



# RUNNING

# COMMENTARY

From the Editor	3	Trials and Tribulations - The US Olympic trials (Part 2)	12
Margaret's update	4	Track and Field Update	16
The trouble with editors	5	Herd on the road—The greatest of all time	17
The John Sheddan story (Part 2)	6	The National Road Relay Trip for the Masters Women's Team's perspective	18

## **Executive Committee:**

Margaret Flanagan	<a href="mailto:margaret@nbo.org.nz">margaret@nbo.org.nz</a>	355 4902
Ann Henderson	<a href="mailto:annhen@paradise.net.nz">annhen@paradise.net.nz</a>	387 0387
Dave Thomas	<a href="mailto:drt2@xtra.co.nz">drt2@xtra.co.nz</a>	384 4214
Allan McLaren	<a href="mailto:armclaren@xtra.co.nz">armclaren@xtra.co.nz</a>	383 2457
Alex Cook	<a href="mailto:Cookie_alex@hotmail.com">Cookie_alex@hotmail.com</a>	322 1519
Kevin Exton	<a href="mailto:kexton@novaenergy.co.nz">kexton@novaenergy.co.nz</a>	027 267 2848
John Kerrison	<a href="mailto:kerrison@xtra.co.nz">kerrison@xtra.co.nz</a>	355 6891
Tony Prisk	<a href="mailto:tony.prisk@paradise.net.nz">tony.prisk@paradise.net.nz</a>	383 0359
Toni Taylor	<a href="mailto:teeteez@hotmail.com">teeteez@hotmail.com</a>	(03) 313 9255
Kara Marino	<a href="mailto:karamarino@hotmail.com">karamarino@hotmail.com</a>	021 130 4471

## **Club Website:**

The club website is [www.nbo.org.nz](http://www.nbo.org.nz) . Please send any photos, videos, results or items of interest / relevance to Tony Prisk at [tony.prisk@paradise.net.nz](mailto:tony.prisk@paradise.net.nz).

## **Articles**

Do you have something interesting which could be included in our magazine?

If you feel that it is interesting we would love to share it with other members.  
Articles for the next issue should be sent in by the middle of November.

A big thank you to those members who have contributed to this issue.

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## From the Editor:

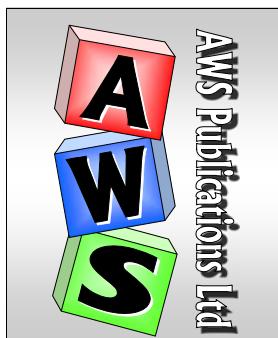
It is great to see our distance runners coming to the fore with Oska winning the recent Auckland marathon in 2:20:36 and our new club member Evan Elder winning the half marathon with Daniel Balchin coming second.



Cookie is back into the GOAT (Greatest of all time) debate in his column this month. He has questioned my assertions that Paavo Nurmi and Emil Zatopek may not have had the same opposition as Gebrelissie and Bekele and he makes a good point about their multitude of World Records and Olympic medals. Although they had good competition from European and USA runners, they did not have to compete against the proliferation of professional and full time African runners that compete in this era. If you look at the top ranked 5k and 10k runners last year, 13 of the top 20 5k runners and 16 of the top 20 10k runners were from Africa. World records and medals are great but this has to be balanced with the competition faced by the athletes.

Allan is a little bit upset with my editorial skills because I made a small mistake in the title of his John Sheddan story. He has to make allowances for me because I am an analyst and as a result my writing and editing is very black and white. I am not a Grammar Nazi but I have heard that this is a common affliction of some school teachers. Not everyone has Allan's flair and creative writing skills. I certainly enjoy reading his articles. Part 2 of the John Sheddan story is in this magazine and it has the correct title!

Tony Prisk



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To see some of my work, check out the PDF versions of  
Cant-A-Long, the Canterbury Master's magazine,  
on the Canterbury Masters website.

## **Margaret's Update:**

Dear Members,

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous group of helpers and parents who have made the first part of the Track and Field season run so well. The weather certainly hammered the Thursday night training sessions there for a while which was frustrating for the athletes wanting to do well in Saturday competition.

December is always a challenging month as we try to keep to normal training routines and at the same time fit in all of the extra tasks that the Xmas season adds to our lives.

I hope that you will all come through the holiday season with an appreciation of family, new recipes to use up leftover Xmas ham and sufficient quantities of strawberries and raspberries that did not cost an arm and a leg to procure.

I look forward to seeing many of you in the New Year down at Rawhiti and also round the park when the 5k series begins.

Merry Christmas,

Margaret

### **PHYSIOTHERAPY ASSOCIATES**

86a Wainoni Rd

ph. 3897-196

Richard Hopkins MHSc. BSc. Ad Dip Phys (OMT). Dip MT.

