



# Forever Run

November 2020

## From the President

by Steve Viegas

Friends,

I write you in the aftermath of the October 30 snowstorm which turned my aerobic activity from running into shoveling yesterday. This week we learned that the Boston Marathon and its prep race the New Bedford Half Marathon will both be postponed from their April and March dates, eyeing the fall as a time we may be able to race again. These are trying times. With COVID-19 peaking again, we need to be very diligent in following guidelines to stay safe.

Ken Houle reminds us that although the club award for 100 miles of racing is on hold due to the pandemic, the recognition for 1,000 miles of annual running or walking is still available. So, get your mileage into Ken by the end of the year if you qualify. I am currently over 1,000 miles and am grateful for those miles for helping to keep me positive in these times.

Our board will meet this Thursday. Among other things, we will discuss what donations we might make from our funds. Jan Holmquist has made suggestions and received recommendations. We'll report what decisions we may make in next month's newsletter.

I continue to serve on the USATF New England board as its masters LDR chair. While the association has been able to assist in some cross-country races which were very successful, long distance running is still pretty much on hold during the pandemic. I hope to represent the association at the USATF virtual annual meeting next month. It had been scheduled to be held again at Reno, NV but like most meetings, it has gone virtual. I hope to attend the LDR meetings and the law and legislation meetings where I represent the interests of the masters LDR.

Let's all stay safe and hope to meet again in person sometime in the new year.

Steve Viegas

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photo courtesy of Byron Petrakis

## A Marathon Like No Other

by Byron Petrakis

The pre-race pasta party provided a big clue. Instead of pasta along with pitchers of water and Gatorade, our fare consisted of an unending supply of red wine along with the typical pasta, salad, and fixings. Instead of hearing from race directors or running icons, the assembled guests listened--and then danced--to lively bands. Raucous singing and chanting emerged from tables topped with 6-packs of wine that were regularly replenished by energetic waiters.

Then there was the setting, the elegant grounds of Chateau Lanessian in the Haut-Medoc region of Bordeaux, France on September 17, 1993 the evening before the ninth annual Marathon Des Chateaux Du Medoc Et Des Graves, a marathon through the world's most famous vineyards.

One of only eight Americans among the 6,000 registered runners, I was there as a guest of Chateau Pichon-Longueville-Baron and a member of its racing team. A wine broker friend and fellow marathoner recruited me to the team, promising that the event would be an unforgettable, once-in-a-lifetime experience. While my pre-marathon mindset inclined me to take the race seriously and run a respectable time to avoid embarrassing my teammates, the party atmosphere soon transformed my thinking. As I joined the conga line of singing runners snaking around tables at the pre-race party, I could feel the ruling deity of the event was bad boy Dionysus rather than Boy Scout Apollo. Before our evening ended around midnight, the appropriately named "Commanderie du Bontemps du Medoc et des Graves" encouraged us to indulge our senses and to exercise our capacity for "good humor" as well as our bodies during the next day's run. In the spirit of "good times," I decided to follow a race strategy of "when in Bordeaux..." and enjoy myself as much as possible while still running a decent race.

While the pre-race activities were atypical, the marathon itself was even more so. Nearly half of the participants were attired in costume, many of which called attention to the celebration of the harvest. Besides those sporting cork necklaces and belts, there were runners dressed as bottles of wine, oak casks and clusters of purple grapes, just to cite a few examples. While the weight of these outfits slowed the runners down, it hardly dampened their enthusiasm.

Adding to the merriment, bands playing a variety of musical genres from calypso, samba,

and rock to jazz and classical entertained participants and spectators alike. Bacchanalian revelry involving both participants and spectators had replaced the traditional loneliness of the long-distance runner.

Nowhere, however, was the race more unorthodox than at its “water stops.” To slake our thirst, gaily dressed volunteers offered both white and red wine along with water and Isotar, the French version of Gatorade. For the truly adventurous, delectable finger foods were available throughout the course, including oysters on the half shell at Chateau Lafite Rothschild, paired with a crisp Bordeaux white wine. While watching many of my fellow runners stop to slurp oysters on the half shell and sample the array of wines, I began to believe the race organizers’ claim that the Bordeaux Marathon is the “longest in the world,” in a temporal if not spatial sense. The average finishing time is about five hours, which is not surprising given the lingering that takes place at the wine stops. Despite the temptation to join the rolling wine tastings along the course, I chose water and electrolyte replacement fluid as my drinks of choice, especially because the warm, humid day with temperatures in the high 70’s was causing me to sweat profusely.

