

Joel Remis

“Why? You’re no jock!” was his Phys. Ed teacher’s comment when Joel asked to join the indoor running club. That was true, but he had become hooked on running earlier that year after reading Ken Cooper’s ground breaking book ‘Aerobics’. This was 1970 the beginning of a running boom. Something in the book inspired him to continue and running became a sport he has participated in throughout his life.

Joel ran recreationally through his university years even entering the occasional MRA race for motivation. He admits he’s a ‘natural middle-of-the-pack runner’ but there is something about running that continues to attract him. Medals were never a consideration but personal goals were obtainable. Could he break 40 minutes for a 10K? He had to wait until he was 38 but that mark was achieved in the now extinct Athlete’s Wear 10K.

Returning back to Winnipeg in 1986, Joel let his friend Allan Finkel talk him into heading up the Marathon start line committee. Allan was the executive director of the Manitoba Marathon and was a natural in ‘co-opting’ friends and acquaintances to volunteer. Getting up at 2:00am on race day to lead the start line crew was a role he filled for three years. It was a position he enjoyed because, as he said “I was finished at 8:00 am and could enjoy the race”. In fact, one year after finishing start line duties, he ran the anchor leg for a marathon relay team. Being involved in the Manitoba Marathon introduced Joel to Winnipeg’s running community. Joining the MRA board, Joel was persuaded to take on the role of President of MRA in 1988, a position he held for 2 years. It was a tumultuous period for the MRA but the organization continued to flourish, hosting a full slate of races each year. After leaving the board, Joel continued running. Another friend talked Joel into joining the board of Triathlon Manitoba and he has completed several Olympic distance triathlons. Spending summers in the Whiteshell, Joel also enjoyed running along the make shift trail paralleling the Trans Canada Pipeline. Along with breaking 40 (minutes) before he was 40, his best effort was running 1:30 in the half at the Manitoba Marathon in 1994. Results he rates as the most satisfying of his competition career. Not because they landed him on any podium, but rather because they represented the attainment of personal goals. “With running” Joel says, “you can’t fake the result. The race is just the product of all the miles run previously.” Joel continues to enter a few MRA races each year. ‘Personal bests’ have given way to ‘personal

worsts' he says, but with the attrition of members in his cohort, he is much more likely today to finish top 5 in his age class. "Sometimes just showing up is a victory!" he laughs.

When asked to choose a favourite race, Joel finds it hard to choose. He has a special place in his heart for the Manitoba Marathon. "With the number of runners and spectators, it's hard to beat the excitement of a big race". He has run the half marathon and participated in relays many times but somehow couldn't manage the training for a full marathon. "The idea of a 3 hour training run puts me to sleep" he says jokingly. He is also fond of the Islendingadagurinn 10 miler and enjoyed the Puma Series as an early start to the season. "I am happy that it is now named for Pat Riddell" he says. "Manitoba has had some great runners. And Pat was one of original builders for the sport". When travelling, Joel makes it a point to find a local race to join. Among the distant locations, he has participated in races in New York, San Francisco, Denver, Washington DC and Chicago. "Finding a local race makes the trip a lot of fun." he adds

While he has not raced a marathon, he did complete the Polar Bear Run across Lake Winnipeg with his friend Grant Mitchell. Getting there was the hard part as there was freezing rain the night before. The road was a skating rink and he says they drove there with two wheels on the gravel shoulder just so they wouldn't slide off the road. "I remember on the way that Grant repeatedly told me that we would run together. However, in true Grant Mitchell form, I only saw him at the start as he joined the lead pack as it headed across the lake. Grant did wait for me at the finish but I was more thankful that his wife Cal had driven out to Grand Beach and agreed to drive me back to Gimli to get my car."

Running now is 90% social he says. He's thankful running enabled him to reconnect with old friends and credits his neighbour and running partner, Natalie Newman, with motivating him to continue lacing up his shoes.

Joel's best 5 km was 19:51; best 10 km was 39:51; best 10 mile was 68 minutes and best half was 1:30:16. Those results belong to another era, he says.

"However, one of the best parts of running is that every 5 years, it's a new race."