

Running Relationships Enrich Life

- By Doug Kurtis

Once running becomes a part of your lifestyle you discover that the relationships you develop through running are as important as the exercise itself. I can't imagine what my life would be like without the friends and acquaintances I've met through running. Over the last thirty years I have been blessed to meet people all over the world, some famous, some not, some interesting and some very passionate about life.

Hillsdale economics professor Gary Wolfram will always be a friend. On the day of his wedding some 20 years ago we ran a race just hours before going to the church. As his best man, we ran together and tied for first place. That moment will never be forgotten, nor the look on his wife's face when we showed her the award.

Many training partners have moved away but still call or email. The bond you achieve while spending several hours a week running together can never be replaced. I would not have been a successful master runner without the help of great runners, Dave Peterson, Guy Murray and the Tuesday night team.

My nemesis Kjell Erik Stahl of Sweden was a rival but also someone I admired. Several times we roomed together and I threatened to toss out his lucky tattered racing shorts. For someone who got free equipment and was a millionaire his eccentric ways made me laugh.

I've been fortunate to have host families when I traveled to races around the world. Pam & Ed Bell of Memphis made sure that I saw all the cultural highlights of their marvelous city. The Elvis gifts on my bed at their home inspired me to give good performances. The Ericksons of Seattle, Washington were superb hosts. They were so gracious that Randy and Kathy Step (while training for the Iron Man triathlon) were included as guests when they stopped by to see me run. More than 15 years later I still get their "family of photos" Christmas letter each year.

Many of the Redford Roadrunners are still like family members, although I've let my life become too busy to spend much time with them. Births, deaths, marriages and excuses for celebration have kept the connections intact.

Meeting and working with race staff members, volunteers, city workers, sponsors and race directors has touched my life and inspired me to use the experience and knowledge gained from running over 190 marathons. I would encourage every runner to take the time to volunteer for a least one race a year. It's rewarding to do something for someone else and it enriches your circle of friends.

Tip of the Week: Long runs are import but try splitting some workouts in two. You can get more out of the effort and avoid greater chance for injury too