, 10K and marathon) to the Olympics. The membership decided that the president should appoint a committee to work for the implementation of the latter goal.

The *FootNotes* staff was reorganized and expanded at the 1978 convention. Tom Coyne had asked to be relieved as editor, after serving for most of the history of *FootNotes* and bringing the publication to a full-size 36-page newspaper.

By the time Darman was a few months into his second term (May 1978), RRCA membership totaled 142 chapters and some 33,000 individuals. Thus, in a little more than one year under Jeff Darman's leadership, the RRCA had added 50 more chapter clubs to its ranks!

During the two years from the spring of 1976 to the spring of 1978, individual membership in the RRCA went from 8,000 to 33,000.

The improvements and growth that the RRCA had enjoyed since 1973 were due in no small measure to the efforts of all the elected officers and other volunteers. These people willingly played a much more active role in RRCA affairs than had been the case prior to the RRCA's "Renaissance Period." An outstanding example is Nick Costes, whose energetic efforts as VP-South (1975-78) really put the RRCA on the map in the South and helped promote the running revolution in the southern states.

The Running Boom (1978-1983)

Jeff Darman's tenure as president laid the groundwork for what has come to be called the "Running Boom" – that period during which running surged from being a mere curiosity practiced by a handful of lonely aficionados, to a time when the point share garnered on ABC by the New York City Marathon was discussed the morning after in Tavern on the Green.

Darman prepared the RRCA for this change by solidifying and expanding the RRCA on many fronts. He helped lobby Congress for passage of the Amateur Sports Act of 1978, a far-reaching bill that changed the nature of amateur sports in this country. The bill essentially disbanded the AAU, which up to that point had a virtual monopoly on Olympic sports in this country.

The result of this breakup was the formation of The Athletics Congress (TAC, then USATF), the new governing body for track and field, long distance running and race walking. Unlike the AAU, which operated with almost complete autonomy, USATF was mandated to be more representative and more responsive to the athletes it served.

These qualities would have helped in 1978, when two celebrated cases pointed out the need for reform in road racing. The first involved the Lilac Bloomsday run in Spokane, WA. There, the Inland Empire of the AAU threatened the participants of the Bloomsday run and the organizers, the Bloomsday RRC,

with revocation of their amateur status because the sponsors failed to comply with a sporadically enforced rule for an AAU sanction – that all race participants be AAU members.

The RRCA provided “technical legal assistance” to the Bloomsday RRC, and the RRC refused to knuckle under to AAU threats. A world-class field that included Bill Rodgers, Garry Bjorklund, Don Kardong, Duncan Macdonald, and Joan Ulliyot bucked the ban along with 5,000 other race participants. The AAU backed down. No sanctions were issued.

The other case involved an individual. Tom Allison was declared ineligible for amateur competition by the Allegheny Mountain Association of the AAU because he had conducted a non-AAU-sanctioned run for his club, the Human Energy TC. Allison was summarily convicted without a hearing on the charges. Again, the RRCA stepped in with legal aid, pointing out that this treatment was against the constitution of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), which the AAU, as a member, was bound to obey.

The suit was finally settled out of court, but the cash settlement in Allison’s favor could not remove Allison’s real lose. Because of the ban, the Boston Marathon refused Allison’s entry in 1978, a year that Allison was in probably the best racing shape of his life.

As a result of this case, however, stronger athletes’ rights were written into the Amateur Sports Act and, ultimately, the USATF constitution. A formal grievance procedure now exists for an athlete accused of breaking the rules, and the athlete may not be banned from competition until that athlete is given a hearing.

On other fronts, a new RCA logo was designed and approved at the 1979 convention in New Orleans. The third edition of the Handbook was completed by Gar Williams. The Handbook was recognized as the definitive text on the sport’s finer aspects: club organization, race management, RRCA operations.

The RRCVA joined forces with Connecticut Mutual Life Insurance Company (CML) to produce 50,000 flyers with a message about the dangers of running in the heat. RRCA dues were

increased from 35 cents to 50 cents per member at the 1979 convention, and a new program with CML and the American Heart Association called Run For Life was started.

The program called for a National Run For Life Day on May 19, 1979, and was designed to educate and motivate entry-level runners to start and stay with an organized running program.

In another cooperative venture, the newly formed Women’s Olympic Distance Committee, headed by Henley Roughton (Gabeau), and Moving Comfort, headed by Ellen Wessel, joined forces to produce a booklet to help beginning women runners. Called Running Women – The First Steps, this booklet was distributed nationally thanks to a grant from Moving Comfort.

