

AU REVOIR!

by Chris Charette

As Randy and I are about to leave San Francisco, I cannot help but think of the many friends we are leaving behind. It's hard to say goodbye after almost 10 1/2 years. Even harder to let go of an association, which has played such a large role in my life these last nine years. It seems just yesterday that I joined San Francisco FrontRunners, although truthfully it was back in October of 1983, October 14, 1983 to be exact! A lot has happened over the years. I hope you will allow me to reminisce.

1983

-Dave Feiger is President. The Club has five runs: Sundays @ 10:00 am (by far the most popular), at different locations usually one out of town run per month; Saturdays @ 10:00 am at Stow Lake; Saturday long distance runs @ 9:00 am, also at Stow Lake; Tuesday track workouts @ 5:30 pm at S.F. State; and Thursday nites @ 6:00 pm at McLaren Lodge. Club dues are \$10.00. 1983 marks the 4th year that the Club has hosted a water station at the San Francisco Marathon, a tradition that continues to this date.

-The first Annual Gay Sports Day on Angel Island is held in September. This year will therefore mark our tenth anniversary (not 11th as the flyers would have it!). S.F. Track & Field Club, Different Spokes and S.F. Hiking Club join S.F. FrontRunners for a potluck picnic and run.

-That October, I run my first of nine Bridge to Bridge Run.

-Membership reaches the 300 mark for the second, maybe third year in a row!

1984

-FrontRunners is ten years old! The founders of Lavender U and former FrontRunners Club presidents are presented with 10th anniversary T-shirts. 70 attend the January celebration. Patrick Vitale is the new president.

-At last count there are 11 FrontRunners Clubs across the country.

-The Club discusses having a permanent logo. The discussion goes nowhere.

-Ten Front Runners run the Avenue of The Giants Marathon (no longer a FrontRunner tradition). I run my first marathon ever in 3:41:24.

-The first International FrontRunners Directory appears. Eastbay Fronrunners is formed.

-Gay Run raises \$2,000 for S.F. Aids Fund. The Club agrees to keep the 1984 design for another year.

1985

-Bob Edwards is the new president. Gary May, the Club's first president, dies of AIDS at the age of 33.

-Ten FrontRunners trek up to Humboldt county for Avenue of the Giants Marathon. I run my second marathon in a P.R. time of 3:34:58.

-The famous "FrontRunners Shoes" make their first appearance at the Gay Freedom Day Parade. Yours truly assisted in the making.

-825 run Gay Run on 7/14/85 and raise close to \$9,000 for the Aids Fund, our largest fundraiser to date.

-Membership stands at only 125 at year end and becomes an issue in the upcoming elections.

1986

-Alan Renoud is elected president and yours truly vice president, brunch queen and to that add acting president in February and March together with chairing of the Gay Run Committee upon the resignation of the race director in March.

-The Buffalo run or Fruit Loop, one of our five Saturday fun runs, originally known as the Melanie Mile after the 1986 treasurer, is created.

-Bay to Breakers weekend: the Golden Gate Bridge run becomes Balloons Across the Bay run.

-Randy Dean and I sign up to hand out flyers for Gay Run on June 6, in the Castro. This would prove to be our first date. Six years later, the relationship still endures.

-The movie "The FrontRunner" is to begin filming in the Santa Cruz mountains this summer. In 1992, we are still waiting.

-July 1986- a rollercoaster month, I'll never forget!

7/13/86: 554 run Gay Run. Due to logistical problems, the separate courses for the 5K and 10K cause havoc. This is the first and last attempt at a separate 10K course (instead of a two loop course). Runners still manage to raise \$6,700 for the AIDS Fund.

7/18/86: Alan Renoud, the Club's president (to which the current President's Award is dedicated), dies in office from AIDS at the age of 41.

7/20/86: I run my third and worst time ever marathon in 4:07:00 (the S.F. Marathon) finishing hand in hand with Randy.

-I first become T-shirt schlepper. Randy Dean becomes VP (blame it on nepotism!).

-The Club organizes the Gay Games II marathon. It will be my last marathon. My time: 4:05:00.

-FrontRunners Footprints, a regular column on other FrontRunners clubs, first appears in the newsletter.

-At last count there are now 22 FrontRunners clubs including Sydney, Australia and Vancouver, B.C..

-The Club welcomes Brent Nicholson Earle, a N.Y. FrontRunner, on his halfway mark to running 10,000 miles for the American Run for the End of AIDS (AREA).

