

George Chapman

One of Manitoba's most accomplished age class runners got into the sport later in life and almost by accident. George Chapman was 50 when his doctor advised him to start an activity where he could elevate and maintain his heart rate. He joined the Y and its 100 mile club (that's 100 miles per year, not per week). There were runs from the Y to Assiniboine Park and other destinations. George met Doug Sammons and found that Dick Scott and Rick Smoke and Emil Dion were running with him and George joined in. The social side of the sport was always important to George. At age 52, he entered his first 10 km, one of the MRA events that year, and ran 44 minutes in his first try. The competition whetted his appetite for more and he started entering all the MRA races, as well as the marathons in Winnipeg and in Minneapolis. At age 60, George ran a 3:06:14 marathon in the Twin Cities race. Amazingly, that "only" got him 3rd in his age class. Over his career he had one 2nd and two 3rd's in Twin Cities in his age class. That 2nd in Twin Cities was the most satisfying of his results, because he tracked down one of his competitors and out-kicked him to the finish in the final 500 yards, collapsing at the end from cramps. He remembers listening to the announcer at the finish describing the 2 old guys trying to out sprint each other.

Another impressive performance in a career filled with great efforts was a 1:28 in the Manitoba Marathon ½ marathon at age 65. At age 80, George went to the Canadian Masters Championships and won his age class in 4 events, setting 3 Canadian records, in the 800, 1500 and 3000 m. He won his age class in the Manitoba Marathon in 2 full marathons and 2 half marathons. He went to the World Championships in Gateshead, England at age 75 and came 9th in the world in both the 5 km and the 10 km. His competition were athletes who had been world class in their prime, unlike George who only took up running at 50. George credits Doug Cable for providing a lot of valuable coaching advice over the years, and his circle of running friends (and Dick Scott in particular) who supported and encouraged him over the decades.

George's favourite races were the MRA events in Assiniboine Park, close to where he lives. He particularly enjoyed the Athlete's Wear 10 km that went down the Crescent. He says that the MRA always did a great job of supplying refreshments along the course and at the end. His worst experience was in a Gimli 10 mile race when he was struggling at the 5 mile mark and stopped. He thought about it for a moment and realized that it was as far back to his car in Winnipeg Beach as it was to the finish line in Gimli and so he resumed the race!

George's best 5 km time was 19:30; 10 km was 39:44; 10 mile was 61:30; half marathon was 1:28 and full marathon was 3:06:14. We can only speculate how fast George might have run those races if he had started in his 20's!