James Fixx won the RRCA Journalism Award in 1978 in Baltimore, and was followed by Joe Henderson, who won the award and was selected to a spot in the RRCA Hall of Fame at the 1979 convention in New Orleans. Henderson was joined in the Hall by Ray Sears and Gar Williams. Bill Rodgers and Mary Cooksey were named Perrier/RRCA runners of the year. Joe Kleinerman won the Rod Steele Award. Dr. John Pendergrass was the recipient of the Scott Hamilton Award. The convention delegates also elected Jerry Kokesh as the new President of the RRCA.

The main order of business at the convention, however, was probably not the meeting, but the race – the RRCA National Championship Marathon, which was threatened by a police strike in the city. Thanks to the work of George DeDual and Roy Green of the New Orleans TC, the race was moved from its original course the causeway (bridge) that spans Lake Pontchartrain. This was possible because Ted Corbitt was at the convention and helped measure the course and then certified it prior to the race. It became known as the first “wind-aided” marathon.

Wheelchair participation in the races was a major topic of debate on the convention floor. Guidelines were issued by the RRCA that advised the race director about the positive and

negative aspects of the participation of wheelchair athletes in footraces.

Kokesh told the convention that RRCA liability insurance, which he had been working on with Lester Seasongood of the St. Louis firm, Reed Stenhouse, was only a month or two away from becoming reality. Two constitutional amendments passed. The first removed the necessity of amending the RRCA constitution every time a dues increase was approved. The second changed the constitution to allow voting on changes in the constitution to be done only at the annual convention, not by mail vote.

The first months of the Kokesh administration were exciting and fruitful. The Dannon/RRCA Road Race Series (13 races) was born in June 1979. The RRCA Liability Insurance had signed up 100 clubs by mid-year. A letter from Kokesh to the USOC was delivered supporting more distance events for women in the Olympics.

The importance of liability insurance was underlined by the first major suit against a race. A runner who suffered a heat injury at the 1977 Peachtree Road Race in Atlanta filed a class action suit against the sponsors. He wanted \$500,000 as damages for himself and 50 others, who had allegedly suffered heat injuries during the race. The suit was ultimately dismissed.

The momentum of a successful first year carried into the RRCA's 23rd annual meeting in Spokane in May 1979. Dues were again increased, this time from 50 to 55 cents. Charity Guidelines were passed, as well as revised RRCA Sponsorship Guidelines. A committee chaired by Harold Tinsley was named to look into open running. A successful group of clinics, cosponsored by Brooks, were put on the day before the convention.

Authorization to form a Speakers Bureau was given, and Jane Millsbaugh was named a coordinator of the project. The Women's Distance Committee, under Henley Roughton (Gabeau), proposed the first Women's Distance Festival, which was planned for July 26, 1980. This would involve races staged across the country during the time of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow to emphasize the fact that women

were not included in distance events in the Games.

Kokesh was reelected to serve his second term as president. Bill Rodgers and Ellison Goodall won the Perrier/RRCA Road Runner of the Year Award. Kenny Moore won the Journalism Award. Tom Osler, Bill Steiner, Nina Kuscsik, and Ruth Anderson were named to the RRCA Hall of Fame. Don Caffery won the Scott Hamilton Award, and Jim Hartshorn was the winner of the Rod Steele Memorial Award.

A RRCA Chapter Transition Paper for Incoming Presidents was passed out to members to familiarize their presidents with the RRCA. Dannon and the RRCA cosponsored handouts on alternatives to running during injury, cold weather running, hot weather running, safety tips for runners and how to buy a pair of running shoes.

More clinics were given at the RRCA convention in 1981 in Cleveland, Ohio. RRCA State Programs, Club Newsletters, Insurance, the International Runners' Committee, a Race Directors' Clinic, and a session on Open Running were held. The Open Racing/Professionalism Guidelines were prepared. The QSP fund-raising program was introduced and explained.

Kokesh was elected for a final term of two years. Craig Virgin won the Perrier/RRCA Road Runner of the Year Award. Hal Higdon won the Journalism Award.

Things were a little slower during 1982. RRCA pins were introduced at the 24th Annual Convention in Jacksonville, FL. The first report on the Star Test program, cosponsored by the RRCA, Descente, and The Runner magazine, was given. The program did not get started until 1983.

Amby Burfoot won the Journalism Award, Walt Stack was given the Scott Hamilton Award, and Billy Mills, Roberta Gibb Welch, and William Agee were admitted to the RRCA Hall of Fame. Alberto Salazar and Patti Catalano were the first winners of the Dannon/RRCA Road Runners of the Year Award. They were selected by the RRCA members who voted with ballots printed in *FootNotes*.

