

## Michael Gwynne

Michael Gwynne's day job was at the Provincial Auditor's office and so it was a natural that he would serve as the MRA Treasurer, which he did for two stints in the 1980's and 1990's. He got involved in road running after a junior high phys ed class where everyone had to run 2 miles. Mike was exhausted but inspired with how much he enjoyed the effort, and how much he wanted to improve his fitness. Mike was a Y member, playing basketball regularly at the Central Y and started to run 2 miles on the elevated indoor track there, meaning 26 laps. A few years later, news of the first Manitoba Marathon prompted him to extend his training runs. He ran the 1979 Tribune Run for Fun 10 km and a few weeks later ran the marathon, managing to finish.

One of Mike's proudest achievements relating to the MRA was researching the background of Joe Keeper, the famous Indigenous Manitoba distance runner, and nominating him to be inducted into a proposed Hall of Fame. He thought of Joe because there was, at the time, a Joe Keeper Prediction Run held annually in Kildonan Park. Most of the first nominees were runners of the present day who were dominating local races. Mike went to the Public Library and found old newspaper clippings of Joe's achievements, including representing Canada in the 5 km and 10 km at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. It took Mike several revisions to meet all of the criteria to qualify Joe as a nominee for the proposed Hall of Fame. Eventually, years later in 2006, Joe Keeper became one of the most worthy inductees in the newly established MRA Hall of Fame.

Mike does not have a favourite race, but one he really enjoyed was a run that celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pembina, North Dakota. The course was about 14 km and traversed Minnesota, North Dakota and Manitoba. There were no age class awards. It was just a celebration of the anniversary, running and the cooperation of these three jurisdictions. Although the race became more formalized in subsequent years, Mike particularly liked that first run.

In the 1980s, as part of the Prairie Sky Road Runners (formerly Phidippides) running club, Mike was involved in organizing a last minute bus charter to the Twin Cities Marathon. Somehow they managed to get reservations at a hotel in the far western suburbs of Minneapolis and they had a sizeable group of passengers. The race headquarters was in downtown St. Paul. Late Friday night they made it to the hotel. Mike told people not to worry about picking up their race numbers as he would get the bus driver to drive him to the race headquarters on Saturday morning and collect everybody's number. The fitness fair didn't exist at that time or was very limited.

However, various people rented cars or got friends or family living in the Twin Cities to drive them to the race headquarters but never told Mike. At the race headquarters, he

collected the race numbers for many people but was told the race numbers for other people had already been picked up. On Saturday night he started phoning people to tell them to come to his room to get their race number. One lady got upset and said how dare he disturb her when people had to run a marathon the next day. So he stopped phoning people and thought he would get the race numbers to the remaining people on the bus the next morning.

The next morning was a scramble to get people on the bus to get to the start line in downtown Minneapolis. They missed the proper exit off the freeway and some people got very anxious. The bus driver drove the wrong way on the overpass to travel back in the right direction. Then they stopped within walking distance of the start line. Then someone asked Mike for their race number. Right then he realized he had left a small cardboard box with the remaining race numbers on the floor of his hotel room. Fortunately he had some US cash. He rounded up the people concerned at a downtown hotel and phoned the front desk at the hotel in a panic. The hotel clerk went to Mike's room, got the box of numbers, and put it in a taxi with directions to the hotel where they were waiting.

Mike gave the taxi driver all the US money he had and started to hand out the numbers. Only one person, the lady who told him not to disturb people, was not there. Someone said that she refused to leave the start line. A young lady said that she was a faster runner and would carry the older lady's number and give it to her when she passed her in the race. Some people on the bus were not running and were spectators. They told Mike later that the young lady carried the number all the way until about 200 metres before the finish line. The spectators gave the older lady her race number just before the finish line so she could be an official finisher.

The weather was hot and humid that weekend. At the race recovery area, an announcement came over the public address system requesting someone from the Winnipeg bus to report to the medical tent. There Mike found at least two people from the bus on intravenous fluid replacement due to dehydration. There was at least one other person with a stress fracture. They made it back to the hotel but one fellow asked what time they were leaving for Winnipeg. Mike told him early the next day, Monday. He got all excited and said he had to be at work Monday morning. Somehow he found a ride with someone driving back to Winnipeg that day, Sunday.

Mike never got involved in organizing a bus trip to the Twin Cities again.

Mike's best times were: 5 km – Falcon Lake, 1988 – 17:11; 5 mile Misericordia 1993 30:26; 8 km Veteran's Day, Grand Forks 2007 – 38:16; 10 km – Puma Series 1983 – 35:34; 15 km Red River 1986 – 56:00; 10 mile – Gimli, 1988 – 58:51; 20 km Bird's Hill 1982 – 1:14:52; Half Marathon Manitoba 1986 – 1:19:27; full marathon Twin Cities 1982 – 2:56:22.