

Dick Withrow

GRTC Hall of Fame – 2009

Good evening everyone. Mike and I would like to thank the GRTC for letting us introduce Dick Withrow as one of this year's inductees to the Hall of Fame.

Time goes by pretty quickly when you are having fun. Mike and I and the rest of the Sal's team have been meeting for years at the Union St. Bridge in Spencerport. I don't remember exactly when we met Dick, but I do remember how. A bunch of us were running, it may have been on the towpath, when we saw 2 runners approaching from the opposite direction. They were going fast and as the groups passed each other we recognized them as elite runners Augie Calabrese and Dick Withrow.

I am sure they recognized us as the legendary Sals running team and immediately tried to figure out a way to run with us. Augie suggested we all meet at the local McDonalds and run from there. Dick would get there early and drink a gallon of coffee, Augie would plan the course, and then we'd begin running. Mike I and would hang on for a mile while they warmed up, then they would be gone. We would be alone, not on the towpath, and we'd be lost. Eventually Dick and Augie would find us, lead us back to McDonalds, where Dick would finish up with a quart of coffee and we'd all go home. Our constant nagging got the group back to the bridge and towpath where man and woman were meant to run.

You know running is a wonderful thing. You meet people through running and you get a chance to become friends for no other reason but the good time you have while pounding out the miles and talking about anything that pops in your head. I think conversation flows well when you run. It was through running that we got to know Dick. "Downhill intervals helps develop leg speed", "Mix in some tempo pace during your long runs", "If you shop early at Bon Ton, they will wrap your Christmas presents for free." These are samples of wisdom that Dick shared with us over the years. He didn't care that we weren't the fastest runners and for a few years he joined us, coached us, bantered with us and was just one of the guys who was part of the group which was an important part of our weekends.

A few of you out there might remember racing Dick. He was (is) a tough and focused competitor. Unfortunately it was years before I discovered how to beat Dick in a race. All I needed was a person on the side of the road to be holding a puppy. When Dick sees a dog the road warrior weakens. The knees turn to jelly and his speech becomes impaired, "OOOO look at the little puppppeeee". It ain't pretty.

A couple of years ago Dick was inducted into the Sals HOF. It's tough to get into, usually your name has to be Mike, but Dick made it for the following top 10 reasons:

10. Yankee Fan
9. Can clean out an all you can eat buffet and still fit into a size 32 jeans.
8. His wife Faye is a great cook and world class bowler.
7. Dick is a dog whisperer. We go on a run and he comes back with 4-5 dogs, that aren't his, following in his footsteps. That's 4-5 less dogs to chase Mike and me.
6. He has mystical coffee seeking powers.
5. Despite being really, really, really old, has great hair...*that should be a reason for NOT making the Sals hall of fame!*
4. Coined the phrase, "If you don't want to get dog hairs on you, stay off my furniture." Mike and I never turn down free hair.
3. Like any truly dedicated runner, he sinks like a rock when trying to swim.
2. He's a fast runner, lives on the westside of Rochester and runs with us!
1. Dick was a shoe tester for Nike for many years and got free shoes! *We are so jealous.*

No less impressive are Dick's qualifications for the GRTC HOF. We believe he could qualify on any one of these accomplishments.

GRTC Board president for 4 years in the 1980s. Here is a quote from the GRTC website under club history, "when top masters runner Dick Withrow became the club's third president in 1981, the GRTC saw a dramatic increase in membership to nearly 2000. Along with the membership boom came the amazing increase in numbers, size and quality of local races.

Dick has been a runner since high school (he still owns his high school's 220yd record)

Here are a few of his impressive 40-49 age group running times:

5k (Buffalo) 15:50

5 mile race 26:10

10k (Rochester), 33:30

Boilermaker 15k 54:04

½ marathon 1:12:40

Skylon Marathon, 2:38.

50+ age group

16:37 5k age 54

23:40 4 mile at age 55 (Subaru-Buffalo)

36:32 10k (Buffalo) at age 55.

Numerous races from the 5k-15k Dick finished in the top 3 in his age group, and frequently in the top 10-15 overall. He was willing to race anyone and often went to Buffalo and other upstate towns, as well as out of state, to face competitors.

Dick was the Lilac 10k race director and volunteer coordinator for many years, when 2500 or more runners came to town, including elite athletes from around the country. He volunteered in all capacities for more than 20 years in more races than can be listed here.

Dick was the director of the JCC Bruegger's Bagel 5k for many years, the Human Race 10k, Freezeroos series and the East Ave. Mile when national class athletes were brought in to race.

Dick was a high school track and field and/or cross-country coach at Brockport, Spencerport and Pittsford central schools.

Dick continues to volunteer at area races and compete in running races, duathlons and triathlons.

Mike and I can honestly say, "we want to be like Dick when we grow up".

Dick, Mike and I and the rest of our team like to joke a lot. We also like to run a lot and you make running better for us at Sals and you made running better for everyone in the Rochester running community for many years, and continue to do so. Congratulations on entering the GRTC HOF. It is a well deserved honor and we are grateful to be a part of it.