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For more information on GRTC Hall of Fame see: <http://www.grtconline.org/>

Induction took place on January 26, 2008 at GRTC Annual Banquet

**Belinda O'Brien Inducted Into 2008 Greater Rochester Track Club Hall of Fame:
Accomplished Runner, Coach Extraordinaire and Community Contributor**

Authored by Michael Reif

The words in the first verse of the song **When Irish Eyes are Smiling** read as follows:

- When Irish eyes are smiling
- Sure it's like a morning spring.
- In the lilt of Irish laughter,
- You can hear the angels sing.
- When Irish hearts are happy,
- All the world seems bright and gay.
- And when Irish eyes are smiling,
- Sure, they steal your heart away

For all that know her, surely these words capture her essence.

Belinda O'Brien is an accomplished runner, a coach extraordinaire and gives back to her community in numerous ways. But for those who know her best, it's that effervescent smile and bubbly personality that make it a pleasure for all to be around her. It is that personality that is a role model for so many in the running community. Her Oven Door Runner friends that she has been a "regular" with since the early '90's would be lost without the weekly dose of the sunshine she radiates.

Not all has been a bed of roses for this Irish Lassie however. She's encountered and overcome some serious illnesses, all to the amazement and joy of her loyal friends. And she's come back as an even stronger competitor in the running game to boot. But, there are some down sides to that personality. For instance, the Oven Door Runners, the early Saturday morning running crowd she hangs out with at Bushnell's Basin, anointed her, at their annual awards party in 1994, the "Mouth in Motion" award, a distinction that no one has won since. And there are those USATF National Age Group race competitions that she could handily win or place high in that she often forgoes . . . In order to be with her high school team or friends, who count on her loyal support. And so it goes for the Irish Lassie.

But here are some of the other facts:

Belinda O'Brien was born in Ireland, has two younger sisters and three younger laddie brothers. Her dad, Sean O'Brien, continues to be a key inspiration to her running pursuits as was her late mother, Bridget O'Brien. She is a long time resident of Fairport NY and has been a Librarian for the Fairport School District for nearly her entire professional career.

Her running accomplishments are many. Starting in the late 1980's she got hooked by teacher friends on running. Firsts, a leg of the Rochester marathon relay, then the full marathon, then many others. Onward to qualifying for the Boston Marathon, running the NYC, Columbus, Los Angeles, Buffalo, Disney and Wineglass marathons. Most of them multiple times and the fastest in 3 hours and 19 minutes for the 26.2-mile distance. She took first place honors in her age group at the 2002 Buffalo Marathon in 3 hours and 30 minutes. A remarkable time for a young person but at age 50. Wow!

Perhaps it was because she tamed and charmed the challenge of the marathon with her steady strides that she ventured out to the Ultra-marathon world. She had successes in the JFK 50 miler, which she completed in 10 hours and the 50 K Hat Run. The Hat Run is a challenging trail race of 31 miles over hill, dale, rivers, rocks and mountain tops. Of course she smiled the entire way.

In case you were wondering, Belinda does not shy away from the highest levels of competitive running either. As part of her Genesee Valley Harriers Running Club 50-59 year old team she successfully helped win four USA Track and Field National Master's (50-59) Team XC Championships between 2002 and 2005. The distances ranged from 5K to 10K. She finished 2nd individually in 2003 in Greensboro NC and 3rd in Holmdel, NJ in 2002.

Belinda has been the Head Coach of the Boys and Girls Cross Country and Track teams at Victor High School since 2001. Her teams have won three Sectional XC championships, seven WFL League titles has had 2 Individual State Champions, and has had athletes compete at the National Footlocker Championships. Coaching runners like Kyle Heath, Amy DeSeyn and Zach Rivers are several of the her success stories with high school athletes. The Boys teams have accumulated a dual meet record of 282 wins and only 13 loses. The girls are 267 wins and 23 loses. No wonder she has been named a Coach of the Year on a consistent basis since her arrival.

Belinda also gives back to her community in many ways. Promoting the Town of Victor's Community 5K for many years and most recently promotion of running for athletes participating in the Special Olympics.

So despite that fact that she smiles everyday as she challenges herself and others around her to accomplish special things what's really important is that she's made the world we all live in a better, more cheerful place. Those Irish eyes keep smiling.

