

# Karl Sproll

Congratulations to the MRA on 50 years of service to the Manitoba running community and thank you very much for the races and overall support. 1972 was a pivotal year in my own running journey and MRA was a fun part of that.

Distance running provides a wide variety of rewards to its participants regardless of level of performance. Although running is an individual sport, many of the rewards come when training and racing in groups, and almost all of my fondest memories are such. We run where we live, we set goals, we strive, and we push ourselves to get better. Running is a journey of self-discovery. But running is hard when you are going for a personal best of any kind. Runners all over the world are connected by the mental and physical challenges of dealing with adversity. Our best running stories come from the toughest experiences. I believe every race has a "Moment of Truth" where our body and mind are imploring us to slow down or quit while our spirit wrestles to urge us onward. Many times I gave up the fight. But, many other times, I conquered. Oh what satisfaction. Running is very humbling. I think that is the reason runners are such nice people. Moreover, our setbacks and failures provide harsh lessons, but they also serve as the barometer to appreciate our successes and accomplishments.

My running journey began in Junior High because of the kindness of the coaches (Mr. Koskie and Mr. Love) who invited everyone to be part of the team and encouraged us all. In my first race, a 1 mile at Memorial Track on school field day, I finished last and was lapped in a 4 lap race! I went out for cross-country finishing last at every practice. There were so many kids Coach Koskie never learned my name, but he called me Tiger and encouraged me as I crawled home each practice. At Grade 9 field day, I won the 440 yards only because my arch-rival fell flat on his face at the finish line. I was hooked! It was unbelievable to me or any of my classmates that I actually won something. I continued running at Dakota Collegiate again thanks to the kindness of Coaches Noyes and Nadler. My first road race came in Grade 12 at the 1972 Festival Du Voyageur 5 Mile, where I finished in the middle of the field. It was a good introduction because the participants had a lot of fun.

While in my first year of Computer Science at University of Manitoba I ran an 800m in the Gritty Grotto. I could see Coach Daly was a very warm and encouraging guy, so I screwed up my courage, introduced myself and asked if I might train with the University team. To my amazement he said "Sure!" and with a big smile added, "Let me introduce you to someone." He introduced me to Chris McCubbins who welcomed me as he did everyone. At the next practice I met Sheldon Reynolds and Grant Towns. My life was changed forever! Those 4 people really embody the acceptance that we enjoy in running. We ran 365 days of the year! I ran my streak to 5 years, 5 months and 15 days through blizzards, sickness, injuries, hail and heat. After yet another knee injury, I finally succumbed to good sense and took a few days off. We ran a lot. As an example, in 1976 I logged 9845 kms.

Some of my favorite races include those where I met the challenge of the "Moment of Truth" and persevered, such as the 1984 Athletes Wear 10km where my wife, Dianne and I both won, and I had to defeat the very tough and strong Roger Swegel, the 2011 Mattoni 10km run at night in old town Prague, 2014 Manitoba ½ marathon with my sons Karl and Erik, and the 2015 to 2018 Manitoba Marathon family relays.

My best times include:	5km	13:49 (track)
		18:32 (road) at age 57 and 19:38 (road) at age 63
	10km	29:57 (track)
	15km	1:03 road age 59 years
	20km	1:03:44 Birds Hill 1980
	½ marathon	1:37:07 age 59 years

My worst experiences happened at the 2011 Budapest ½ marathon relay where Dianne and I ran the 2 person relay. The temperature at race time was 30 degrees C! I did the first leg. I am not a heat runner under the best of circumstances and this was way beyond that. Despite starting at a jog, I got so overheated that by the time I arrived at the exchange zone, I looked so horrible that Dianne did not even recognize me at first as I plodded in. That same trip, at the 2 lap Prague 10km, I got so excited by the cheering crowds lining the streets at night and the music and running with Kenyans I thought I was running a 5km!?! I raced furiously to the race-clock set up in the town square at 5km, only realizing as I reached it, that everyone was continuing and I was only half way! The second 5km was sheer agony. I can still feel every step to this day!

I was fortunate to coach at St. Paul's High School from 1993 to 2002 thanks to Steve Chipman. I'm pretty sure I had more fun than the boys. I applied what I had learned from my mentors and friends. Each year at the inaugural meeting I opened with "I have good news and I have bad news." The grade 12 lads in the back row rolled their eyes. I carried on, "The good news is that you are all on the team. The bad news is that you are on the team." I then proceeded to list the variety excruciating pain and suffering they would experience over the course of the seasons. I ran with the boys and coached as we ran; part physiology, part tall tales and lore about running legends of the past, part sport psychology. The boys kept coming back year after year and our teams had a lot of success and made great memories.

I feel very fortunate to have experienced 50 years of running and racing and having made so many amazing friends and memories in that time.