Adding to the lure of sideline delicacies, festively dressed “sirens” populated the course with offers of wine, food, and fun. At one village square, lively dancers were swinging their partners around as a band played a rousing jig. While my Spartan “superego” told me to stay on course and ignore the temptation to join the party, my Dionysian “id” pulled me into the revelry. Before I knew it, I had linked arms with a laughing dancer as we cavorted a bit before I gave her a gentlemanly bow and resumed running. During the rest of the race, I felt like a modern-day Odysseus trying to navigate the temptations posed by Circe, Calypso, and the lotus-eaters. My challenge was balancing my desire to indulge in the pleasures before me with my need to return safely homeward. My overall strategy for the rest of the race was to defer the gustatory pleasures of taste and smell until the finish and focus instead on the sounds and sights surrounding me. In short, I tried to immerse myself in the moment without drowning in it.

As the finish back in Pauillac loomed ahead, I looked forward to the end of the race in order to get off my feet and enjoy the post-race wine lunch that our Chateau hostess had prepared for us. (All those wines I had passed up on the course!) As we crossed the finish line, we were rewarded with a grape-cluster finisher’s medal, a bottle of red Bordeaux, and a kiss on each cheek by a friendly volunteer. While the prize for the male and female race winners was their weight in wine, the prize for wine lovers like me was experiencing running through vineyards of historic chateaux like Latour, Margaux, and Haut-Brion in an atmosphere more akin to Mardi Gras than an athletic event.

At the post-race luncheon (followed later that evening by a catered dinner and dance party), our gracious hostess awarded each one of us on her chateau team with a magnum of her magnificent 1989 Chateau Pichon-Longueville-Baron, *Wine Spectator* magazine’s wine of the year. I knew that once I returned to New Hampshire, I would cellar that bottle and save it for a special occasion. That occasion presented itself in 2017 when my wife and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. At a celebratory family dinner, I uncorked the bottle to share with my loved ones. Along with the mature, velvety red wine, many pleasant marathon memories poured out for me to savor. In my mind, I can still taste every drop.

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photo by Eldon Burkinshaw

## A Virtual Boston for Jo Ann

Jo Ann McCalister (above) running a 16-mile race last year in Derry, NH in preparation for the Boston Marathon. This year, Jo Ann joined 18,000 other runners to complete Boston virtually. She ran with her daughter and said her time of 6 hrs and 42 min was slow but she finished. She sent us the photo below of some nice items sent by the BAA to Boston virtual participants.



# Free Trophies

Recently we received an email from Rita LaBella who asked if there might be a club member interested in receiving some women's trophies. Rita said they could make nice awards, especially to young female runners. Rita is willing to deliver them or meet someone half way. Her contact information is: 978-851-5877 or [aaron90@verizon.net](mailto:aaron90@verizon.net)

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## A Witch of a Run

by Rick Stetson



photo courtesy of The Witch Run

This will not be a favorite race memory but an account of a real, as opposed to virtual, race I ran last month in Utah. Why I traveled out to Utah for a race during a time of Covid-19 is a bit involved so you will have to bear with me.

Earlier this year I purchased season football tickets from my college alma mater. Then this summer due to the pandemic, games started to be canceled which is what happened to my school. The same happened to BYU in Utah and since both had openings in their schedules, the schools got together and arranged to play each other in Provo. I wasn't that interested to fly to Utah for the game, especially since it was going to be shown on ESPN, but due to the Roadrunners Club of America annual convention being canceled last March in Oregon, I had an airline ticket that had to be used prior to next February (it could not be refunded.) Then I remembered Utah was a state I needed for my bucket list goal of running a race in every state. I got on-line, searched Utah races and found one called the Witch Run in Gardner Village located between Salt Lake City and Provo. Perfect. I could run the 5K and still make it to the game. I arranged for my flights, made motel reservations, entered the race and purchased a ticket to the game. Then several days before my trip, the athletic department sent an email saying that due to an increase in positive cases of the virus in Utah, no fans would be allowed in the stadium for the game. Since it had been a lengthy process to get my plane tickets, I decided to keep them and fly to Utah for the race. It is probably just as well that I was unable to enter the stadium because BYU ran away with the game but I was able to make it to the Witch Run so here is the rest of the story.