-Saturday runs move to 9:00 am. Turnout often exceeds 30 people. We finish the year with 166 members, 16.3% of which are women.

1987

-Yours truly is reelected president. I also take on the added function of membership chair.

-Three Club members including myself attend the first International FrontRunner Forum in early April in Chicago. Some 20 members from 11 U.S. FrontRunners clubs meet to discuss affiliation, the establishment of a clearing house and having a FrontRunner convention in 1988.

-Club dues, which had not increased since 1/1/83, go up from \$10 to \$15 effective 5/1/87.

-The AIDS Pledge Run is first held during June 1987. Over \$25,000 is raised for different charities.

-On 7/11/87, Tom Waddell, the founder of the Gay Games dies of AIDS at the age of 50. Only 411 run Gay Run on 7/12/87.

-The Arboretum run, originally about 3.5 miles long, is created by Tom Lake at my request. To this date, the course has never been finalized due to the numerous paths within the Arboretum.

-Cartoons, photos and the treasurer's report first appear in the newsletter. The Club decides to keep the same T-shirt design for another year.

-The Russian River weekend is revived.

-October 9-11, Randy and I attend the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights along with 23 other S.F. FrontRunners. Over 200 FrontRunners from all over join Brent Nicholson Earle's AREA run into Washington, D.C.. I volunteer to be a monitor for the Names Project Quilt, which is first unveiled that weekend. The Quilt contains close to 2,000 panels including two of S.F. FrontRunners: Alan Renoud, 1986 president; and Marvin Shipley, 1979 secretary.

-Team San Francisco is formed. Founding members include several FrontRunners.

-Minutes of membership meetings first appear in the newsletter. The issue of team outfits is raised--nothing comes of it. The Club votes to have a club brochure.

-A record 62 runners show up at one of our Saturday runs. The Club finishes the year with 184 members, 12.5% women.

1988

-Jim Miller is elected president. Except for being active on the Bylaws Committee, I take a sabbatical.

-Membership as of January 1988 reaches 131. The bylaws are amended to allow prorated dues.

-Walking around Stow Lake and Women's only runs are introduced. Close to 80 FrontRunners show up for a Saturday fun run, a new record.

-In April a new tradition is born: nearly 30 FrontRunners attend the first Yosemite weekend trip.

-125 turn out for Balloons across the Bay. 20 FrontRunners travel to Guerneville for the 2nd Annual (revived) Russian River Run.

-The June AIDS Pledge Run raises \$15,000. Gay Run moves from July to October. 450 run and \$1,000 is raised for Open Hand. The Club gets a new booth, compliments of Doug Farson.

-The Club votes to move the election of officers forward from January to December.

-October 7-11: the First International FrontRunners Convention and Track & Field Invitational is held in New York. 4 FrontRunners attend.

-Membership reaches 250, a new high not reached since 1983.

1989

-Yours truly loses the presidential election to Tim Cook. As a consolation prize, I get to chair the 15th Anniversary Committee, the Bylaws Committee and become T-shirt schlepper again. The newsletter gets a new name: "The Footprint".

-The First Apex Awards Banquet honoring excellence in the Gay/Lesbian sports community are held on 1/28/89.

-New Tuesday nite runs begin @ 6:45 pm at the Marina Green. At the end of the year, they'll move to 6:30 pm at the Ferry Building, where they are still held today. The women only runs are cancelled.

-April 1989: the 15th Anniversary T-shirts go on sale; 4 FrontRunners join members from 18 other clubs at the 2nd International FrontRunners Forum in Chicago.

-The first annual Cinco de Mayo run/meeting is held at Warren Martin's family compound in Woodside.

-The AIDS Pledge Run raises \$11,549.

-Club membership meetings move to Saturdays. I get involved with the 1990 T-shirt design contest and the Nomination Committee.

-134 join founders Jack Baker and Gardner Pond, Supervisor Harry Britt and past officers at the 15th Anniversary Banquet on August 19th at Umberto's. Harry Britt on behalf of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors later presents the Club with a Certificate of Honor for providing a positive outlet to the gay community.

-410 run Gay Run and raise \$1,500 for the Latino AIDS Project and Project Open Hand on October 15, two days later a 7.1 earthquake hits San Francisco.

1990

-Welcome to the GAY 90's. Rod Doby is elected president. Jack Baker, one of our co-founder dies on 1/12/90, five days after the 16th Anniversary Run, at the age of 59.

