

HISTORY OF THE CHARLESTON DISTANCE RUN

By Gary Smith

1973 to 1977

In 1971 the Charleston Sternwheel Regatta began as a Labor Day weekend community festival celebrating our river heritage. The festival grew in 1972 and in early 1973 local runner Don Cohen was approached about adding a road race to the event. Road racing was starting to take hold across the country (the New York Marathon and the Peachtree 10K both started in 1970) and Don wanted a quality event for Charleston. Rather than deciding on a distance and then figuring where he could lay out a course, Don decided he would like to include as many Charleston neighborhoods as possible and started driving around the city. After laying out a course that took in the State Capitol, the Kanawha riverbank, the East end, West side and South Hills he found he had created a 15-mile race course.

There were very few races held in West Virginia at that time and Don and the other race organizers didn't know how many runners to expect.

They invited some well-known runners to Charleston to speak or run at the inaugural event. Four-time Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens, Olympic gold medalist Dave Wottle, Steve Prefontaine, Jeff Galloway and Franci Larrieu all came to Charleston in 1973. In addition to the first Distance Run the year also saw the first Falmouth Road Race and the initial Cherry Blossom 10 Miler.

Some things happened in that first race that were never repeated, there was no entry fee for instance (race costs were borne for the most part by Don Cohen). Also, the race started and finished at the Civic Center. In that first-year race promotion included the selection of a "Miss Charleston Distance Run". Jane Young of Clendenin was chosen. 213 runners completed the race that first year. In place of the standard 5-year male and female age groups common in races since the 80s the first Distance Run had five "divisions" Boys under 17, Men 18-30, Men 31-45, Men 46 and over and Women. There was no electronic timing at the finish either, it was stopwatches and clipboards for recording the time and order of finish. The top ten finishers received Accutron watches.

Overall men's winner was Jeff Galloway of the Florida Track Club in 1:16:29. Runner-up was Lucian Rosa of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1:17:35. The women's winner was Jacqueline Hanson of the Beverly Hills Striders finishing in 1:39:28. The second place woman over seven minutes behind her in 1:46:44 was Francie Larrieu of San Francisco. From the very beginning the race drew runners from across the country and around the world. Other notable runners that year were Hal Higdon (one of the founders of the Road Runners Club of America) who won the men's 31-45 division, Thomas Fleming who finished 5th and was the American 15 mile record holder at the time (1:16:11), WVU Track star, Carl Hatfield and John Pianfetti, who at 66 was the oldest runner that year. The first few years over half of all runners were affiliated with a running club. The inaugural race saw one group of runners who belong to the ultimate club – the family. Jay, Sr., Jay, Joe and Debbie Wildt all finished the first race.

1973 also saw the start of what would become a decades long conspiracy to keep local sportswriter and runner Danny Wells off the winners' dais. Dave Wottle's wife, Jan approached Danny before the start and told him the story of a runner in another race who dropped dead of a heart attack then indicated with her silence that Danny should slow down.

1974 saw tremendous growth in participation in the race. Finishers ballooned to 1,308 (by comparison there were 1,951 entrants in the Boston Marathon that year). All entrants were given a race t-shirt, a black lightweight running jacket and a small canvas tote. High School sophomore John Frazier runs his first Distance Run in 1:26:58, capturing 76th place. John would improve and finish in 20th place three years later.

The course was redesigned, the start remained at the Civic Center but the finish was moved to Laidley Field. Olympians Rafer Johnson and Jim Ryun spoke at the awards banquet. Heat and humidity were high race morning and three runners were treated for muscle spasms or heat stroke at local hospitals. Jeff Galloway quit at mile four with muscle spasms. Harry Cordellos, the blind runner from the San Francisco Bay area ran in 1974 and became a perennial crowd favorite. Philip Ndoo won the race in 1:18:03, John Vitale of Connecticut was second and Bill Rodgers was third. As we were enjoying our second year The Virginia Ten Miler and the Berlin Marathon celebrated their first year.

In 1975 Steve Prefontaine, one of the marshals in the inaugural race parade, died. The Distance Run dedicated our race to his memory and printed 'A salute to Pre' on the back of the runners' t-shirts. This was the only year sleeveless shirts were given out. The top 10 male and top 3 female runners received blue Distance Run logo watches along with their trophies. All runners were treated to a free pre-race pasta dinner courtesy of C&P Telephone. C&P (later Verizon, now Frontier) would provide this service for the next 37 years. John Vitale won in 1:17 and Barry Brown was second. Lucian Rosa and Jeff Galloway were among the top ten. Kim Merritt was the female leader. Local businessman, Jack Goldfarb who is legally blind finished his first distance run in 1975. He would go on to run 23 more times before opting for the 5K Race.