The Witch Run race literature said Gardner Village is "home to the best Halloween displays in Utah." Entering the village, a number of larger-than-life witch mannequins were on display. One had a witch standing by a huge kettle with steam rising from it. Another featured a witch winding up to throw a baseball to a boy holding a bat (a son of a witch?) Meanwhile, several human witches (see above) circulated among the crowd paying special attention to the youngsters.

The race organizers had given runners times spaced 30 seconds apart to pick up their race packets and I reported to the table at the designated time. A box of safety pins was next to a volunteer and I reached to get some. She pulled the box back saying runners were not supposed to touch the pins. (I'm still learning proper Covid-19 etiquette.) She then handed me my number, four pins and a black witch hat that was too big and floppy to wear during the race.

Music was being played like "The Theme from the Adams Family," and "The Monster Mash" which helped give the event a Halloween spirit. Finally, the race announcer asked runners to line up according to their starting times. When we entered the race, (there was no race day sign up), runners were asked to give their predicted finish time. Then, several days prior to the race, emails were sent giving our race number along with a starting time. The race began at 5:00 which is when the runner with the fastest predicted time would be on the starting line with the rest of the field lined up behind keeping a good social distance (tape had been placed on the pavement letting us know how far back to stand.) Runners were also asked to wear masks which most of us did until we started the race at which time most masks were removed. Every 10 seconds the race director would call a runner forward, punch his or her number in a computer and say, "ready, go." Instead of the National Anthem before the race, a woman with a good voice sang, "I'll put a spell on you." I started three minutes after the first runner and when I was told to "go," a spell must have been cast on me because my legs did not want to move. It probably had something to do with little training mileage, little sleep the night before and no speed work since the virus started. The race was an out-and-back on a scenic bike path but all I wanted was to finish which I was able to do in a slow time. However, I was able to win my age group (it helped that I was the only runner in the age group.)

I'm down to 10 states needed to reach my goal of racing in all 50 but I don't plan to fly again until Covid-19 is eliminated, or a vaccine is developed. Wearing a mask on a long flight is not enjoyable and drinks and snacks were not served during the trip. I asked a flight attendant if she missed pushing a cart down the aisle and serving passengers and she said flights were boring with nothing to do. Then she told me this was her last flight. I asked if she was retiring and she said the next day, she and 6000 other employees were being laid off. I told her I was sorry. It made me realize that the virus has impacted people everywhere and how much better things will be when we don't have to worry about it any longer. Until that happens, we all need to continue to stay safe.

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## **1000+ Miles of Running and Walking Challenge**

by Ken Hoolks

**The 1000+ Miles of Running and Walking Challenge is still on for 2020. The challenge can be all running to include race mileage, all walking or a combination of the two. When sending in your results, keep the running and walking mileage separate. Then you can add the two totals together for your grand total which should be sent to me in January, 2021. [hoolks@metrocast.net](mailto:hoolks@metrocast.net)**

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## John Gibbons Profile

by Byron Petrakis

“I’d walk a mile for a Camel.” Those of us of a certain age remember that iconic slogan and those vintage ads from the 1940’s and early 50’s. While most runners wouldn’t associate smoking with running, John Gibbons can claim to do so, albeit in a roundabout way. When he was in grade school, John’s family would rent a vacation cottage on Cape Cod to escape the stifling summer heat of their native Delaware. His mom would ask him to go to the store and buy her some cigarettes, so he started running the mile from their cottage to buy comic books for himself and cigarettes for her. (In those days, no one cared if you were a kid buying cigarettes; after all, even some doctors then were touting the health benefits of smoking).

