

FOREVER YOUNG :

THE LONDON PACERS, 1993 to 1998

*May your hands always be busy, may your feet always be swift,
May you have a strong foundation when the winds of changes shift
May your heart always be joyful, may your song always be sung,
And may you stay forever young. "Forever Young" Bob Dylan*

The age of the average member continued to climb from 1993 to 1998 but the club kept busy, joyful (mostly) and in a few individual cases even swift. We seemed to be making a general transition in these years from a bastion of elite, competitive athletes to a social club.

The winds of change would also blow through the city's running community as a whole after the Running Room opened an outlet in London and some fierce competition between it and Runners Choice led indirectly to each store creating their own marathon and 10k training groups.

Over the ensuing years fewer and fewer beginning runners would look to the Club for the knowledge and support necessary to get started and only a handful of people from either store's training groups would affiliate themselves with the club once they became established runners.

The executive for **1993** were:

President – June Bugler
Vice President – Cheryl Easter
Secretary – Joey Hughes
Treasurer – Bill Nightingale
Membership – Pat Needham
Race Directors – Eric Magni, Art Whitfield & Jan Brooks
Race Reporter – Bernie Conway
Newsletter Editor – Pat DeMeester
Social Convenor – Harold Mitchell
Women on the Run – Sherry Watts
Publicity Chairperson – Dennis Hopper

By this time Sherry Watts' newsletter columns reflect a change in focus from women's issues to racewalking. Within a few years the Club would vote to change its constitution to officially include racewalking. Larry Gooder would begin his (very) active involvement in the club by organizing our Labatt's 24 Hour Relay team and taking tons of race photos for the newsletter.

New member Brian David would lead a small Pacer contingent at Boston in a time of 3:09 and life member Joe Pineau would pass away in August at the age of 80. At the Forest City Marathon, on a day that was hot as hell Jim Burrows would finish 3rd in 2:35, Aaron Ramlal 6th in 2:42, Nick Merucci 8th in 2:44 and John Ferguson 9th in 2:47. Pacer teams would finish first in both the men's 35 to 49 and over 50 age groups at the OMTFA Cross Country Championships in Toronto.

Old reliable Bruce Pellow and the editor would write articles for the newsletter extolling the virtues of cross-country running but it still seemed to be a pleasure known to only a small portion of club members.

1994 will forever be known as the year Ken Dungavell ran his first marathon - a 3:51 in London. That may not seem worthy of mention to you but if you don't like it I can only suggest that you write your own damn club history.

Now where was I? Oh yeah, a few events of lesser importance also occurred that year. Larry Gooder began his energetic 2 year term as club president. A large Pacer contingent participated in the 100th running of the 30k Around the Bay race in Hamilton. Peter Haase ran the Forest City Marathon in 2:49:30 thus finishing second in the Canadian Masters Championship. Sharon Culliton became the national female masters champion by running a 3:17 in the same race and Aaron Ramlal and Ron Falck finished one/two in the masters division of the 10k in times of 33:02 and 33:15.

Bruce Pellow led a large, free, fun interval training group in Springbank Park that summer and also single-handedly organized the first Pacer Thanksgiving cross-country race in the park a few months later. A big contingent ran the Detroit

Marathon led by Andy Tarr who finished in 2:48 in his first marathon (despite the complete lack of support for his pre-race preparations from his wife and friends – "Oh that's right, Andy can't have another beer because he has to run tomorrow."). Cheryl Easter (3:12), Bob Gardner (3:14) and Mark Faust (3:39) ran personal bests in motor city and Doug McGill (3:23) and Lynn Marsh (3:34), in her first marathon, qualified for Boston. Harold Mitchell was believed to be the first amputee (9 toes) finisher in a time of 3:46.

A well-attended Club Championship brunch was held at the Highland Golf Club in November and many members participated in a New Year's eve costume run at U.W.O.

The **1995** New Years' morning run was hosted by Gerry Fenwick.

Eric Magni stepped in that year to act as race director for and save the February 10k run at Western Fair - then called The Chilly Dog .