In 1976 the Marine Corp and New York City marathons started. In Charleston 11-year-old Laura Craven beat most of the men and all but one of the women in the race to take the second place female trophy in a time of 1:33:00. Kim Merritt repeated as overall female winner. Frank Shorter won the race in 1:14:37 and Gary Tuttle was second. Lucian Rosa, John Vitale and Amby Burfoot were among the top ten.

1977 saw the first change in the Race Committee Chairman as race founder Don Cohen stepped aside to let Mike Reed take the helm. The race clinic started at 2:00 pm Friday and continued for three hours. Three college track coaches spoke before keynote speaker Dave Wottle. The Charleston Gazette steps up their sponsorship of the race in what some saw as a Machiavellian attempt to disqualify Gazette employee Danny Wells from winning the race. By the time it was determined that Wells was not disqualified their psychological tricks had done their work and once again he was kept out of the winner's circle. Kim Merritt made it three in a row and William Haviland of Ohio won the men's crown. The Chicago Marathon was founded this year. Jim Fixx's "Complete Book of Running" was a best seller in 1977.

1978 to 1982

In 1978 William Haviland wins again. Due to construction at Laidley Field, the course was changed. Leaving out everything west of the Elk River the course crossed the South Side Bridge a third time to finish in Kanawha City at Watt Powell Park. This resulted in a course of approximately 14.8 miles. When the finish returned to Laidley in 1979 the committee over-compensated and the course was approximately 15.2 miles. Clinic speakers included the venerable New York writer and runner, Dr. George Sheehan. To honor the state's mining heritage, the overall winner trophies were made of coal.

1979 brought a new men's overall winner, Robert Perkins who beat William Haviland. John P. Case of Buchannon was the first West Virginia finisher, placing 22nd in 1:24:00. Robert Parker's "Once a Runner" was published, giving voice to a generation of lean and hungry runners. Jerry Traylor of Parkersburg finished the race in 3:44, negotiating the course on crutches, while Danny Wells struggled with a different handicap, 'heavy pins'. Extra-heavy safety pins had been planted in Well's race packet and over 15 miles the extra weight extracted its toll, once again keeping Danny from winning. Tony Gallo began a six year stint as Race Director that year.

In 1980 the Columbus Marathon began and America boycotted the Moscow Olympics. Rosie Ruiz became a household name with her taxi-assisted Boston Marathon finish, but Bill Haviland needed no taxi to cruise in the rain to his third win. Someone who could have taken a taxi without shame was Teresa Petrovic of Doctors Creek in Kanawha County who finished the race in under three hours. Teresa was seven months pregnant.

1981 saw Alberto Salazar break a 12-year-old world marathon record at the New York Marathon that was televised live for the first time. In Portland, Oregon a young company called Nike helped a local race be the first ever to overtly award prize money in a road race. And at Boston that year more than 320 men ran the race in under two and a half hours!

Here in Charleston, Terry Baker of Hagerstown MD won in 1:15:43 and a Charleston native was second, John E. Dotson in 1:16:12. The top two women were June Keller and Susie Comer. The youngest finisher in race history, 8-year-old Patrick Board, IV ran 2:13:35, finishing ahead of 230 runners.

In 1982 Terry Baker repeated his first-place finish followed by David Olds. Julie Isphording and Karen Cosgrove led in the women's division. Ronnie Williams suffered a heart attack in the last mile of the race but was able to joke about it later, saying the clock was still running and he would get out and finish the race as soon as he was out of the hospital.

1983 to 1987

1983 saw Mark Stickley win followed by William Haviland. Haviland finished in the top three for seven consecutive years. Beth Dillinger won the women's race and Charleston's Joni Adams took second. Both Stickley and Dillinger were Blacksburg, VA residents. For the first time the race was televised live

Prior to August, 1983 secondary school track and cross-country runners in West Virginia could not compete in road races. That year, just a few days before the Distance Run, Judge Andrew MacQueen ruled that road racing was not the same sport as cross country and track. This allowed Eddie Gannon (represented by Charleston runner, lawyer and later judge, Tod Kaufman) and every high school and junior high runner since then to compete in road races.

Stickley repeated his first-place finish in 1984, cutting his finish time by a minute and a half to 1:14:33. Karen Cosgrove of Cincinnati was the first woman finisher. Top WV finishers that year included Jerry Dotson, Tom Cherchuck, Frank Lewis, Tim Coffman, David Kline and David Duncan. On the international scene, Russia retaliated for the USA's 1980 Olympic boycott by staying home when the U.S. hosted the 1984 Olympics.