After discovering that he was a decent sprinter in grade school, John later became a member of his high school track team, where he competed in the 100, 200 and 400 meter sprints, relays and the high jump. He even competed in the famous Penn Relays, the oldest and largest track and field competition in the United States. Later, while he was a student at Maine’s Bowdoin College, he ran indoors on the track and outdoors on the roads to keep in shape.

John’s choice of Bowdoin proved consequential for his running career in many ways. Although he did not attend Bowdoin at the same time as Joan Benoit Samuelson, one of Bowdoin’s most famous graduates, he eventually connected with her through their shared love of running. He met Samuelson in 1990 at her premier event, the Beach to Beacon 10K. His streak of 20 B2B races was broken in August 2020 because of the COVID pandemic. For 15 years, John served as a Bowdoin trustee (along with Samuelson) and after the trustee meetings, he would usually try to run the Mother’s Day 5K in Portland before driving home to Greenwich, CT, his home since 1969.

John’s Bowdoin’s roots also connected him with members of the Maine Rowdies, a group of runners whom Joan Benoit Samuelson credits for taking her under their wing when she began her running career. Jerry LeVasseur and Phil Pierce were just two of the well known runners whom John met while attending races in Maine. They recruited him to run a leg in the Maine Marathon Relay, which he did for 15 years. John also credits Phil and

Jerry for recruiting him to the New England 65+ Runners Club, where John now serves as one of the two club Directors from Connecticut.

John's Marathon Relay experience landed him on Vermont City Relay teams. In 2015, John was part of a team that included Zeke Zucker, Bill Borla and Sharon Vos that set a Mixed Masters marathon record of 3:14.

John's running career has yielded him a number of memorable experiences well beyond New England. His wife was brought up in Alaska and still has family there. After inheriting some land from his wife's aunt, John and his wife built a vacation home there. Over the years, the Gibbonses have entertained a number of runners for the Mayor's midnight marathon/half/5K on the summer solstice. At one 10K in Alaska, the Race Director warned runners that there were two moose at the 10K turnaround on the Coastal Trail, which meant if the moose came down the trail there would not be a water stop there. Lo and behold, the moose did in fact appear, so he and his fellow runners turned around sooner than expected and sprinted back to the start. Another one of John's favorite Alaskan races is the Mayor's Marathon, with its copious amounts of post race food and drink.

In 2015, John experienced the challenge of an international race, the Budapest 10K, which he hadn't even planned for. While on a river cruise on the Rhine with his wife, John learned about the race and took a train from Vienna to Budapest to join around 300 participants for the 10K. After experiencing some aggressive pushing and shoving from his fellow male runners, he opted to run with a group of "nice and reasonable ladies" and managed to turn in a good time.

These days, John is running as many virtual 5Ks as he can, using the races as part of his training. Tod's Point Beach is 4 miles from his house in Greenwich, so he goes over there to run 5Ks and submit his time. He plans to keep running for as long as he can, finding inspiration from legends like Lou Peters and Jerry LeVasseur. The New England 65+ Runners Club also provides him with what he calls "one of the delights of his running life—running behind so many 65+ Race Directors in the James Joyce Ramble and the Beach to Beacon, especially Jan Holmquist."

John's long and colorful running career shows that you can survive walking or even running a mile for a Camel--as long as you don't smoke it.





In last month's newsletter, the above photo accompanying Byron Petrakis' article about a favorite race memory had an incorrect name for his relay team. It should have been Chester College of New England. We apologize for the error.

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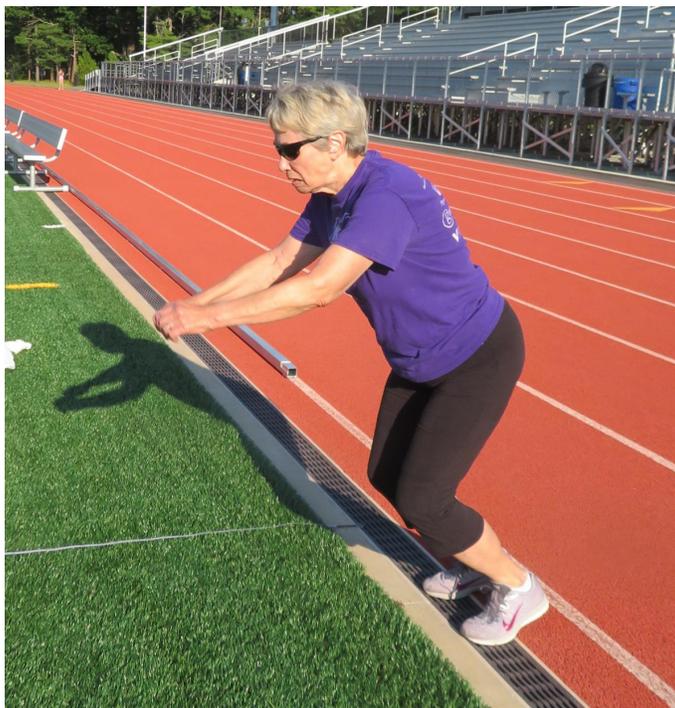


