Sheldon Reynolds

How many MRA members can say that they ran their first MRA race in 1971? Sheldon Reynolds would guess, "not many". When he went to a St. Norbert MRA race in 1971, he discovered there were only 2 other runners. He was sure to win a trophy!

Sheldon started running in grade 8 at John Henderson Junior High, joining its cross-country team, coached by Brian Zimmer. In Grade 9, he started at River East Collegiate where John Gratton was the star of the team. Although John was faster (and would get a USA track scholarship), Sheldon was the second fastest on the team even in Grade 9. When Gratton graduated and Sheldon was in Grade 10, he became River East's fastest runner and led the team coached by Ed Gilroy for those 3 years. After high school, Sheldon joined the Bisons cross-country and track teams and was one of its top runners, on a team coached by Jim Daly, that was among the strongest in Canada. While in university, Sheldon and his teammates would participate in many MRA road races to help the transition from 3 km indoors to 10 km outdoors in track. When Yellow Snow Track Club was formed in 1976 by Chris McCubbins and his disciples, one of whom was Sheldon, that club started the Puma Series but its members rarely ran in the races. due to the demands of organizing the three weekend races. The club was formed because you had to be in a club to qualify for Olympic trial races in Montreal.

Sheldon got his degree in Education and Physical Education and began his teaching career at General Byng School in Fort Garry where he stayed for 11 years, from 1976 to 1987. Sheldon lived in East Kildonan at the time and would take the bus downtown in the morning and run the last 6 miles to the school, and at the end of the day he would run the entire 13 miles home, at varying speeds but 90 minutes on his WORST days. Sheldon transferred to Arthur A. Leach school near the Fort Garry campus of U of M in 1987 and switched to biking to work. He retired from teaching in 2008 and served Sport Manitoba for the following 10 years as coach education coordinator in Coaching Manitoba.

Sheldon's running career has had many highlights. He was MRA runner of the year in 1976 and 1977. He won the first Grand Beach Sun Run in 1979, after winning the first Winnipeg Tribune Run for Fun (the biggest road race of the year in Manitoba at the time) against a stellar field, running 30:59. He was in the first Bird's Hill 20km in August that year and won in 64:09. Sheldon ran his first marathon in May 1976 at the Montreal Olympc trials in Ottawa, finshing 9th in 2:22:56. He has run several Manitoba Marathons including the 1980 race in which he had a time of 2:22:27 for his best marathon, finishing 9th.

Sheldon's proudest achievement was winning that first Tribune 10 km against a large field of very talented runners. It was his first win in a big race and he had great support from fans and other runners along the way, since the star runners of the day were well known. That race was also Sheldon's favourite race, with its course starting in Assiniboine Park and going out and back along Wellington Crescent, where you could see the runners behind you (if you were leading!) and get encouragement all the way back to the Park.

Sheldon has lots of favourite stories about road racing. He and his running partner, Greg Gemmell, were running in the elite portion of the Montreal International Marathon and saw a Quebec runner knock over an entire table full of water glasses for the runners. "What a klutz!" they said to each other before they realized that he had been sabotaging everyone behind him. Another story was from a 9.9 mile race in Mankato, MN that promised prize money to top finishers. It was promoted by a local radio station, the frequency of which was the reason for the strange distance (99.9 on your dial). The temperature and humidity were both 90. Sheldon placed third against an elite field that included runners that competed internationally for the USA. He was supposed to receive $75 for his achievement, but he is still waiting over 30 years later. I suppose that means that he is still an amateur!

Sheldon's worst experience in a road race was the Ottawa Marathon in 1977. He and Mike Dion were leading the field at the halfway point when Sheldon started to get cramps. He walked and jogged the rest of the way and still finished in 2:32. Almost as bad was an Oktoberfest race in Southern Ontario in freezing weather where Sheldon got hypothermia and had to stop at 13 miles. There was a Molson Golden Regina Marathon on the Wescana Parkway, where Sheldon ran in tandem with Grant Towns in first place. Jim Fethers of Winnipeg was the leader after 9 miles (there were three 9 mile loops) and Greg Gemmell and Reg Hoogervorst tied for the lead at 18 miles. Sheldon was feeling sick towards the end and asked Grant to ease up. He didn't. Sheldon got sicker and repeated his request. Grant still didn't slow down. In the final stretch to the finish, Sheldon went down and vomited on the grass. Grant jogged in a circle until Sheldon recovered from his nausea and then the 2 of them finished the last few meters together, still running 2:30.17. The next place runner finished in 2:38:15. The first prize was a trip to the Boston Marathon, and the sponsors agreed, in all the circumstances, to send both of them. It was their biggest road race prize ever!

Sheldon's best 1500 m was 3:58.3; 3 km was 8:26.4; 5 km was 14:48.8; 10 km was 30:22; 20 km was 64:09 and marathon was 2:22:27. In an era of fast runners, Sheldon was one of the fastest. In recent years, Sheldon has been known to bicycle to Winnipeg Beach and then run the Gimli 10 miler. Because anyone knows that a 10 mile run in the hot August sun isn't enough of a workout for a middle aged man!