Don Lindley won the Rod Steele Memorial Award. Four newsletters were selected for the new Journalism Award – The HTC News from Huntsville, the New York Running News, Tracking (newsletter of the Kansas City Track Club), and the Dothan Running Club Newsletter.

A Committee on Long-Range Planning was named, headed by Harold Tinsley. The committee was charged with mapping out future directions for the organization, which by the 1983 convention in San Francisco – the club's 25th anniversary – was 408 clubs and over 100,000 members strong, with annual dues now set at 75 cents per member.

Kokesh left office in 1983, handing over the reins of power to Harold Tinsley, who was elected president in San Francisco. When Kokesh assumed the presidency, the RRCA had 200 clubs and 45,000 members. When he left, membership was at an all-time high. Among his accomplishments that haven't already been listed, Kokesh initiated the convention banquet, equipment insurance for member clubs, the Running Times/All-American Awards Program, and a new marketing scheme.

In tribute to Kokesh's administration, incoming President Tinsley called Kokesh's term, the "Benefit Years." "Many of the benefits we take for granted today didn't even exist four years ago," said Tinsley. As for his plans for the future, Tinsley committed himself to carrying out the goals of the long-range planning report. Plans were made for the development of a Finance Committee and a Computer Evaluation Committee.

"Having chaired the Long Range Planning Committee, I have gained an insight into the problems and requirements that face our organization," said Tinsley. "The RRCA has been through a period of rapid growth. The RRCA has been busy building the organization – acquiring new clubs and establishing benefits. This must not stop. The RRCA must continue to grow and increase benefits. Only 10 years ago we barely had an organization. Now we do, more than 400 clubs strong. These clubs are the RRCA. It is now time to get these clubs involved and working to

provide a greater capability for the sport and their members.

"This must be done by a coordinated effort at the local and national level for these clubs to achieve their full potential. This can only happen as a result of sharing resources that are much greater as a whole than the resources of any single club. The key to accomplishing this goal is communications. First, there must be awareness, followed by education and motivation, to produce capability and performance from which there will be results that give status then pride. We will then be self-perpetuating. One member or one club could never accomplish what 400 clubs with 100,000 members can accomplish. This is our challenge. Let us go forward together."

Bigger and Better (1983-1992)

With Harold Tinsley at the helm and a membership that had exploded to over 400 clubs and 100,000 members, the RRCA moved into a new era. The "running boom" had forever changed the nature of long distance running in the United States. For the RRCA, that meant an expanded leadership role in the organization and promotion of what had once been a sport enjoyed by a mere handful of true believers.

Now, expectations were higher. Races of 5,000 runners were commonplace, and some exceeded 25,000. Prize money was a growing trend. Sponsorship dollars had grown geometrically. Legal questions had moved to the forefront of race organizers' concerns. And in the midst of this, people were wondering if the "running boom" would be followed by the "running bust".

The RRCA had adjusted quickly to the extensive growth under the leadership of Jeff Darman and Jerry Kokesh. Now, Harold Tinsley began a tireless campaign to strengthen and expand the RRCA's leadership role. In the new era, the RRCA would encourage greater professionalism in its own ranks and its member clubs. By the end of the decade, it would hire its first full-time executive director.

One of Tinsley's first priorities was to strengthen communication among RRCA clubs. To that end, Tinsley oversaw the computerization of a variety of lists and committees, started the "President's Newsletter," and spent untold hours improving the administration of the organization. Tinsley and his wife, Louise, handled these and a growing number of RRCA administrative duties from their home in Huntsville, Alabama.

Communication remained a top priority throughout Tinsley's tenure. He coordinated publication of the RRCA Guidelines Booklet (an accumulation of a variety of one-page handouts), published chapter listing and convention booklets, and provided communications through the President's Newsletter, VP newsletters, state rep newsletters and club newsletter exchange. To facilitate *FootNotes* circulation, Tinsley placed the responsibility for updates in club hands, with computerization of information under the direction of Janice and Ed Murray.

During his three years in office, Tinsley was able to conduct several club surveys, thereby collecting valuable data on RRCA member clubs. Those surveys reinforced Tinsley's vision of the RRCA as a volunteer-driven organization, a subject he stressed repeatedly in speeches and articles about the RRCA. At the 1984 convention in Michigan City, Tinsley recognized volunteer effort at the national level as well, instituting a President's Volunteer Hall of Fame. Paul Hronjak, Steve Clapp, Janice Murray and Henley Roughton (Gabeau) were singled out for their contributions as volunteers.

