

Dianne Sproll

I began running just before Junior High when I was invited along with my best friend to run with St. James Optimist club. I really enjoyed the running, the lively atmosphere, the racing and had some success right away. In Junior High at JB Mitchell, I met Coach John Kemp who encouraged me to participate in all sports. He was an exceptionally kind and generous man who helped so many young people over decades of teaching and coaching. He was truly inspirational and had a hugely positive impact on me. Through him, I also joined Flying M track club. He gave me very challenging workouts and my successes on the track grew throughout Junior High and High School at Grant Park.

At University of Manitoba while obtaining my education degree, Coach Jim Daly invited me to represent the University in competitions, an offer I gladly accepted. The track program for women was very limited at that time, but I am grateful to have had the opportunities that were there. I had been dealing with a series of injuries and after graduating in 1978 I thought about trying something new. In the spring of 1979, I asked my good friend Chris McCubbins if he would coach me. Chris was another kind and generous man. He had definite ideas about how to prepare for races and how races should be executed. I admired him and learned so much under his watchful eye. I raced between 800m and 3000m on the track and ran my first MRA road races, including the 1979 Tribune 10km where I surprisingly finished second.

I won the inaugural 1979 all women Bonne Belle 10km in Winnipeg which qualified me to run in the North American Bonne Belle 10km Championships in Boston that fall. I was proud to be part of the women's running revolution. Today, the majority of participants in MRA events are women. Essentially all of the top women across North American ran in these races as they were as excited as I was to be part of the movement. When I arrived in Boston they were all there. I ran the first mile right beside Joan Benoit, the future Olympic Marathon Champion and arguable the greatest North American woman distance runner ever, and Olympic 10km medallist Lynn Jennings. The pace was too fast for me but I managed to exceed my goals for the race and finish 9th out of 5,000 women. It is my proudest result.

Some of my favorite races include the 2011 Run for the Whales 5km in Maui, the 2011 Einstein 5km in Ulm, Germany (22:05 at age 55), the all women 2011 Mattoni 5km in Prague old town, the 1996 Disney World 5km where our whole family ran, and the 2010 McDowell Mountain Desert Preserve 15km. My recollections of the races are filled by the widely varying sensory intensity of the respective events, the tropical smells and sounds of Maui, the rain and cobblestones in Germany, the loud music, crowds and lights in Prague, the arid landscape and desolation in Arizona. The 1984 Athletes Wear 10km was satisfying because my husband Karl and I both won. It was difficult to train as the young mother of two boys aged 3 and 1 and the race was really tough. I am proud of my performance that day. I especially treasure the 2015 to 2018 Manitoba Marathon family relays because we ran as a family.

My worst experience happened at the 2011 Budapest ½ marathon relay where Karl and I ran the 2 person relay. The temperature at race time was 30 degrees C! I am not a heat runner and the run turned out to be a miserable one.

I am so very grateful for the gift of running and the running community. Thank you MRA for all that you do. The tremendous amount of volunteer effort that has been put in for 50 years created these opportunities we have had.