

Gord Flett

One of the prominent age class runners on the roads and on the track in this Province in the last 5 years has been Gord Flett. Gord started like most of us, trying cross-country and track in junior high, in his case at Beliveau School. He managed to come 4th in the suburban championships before getting a night job at the Free Press that left him no time for organized sports, between school and job. He continued his career in the newspaper business, that took him to Pacific Press in Vancouver in 1982 and he spent the next 33 years in British Columbia. He was a smoker for 27 years until he started getting bad sinus headaches and realized that a change in lifestyle was indicated. He went on the patch and defeated tobacco. He started walking and working out and then he saw an ad for the BC provincial cross-country championships that had an all-comers event at a 4 km distance. He went to Jericho Park and competed, finishing 3rd last. Still, he was hooked on running again.

Gord was a successful mountain runner and won his age class (50-59) at the Canadian Championships at Cypress Mountain in 2015. He was also champion in his age class in the 5 peak series. Gord was a regular in the 10 km event at the Okanagan Marathon in Kelowna. His most satisfying accomplishment as a road runner was his PB 40:49 in that race one year. His most memorable race was the Sand Castle 10 km in White Rock, B.C. on a hilly course. After the race, organized by Mary and Jim Hines originally from Winnipeg, Mary introduced him to Solomon Rotich, an elite runner from Kenya. Gord was all scraped up from a race the previous day in Squamish, where the dry conditions had meant that the ground kept breaking up under the runners. Rotich noticed the scrapes on Gord's skin and asked how he got them. Gord explained about his race the previous day. "You raced yesterday and again today?" Rotich asked. "I love to run," Gord replied. Mary corrected him: "Gord loves to race." And it's true.

While in BC, Gord earned his coaching credentials after being trained by Olympic medallist, Lynn Kanuka. He also got certified as a track and field official.

His job at Pacific Press ended and he had a chance to buy his Mom's house in Winnipeg in 2015. He moved back and got a job at the Free Press as a substitute for workers on vacation or sick leave, working part-time. He tried the Fire Paramedic half marathon that autumn and won his age class. He ran races from 600 to 3000 on the indoor track at the Max Bell meets that winter and then did the entire MRA series the following season. He even ran the occasional 400 m, including in relays. At age 60, he was able to take an unreduced pension and retired from work. He beat Leon Clegg once in the 1500 m, when Leon had just competed in the 100 m.

Gord's best 5 km was the one time he broke 20 minutes, a 19:56 in Coquitlam in 2013. His best 10 km was that 40:49 in 2012. He did an 8 km in 32:34 in the Vancouver marathon in 2011. He did 68:12 for the 15 km in Merville BC. His best 10 mile was in the Islendiggadagurin race in 2011 in 72:18. His best half marathon was a 1:34:21 in the April Fool's Run in Gibson's Landing, BC in 2015. He has not run a full marathon, although he did a hilly 36 km race in Kamloops once.

Gord's worst experience on the roads was a 30 km in Langley, BC. The flat course encouraged him to go a little faster than the distance allowed and by 20 km, he "bonked". He was mostly walking the rest of the way, but he had a cheering section at the end and so when he emerged from the woods with 400 m to go, he managed to run it in. It was a race he'd rather forget.

The prodigal son has been a major presence on the local running scene in the last 5 years.