Another of Tinsley's goals in office was to strengthen and expand the state rep program. During his term, the program received increased attention and funding, leading to better coordination of RRCA efforts across the country. In addition, Tinsley worked tirelessly to instill a stronger sense of identification of member clubs with the RRCA nationally. Attendance at the national convention nearly tripled from 1983 to 1986.

Tinsley always stressed the services the RRCA provided to members, and worked to

make these services more accessible. He expanded both the prospective new club kit and the kit sent to new clubs after joining, oversaw the production of the fourth edition of the RRCA Handbook, which was edited by Jim Ferstle, and helped establish the Challenge Series.

In his final message at the 1986 convention in Portland, ME, Tinsley stated, "It was my primary goal as president to put life into our organization through communications to get our chapters active and participating in the RRCA. To make it be what it is – your organization. The extraordinary performances of the convention hosts, the increased attendance and participation at the convention, progressively improving response to surveys, increased updating of *FootNotes* mailing rosters, a tremendous surge in the state rep program, committees that are functioning with excellent leaders, more frequent usage of the RRCA logo and RRA information in club newsletters, representation at the convention by all the major and many regional running publications, and so many more indications show the increased and positive involvement in the RRCA."

Not only were Tinsley's efforts helpful in a general sense, but they also helped the organization survive one of its greatest challenges, the loss of liability insurance. During Tinsley's last year in the office, a nationwide crisis in the insurance industry led to cancellation of the RRCA's policy, a policy clubs had come to depend on for coverage of road race participants. With the RRCA no longer able to offer liability insurance, many clubs began to ask if RRCA membership was worth the price.

Responsibility for handling the crisis fell to Henley Gabeau, who assumed the role of president at the 1986 convention. Gabeau and the RRCA Board struggled for four years to find an affordable replacement policy. In the meantime, Gabeau continued to stress Tinsley's message – that RRCA membership was important to running clubs, with or without liability insurance. The message didn't take hold immediately, as about 75 clubs initially declined

to renew their membership. By the end of 1987, though, membership had climbed back to pre-crisis levels, and continued to grow.

Gabeau was able to bring new clubs into the fold through hard work and an outgoing personality and the creation of additional RRCA programs. In October 1986, she announced the RRCA's Children's Developmental Running Program, which was funded by Nike, Inc. In the ensuing four years, over 60 RRCA chapter programs were funded. Under that program a series of 10 flyers with tips on children's running were developed by Don Kardong and the Association of Road Racing Athletes. In addition, a booklet on running was commissioned and written by Kardong and Jim Ferstle, and illustrated by children's artist Jane Prince. Thousands were distributed through RRCA clubs, teachers' magazines, etc.

Also in 1986, as part of the RRCA's continuing development as a national organization devoted to the needs of its members, Gabeau coordinated the opening of the first real RRCA National Office, including a part-time employee. Additional marketing efforts under the direction of Jeff Darman helped raise the funds necessary for this and other RRCA initiatives. As a result, during Gabeau's four years in office the RRCA budget increased fourfold, while dues to member clubs remained 75 cents per individual.

As another part of the RRCA's evolution, a new RRCA Constitution was approved at the 1987 convention in Rockville, MD. Under the new constitution, the makeup of the Board was adjusted to allow for individuals to be elected for specific program areas, including marketing, legal, programs and public relations. The changes to the Board took effect with elections at the 1988 convention in Indianapolis.

As the RRCA National Office grew, coordination of additional programs and services became possible. In the summer of 1988, the RRCA's Women's Distance Festival program was greatly enhanced. A "window of time, July 1 to October 31" was allowed for participating events, and by the 1990 series almost 100 clubs were participating.

1988 also saw a new RRCA logo. A contest advertised in *FootNotes* brought 65 pieces of artwork for the new logo, and a committee selected one designed by Les Kidd of Dayton, OH. The new logo gave the RRCA a more current look. Gabeau continued to build on Tinsley's efforts at better programs and communications. In the summer of 1989, a women's safety flyer was printed and distributed to thousands of groups and individuals. In the spring of 1990, *FootNotes* was overhauled to provide better graphics and editorial content, and the RRCA handbook was revised for a printing of its fifth edition. Gabeau's tenure was also a time of improving USATF relations, as the RRCA used its participation in a variety of USATF committees to address long-standing problems in the sport. USATF, in turn, awarded the RRCA a yearly grant to support grassroots running in the U.S.

In the fall of 1989, the RRCA finally regained its liability insurance policy, and chapter clubs were up to 450 by the time Gabeau stepped down as president in June of 1990. The job of continuing the work of the RRCA passed on to Jane Dolley of Yarmouth, ME, who was elected president at the 1990 convention in Miami, FL.

