

Janie Parson

I became involved in road running because I was tired of using my exercise bike in the basement of my house and wanted an activity I could do outdoors. I started running in 2005 when I went to the Running Room to get my first set of runners and then started working out on my own. After about 6 months, I decided to run the Manitoba Marathon in 2006. I signed up for the online marathon training program at Running Room. I was going to do the half marathon, but my husband said I should do the full since I was running so much. The rest is, as they say, history and I soon discovered that I had more endurance than speed, and the longer the race, the more competitive I was.

I joined the MRA in May of 2006, and ran a series of races. I earned enough points to win my age group category and even won a couple of the races. Somehow, I got talked into being the Treasurer on the MRA board starting in 2007. I did that for a year or two until I found that, since I am a full time accountant, I didn't have as much free time as I would have liked to work on the monthly financials but I did enjoy my time with the Board. It was a lot of fun to work with people like Leni Campbell, John Wichers, Dreena Duhamel, and James Slade.

I joined the Roadkill Running Club in the winter of 2007 where I had some great training plans from Coach Ken. I was put in a pace group with the current MRA Executive Director, Kathy Wiens to do our interval workouts and she was a great mentor as I had no idea what I was doing. My time in the 2007 Manitoba Marathon improved by 13 minutes so those workouts definitely helped my running.

I have many special memories of my road running involvement, as an example: 2016 was my best and most satisfying season. I won a lot of MRA races that year. I ran personal bests in every road distance and took an unexpected 3rd place in the Manitoba Marathon that year. I was also named MRA Female Runner of the Year for 2016, which was an incredible honor for me. But my favourite memory would have to be the surprise 3rd place finish at the 2016 Manitoba Marathon. I had passed mile 14 and someone called out from the sidelines that I was in 4th place about 2 ½ minutes behind number 3 and that number 2 was fading fast. I thought I didn't have a chance to catch up. Little did I know that by mile 16 or so, the

accompanying cyclist would show up to tell me I was in 3rd place. I hadn't passed anyone, so I was shocked – however I later learned that the 2nd woman had dropped out after 15 miles. It was a long 10 miles to the finish, as the humidity of the day began to catch up to me. I was having a bit of trouble at mile 23 keeping my legs moving properly without tripping over my own two feet, but I made it to the finish. I definitely had some extra challenges during the race, but I don't want to gross everyone out with the “gory details” so let's just say they need more porta potties early on in the race now that the course is reversed! As I got to the last few miles, I kept thinking – “I wish I knew how far number 4 is from me so I know if I have to pick up the pace or not”, little did I know it was a fellow Road Kill Runner who finished exactly 10 minutes behind me. It was a real treat to not only set a PB but run to the finish on the old Bison stadium track, knowing that I was number 3, then to have my photo taken with the other winners and be interviewed by CJOB!

As an example of how well my 2016 season went – here are my personal bests:

5K – 20:52 (Headingley Run for Wishes in 2015 and 2016)

10K – 42:38 (Commit to get Fit 2016)

10 miles – 1:08:37 (Gimli 10 miler 2016)

Half Marathon – 1:31:17 (Fort Garry Rotary Club Half 2016)

Marathon – 3:15:42 (Manitoba Marathon in 2016 on a very warm and humid day)

My favourite race would have to be the Fort Garry Rotary Club Half Marathon in 2016. I kept getting stronger and stronger all season and I was sure I could do a 1:33 or better. My PB was 1:35 so I was looking to improve a bit. The weather was perfect on the day and I felt strong the whole way – it was probably the best paced race of the year. I was the first female from start to finish. As I neared the last couple of miles and went over the Bishop Grandin ramp, I was able to look behind me. I realized there were no other females even close to me so I had the brief thought that I could slow down a bit but then I decided “nah keep the pedal to the metal – I'm going for a PB”. I got that PB by just over 4 minutes, finishing at 1:31:17. My fellow Roadkill teammate, Sherry Seymour finished 3rd female. It was nice sharing the podium with a teammate. I also love the Gimli 10 miler as we runners refer to it. It's a fun race and we have started getting together with fellow Roadkill runners at Pizza Place in Winnipeg Beach afterward for a post-race

celebration. I hope that we can get back to normal soon so we can continue the tradition!

Of course, as with many other runners, injury has sidelined me for many races and even seasons, which leads me to my worst running experience. That would be the 2012 Boston Marathon. I had injured myself about 6 weeks before the big race and hadn't had quite enough time to heal properly. I had non-refundable reservations, so I went anyway and attempted the race. Unfortunately, I had to drop out at mile 11 because I was in so much pain. It wasn't my first DNF but it hurt a lot more because of the qualification process and the training involved for that one big race. Getting back from that point in the race meant getting on to several buses and vans to be taken to the finish – not easy when you are in a lot of pain and can barely climb up stairs! It was also the year of the 30 degree Celsius heat wave so there were a lot of DNF's that year. I've had to learn to become much gentler with my body and give it the rest it deserves, especially as I'm now well past my "best before date". I may not be as fast as I was, but I've accepted that and I'm still out there racing and enjoying the benefits of running on my physical and mental health.