1985 saw the first time a West Virginian won the state's premier road race. Steve Taylor was 20 years old when he edged out the 1982 runner up David Olds by 21 seconds to win. The women's race saw the great Grete Waitz of Oslo crush the field winning by over eight minutes in 1:24:57. 1985 also saw Nemo Nearman take the helm, serving as race director for the first of his four years.

A new course record was set in 1986 when Don Norman beat 38-year-old Bill Rodgers by a minute and a half, finishing in 1:13:54. Julie Isphording won the women's race by a wide margin.

Still a West Virginia native but now a resident of the Commonwealth, Steve Taylor returned in 1987 to win again, cutting two minutes off his 1985 time to finish in 1:14:31. Priscilla Welch cut 5 seconds off Grete Waitz' time of two years earlier to win and set the women's course record that still stands.

The Distance Run has never had a costume award but that has not kept runners from having some fun, Gary Fanelli from Pennsylvania competed in 1987 in white button-down shirt, tie, black jacket and fedora and sunglasses, aka the Blues Brothers. As it has been many years, humidity was high and heat exhaustion took its toll on the runners, including Jim Pritt of Scott Depot. But hot weather training and racing paid off a few years later when Pritt was the first WV runner to finish the 1992 New York Marathon.

A special 15th Anniversary poster showing racers crossing the South Side Bridge with a sternwheeler passing underneath was created that year. Ten runners had run all of the first 15 races. They were: John Pianfetti, Bobby Griffith, Ray Harmon, Jim Jones, Mark Allison, David Berry, Danny Wells, Frank Branner, Worley Stout and Tom Poole.

1988 to 1992

Don Norman won for a second time in 1988 Zack Barie was second and Bill Rodgers was third. Charleston's own Mary Heidelk won the women's race finishing about a minute and a half ahead of Beth Howell

Shawn Chillag, physician, runner and in 1988, Batman, running the entire 15-mile race as the caped crusader. Shawn went on to run the next 19 years in various costumes. He was Superman,

Dennis Rodman, Tattooed Man (believe it or not those were two different characters), Spiderman and many others. Jimmy Fisher of Elkview ran under 1:33 in 1988 even though he is legally blind. Don Cohen returned to serve as Race Co-Director along with Danny Wells. Danny, it seems had given up dreams of winning the race and settled for directing it, a job he held for 13 years. Running has improved the health of most of its adherents, but Roy Wheeler of Mt. Alto collapsed at about mile 12 and his heart and breathing stopped. William Carroll, running behind Wheeler, started CPR and stayed with him until paramedics arrived and then went on to finish the race. Wheeler ultimately recovered.

There was a definite home state advantage in 1989. Steve Taylor won for his third time and Scott Depot's Bubby Dent finished second for the men. Hurricane's Mary Heidelk finished second for the women, only 30 seconds behind the international star Priscilla Welch. In the Men's 40-44 division that year there was a Ron trifecta with Ron Norman, Ron Lane and Ron Plantz taking the top three spots in that age group.

In 1990 Steve Taylor cut four seconds off his 1989 time but it wasn't enough with Mark Curp finishing more than a minute and a half ahead of him to win. Julie Isphording and Mary Heidelk took first and second for the women. The hills in the first six miles of the race can be intimidating but for the second year in a row, seven wheelchair participants completed the race led this year by Scot Hollenbeck for the men and Diana McClure for the women. Construction on the South Side Bridge changed the course which crossed the Patrick Street Bridge early putting the hills in the middle of the race. As they came down Loudon Heights Road runners crossed Grosscup Road to Bridge Road to MacCorkle Avenue. Then they ran along the river to 35th Street Bridge where they went back across the Kanawha River to Piedmont Road and Laidley Field to finish.

In 1991 Mark Curp won again with Dan Held almost three minutes behind him. Held later made history by being the only American to make U.S. distance running World teams in four distances: Cross-Country, Half-Marathon, Marathon and 100K. Julie Isphording again won the women's crown. It was in 1991 that the committee first instituted cash awards in the race.

It was three in a row as Mark Curp won the 1992 race ahead of Steve Taylor. Debbi Kilpatrick-Morris was the female winner.