photo by Jerry LeVasseur

**Arden LeVasseur (above) set to take off virtually in the women's standing long jump while competing in the USATF Virtual Track Summer Challenge.**

## **USATF Virtual Track Challenge**

**by Jerry LeVasseur**

In August Zeke Zucker, Arden LeVasseur and Jerry LeVasseur did the USATF Virtual Track Summer Challenge. Jerry and Zeke did 19 events and Arden 4. The events included

the 10K, 5K, Mile, 1500, 800, 400, 200, 100, 50, long jump, standing long jump and triple jump. Arden had All American status in the triple jump placing 1<sup>st</sup> in all 4 of her events. Zeke had two firsts (400 and 1500 ) a second and fourth and two fifths. Jerry had 11 firsts and one second with little competition. The club with Arden earned 155 points. The jumps were done at the Bath track and the runs at Bowdoin College. Verification was done by video of the jumps and sprints as well as photos of the measurements. Distance was verified by a photo of the GPS distance and time results.

Jerry also did 9 events over three days in the Athletics Canada Virtual Summer Track Challenge including the 3,000, 1,500, 800, 400, 200, 100, long jump, standing long jump and earned All America status in the triple jump. There was no competition.

In September Bill Borla, Ram Satyaprasad and Jerry LeVasseur competed in the USA Virtual Road Race Series finishing as the first club in the 5K. In October the same three placed first club in the 10K. Bill finished first in the 80-84 age group followed by Ram with Jerry carrying the red lantern. They will do the 12K in November which is the last of the series. Jerry signed up the Fall Masters Virtual Track Challenge and as of press time, had completed 4 of the 12 events.

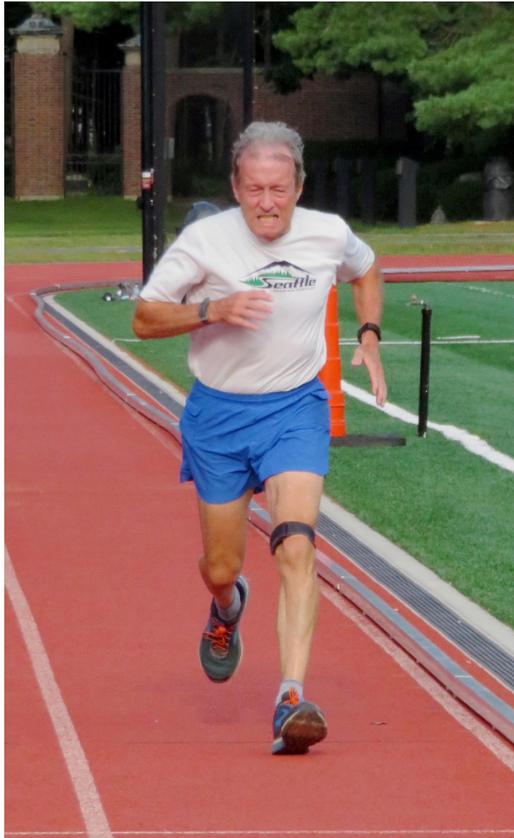


photo by Jerry LeVasseur

**Zeke Zucker on his way to a virtual first place finish in the 1500 at the USATF Virtual Track Summer Challenge. Zeke is the NE 65+ Runners Club vice president.**

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## Quote of the Month

**"Physical activity can boost your happiness by reducing stress and releasing feel-good brain chemicals."**

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