Spinal Injuries

Sports Injuries

Muscle balance assessment

Occupational health

## The trouble with editors:

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The trouble with Editors and for that matter Grammar Nazis is that they struggle to focus on the big picture. Too focused on the written word, they can't comprehend when less gifted people than them self are trying to have a bit of fun with English.

If you are a slow runner, do we ban you from joining the club? If they just want to have fun and not race too seriously, is that to be discouraged? So, why is it different with English? Should uncouth people such as myself who will never be accepted into the Apostrophe Society, let it get in the way of a good story and having a bit of fun playing with the laws of English? Is English only for the elite?

This is all building to my gripe on the John Sheddan story that I was asked to submit, although I was a bit reluctant as I had been unable to clarify a few things with him. Ironically, the one thing I asked to be removed because I couldn't remember how many Grandchildren John had, was not.

One thing I pride in my articles is attempting to come up with a clever title. In the case of this story, I agonised for days as the title 'The John Sheddan Story' didn't do it for me and was stating the obvious. Of all place a training run, where obviously the oxygen was flowing, it came to me.

In a matter of a few seconds with the stroke of a pen, the Editor was able to destroy my hard earned search for a title. The title as printed is 'Waiting Patiently His Time Would Come'. Does this do it for anybody or mean anything? I think not. If you focus on the actual story, instead of grammar and spelling, you will see the clue quite early on in paragraph four, that John was having difficulties when his rugby division changed from WEIGHT to age. I thought playing with the word 'WAITING' to 'WEIGHTING' to recognise the problems he was experiencing in his younger days until a more suitable sport came along was clever. Well I thought it was clever. I'll leave judgement to the readers. Personally I feel Editors and Grammar Nazis should be burnt at the '**Steak**'.

Allan McLaren

## **Weighting patiently his time would come - The John Sheddan story (Part 2):**

The New Zealand team finished a worthy third behind Belgium and the Soviet Union and was ahead of England for the first time. With Dixon in 3<sup>rd</sup>, Richard Taylor 12<sup>th</sup>, Brian Rose 14<sup>th</sup> and Euan Robertson in 15<sup>th</sup>, it is surprising that the team did not place higher. On this occasion the women were a distant sixth. Obviously the damage to his foot cost him a lot of places. It is interesting to note, that if he had been able to run up to his British form where he was ahead of Brian Rose and Dick Taylor. New Zealand would have won the team's race. However, John told me that he felt he was having a bad run in any case. One thing I have learned about John in this interview is that he does not make excuses, which says a lot about his character.

He returned home to the prospect of the New Zealand Cross Country and later the Commonwealth Games in his hometown. At Cuthbert's Green in cool and overcast conditions John ran another steady race for fifth just behind Euan Robertson. Richard Taylor in a precursor for the Commonwealth Games, won convincingly by 31 seconds.

Due to the Commonwealth Games being held in January 2014, the New Zealand Athletic Champs which were basically the trial for the Games were held in December 1973. As the Games were in New Zealand there was the prospect of three being picked in each event due to the low costs. John decided to make his bid in the steeplechase. Unfortunately, he had a shocker in 7<sup>th</sup> in a very slow 9:41.2. When you consider he has run 8:50 on grass an opportunity was missed. Yet only two months later he was in sublime form taking out four Canterbury titles in the 1500, 5000 and 10,000m and the steeplechase, all in good times over stern opposition.

John put the transition down to some of his best training ever. You will recall the world record holder in the 10,000m Dave Bedford and the 400m runner David Jenkins came out from England early to train for the Games. John with an obvious understanding of the best training locations basically teamed up with Bedford and got the benefit of his training. This also included hard sessions on the track. Perhaps we can credit John for Richard Taylor's great run, wearing out Mr Bedford.

This form continued into the 1974 cross-country season where he led from the start of the Canterbury Champs to win easily from Frank Brookes, Roger Robinson and Eddie Gray. He also had a convincing win in the Edmond Cup in Dunedin over Euan Robertson. At the Nationals on a muddy hilly course in Kamo near Whangarei, he was not pleased with his seventh place, but all the usual antagonists were ahead of him and some not by much. Kevin Ryan won the race.

The Motueka to Nelson Relay was ridiculously stacked on lap one. Philip Watson told me it was a trial for the World Cross Country but John doesn't think it was. Whatever it was this is the result; Euan Robertson 8 seconds over Philip Watson with John 12 seconds further back. Eddie Gray was 4<sup>th</sup> followed by Paul Ballinger with Brian Rose only 7<sup>th</sup>.

The team was picked for the 1975 World Cross Country in Rabat, Morocco, with John missing out, but along with Philip Watson he was named as non-traveling reserves.