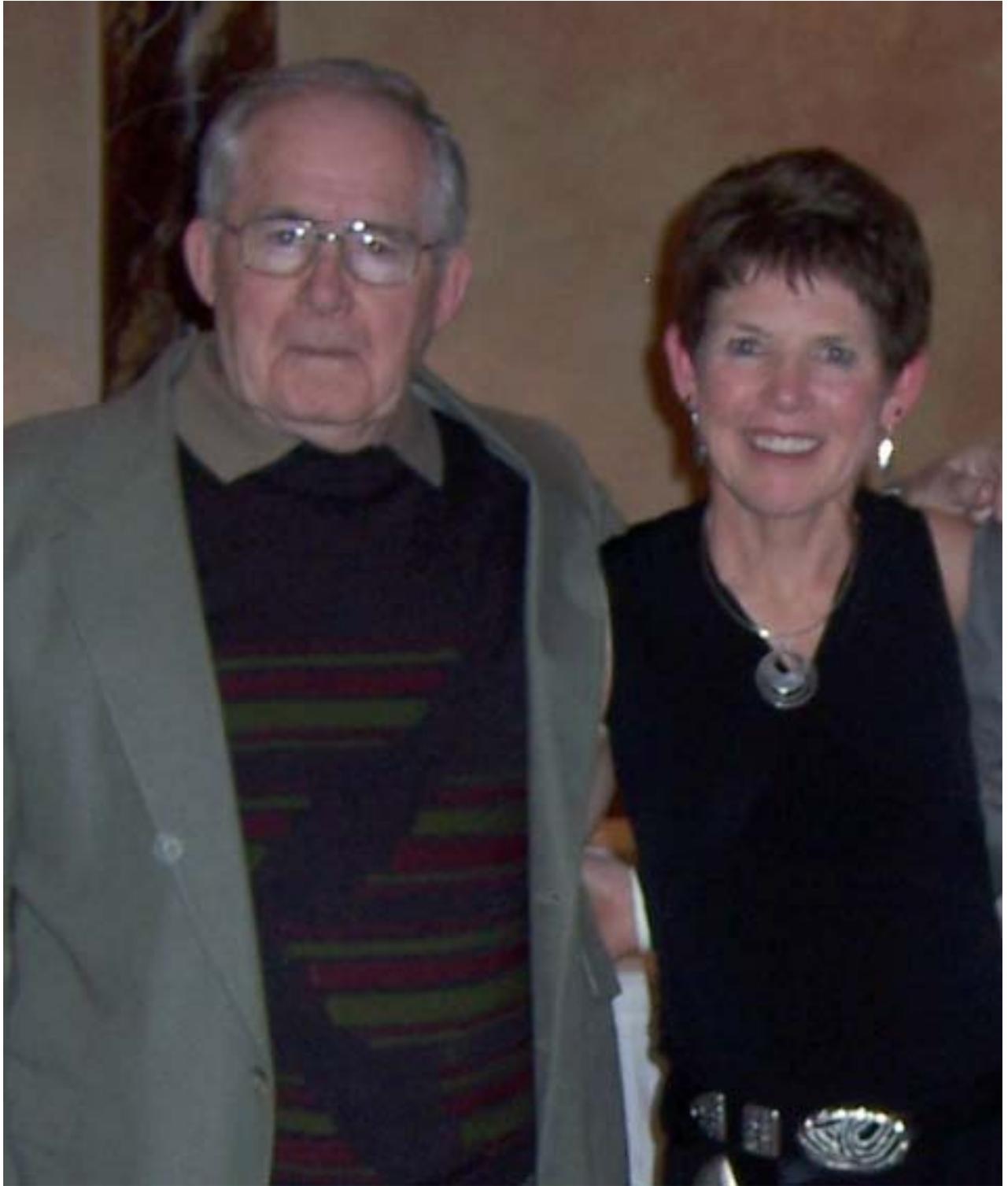
Picture #1: Belinda O'Brien finishes Boston Marathon in 1996



Picture #2: Belinda O'Brien congratulated by Michael Reif, Presenter and fellow Hall of Fame Member at GRTC Hall of Fame Banquet January 26, 2008



Picture #3: Belinda O'Brien with her Dad, Sean O'Brien at GRTC Hall of Fame Awards 2008



Picture #4: Belinda O'Brien with fellow HOF Inductee Richard (Dick) Buerkle

