

## Chris Glowach

For many of the time spans over the past 50 years, one runner has dominated on the Manitoba roads. For the last 5 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that runner was Chris Glowach. Unlike many of us, Chris did not race as a boy. He had struggled with many sports, due in part to his diminutive stature. In his 20's, he turned to running to address his stress level and concerns about gaining weight. So, just before the first Manitoba Marathon in 1979 he took up running and that event was his first race. He was not planning to run far, just enough to get to one of the "exits with dignity" and he was wearing some cheap court shoes, not running shoes. However, he felt pretty good and just kept running. There was a picture taken of Chris taking a bit of a rest along Portage Avenue in that race, and by coincidence, it was a stone's throw from the building where years later (1993), Chris and his wife, Lynn, would open the first Running Room location in Winnipeg. Chris finished in 3:19, even though he had never run more than 6 miles before. He drove to Brandon the following day in a standard shift vehicle, and struggled mightily using his hand on his knee every time he needed to use the clutch. Many of us feel that pain.

Nevertheless, Chris the non-athlete was hooked for life. Over the years, Chris has run 35 of the Manitoba Marathons. He was running for his health, not with a plan to win the race. But he got faster and faster and by the mid-1990's, he was winning the Manitoba (and Edmonton) marathons in spite of himself. In 1997, Chris was the first Manitoban-born person to win the Manitoba Marathon. He trained intensely, as he does many things in his life. After running a 2:28 marathon in NYC, he ran another 100 miles the following week while visiting New York.

While running may have come easily to Chris, not everything has. In 2002, he suddenly experienced blindness in one eye. His vision had been perfect prior to that and he saw an optometrist and then an ophthalmologist. He was diagnosed with retinal arterial occlusion, a rare eye condition. The next year, Chris was taking some people to the Flanders Fields Marathon in Belgium and he lost his vision in his other eye. People cared for him and he returned safely to Winnipeg and got some vision back. Two weeks later he could read large print. As rare as the condition is, it is far more rare to get it in both eyes. It is impressive that

many of Chris's greatest running performances came after his vision problems appeared.

Chris has many achievements in our sport to be proud of, but he still counts finishing that first Manitoba Marathon as his proudest. Running with John Robertson in the marathon in 1996 was another great moment.

One of Chris's favourite stories is about when his hero, 1984 Olympic champion Joan Benoit, came with her family to Winnipeg for the marathon. Joan told him that it was the first time anyone had invited her family to travel with her. She signed autographs all day and then took her kids to the Children's Museum. After, she and Chris ran back to the International Inn where her family was staying.

Another time, Chris was the organizer of the Gimli 10 miler. He drove to Gimli for the set up, then ran to the start line in Winnipeg Beach, raced back in 51 minutes and was recording results as the people behind him finished.

Chris is also proud of the work he did for Joints in Motion on behalf of The Arthritis Society, which took him as far afield as the Great Wall of China, Lausanne and Dublin. His favourite race is still the Manitoba Marathon, although during his peak period he won the Edmonton marathon 4 times in 5 years (he was too injured to run the other year).

Chris rates his worst experience in a race a Chicago marathon where he went out way too fast, completing the first half in 1:08 and finishing in 2:48 – a good time, but not after a 1:08 first half.

At age 62, Chris is not even the fastest runner in his family, as his wife, Lynn, is now faster. Lynn is fitter than she ever has been.

Chris's best 5km was just under 15 minutes; 10 km in just over 30 minutes, half marathon just under 1:08 and full marathon in 2:25. He says that with proper training and nutrition, he should have been able to run 2:15. Most of us would be pretty happy with 2:25!

Chris was inducted into the MRA Road Running Hall of Fame in 2006. You can [view his plaque here](#).