Walter Lea
2004 Ewen Stewart Inspirational Runner Award

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2004-2005
The PEI RoadRunners Executive would like to announce the first ever Ewen Stewart Inspirational Runner Award. Thank you to the PEI Marathon Committee for its' sponsorship.

The genesis of The Ewen Stewart Inspirational Runner Award springs from the eternal inspiration given to us throughout the years by the chancellor of running on PEI, Ewen Stewart.

The award doesn't celebrate fastest times and most improved but rather celebrates and honors a club member who presents spirit, determination, guts, grit and inspires us all by a dogged determination, a winning attitude and naked truth.

Speaking of naked....

Walter Lea, it seems, has been running for quite some time. He started running in the late 70's as a means to improve his health and general well being. He started

running 1/8 of a mile, stopping to catch his breath and returning home, rewarding himself with a smoke. Walter soon realized that he had a choice to make between his two weaknesses, running won out.

His first race was a 10mile road race at the Acadian Festival, a place far enough from home that would protect his identity should he make a fool of himself. Well, he didn't need the worry...finishing in an impressive 75 minutes, Walter was bitten by the long distance running bug. He completed his first marathon, the Johnny Miles, in 1980.

Shortly after this, and following retirement as school teachers, Walter and his wife anticipated a full retirement complete with travel and relaxation. Fate held other plans and Walter's wife was diagnosed with cancer and after an eleven month battle, she passed away. The loss proved too much for Walter and he went through a serious depression, requiring hospitalization.

Thomas Moore, a renowned author and a former Catholic monk states:

Life is usually rich in the variety of sufferings and torments it concocts. The important question is not why we suffer but how do we respond to it....It seems that people respond in one of two ways to such challenges :either they collapse and never recover, or they find unknown strength and acquire remarkable vision.

Walter's running was central to the unknown strength and remarkable vision Thomas Moore so eloquently writes of. Walter gained a more positive perspective on his life and made some significant lifestyle changes. In the midst of the storm, Walter has been quoted as saying, "In the meantime, I have today~~~~which is all any of us really have."

Walter's outlook would be tested again and again. First with a diagnosis of prostate cancer and then a run in with a car while running his beloved bypass. Undaunted, Walter continues to run, continues to grace our races and continues to be a well loved contributing writer to the newsletter where he uses this platform to educate, validate and illuminate the rest of the club.

Always turning lemons into lemonade, that’s our Walter.

I, like many, miss the silhouette of Walter cruising the bypass on my way to work in the morning, but I am contented knowing that he is sparking interest in some neighborhood, complete with his signature running gait, Fall Frolic Fanny Pack and the look of a warrior in his eyes...

Walter, it gives us great pleasure to present you, this, the first Ewen Stewat Inspirational Runner Award.

God’s speed and God Bless you Walter.

Presented by Past President - Kim Bailey