"My goals for the next two years," noted Dolley, "are 1) to increase the number of RRCA clubs to 500, 2) strengthen the state representative program, and 3) effectively manage the transition to the new executive director position."

As Dolley assumed the RRCA presidency, for the first time in its history the president had a full-time employee to depend on. As a result of two years of committee work, the RRCA voted to hire an executive director, with Henley Gabeau serving in that capacity on an interim basis. In addition, in October 1990, the RRCA Executive Board gave Gabeau a "vote of confidence" and offered her the job of executive director when her interim contract expired in the spring of 1991.

After helping the RRCA strengthen its position nationally through better service, better communications and better programs, Gabeau had this to say: "My 12 years of

activism in the Road Runners Club of America, and particularly the last four, have been the most fulfilling I have ever had, and I want to thank you for them. The work I have done has been made easier because of the dedication and contributions by hundreds of volunteers across the country.”

“To prepare for my new role as president of the RRCA in 1990, one of the first tasks I assigned myself was to butsh up on the history of our organization,” said Dolley (1990-92 President). “What became evident to me is that Harold and Henley brought two essential components to the RRCA: strength and professionalism. The insurance crisis was behind us, club membership was at an all time high of 480, and Henley had become our first Executive Director. They successfully set us off in a ‘new direction’ for the future...When I assumed the role (of president) in 1990, the framework was already in place for us to build upon our strength and professionalism. During my tenure, the Board of Directors had a mission to focus on what was essential for our growth and financial stability, while allowing for flexibility to change with the times, capitalize on trends, and not be afraid to take a stand on issues. When I reflect on the progress that the RRCA made from 1990-90, it is with great satisfaction to know that we achieved two of the three goals I set: revitalizing and strengthening the State Representative program, and developing an effective Executive Director position that ensure the continuity of our RRCA programs and services at the national level.”

In November 1993, the RRCA invited members of the running community to celebrate its 35th anniversary. The reunion of sorts was held on the balcony of the Paramount Hotel. A plaque was dedicated, the affair was catered, and everyone shared their memories. Memories of sitting on the bed, the floor, or the radiator of a cramped room at the Paramount and launching what would become in 1998, a nationwide organization with a million dollar budget.

Of the many things that happened from 1958 to 1993, perhaps this elegant, yet understated affair symbolizes how far the organization has come, and where it’s going. Organized by Darman, the anniversary brought together people from all aspects of the running community during New York City Marathon weekend. IT wasn’t held in a fancy ballroom, nor did it cost thousands of dollars, it was merely a reminder that though the organization and the sport were growing into a multi-million dollar industry, the RRCA remained true to its “grassroots” beginnings. That has been the challenge for each of the RRCA leaders, to develop a national organization that still maintains a strong bond with the grassroots.

Preparing for the New Millenium (1992-2000)

If Browing Ross is the father of the RRCA, Gabeau could probably be viewed as the organization’s “mother.” During more than two decades of service to the RRCA in a variety of roles, Gabeau has done more for women runners than nearly any of her more publicized counterparts. Characteristically, all this work has been done “behind the scenes” in Gabeau’s persistent, understated way.

“In 1977, Jeff Darman (then RRCA president.) asked me to be the RRCA contact and liason to the US State Department for the International Women’s Year Women’s Torch Relay that started in September in Seneca Falls, NY and finished in Houston, Texas in late November,” said Gabeau. “I was to coordinate all of the running clubs, women, and logistics of the RRCA participation, and other stuff. It was a time when Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, and Coretta Scott King would amble in and out of the office as I sat with a phone glued to my ear in awe of these women.

“I was sent to Houston to organize the last week, where I met Jacqueline Hansen and Leal-Ann Rinehart (Jacqueline was the former world recordholder in the marathon and Leal-Ann the 1977 US Marathon champion), who were there to lobby for the inclusion of a women’s

marathon in the Olympics. It was that meeting that sent me back to Jeff Darman in the fall of 1977 with a mission, to have the RRCA be a force in that effort. He promptly appointed me as chair of the RRCA's Women's Distance COMmittee. Out of that I organized a major RRCA panel on women's running at Boston in the spring of 1979 – Fess Bell (owner of Bonne Bell, the cosmetic company that sponsored a nationwide women's running series), Sara Mae Berman, Steve Conroy, Jacqueline Hansen, Eleanora Mendonca from Brazil, Katherine Switzer, and Ellen Wessel (founder of Moving Comfort) were the panelists. I remember I invited Nina Kucscik and Barbara Palm to be on the panel – they declined. It was in that standing-room-only room that a USOC lawyer stood up and told us all (KS didn't know it either) that in order to get a women's marathon you had to get the approval of 26 countries and three continents to vote yes. The next year the RRCA started its Women's Distance Festivals, which continue to this day."