1993 to 1997

Ed Eyestone won the race in 1993 (Ed made Olympic marathon teams in 1988 and 1992 and numerous World Championship squads, he was named American Runner of the Year five times) beating Dan Held and Mark Curp. Debbi Kilpatrick-Morris repeated as the women's winner. In an effort to broaden our base of participants and reach out to runners who might not be ready for 15 miles a 5K event was added in 1992, we had 317 runners in that first year. The 5K started and finished at the same locations as the 15-mile race but its course left out the bridge crossings and hills giving runners a flat, fast, shorter alternative.

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Gideon Mutisya won the race and set a new course record in 1996. That record (1:12:24) still stands even though Mutisya entered Laidley Field second that year. His friend and fellow Kenyan Simon Karori running here for his first time made a wrong turn near the Capitol turning his race into a 14 miler. Simon didn't know he made a mistake until he approached the finish and realized his time was impossibly fast.

Gideon returned in 1997 and won again but could not best his own record that year. Shawn Chillag competed as Elvis complete with blue suede shoes in 1997 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Elvis' death. He followed up in 1998 with what was perhaps his best received costume, as Monica Lewinsky (Black wig, sunglasses and a beret) with help from his running partner that year, Ron Plantz as Bill Clinton.

1997 was our silver anniversary. It was also the first year the state's two largest and oldest universities first met on the gridiron – on the Saturday before Labor Day, our traditional race day. Director Danny Wells made a tough decision and chose to move the race back a week. Some Charleston runners complained that the new date made it difficult for runners who participated in one of the State's other big races, the Parkersburg Half Marathon. Since the two long races would be only a week apart, it would not allow enough time to recover from the first and run well in the second. A boycott was called for. The Distance Run Committee met with the boycott promoters and promised to return the race to its traditional weekend in 1998. The boycott was called off.

1998 to 2002

After winning four years in a row Gideon Mutisya had to settle for second when Andrew Musuva beat him by 23 seconds in 1998.

In 1999 both Mutisya (3rd) and Musuva (2nd) were bested by Simon Sawe. A loose German Shepherd dog on Loudon Heights Road accosted the second and third place women runners, giving them a shot of adrenaline, but it wasn't enough for them to catch Russian Nadya Guselschikova, the women's winner.

In 2000 Mutisya showed he still had the fire as he won for the fifth time.

Wilson Onsare won in 2001 and Zabloh Mokaya won in 2002.

2002 saw the 30th anniversary of this race and Race Director Kelly Castleberry tried to add some excitement and value to the event. Kelly oversaw the creation of our website (www.charlestandistancerun.com) and introduced finisher medals provided by Bayer CropScience that were given out as the racers crossed the finish line. Also in our race packet that year was a commemorative 30th anniversary pin. The winner of our inaugural race, Jeff Galloway was brought back as the clinic speaker. We saw participation numbers in the 15 Mile race increase for the first time since 1988.

2003 to 2007

Hillary Lelei finished first in 2003. Bill Rodgers, clinic keynote speaker, planned to run here again that year but a broken leg kept him on the sidelines. State of the art 'Champion Chip' timing was introduced that year also, keeping the race up to date.

Shawn Chillag was back in black (cowboy hat, that is) playing the part of local lottery winner Jack Whittaker, and winning the crowd over by handing out (play) money as he ran the 2003 race. In 2004 he played a devilish George Bush and in 2006 he played a part from one of the most highly publicized yet least watched movies of that year with his "Snakes on a Runner".

Douglas Momanyi was in first place in 2004. Relay teams were introduced that year at the suggestion of long-time committee member Joni Adams to try to beef up participation. The first runner covers six miles including all of the hills then a second runs five miles and the clean-up runner does four miles. David Fenwick in his first of three years as Race Director brought Alberto Salazar to town to highlight the runners' clinic.

Francis Bowen was the top runner in 2005. In 2005 Gideon Mutisya finished 5th giving him a top 6 finish 11 of 12 years since 1994. Don Kardong was our clinic speaker and the addition of WOWK as a race sponsor gave us broadcast media exposure to complement the print exposure long-time sponsor, the Charleston Gazette has provided.

2006 saw the most exciting finish in race history with only 4 seconds separating first place and fifth place. A new face, Jacob Yator was first to the tape. Anne Jelagat won the women's race and Susan Graham-Gray, a WV Wesleyan alumni finished in the top 5 for the third consecutive year. Susan is legally blind and does most of her training on a treadmill. Unfortunately, there were fewer spectators and participants because Marshall and WVU played an early game in Morgantown on race day that pulled 60,000 plus people to the northern part of the state. John Hall, retired Union Carbide engineer missed his first race since he began in 1974 due to an Achilles injury. That left Chuck Barr of Clendenin and Gary Smith of Hurricane as the runners with the most completed races. Both ran every race but the first and along with Hall completed the 2007 race. Danny Wells has entered and started every race but some of his innovative training methods such as interval resting, carbo sleeping and substituting reading about running for actual muscle damaging training backfired leading to a few DNFs.

