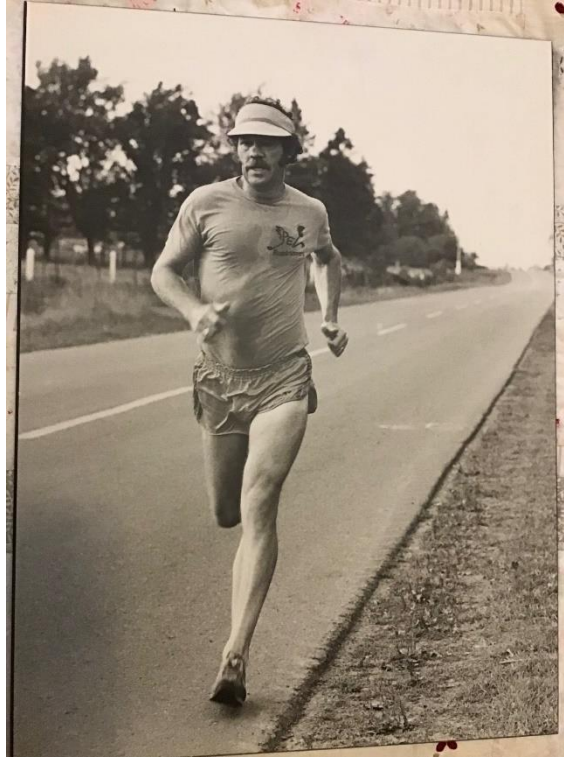


Sept 7th

Inspiring Islanders On The Run : Parker Lund



Picture Caption: Parker Lund on a training run in 1978 from Brackley Beach to Charlottetown

In celebration of this year's 20th Annual Prince Edward Island Marathon Weekend, we have embraced the opportunity of these articles to bring light to people who inspire us. This week we are featuring one of the founders of road running on P.E.I, Parker Lund.

Parker's first exposure to running was the summer of 1953 at Army Cadet Camp in Aldershot Nova Scotia. A part of his training was Physical Education which involved running as groups (or platoons). Parker spent the next two summers involved in group running in Ontario. In 1970, Parker became more serious into running when he was at summer camp in Gagetown New Brunswick. His objective was to run around the perimeter of the base camp which was about five miles - a long distance at the time.

When the school year started that September, Parker was teaching at Colonel Gray and he started thinking about planning some runs for the school. In 1973 he organized a series of three runs - called the 3M series (one mile, 3 miles, and 5 miles). Parker was successful in attracting hundreds of student runners and others in the community to the sport. In 1976, Parker was the principal of St Jean Elementary school. That fall he had organized a fundraiser that helped acquire playground equipment - eight people ran from Moncton, New Brunswick to Charlottetown in three days, raising approximately \$8000. During that long run of 100 miles was when they discussed the idea of forming a road running club.

Parker initiated the first P.E.I Roadrunners Club meeting in 1977, and two years later in 1979 the first P.E.I Roadrunners Marathon was held. He served as co-chairman for the first three years and was successful at establishing the P.E.I Roadrunners Marathon as one of the best in Atlantic Canada at that time. Parker initiated many of the P.E.I Roadrunner's Club activities which played an important role in the growth and development of distance running in P.E.I.

Parker was not only a founder of the P.E.I Roadrunners Club and the first club president, he was an avid runner. He has participated in more than 150 running races, with several particularly fast marathons notably in the 80's. Parker has received many awards in running over the years, including P.E.I Roadrunner of the Year, honorary member of the P.E.I Roadrunner's Club, and a Certificate of Recognition from Perfection Foods Ltd. through Sport P.E.I.

Evolution of P.E.I Marathon and the Sport of Running:

For Parker, what initially started out as running strictly for personal fitness, later formed into an organized sport. In the 1960s, running was something only athletes or boxers did. Recreational jogging or running on sidewalks and streets was unheard of. At that time, if someone was seen running down the road it was a cause of concern and attracted attention from the police.

The initial years of the P.E.I Marathon, between 1979 and 1982 races attracted fields of 69 to 114 runners. For 2024 we expect about 2500 runners & walkers registering for the various events on the P.E.I Marathon Weekend. Interestingly, in 1979 at the first P.E.I Roadrunners Marathon, only 4 of the 86 registered runners were women. At that time there were very few women distance runners, and it wasn't until 1984 that the Olympics added a women's marathon. Currently across the world, about one third of marathon runners are women.

It is amazing to see the increased popularity of running & walking over the years, and we have Parker to thank for contributing to many of the running events in P.E.I. We found a quote from Dave Manovill, the 1985 chairman of the Island Marathon, stating: "Marathons make memories, and this is your invitation to a most memorable event". We are looking forward to making many more memories at the 2024 P.E.I Marathon Weekend, and for many years to come.

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