

Fifty Years and Still Running



Prof. Roger Clark (center), pictured with members from his running group, celebrates 50 years of touring the streets of the world.

He's been running for 50 years, and, in April, a record 51 runners and one cyclist joined Prof. Roger Clark for a special Law School Run. Among the field were seven alums: Peter Reinhart '75, Marvin Towler '96, Anthony Pugliese '84, Jeff Heppard '81, Mellany Alio '03, Tom Ehrhardt '94, and Frank Brennan '95. Reinhart was the first student to run with Roger at Rutgers, beginning in 1972, and they did two Boston Marathons together. Towler flew in from Santa Barbara especially for the event. Heppard competed in some of the early Law School Runs, which began in the late 1970s (although nobody remembers exactly when).

To celebrate the occasion, Clark agreed to pay \$50 to the APIL Scholarship fund for each runner who beat him. He came in 23rd and described the check he handed over as "the most expensive entry fee in a long if otherwise undistinguished running career." Several other runners also contributed to APIL. Provost Roger Dennis continued his unbeaten streak in the cycling section of the event.

A half-century is a long time to pound the pavement, and the native New Zealander offers some insight into his passion:

1. How long have you been running? When did you start, and why?

Fifty years, beginning in 1954. I began partly to get fit for rugby football, partly to train for the high school cross country champs and partly because I was inspired by the attempts going on to be the first runner to break four minutes for the mile. Roger Bannister did it later in the year, but our New Zealand runner Murray Halberg (later the 1960 Olympic champ at 5,000 meters), the American Wes Santee (put out for accepting money), and the Australian John Landy were all close. (Halberg won the Penn relays mile in 1954. He later beat me by half a mile in the fastest three miles I ever ran.) In 1994, I found the track in Oxford where Bannister did it and ran seven minutes, 59 seconds — 40 years and four minutes late! I never had any speed, but found that I had stamina. I eventually won my high school cross country in 1957. I'd given up rugby to concentrate on running by then. (My daughter is now playing rugby for Middlebury.) I ran through college, of course, for Victoria University of Wellington.

2. When did the law school's running club get started? What prompted its creation?

There is no "club." It's totally informal and word of mouth. I've been running with whoever shows up from my first year here. In the early years, a few of us went up to Boston for the marathon, but mostly the competitive side of it has been the two school runs in spring and fall and pick-up teams we put in some of the races in the area.

3. What's it like to have Camden as your race course?

We do the Waterfront and the bridge. Both are very attractive places and the traffic is not a problem. Most people here are very friendly. In 32 years here I have had

two bottles and one brick thrown at me in Camden. I've run in much more dangerous places: New York City, West Philadelphia, Tokyo, Beijing. In Amman, Jordan, (wife) Amy (Boss '75) and I were pelted with snowballs from rooftops during one of the few snowfalls there in living memory.

4. Aside from running in Camden, where else do you run, and in what venues?

My last marathon was in Boston in 1975. By then my knees were not up to the training so I have mostly done 5k and five-mile races since. When I was a graduate student at Columbia during 1967-69 (before the running boom in the U.S.), I ran in New York. There were about 40 regulars at the races there in those days and no New York Marathon. We ran the marathons in Boston and Philadelphia. My best place in Boston was 175 (out of a field of 1,200) in three hours, three minutes, in 1969. I ran 2:59 (a bit better than seven minutes a mile) there in 1975 but was much further back in the field of about 2,500. These days in the 5k, I am fairly competitive in the 60-69 age group. There are about half a dozen regulars in the age group who can always beat me in the South Jersey/Philadelphia/Wilmington circuit and another couple of dozen who can't. I run 8-12 races a year, otherwise I break down. That happens anyway!

5. Talk about globetrotting: as a prominent international law scholar, you travel extensively. Do you run when you're abroad?

I have a list of 48 countries on the back of an envelope in my drawer. Maybe it will reach 50 this year as I hope to add Samoa and Thailand. At one point, I had a competition with a friend in Helsinki to see who ran most. He creamed me when the Soviet Union fell apart; we were neck and neck until then, but he was able to add a dozen or so overnight. I like the mini-states: San Marino, Liechtenstein (where I crashed running down the mountain), the Republic of Palau (our graduate Arthur Ngiraklson '74 is Chief Justice there), and the Vatican (the Swiss Guards chased me out of St. Peter's Square for being in shorts. They were too slow.). I've also run on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro and along the Malecon in Havana.

6. Why keep running?

I like it. I like the people. I like the competition. It's good for my head.

7. When students graduate, do they come back for alumni runs, or keep in touch to advise you of their growth as runners?

Yes, several of them come back for the Law School Runs and we get together for the occasional race. I think I've helped a lot of people enjoy the sport over the years. My uncle recently sent me a piece from the local paper in my home town, Wanganui, that had a piece about a guy who said I got him into running in high school in 1956. He's still at it.

Graduates interested in joining Clark for a run may contact him at rsclark@camden.rutgers.edu. ■