Also that year John gave his Olympic Club a flying start on lap one of the Takahe to Akaroa Relay, but it was to no avail as University having a superlative year broke the course record. John always found time to run for his club and along with Neville Reid he was a member of every Olympic winning team in their grand reign from 1966 to 1973. He came into the team at the tender age of 16, which must have been special and also daunting, mixing it with the older more seasoned team members.

1975 was an erratic year for John where he started on January the 11<sup>th</sup> with a good win in the Canterbury 10,000m. John had been advised not to run with the New Zealand Games so close, but he didn't think it would do him any harm. The New Zealand Games did not go well running only 14:19 in the 5000m and last place in the 10,000m. Worse was to follow when he was beaten by Martin Cauldwell in the Canterbury steeplechase and having .2 of a second taken off his Canterbury record. However, you have to remember John's record was on grass.

The New Zealand team for the World Cross Country to Morocco was having problems and he recalls Alan Stevens warning him to keep fit as he might be needed. As it turned out Richard Taylor was having arthritis problems, Paul Ballinger was injured and Rod Dixon decided to pursue other interests. They were replaced by Jack Foster, Dick Quax and John. Philip Watson was not considered because he would not race on Sundays. With only eight days before the team left from Auckland he was playing catch up. Alison Roe's father is a Doctor and gave John his inoculations only the day before departure. This caused a reaction on the flight and feeling very crook his face swelled up.

The team flew via the USA where running friends of John Walker had arranged a special evening. It was then onto France where they were met by the NZ Ambassador. Before moving on to a warmup race in Spain, the team did a time trial against each other to keep them sharp.

New Zealand was given permission to compete in the Spanish Champs in Seville. The race was round and round a racecourse in ankle deep mud and won by the great Spanish athlete Marian Haro. John Dixon was second, with John Walker in his first overseas cross-country race third with Dave Sirl fifth. Our John (There are too many Johns in the team) fully recovered from the inoculations ran

a very good race for eighth, ahead of Euan Robertson and Brian Rose.

John Walker in his book described the journey from Estepona in Southern Spain as a major ordeal. He claimed the Manager always tried to do the best for the team but sometimes took a long time to reach a wrong decision. He deliberated for two days on whether to fly or take a train and ferry to Morocco. He chose the latter which he said was cheaper and took only two hours. Eight hours later they clambered from the dirty cattle-trucks which Spanish Railways called carriages in no condition to run anything. There was no money to buy food or drink on the trip. He did say that the spirit in the team was the best he ever experienced.

Our Jon didn't see it that way and felt that the Manager could only do so much with the money he had been given. John said he was just thankful to be on the trip and absolutely loved the whole experience. Yes there were tough times but he simply went with the flow. John actually said the week before the ferry trip was spent in utopia on the Costa del Sol, a well renowned tourist destination. Walker failed to mention this is in book.

The team arrived in Rabat for the World Champs three days before the race which was scheduled for 4:10pm on the Sunday. The pre-race meals were not great consisting mainly of hard rolls and Coca Cola. They then took the bus to the Souissi Racecourse. On entering the Course they past tall gum trees and the thirty flags of the nations competing. The race was a six laps over 12 kilometers, being basically flat, except for artificial mounds, but stretches of soft sand made it a grueling test. The weather was very hot.

Before their event the athletes were treated to another form of competition camel racing. As race time approached there was a large roar when King Hussan II arrived, surrounded by Military Guards. Last minute toilet stops were abandoned as sewerage was flowing out the doors.

Before the race the teams marched past the main stand and King Hussan II. New Zealand were banished to lane 24 where you line up in twos with John Walker and John Dixon, followed by Dick Quax and Euan Robertson. Suddenly they were away 200 odd sprinting furiously with clouds of dust and sand. The first kilometer was covered at a furious 2:45. The race was won by Ian Stewart of Scotland, followed by the Spaniard Mariano Haro and Bill Rogers of the USA who was the surprise package. John Walker and Euan Robertson in fourth and fifth ran brilliantly to help the team situation. The next New Zealanders home were Dave Sirl and John Dixon in 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. Our John found the start very fast but in the last kilometer caught a lot of people and could clearly see Sirl and Dixon just ahead, finishing a worthy 33<sup>rd</sup>. With Brian Rose only one place behind in 34<sup>th</sup> in the six man teams race, it was looking good for the title.

Welsh athletes came forward offering congratulations claiming New Zealand had won the teams title. Not wanting to count their chickens, they waited for twenty minutes before an official list of the top 40 was distributed to the various

teams. With no computers in those days the athletes scanned the list adding up the team points and by crikey they had won. Everyone had a grin from ear to ear and it felt like every other athlete wanted to swap for a NZ singlet or tracksuit.