The WDF was the RRCA's attempt to provide visibility to the campaign for inclusion of more women's distance events in the Olympics. The campaign succeeded, and in 1984 the first women's marathon was run at the Olympics in Los Angeles. Just as Gar Williams used volunteer tasks to evaluate individuals, so did Darman, and another RRCA president, Harold Tinsley.

"Harold and Jeff took me aside at different times more than a year prior to when I was elected, and said that they thought I would be a good candidate for the President's slot in 1986," said Gabeau. "I remember I was floored, scared, and thrilled all at the same time."

Gabeau was elected at the convention in Portland, Maine at a time when the annual budget was \$118,000 and membership was 115,000 from 450 clubs. Cash flow was a problem. Gabeau had to loan the organization \$10,000 because dues were collected on January 1. To prevent the year-end budget crisis, dues payments were shifted to November. But the RRCA had also lost one of its major benefits to member clubs, the RRCA insurance. Because of a nationwide insurance

crisis, the RRCA and other like organizations had to scramble for coverage. Enter a New York lawyer named Alvin Chriss. Chriss was special assistant to USATF executive director, Ollan Cassell, had begun attempts to repair the rifts between the USATF and RRCA. Chriss had also pushed through annual USATF grants to the RRCA, which would range from \$12,000 to \$18,000 a year during the time the grants began in 1988 and ended in 1996. At the behest of Darman, he was also able to negotiate an insurance policy through USTAF that met the needs of the RRCA events until a new RRCA policy was obtained in 1990.

The insurance crisis made membership growth slow, so Gabeau sought out other areas of funding and expansion. She wrote a proposal to Nike to fund a children's running program. This resulted in a seven-year, \$15,000 a year grant to the RRCA that was distributed to member clubs who submitted their own children's development program ideas. A Nike printing grant also helped fund the RRCA's children's running booklet. Reebok underwrote the RRCA Guidelines Notebook. But, perhaps, the most important development was the opening of the RRCA's office in Alexandria, VA. The 650-square foot office was opened in July of 1987. Gabeau worked in the office fulltime on a volunteer basis, and later that summer national class runner, Susan Gerard Eberle, was hired to work part time. Gabeau bought a bulky IBM computer for \$4,000 with her own money – the RRCA paid her back in installments – and the organization finally had a place everyone could call "home." Instead of drifting between the residences of each of the current presidents, the organization now had a stationary focal point for all its operations.

"The first visitor to the RRCA's tiny office was Joe Vigil, legendary coach, who had been to Poland with me the previous spring. He sent me a large framed copy of the famous SI photo of his runners running along the tops of the sand dunes in New Mexico," said Gabeau. "We still have that photo on our wall. I feel that the RRCA has played an integral part in the resurgence of the running boom, and the fact

that, finally, running had a national office has played a great part in it. The media had a place to call, sponsors had a specific place to 'hang their hats', and the public had a place to find lots of information."

"My personal feelings were that two of the RRCA's biggest challenges would be to attract new and young blood into our clubs, and to help our young athletes develop a presence in the competitive world of long distance running."

Just as it has since its inception, the RRCA continued to provide support for the US's developing distance talent. When Carl Sniffen was elected to succeed Dolley, the organization developed a program cleverly titled the Roads Scholar. Every year, financial assistance in the form of a stipend is given to a small, select group of US distance runners. These grants are earmarked to allow the athletes to pursue their dreams of becoming the best they can be, and many of the recipients have gone on to win national and international honors after becoming Roads Scholars.

At the RRCA's Executive Board meeting, October 1990, to be effective in 1992, an increase to the RRCA dues was approved. Dues went from 75 cents to \$1.00 with a minimum of \$50 and a ceiling increase from \$5,000 to \$6,000.

Sniffen's term ran from 1992 to 1996, and it marked a transition in the RRCA and growth in the sport. "The RRCA was in its early stages of transitioning from a volunteer organization to a professional organization with a paid staff," said Sniffen. "The RRCA was and continues to be the voice for distance running in the United States. It is the only organization firmly focused on the grass roots running efforts in the US. From cradle to grave, the RRCA has always put together programs designed to meet the interest of American runners."

To meet those needs, Sniffen concentrated on developing tighter financial controls with the efforts of Secretary/Treasurer Jeff Hollister, better reporting systems, and an overall strategic plan. This was achieved through "increasing professionalism among RRCA staff

and board members," and enhancement and improvement of the RRCA's state representative network. During this time, the RRCA's budget tripled, the organization developed new publications and videos focusing on women's running safety and children's running.

