

## ***Decades of Running and Counting***



***Photo Credit: Francis Fagan***

In celebration of this year's 20th annual Prince Edward Island Marathon, we have embraced the opportunity of these articles to bring light to people who inspire us. This week we are featuring Francis Fagan, a well experienced marathon runner.

Francis' running all started in spring of 1991 when he broke his leg. While he was rehabbing, someone suggested the goal to run a marathon once his leg healed. The next year, in spring of 1992, Francis ran his first marathon, the P.E.I Marathon. This was just the start of him getting hooked on the sport of running. Since then, Francis has participated in every P.E.I Marathon. He is now in his 32nd year of running and has completed a staggering 149 full marathons, with this year's participation in the P.E.I Marathon bringing his total to 150. Francis has completed marathons all over the world, including the Boston Marathon many times. Most recently, he completed a marathon in Newfoundland where he is originally from.

Francis is no stranger to putting hard work into his training. Most early weekend mornings, he can be found running with a group of friends or training on some hills. At 74 years old, he consistently runs 5 days a week. He is notorious for running several marathons within a short amount of time, including back to back weekends. This shows his exceptional ability to recover quickly. Francis is always a familiar face at the local island races, known to sometimes even run or bike to the startline! Francis has even completed a full Ironman; and most years you can find him on New Year's day participating in the polar dip. There is no surprise that Francis has won male Roadrunner of the year (2002) and is an honorary lifetime member of the P.E.I Roadrunners club.

Francis' favorite part of any marathon is getting together with his running friends after the race. He enjoys marathons for the challenge and satisfaction of when it's finished. Francis is always willing to help out beginners. He encourages others to set goals, like racing a 5K. Francis' advice to first timers is to not be concerned about time, to not start out too fast and just get a comfortable pace going that can be maintained until the end. He also encourages the importance of selecting a good pair of running sneakers, and to make sure you wear them in training before racing. Francis isn't particular about what he eats before or after a race, however if he had to choose it would be pasta the night before and steak after.

Francis is always looking for ways to give back to others. A prime example of this is every winter he organizes a fun run to raise money for the P.E.I Food Bank. He often collects bottles and uses the return money for donations. Francis has been an inspiration to us in many ways, from staying active at any age to helping others reach their running goals. We have had the opportunity to share many training runs with Francis that have helped shape us into the runners we are now.

There is no sign of Francis slowing down on his running anytime soon. Francis' favorite quote to help get him through a tough marathon is from the movie *Shawshank Redemption*: "get busy living, or get busy dying". Francis hopes to see you on the road at this year's P.E.I Marathon!

**Tagline:** Sisters Sandra Cottreau and Carrie Gregory will be writing a weekly column in The Guardian leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual P.E.I Marathon Weekend on Oct. 20.