A bus ride back to the hotel for a bath or shower, wondering what else was on the menu for dinner besides rolls and coca cola. The Hilton-Rabat was the venue for the reception and presentation. Then a party in Room 619 to the early hours of Monday morning, as the Kiwis celebrated New Zealand's greatest ever day in cross-country. On a side note the woman's team was second to the USA. It was a great moment for Ozzie Melville who had done so much for new Zealand Cross-Country. The team as a thank you charged everything to his room which must have been a small fortune, but he took it in good stead.

On top of the world, John carried his form into the 1975 local cross-country decimating a strong field in a Triangular Inter-provincial between Wellington West Coast North Island and Canterbury, on the tough Jane Paterson course at Motukarara. People still talk about the famed hill where John defeated athletes of the caliber of Past Riley by 31 seconds and Frank Brookes by 45. He regained the Edmond Cup but it all unraveled in the Canterbury Champs, where flu ridden was only fifth curtailing his season.

In January 1976 in the Canterbury 10,000m Kevin Hamilton went with 800m to go realising that John had the superior sprint and got a substantial break. John made inroads on the last lap but was still three seconds behind at the finish, but still in the good time of 29:21.8. Three weeks later John had his revenge in the 5000m and fulfilled an ambition by breaking the 14:00 minute barrier in 13:57.8. Poor Kevin missed by .8 of a second.

In the nationals in Auckland, John went for the 10,000m and did not have a good race being a distant fourth to Paul Ballinger in a slow time for John of 31:03.6. He tells me he was having trouble with hot feet, and pardon the pun in the heat of the moment he removed his shoes and kept running. Unfortunately, the all-weather track made his feet even hotter. Bill Baillie who is never one to hold back on feedback basically told him he was a bloody idiot and with his experience should have known better.

John was only third in the 1976 Canterbury Cross Country Champs to a rising star Don Greig and Brian Kennelly having a rich vein of form. In the nationals in bad weather in Invercargill, John threw the form-book out the window, the first Canterbury runner in fourth place only four seconds behind Dave Sirl who was third. Paul Ballinger won the race.

As a result of this run John was picked for his fourth World Cross Country team, to be held in Dusseldorf, Germany. Unfortunately, he pulled a calf muscle and before it was totally healed was told, that he had to do a fitness test of sub 30

minutes for 10,000m. In his own words this absolutely buggered it and he had to withdraw from the team. He was in good company, as the big three Dixon, Walker and Quax also pulled out to really deplete the team. In those days sports medicine was in its infancy and it was quite a find, if you could find a Doctor who did not think all runners should be certified. John says nowadays he would not make the same mistakes and is certain with ice etc it would have responded in time.

Disappointed in having to withdraw from the team he bounced back to avenge the defeat of Don Greig the previous year. The course was at a farm in Mairehau Road which had a large waterhole with most runners taking a longer much safer route skirting to the outside. By half-way Don had built up a substantial lead, but John gradually began to make inroads. With 500m to go it was obvious John was going to catch up and in desperation Don unwisely chose the direct route through the waterhole to his detriment, with a heavy dunking and swim. The nationals in Napier were not as rewarding in 13<sup>th</sup> place.

The Canterbury 10,000m of 1978 was a very exciting race. After going through half-way in 15 minutes the race speed up markedly with the battle coming down to a last lap sprint between John and Mel Radcliffe. In the turn before the final straight Mel jumped John grabbing a very useful five meters. John could not go any faster and thought it was all over as Mel was maintaining the gap. John did not give up and although he could not increase his speed, held his form, whereas Mel in the last few meters started to tread water allowing John to sneak past by .8 of a second in 29:21. Their last 5000m was a very respectable 14:21. This race was enough for John to tell Allahah "That's it I'm not racing anymore, it's getting too hard."

Obviously not a man of his word he ran the 10,000m in the nationals in Wellington, coming out on the wrong side of the medals in fourth. Mel got his revenge finishing three seconds ahead in third with John running 30:08 in fourth. In a close race Alan Thurlow won in 29:58 with Philip Watson second in 30:01. All four have run for either Olympic or New Brighton at some stage.

In 1978 he retained his Canterbury Cross Country title over Don Greig and Mel Radcliffe but had a bad run for 15<sup>th</sup> in the nationals in Tauranga.

A year later he was once again second to Don Greig in the Canterbury Cross Country Champs, but in the Nationals in the mud of the Wingatui Racecourse in Mosgiel, he ran one of his finest races. Although a brilliant second, there was frustration feeling another National title had just slipped from his grasp. Mud to Dr Chip Dunkley is like a duck to water and boy there was a lot of it. John would normally beat Chip quite easily, but in the mud the Palmerston South Doctor is a different beast. John managed to rid himself of all the other main antagonists early on, and even made slight inroads on Chip in the less slippery areas. However, when the course ventured into the infield the word mud is a bit kind

and is better described a deep bog. Chip was far too good in these conditions winning comfortably from John who held out Don Greig in third by 24 seconds.

