

Steve Chipman

Most people know Steve Chipman as one of the brothers who own and operate the Birchwood Auto dealerships in Winnipeg, and who co-own the Winnipeg Jets. But if you were a serious road racer in the early 1980's, you knew Steve as a formidable adversary in any race.

Steve was a basketball player who played high school and senior men's basketball, but at age 29 in 1979 he decided to accept the challenge of that first Manitoba Marathon. He started training in January, 1979 and participated in the Tribune 10 km on the first Sunday in June and two weeks later he was on the starting line for the infamous Marathon. Three hours and 22 minutes later, he crossed the finish line. A born competitor, he vowed to do better and a year later, he ran 2:48. He joined the Phidippides/Prairie Sky running club and ran lots of races, including the Puma Series, the Athlete's Wear 10 km, the Grand Beach Sun Run, the Islandingadagurrin 10 mile, the Bird's Hill 20 km, the Festival du Voyageur 5 km and the Pacesetter Prediction Run. He was also in the Great Grain Relay and the Kelly Corporate Relay. He won the Buffalo Barbecue 5 km one year, choking on the fumes of the police motorcycle that led the way, and when he arrived at the finish line, Larry Switzer said to him, "Who are you?" One can suspect that Larry knows today who Steve is.

One challenging race was the Twin Cities marathon. Steve ran it with a stress fracture and still ran 2:55. He was on crutches for the next 3 months. His wife was with him, pregnant and experiencing morning sickness. The drive home was perhaps even less pleasant than the race.

He did the Banff/Jasper relay twice on a team with local stars John Thresher, Ralph Waples, Doug Sammons and others. Steve was MRA runner of the year for his age class in 1983, running one 10 km that year in 32:50, beating several members of the Bison track team. He was on a Marathon relay team ("the River Heights Iron Men") two years with Ken James, John Thresher, Karl Sproll and Ralph Waples and they completed the course in 2:24. He also ran on a mixed team twice with his brothers, sister and wife.

Steve's favourite runs come from the travels he has done through his varied work. He had a run at Victoria Falls in Africa, spanning two international borders. He ran a 10 km in Bermuda where he was concerned that a female runner had out-kicked him, until he realized she was Grete Waitz. He has also run in every province and territory in Canada.

Steve's favourite story starts with a race where he and Ken James were stride for stride until the last 200 meters where Steve outkicked Ken. The prize was a pair of Pacesetter running gloves, and Steve made a point of always wearing the gloves when he was running with Ken.

In the 5 km of the 2017 Police Half Marathon, Steve was close to the end when he was racing to the finish against a young boy. When the boy outsprinted him, he had a huge smile on his face. Steve asked him his name and age. "I'm Matt and I'm 9 years old!" Steve was 67.

From 1991 – 1995, Steve coached cross-country at Kelvin with Lionel Orlikow and one year with Karl Sproll to launch a track program at St. Paul's. Steve was a teacher early in his adult life and coached basketball, and then he went to law school and practiced law before his "final" career change to entering business. Recently, Steve has returned to coaching at St. Paul's in a cross-country program with over 50 runners, with 37 of them running in the 2020 provincial cross-country championships. Not bad for a school that did not have a track program when Steve was a student there.

Steve's best 5km was 16:08, 10 km was 32:56, half marathon was 1:16 (although he thinks it might have been 1:14) and marathon was 2:48. Steve is proof that a busy career and family life do not prevent you from excelling on the roads, or from giving back to the sport after the prime competing years are over.