"Unlike the early days of the running boom, runners now face more choices," said Sniffen. "Time demands from family, business and other sports activities impact the decisions that runners make as to how much time they train, the kind of training they do, and the number and type of events in which they participate. The RRCA has continued to evolve and grow to meet the changing and growing needs of its membership."

Sniffen, a lawyer and amateur guitarist, also knew how to have fun.

"At the Knoxville convention, Michael Hughes and I decided to be the pre-dinner entertainment," he said. "We recruited Penny Kaiser from Atlanta Track Club; Michael deLisle, the Tennessee state rep; my son Brian (then 13); and Patty Darman. We had a great time playing. As we played, others like Jeff Darman, Jane Dolley, Jane Serues, and Barb Sniffen pretended to be secret service type agents providing security."

Back home in Grants Pass Oregon, Sniffen also does some coaching, and it was one of his dreams to develop the RRCA's own coaching certification program, which was announced and launched as Don Kardong succeeded Sniffen as RRCA president in 1996. The 1996 Knoxville convention was a special one for another reason as well, Sniffen recalls: "In Knoxville, I stepped down as president. That was a deeply moving experience for me, and I was looking forward to sharing it with my family. I knew that my oldest son Neil would not attend because he had senior prom. Barb and Brian left Oregon for Knoxville on Thursday morning. What followed was almost nightmarish. Weather and plane delays kept them in Chicago for more than 24 hours. When I was able to speak by telephone with Barb, I could tell that she and Brian were exhausted. I

suggested that they just head home. I was devastated. They persevered, however, and arrived in the wee hours of Saturday morning. Tired but undaunted, they made it a very special evening for me. On a positive note, my son Brian memorized every recorded message at the O'Hare Airport and can tell you how many sections there are in each of the moving sidewalks."

Kardong, a 1976 Olympian in the marathon, co-founder of the Bloomsday races, author, and speaker, has roots with the RRCA that, like Gabeau's, go back over 20 years.

"The first time I ever remember hearing of the RRCA was when I was given the Road Runner of the Year award in 1977," he said. "I wrote a letter saying thanks for the honor, but since the only Road Runner I knew was Wily Coyote's nemesis, I ended my letter with Beep-beep! A year later, here in Spokane, we found ourselves in a major sanctioning dispute. Our local AAU representative wanted everyone in the Lilac Bloomsday Run to buy an AAU card, and we refused. That's when I first met Jeff Darman, then RRCA President. Jeff brought the RRCA into the battle on our side, emphasizing an athlete's right to compete without undue interference. Jeff made us aware of a provision in AAU rules that allowed an event to be held without sanctioning – or cards – if everyone in it was a member of the same club. So we created a new RRCA club, the Bloomsday Road Runners, and made every Bloomsday Run entrant a member. It was a beautiful and successful end run of AAU interference.

"One of the outcomes of the Bloomsday's association with the RRCA back in 1978 was that we hosted the national convention here in Spokane in 1980, the first RRCA convention held in the west. Attendance was sparse because most clubs at the time were located in the east and south, but the western location that year was symbolic of the organization's growth nationally. Now, with the convention returning to Spokane in 1999, things have changed dramatically. RRCA club membership in the west is very big, and a huge turnout – from club members all over the country – is expected."

During Kardon's first term in office (1996-98), the RRCA started a new program, the RRCA National Run to Work Day, launched the RRCA coaching certification process for coaches of adult runners, teamed with Avon to help administer the Avon Global Women's Circuit of 5K races, redesigned *FootNotes*, and continued the growth and development of the RRCA Website (<http://www.rrca.org>) through the assistance of webmaster Warren Finke. As Kardong notes, the "seeds of many of these developments were planted before my presidency, and they've come to fruition because of the efforts of many people.

"The RRCA National Run to Work Day was launched last October to enthusiastic reviews, but I think we've just scratched the surface. In Spokane we recruited our City Manager for an 8-mile commute, and there were video clips of the event on two out of three news shows that evening. It's a simple way for RRCA clubs to get some air time to say a word or two about their programs and events, not to mention the benefits of running as a path to fitness. We received great feedback and suggestions, and I think October 20, 1998 promises to be bigger and better."

In 1998, Roy Benson developed the RRCA Coaching course. Carl Sniffen was also involved in the development of the course. The original concept was to provide training for coaches for RRCA running clubs at the annual convention.

And, back at the office, Gabeau and her staff continue to provide the essential services necessary to keep the organization growing. As a result of their efforts, for example, this year the RRCA received The National Park Service Leadership Award (category: Protection and Visitor Services) from the National Park Foundation in recognition of the RRCA's women's running safety programs.