By 1980 he was having to give way to the younger brigade, but still managed third in the Canterbury Cross Country Champs to Peter Renner and Alan Thurlow. He went to the Nationals in Trentham still hopeful of making yet another World Cross Country team, which was to be in March 1981 in the capital of Spain, Madrid. The race was highlighted by Euan Robertson who always ran well for New Zealand, finally capturing the title after running himself to a standstill, to hold out Peter Renner. John ran well for 8<sup>th</sup> but was left frustrated and angry with himself, on what might have been, as he managed to miscount the laps. As a result of this race John was named as reserve for Madrid, but not like his luck in 1975, no one pulled put.

You would think that John would be suited to the marathon and in fact this was one of his ambitions to run a fast time and represent his country. He tried on a few occasions, most notably the Great Westland Marathon but only got down to 2hrs & 36min, troubled by sciatica. Whilst it didn't bother him in the shorter events, the longer distance appeared to stir it up.

From 1981 he never stopped training but raced only sparingly. His interest was rekindled in 1982 at the prospect of making a Canterbury Road Team being sponsored to the USA. He enjoyed this trip, competing in events such as the Cascade Runoff and the Brentwood 10k.

After this it was a quiet eight years with the magic 40 approaching. Whilst he hadn't raced in years John had not stopped training, so he decided to give Veteran's athletics a go. It is probably 1990 and 1991, he can't remember exactly where he achieved two third places in that age group in the New Zealand Cross-Country Champs.

John has freely given of his knowledge and as previously pointed out coached his brother Warren to National titles. Other New Zealand Representatives he has coached are Debbie Sheddan who competed at the Commonwealth Games in 1990 and Kelly Humphreys.

On the home front, many years ago John and Allanah moved from their property on the Port Hills to a lifestyle block out at Ohoka, growing olives etc. About 11 years ago, attending to maintenance on the property, John fell from a high ladder. I can't remember the extent of his injuries, only that they were very serious and that he was lucky not to become a paraplegic.

Overtime he regained his strength to the extent he started competing for the club again. We haven't seen John at the club for sometime due to more important things going on, but hopefully he will be back in the near future. I would like to finish off by thanking John for sharing his story with the club.

## **Trials and Tribulations - The US Olympic trials (Part 2):**

In part one I have spotted an error. As previously pointed out, the Trials were at Hayward Field named after Track Coach Bill Hayward who ran the track programme. I had this was from 1904 to 1907 but it was actually 1904 to 1947. You need more than four years to achieve legendary status.

As always with the terrorist threat, getting into the stadium was an ordeal if everybody was arriving at the same time, with the scanning and checking of bags. A couple of wet days didn't help.

One thing I learnt early on is that Americans are very patriotic; unkind people would call it over the top. This was never more prevalent at the start of each meeting when the national anthem was sung. You would have to be very brave or have a death wish not to have stood up and removed your hat. Passionate would be an understatement. Each day the Star Spangled Banner was sung by a top athlete past or present. Most of the renditions were unbelievable with athletes being a competitive bunch, trying to outdo each other. Great importance was placed on the last note and how long you could hold it. Many oxygen debts were incurred at this point.

Every so often in the meeting athletes from the past were introduced to the crowd and believe me it was a smorgasbord of the who's who of USA athletic history. They also were utilised to present the medals.

To the competition itself, at age 34 Justin Gatlin lived up to his favourite tag in the 100m with a world leading 9.80. La Shawn Merritt followed suit in the 400m with a world leading 43.97. There meeting in the 200m was something to savour with Justin prevailing by four hundredths of a second in a fast 19.75. The story doesn't end there with two high school kids who dominated the heats, Noah Lyles and Michael Norman placing fourth and fifth.

Throughout the Championship we sat next to a delightful retired African American couple. The wife was always dressed immaculately with very colourful beads, jewellery, accessories etc. They had obviously done a lot for younger athletes and alerted us to athletes such as Noah and Michael. The same goes for the women's 400m hurdles where 16 year old Sydney McLaughlin nabbed the third spot. Favourite Shamier Little, who was the winner of six major titles at Hayward Field in the past three seasons, shockingly did not advance out of her semi-final after finishing fifth.

Clayton Murphy who won the NCAA 1500m with a big kick was not able to run this event as surprisingly he did not have a qualifying time. You would think they would make a concession when you have won a major event. No matter, he used his big kick to destroy the 800m field. Matthew Centrowitz showed his tactical brilliance with an easy win in the 1500m, with Evan Jager securing his fifth National Title in the steeplechase. All three athletes went on to medal at Rio.