The executive slate was:

- President – Larry Gooder
- Vice President – Bob Gardner
- Treasurer – Bill Nightingale
- Secretary – Willie Gortworst
- Race Directors – Eric Magni, Chuck Edwards & Don Cunliffe
- Membership – Sharron Poole
- Newsletter Editor – David Howard
- Social Convenor – Len Donkers
- Publicity – Andy Tarr
- Race Reporter – Bernie Conway
- Women on the Run – Sherry Watts

Marco Balestrin would begin writing a regular column for the newsletter in 1995. Cheryl Easter would act as race director for another very successful Forest City Marathon & 10k but the Murder Mystery dinners to support that race were losing steam and no longer selling out. The last one, with a Star Trek theme and the usual collection of bad actors, would be held at the Art Gallery in May.

London Life indicated part way through the year that it could no longer make its large auditorium available for the monthly meetings which would then move to smaller seminar rooms in the building for several months.

A group of Harry Littleton's friends would get together to create an award to be given in his honour to a Pacer member who was an active competitor, volunteer and ambassador in and for the Club and our sport. The first Silver Fox award would be presented to Bruce Pellow at the Club Championship brunch at the Highland Country club on November 19th, 1995.

In **1996** June Bugler would return for her second stint as club president and Sherry Watts would become newsletter editor. Eric Magni would continue to breathe life into the Chilly Dog race.

After a year of brightening up our Tuesday/Thursday training runs Bruce Pellow's daughter Lindsay would leave us for B.C. The Forest City Marathon/ 10k would once again be a big success under the direction of Cheryl Easter and with the support of an army of other Pacer volunteers.

An entire issue of the newsletter would be devoted to cross-country-running in September but that part of our sport still only seemed to have a few hard-core aficionados within the club, i.e. Bernie Conway and Bruce Pellow. Dennis Kalichuk would win the 5k race at the Club Championships in 18:51 and Peter Haase would run away from the field in the 3-looper to win in 51:45.

Lorne Duquette would be the second Silver Fox Award winner, receiving his trophy at the Club Championship brunch at the Highland Golf Club. To mark Jennifer Dungavell's 40th birthday Runners Choice would hold its (4th annual) pub run on December 17th. Funny the things you learn about people, even people you have known for a long time, when you are the designated driver and they are, uh, very definitely NOT SOBER. (I guess I can't use the term "shit-faced" here can I?, because a few of you endurance sorts are still reading this)

At the end of the year the Club would end a long association with London Life and begin a few years of wandering in the wilderness with the announcement that its December meeting would be held at the Goodlife Fitness Club at 305 Richmond Street.

1997 was our 25th anniversary (but nobody found it necessary to commission a Club history, Aggie) The executive committee was:

President – Greg McGugan
Vice President – Steve Hillman
Treasurer – Don Cunliffe
Secretary – Jennifer Dungavell
Race Directors – Paul Roberts and Bruce Anderson
Membership – Patty Stark
Newsletter Editor – Sherry Watts
Publicity – Chuck Edwards and Harry Littleton
Social Convenor – Lynne Weaver
Race Reporter – Bernie Conway

The New Years morning run was held out of the Dungavell residence in Westmount in frosty conditions. There would be 228 runners at the "Really Chilly" race in February with Jim Burrows placing second in 32:05 and Ron Falck fourth overall in 32:48. A regular Wednesday cross-country group would start running at the provincial park in Komoka that spring.

More than 400 marathoners would compete in the Forest City Road Races with John Ferguson leading all members by coming in 5th in 2:42. The enthusiastic race walking wing of the club would host a summer clinic instructed by U.S. national team competitor Dave McGovern. Marco and Sandra Balestrin would revive the River Road run in St. Marys that September.

Life member, world-class athlete skilled photographer and good guy Art Obokata would pass away in October. To cap the year the Club Championship brunch would move to Windermere Manor at U.W.O. for the first time and a large, happy crowd would see Larry Gooder spoof John Ferguson's marathon training clinics and a very deserving Sherry Watts presented with the Silver Fox award.

(this history to be continued – at some time in the future by somebody else. i.e. Aggie, I quit. - Ken D.)