-The Club hosts a Women's Friendship reception on 3/2/90. The event is the first of its kind in the Club's history and attracts over 35 women.

-The idea of a Club logo is raised again and goes nowhere.

-More than 100 runners and walkers show up for the Club's Saturday fun run on 3/17/90. Membership now stands at 175.

-\$22,707 is raised for the June AIDS Pledge Run. 260 T-shirts from past Gay Runs are donated to the Community Thrift Store.

-Over 200 FrontRunners from over 15 clubs join in a fun run in Vancouver on the eve of Gay Games III. Some 60 S.F. FrontRunners attend the Games.

-About 400 run Gay Run. Over \$4,000 is raised for the Food Bank.

-I volunteer to chair the Nomination Committee.

-Close to 400 gays and lesbians converge on Angel Island for the annual Gay Sports Day on Angel Island.

-For the first time ever, \$1,500 in seed money is set aside for next year's Gay Run.

-10/26/90: Peter B. Middendorf, 1982 Club president, dies three weeks shy of his 46th birthday after a long illness with AIDS.

1991

-The year of the women: for the first time in the Club's history, the membership elects an all women board lead by Marie McNulty. As Nomination Committee Chair, I get to make this proud announcement.

-S.F. FrontRunners is awarded the "Golden Eagle True Spirit Award" at the 3rd Annual Apex Awards for our contribution to the Gay and Lesbian sports community.

-Yours truly volunteers to conduct a survey of the membership on how to increase participation at our Sunday runs, which have been decreasing steadily in attendance over the last several years (compare this to when I first joined this Club, back then Sunday runs were the most popular and we were lucky to get 12 or more at our Saturday runs). As a result of the survey, Sunday runs move to 9:00 am effective 4/1/91.

-Attendance at Saturday fun runs often exceed 100.

-The 2nd Annual Women's Reception is held on 3/8/91. Some 22 women attend.

-The AIDS Pledge Run wins the Cable Car Award for the best fund raiser of 1990.

-Women's only runs reappear on the last Sunday of every month. Regular membership dues increase from \$15 to \$20 effective 6/1/91.

-3rd Annual International FrontRunners Forum is held in Toronto. Marie McNulty represents the Club. Some 15 clubs are represented.

-A third Bay Area FrontRunners club is formed in the South Bay: Bayland FrontRunners.

-The June AIDS Pledge Run raises some \$20,400. The Club charters its first ferry to accommodate the 350-400 athletes for the ever popular Gay Sports Day on Angel Island.

-Over 300 run Gay Run '91 and raise some \$1,100 for PAWS.

-Yours truly wins the President's Award. In an emotional "little speech", I outline my past involvement with the award including the honor of: dedicating the award to the 1986 president, Alan Renoud, whom I succeeded upon his death on 7/18/86; and personally selecting three of the past winners.

-Membership at the end of the year stands at 254.

1992

-Mike Simon is elected president.

-I volunteer to chair the Middendorf Trust Committee on how to spend the \$2,500 bequest from our past president.

-Lack of attendance at the Sunday runs is again an issue. The Club agrees to keep the runs at 9:00 am but stipulates that they be held in the same place monthly except for the traditional one out of town run.

-Some 386 Gay Run T-shirts are donated to the Community Thrift Store.

-2/14-17: Some 26 S.F. FrontRunners attend the 2nd International FrontRunners Invitational in Long Beach. Our Club fields three relay teams, one of which is composed exclusively of past and current presidents (Patrick, myself, Rod, Marie and Mike).

-The Club votes to allocate \$1,200 from the Peter B. Middendorf Trust to: Gay Games '94 \$500; Forum '93 \$300; and Presidents Honor Roll \$400 (subsequently reduced to \$225).

-The S.F. Parks and Recreation Department informs the Club that a permit and liability insurance is required to hold our Saturday fun runs in the park. The cost would be \$0.50/member/week, which would bankrupt the Club. A Committee is formed to fight this.

-On 5/3/92 the Club votes to officially change the name of Gay Run to Gay Pride Run.

-A new FrontRunners club is formed in Hawaii by S.F. FrontRunners transplants.

Well that's it! I hope you've enjoyed reading this slanted partial history of the San Francisco FrontRunners as much as I've enjoyed researching it. Please excuse any errors or omissions I may have made. My research is only as good as what I remember and what articles members have submitted to the newsletter over the years. So keep these newsletters (thanks to past donations, my collection of newsletters goes back to June 1981!) or donate your old issues to the Club.