From a dazed-looking seated on the track DNF in the 10,000m to a 52.82 closer in the

5000m, taking the lead in the last 50m, 41 year old Bernard Lagat perfected his Lazarus act. One of my favourite athletes Ashton Eaton who I saw break the Decathlon World Record in Beijing won by 300 points.

The unfairness of the three athletes per country in the Olympics was highlighted by five women in the 100m breaking the 11 second barrier, with the race being won by an English Gardner. One of the greatest 200m runners of all time Allyson Felix missed out in fourth, but don't despair she won the 400m in a world leading 49.68. A pile up in turn four of the 800m changed everything. The cruelty of only one chance was highlighted when one of the favourites Brenda Martinez went down. She pulled herself up to finish seventh. The 1500m went to form with Jenny Simpson edging Shannon Rowberry, but the crowd favourite was Brenda Martinez after the debacle of the 800m. Checked again and only fifth off the turn she dived across the line to secure a well earned final berth. Molly Huddle who lost a certain bronze medal at the last World Champs when she celebrated too early, dominated the 5000 and 10,000m. But just like Brenda Martinez, Kim Conley fell in the 10,000m but came back to secure the final berth in the 5000m. In a prelude to her Olympic medal Emma Coburn dominated the steeplechase. In the field events Brittney Reece won her tenth National title in the long jump. Michelle Carter in the shot put was only third when she stepped up for her final throw, but then unleashed a monster. Unfortunately, she repeated this in the Olympics cleaning out Valerie Adams with her last throw.

In my previous article I said how I was surprised that the stadium lacked toilets and food outlets. Even the toilets in the lane next to the stadium were portaloos. However, this lane had many food and athletic stalls selling their wares. Although I was not interested in the run gum product at one stall which apparently was a gum that maximises your energy, being a name dropper I was interested that the stall was being manned by Nick Symmonds the silver medallist at the World Champs in Moscow.

There was also a field next to the stadium where musicians would perform and late medal ceremonies conducted. There were a lot of athletic activities for the kids and bars where people could congregate for drinks. Nike had a huge tent where they were advertising their wares. They were also selling shoes from a Kombi Van to signify how Nike started out as Blue Ribbon Sports with Phil Knight selling Tiger shoes from his van.

It was in one of these bars that I plucked up the courage to approach Carl Lewis nine times Olympic Champion for a joint photograph. I found him friendly and he appeared impressed that I had come all the way from New Zealand. Whilst in the name dropping department it was an honour to meet Frank Shorter the 1972 Olympic Marathon Champ. Also John Carlos who was involved in the black power salutes at the 1968 Olympics. To my surprise he wanted a picture with me for his collection, apparently impressed that I was all the way from New Zealand. Maybe the down under theme fitted his plight. He told me that only last week he had been on New Zealand radio; he also raved about Peter Snell. I asked him if he was ever going to visit New Zealand and said he would love to, but no one had invited him. I said I'm inviting you but got the impression I would be paying the tab.

A two day break in the trials gave us the chance to hire an Audi and head out to Crater Lake which was three hours away. Having many beautiful lakes in New Zealand I was a bit sceptical that this would be that impressive. How wrong can one be, with it being one of the highlights of the trip? It's hard to explain but it felt different because although it was surrounded by mountains and snow, you were looking down into the lake. Nowhere did there appear to be access at water level but as there were boats on it, there must be a way. The deep blue and water clarity was stunning. The reason the waters are some of the purest in the world is because it has no inlets or tributaries. With no rivers flowing in or out of the lake, evaporation is compensated by rain and snowfall. The lake is the deepest in the United States and ranks tenth in the world for maximum depth and third for mean (average) depth. Crater Lake is also known for "The Old Man of the Lake", a full sized tree which is now a stump that has been bobbing vertically in the lake for a century. The low temperature of the water has slowed the decomposition of the wood, hence the longevity of the bobbing tree. There are two islands on the lake, Wizard Island and Phantom Ship.

One thing I learnt early that will never happen on a trip to the United States is starvation. Order a sandwich and it takes up the whole plate. Order a main course which is ironically called an entree and you get a salad first, which is a meal in its own right. In Eugene we had a Diner not far from our accommodation, which reminded me of 'Happy days'. I had no problem being referred to as 'Honey' and 'Sweetie' by the waitresses. I really enjoyed gorging on the pancakes, bacon and eggs etc. Not good for you but very satisfying. It was interesting to note that most of the patrons were rather rotund.

I was to finish my United States sojourn with three nights in San Francisco, but first was the little question of getting there. Flying would have been the quickest and less tiresome, but the fare from Eugene was \$700. Drive 2.5 hours in the opposite direction to Portland and the fare was down to \$250. Drive 6 hours in the opposite direction to Seattle and cheaper again at \$150. Maybe, drive to Alaska and it would be cheaper again? A Greyhound bus taking 13 hours was only \$60 and gave you the added bonus of saving a night's accommodation, if you survive that is. Another advantage is that you are dropped off in the centre of the city.