As the year 2000 approached, the RRCA also reached another financial landmark, the \$1 million mark for its annual budget. Dues as of the year 2000 were raised to \$1.25; \$72 minimum, \$10,000 maximum.

THE NEW MILLENIUM

In 2001, after six years of board service and ten years of service as the RRCA's first executive director, Henley Gabeau retired from the organization. After her departure, the organization's attention turned to finding a replacement and managing a negative financial position brought on by the rising cost of producing FootNotes coupled with a financial loss from a previous national convention.

Between 1973 and 1992, the organization was producing a quarterly newspaper ranging in size from ten to twenty-four pages. In 1993, the newspaper converted from black and white to color. Between 1996-2002, Footnotes was again converted from a newspaper into a twenty-eight page black and white magazine which was mailed to over 100,000 households.

In 2000, to keep pace with market trends and the competitive advertising business, Footnotes underwent yet another conversion from a black and white magazine to a full color magazine ranging in size from thirty-two to fifty-four pages. By 2002, over 140,000 copies of Footnotes were being published and circulated.

Since the inception of a consistent print publication to the general members of the RRCA, the organization had lost between \$31,000 and \$217,000 dollars a year on Footnotes. While other sources of revenue such as dues income, sponsorship dollars, and contributions helped make up the financial loss of the publication, the publication as a business has not performed well.

In 2000, Andy Palmer became involved with the RRCA Coaching course and 2-3 courses were

hosted each year between '99-2002. The RRCA course included taking the NHSF Coaches certification, which is a basic coaching principles course. Palmer tragically passed away in 2002 and the course seemed to be inactive for the year.

On September 11, 2001, the RRCA was set to announce the new executive director, David Dobrzynski but delayed the announcement for a week while the nation recovered from the shock of the largest terrorist attack in U.S. history. By 2002, the RRCA was forced to halt production of FootNotes and cut programs. It was evident that the organization was in the throws of an organizational mid-life crisis

Over the next four years, the RRCA would experience turnover in staffing and downsizing in an effort to improve the financial position which at one time reached negative net assets over \$200,000.

A small group of members split from the organization in protest to poor handling of a proposed dues increase by the Board and executive director. The group lead by several former RRCA presidents went on to form the America Association of Road Runners (AARC) in response to the organizational issues and poor governance faced by the RRCA. Despite the challenges facing the organization, the RRCA stayed true to its mission and a dedicated group of volunteers vowed to bring the organization back to prominence.

In 2003, Patti & Warren Finke took over the Coaching Course leadership. Two courses were taught by Jim Duguay and one taught by Patti and Warren in Portland, OR.

By 2005 under the leadership of President Bee McLeod, the AARC memberships merged back into the RRCA as a result of agreed upon organizational improvements and governance

changes. In August 2005, the RRCA Board hired executive director, Jean Knaack, an experienced professional dedicated to the sport, after a national search effort. The organization finished the year with significant positive net assets. A feasibility study and business analysis was conducted on re-introducing a print publication for the general membership. What was learned was that during the publication of FootNotes in a hard copy format, the organization lost between \$26,000 and as much as \$300,000 in a year for a total of a million dollar loss over the life of the printed RRCA. The Board resolved to launch FOOTNOTES as a web-based, e-magazine for the members. The board also developed an operating reserve fund to ensure long-term financial stability for the RRCA. This approach has been one of the main contributors to the financial stability of the organization.

The largest individual contribution of \$100,000 was received to support the State Reps Program. The gift was designed to fund State Rep's travel to the annual convention for important training and networking. Membership by the end of 2006 exceeded 775 member clubs and events. The RRCA Board took action to restrict \$100,000 of the organization's net assets to ensure Board action must be taken to protect a positive net asset balance.

In 2006 the RRCA launched the Kids Run the Nation fund designed to give small grants to youth running programs that promote running as regular exercise in a non-competitive atmosphere. The establishment of this fund was made possible by a contribution from David and Sharlee Cotter in honor of Sharlee's parents, Hank and Nancy Taylor. To grow the KRN Fund the RRCA Board restricted \$50,000 in net assets.

At the conclusion of 2007 and on the eve of a major milestone, the organization boasted an all

time membership high of 863 clubs and events. In 2008, the RRCA celebrated the 50th anniversary of its founding.

Today the organization represents over 960 clubs and events. Our members host over 5000 long distance running events around the country which attract over 2.5 million runners a year.

The future of long-distance running and the RRCA's impact on the sport will continue to be written for years to come.