Two words 'Never again'. I arrived in time for the 9pm departure to be told by this unhelpful man at the counter, that he didn't know if the bus was coming and whether it had reached Portland, as no one had phoned through. What happened to the technological age? The news got better when he told me that there probably wouldn't be any spare seats in any case. The good news apparently was that I would get my money back. I told him that it wasn't much use to me getting my money back when I have to get back to New Zealand and where am I expected to sleep tonight, a park bench? The bus finally did limp in two hours late and I did manage to get a seat at the back amongst some very unsavoury specimens.

As you have probably guessed, I did manage to survive and go on to experience the amazing city San Francisco. The only negative is that accommodation is horrendously

expensive. I stayed in a Youth Hostel with my own room and ensuite but it was still \$300 a night. On the positive side it was only one block from the main focal point Union square, which made me feel part of the action.

Thankfully transport is very cheap with buses only \$2 for three hours. However, San Francisco is famous for cable-cars, so I took the obligatory trip over the hill to the fun and markets of Fisherman's Wharf. Health and safety is non-existent on the cable-cars where you can hang onto a pole on the outside. They say Dunedin has the steepest street in the world but San Francisco must be very close. They certainly have the most zigzag street. Fisherman's Wharf is also the departure point for the notorious Alcatraz Prison, where we are lead to believe no one ever escaped from. As per the film we learnt that three people did manage to escape, but they are presumed drowned. There is also the possibility that they got to South America.

The highlight for me was hiring a mountain bike and crossing the famous Golden Gate Bridge along with hundreds of others. You then descend into the picturesque seaside town of Sausalito. At this point most cyclists hop on the ferry back to Fisherman's Wharf. I carried on with a small detour to a Redwood Forest which allegedly has the tallest Redwoods in the world. I then followed the coast in a sort of 180° formation to the seaside town of Tiburon to complete a 45km cycle ride. A relaxing Ferry across to Fisherman's Wharf and another 2km ride back to the hire shop where I was greeted with over the top high fives. At first the old judge a book by its cover came into vogue, when they couldn't believe I had completed the full ride. Apparently, only 3% go to Tiburon, with most surrendering at Sausalito. So that's right folks I am in the top 3%.

On my last day in the United States, I walked the length of Golden Gate Park which is 5km, starting at the foggy Ocean Beach and the Pacific Ocean. There were lots of natural features and activities culminating in the amazing California Academy of Sciences, whose mission is to explore, explain and protect the natural world. Designed by Architect Renzo Piano, it combines innovative green architecture with inventive exhibits, including the four storey Rainforests of the World dome, the world's largest all-digital planetarium, the Philippine Coral Reef, Water Planet, a living roof garden of native plants and obviously much more. I could have spent all day there but that was not possible. I was able to save time renegeing on the earthquake simulator as I already have experience in that field.

Now back in New Zealand I am able to reflect on my journey. Before leaving New Zealand I was apprehensive about the tipping phenomena, but found that surprisingly straight forward. Most places have the recommended tips on menus etc. I also have to say that my image of Americans as loud and brash were completely unfounded. Everywhere I went the people were very friendly and helpful. Their manners were unbelievably impeccable and made you wonder if it was a subject taught at school. The number of times I walked into people where in my opinion I was completely at fault, I would get "I'm most terribly sorry Sir". From never really having a hankering to visit the United States, I can't wait to return.

## **Track and Field Update:**

The Track and Field Season is well and truly underway with some great numbers again this season. I would like to say thank you to Dave & all the committee for all the great work making our open night a great success and the continuing weeks with all the new registrations.

Our Tuesday Club Nights have had some amazing turnouts with extremely enthusiastic children that are just buzzing to be there which is awesome to see!

We have been extremely lucky this season to have so many keen parents stepping up and taking on the coaching rolls, which have included extra trainings on Tuesday's and Thursdays plus they did pre-season which I am extremely grateful for and I know the children have benefited immensely for it and it is showing at Saturdays Interclub.

Mother Nature has definitely tested us again with Interclub having our first Saturday being called off due to the rain making the track too slushy and CCAA not wanting to ruin it for the season, then we had another wet and wild Saturday in Timaru, where our wonderful parents did our HJ duty in the pouring rain along with hail! We thought Mother Nature was going to do it to us again for the Quadrathon but after numerous phone calls between myself and the President of CCAA we made the call to run it and it proved to be a successful day for CCAA and NBOL with us raising \$650 from our bake sale. Last weekend we were again in Timaru which the weather was much nicer for us and it was another great day for all our competitors.

We have had a lot of children already break their PB's and one of our newest members 7yr old Luca Lemalie came 3rd in the Junior Boys Quadrathon.

I would also like to give a special thanks to Paul Wadsworth - Coffee Vice who is not only our Discus coach & Coffee Guy on Tuesday's, he has kindly donated 3 new discus to the club.

So overall a fantastic start to our season and I can't wait for the rest of it.

Kara Marino  
T&F Club Captain

## Herd on the road - The Greatest of all time:

In continuing the discussion on who is the “Greatest Distance Runner of all Time” I will first start with the comments expressed in the last “Running Commentary” by Tony P. When commenting of Paavo Nurmi and Emil Zatopek he appears to write them off by suggesting that there was little opposition around in their day. I think this does an injustice to these great athletes. Possibly the greatest.



In Nurmi's case he had stiff competition from Ville Ritola (Finland), and Edvin Wide (Sweden), amongst others. Both these men were multiple Olympic medalists, 13 between them, and both also broke Nurmi's world records for 5 and 10k. Nurmi responded by regaining both world records once again. In 1925 Nurmi visited the United States, a five month visit. He ran 55 races and was only beaten twice. Once, when he was ill and withdrew during the race, and once over 880 yards.

Emil Zatopek also met the best runners around during his time. After all he did compete in three Olympics, and two European Championships. He proved to be virtually unbeatable. He won his first 38 races over 10k from 1948 to 1954, and was unbeaten over 5k from 1948 to 1952. Remember too that Zatopek was competing in the years just after World War 2 when there must have been a shortage of good, healthy food and the opportunity to travel must have been limited. Despite this he still set new standards.

I would also like to highlight the case for Ron Clarke, of Australia. Clarke is usually written off because he “only” won one Olympic Medal. A bronze, in 1964. People intend to overlook that in 1968, when he was at his peak, the Olympics were held in Mexico City at high altitude. He didn't stand a chance as athletes who were born, and raised, at high altitude dominated the distance events, and have continued to do so ever since. One must also consider his 1965 year. This included racing in NZ, the United States and continued on for an outstanding European tour. In 44 days he ran 18 races, broke 12 world records, and ended the season by breaking (once again) the world records for 5 and 10k. It is doubtful that any other athlete has ever had such a successful season.

Cookie

## The National Road Relay Trip for the MW Team's perspective:

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The new Rotorua Course called for 7 runners per team. The Club sent 3 teams and most of us travelled up to Auckland on the morning of Friday Sep 30<sup>th</sup> and decamped into team vans to descend on Rotorua. There were some issues at departure, including John Kerrison's arrival at the gate with a ticket that said he was going to Invercargill and Tessa Holland's ticket coming out of the machine as mine. However we all got there and the first highlight of the trip south was stopping at ? for what Paul Coughlan described as the best bacon butties on the planet.

Our motel in Rotorua was comfortable and clean and was managed by a man who had probably studied at the Basil Fawlty School of Hospitality. He followed John back to his unit to make sure he really did need extra towels. (See me in person for a report on the phone conversation I had with him the week before about the numbers in each room.)

After a trip to collect supplies we set out on a drive around the route. It is a beautiful course, apart from the last leg. It is a demanding course and you need to be able to cope with hills. The day was fine, mostly. I got wet on my lap. We all ran well and are looking forward to going back next year now we know the course. We were 5<sup>th</sup> out of 6 teams and we were happy with that.

It was exciting to see our Senior guys get second and gutting to see what happened to our Masters Men's Team.

The next day most of us went for a run around the hill trails of Rotorua hosted by the local Club. Our trip back to Auckland was broken up by a stop in Tirau where we enjoyed the corrugated iron art and lots of funky shops. (I think the Masters men's team stopped at the bacon place again. Priorities!)

Our trip back to Auckland turned out to be a wee bit exciting. Who knew how long it took to get through Huntley on a Sunday afternoon? Should we have left Tirau just that little bit earlier? Then of course we hit the Auckland traffic slowdown. Chrissie was driving like Scott Dixon by this point and we had decisions to make about dropping people off at the airport first or all going to the rental car depot. Thank god for cellphones.

Our lovely driver from the depot to the airport told us it was a good day. 15mins to travel 4k. Twice that on a week day.

This trip showed once again how much fun it is to travel with like-minded people and share an experience. We do get to know one another as we run together in training and during the winter season. Travelling away together provides a deeper experience. The time together provides the opportunity to talk and share

all kinds of things. "What stays on Tour" protocol prevents me from saying more! I do need to thank my motel mates for letting me have the downstairs bed next to the bathroom. We are all looking forward to next year now we know the course.

Margaret Flanagan



**Return Address:**

New Brighton Olympic Athletic Club Inc.  
P O Box 18840  
Christchurch 8641