2007 was the 35th running of the 15-mile race and the 15th anniversary of our 5K. The committee decided to spread the prize money around by paying less to the overall winners (but still a substantial \$1,100 to the first-place male and female). For the first time prize money was given to the top two finishers in each age division. This means an increase in cash recipients from 32 to 78. Add to that Sport Mart t-shirts, Bayer finisher medals, the Friday Verizon Pasta dinner, the Saturday WOWK awards banquet, complete results in the Sunday Gazette-Mail, the Friday runner's clinic, Appalachian Power Champion Chip timing and the Distance Run after 35 years still was the best value race for the runner.

His manager, Hussein Makke, predicted that Tesfaye Girma would set a new course record. At 7:00 on the morning of the run, Race Director Gary Smith realized Tesfaye had still not picked up

his race packet and called his hotel. It turns out Tesfaye's understanding of English was not as good as it had seemed when he was picked up the day before at the airport and he was waiting for someone to come and get him and take him to the starting line. Gary ran two blocks to the hotel, met Tesfaye and ran with him back to the Civic Center, helped him pick up his race packet and timing chip and got him to the starting line with 5 minutes to spare. No course record was set but Tesfaye did win the race in 1:16:26. He was followed by Jynocel Basweti in 1:17:16, Chris Seaton in 1:18:53 and Gideon Mutisya in 1:22:53.

The women's race saw Maria Busienei of Charleston win in 1:27:38 with Gladys Asiba second in 1:30:32.

2008 to 2012

The 2008 race saw an old friend back in the winner's circle. Gideon Mutisia won for the sixth time in 1:22:48. Gideon's time was the slowest winning time ever in the 15 mile race. Previously that distinction was held by Philip Ndoo who won the 1974 race in 1:18:03. Charleston resident, Maria Busienei won the women's title in 1:33:34.

In continuing to try to attract more participants to the event, for the first time a performance fabric shirt was given to all runners instead of the traditional cotton shirt. In addition, 5K and 10K runs were added to the mix.

2008 saw tragedy in the 5K race. Don Bird, a friend of running in the Kanawha Valley, collapsed of an apparent heart attack as he crossed the finish line. Medical personnel rushed him to the hospital where he was pronounced dead.

In 2009 a new race director, Aaron Allred was introduced. Aaron brought new perspectives to the race. He tried to find a way to turn around the slow decline in participation in the race, particularly the 15-mile event. Aaron believed the way to save the race was to change the course so that the race was a flat half-marathon. During Aaron's tenure the race received more national publicity than it had in a long time. Both the Wall Street Journal and Runners World did articles on the race and its unique distance. The course was changed to showcase our beautiful state Capitol and to put the start and finish closer together by moving the start from the Civic Center to the Kanawha Boulevard in front of the Capitol. The pasta party and packet pick-up were moved to the Capitol rotunda. Children's Fun Runs were added to the Friday evening festivities this year too. The course change moved the start of the hill section of the race from near mile 1 to near mile 3.5, giving runners a longer warm up before tackling the challenge of the hills. Relay exchanges were kept on the South Side Bridge so the course change affected the length of the relay legs. After the race reports from runners were nearly unanimous in praising the course change.

In 2010 the Committee decided to do away with prize money and use those funds to give more to all of the runners. All runners received two performance shirts, one long-sleeve and one short-sleeve shirt, runners were also given a baseball cap embroidered with the CDR logo. After much discussion both in the Committee and in the media the Committee members except for Aaron

agreed that the unique 15-mile race distance and the traditional hill section should remain with the race.

A new female course record was set in the 5K race, 18:21.94 by Sami Harris a 15-year-old Charleston resident.

Aaron had said he would step down from the race director job if the Committee did not agree to change to a half-marathon so 2011 saw John Palmer step up to the role. John brought a commitment to the race traditions and energetic leadership to the race. After a one-year hiatus prize money was returned to the CDR. The Committee continued to keep their focus on local and regional runners in bringing back prize money by structuring the payouts to emphasize age group winners.

The 2011 Frontier Pasta Party was moved from the Capitol back to the Civic Center. The weather for the 2011 race was brutally hot and humid but despite the less-than-ideal conditions the male overall finisher, Joe Moore ran 1:20:12, five minutes faster than the previous year. Later that year, Joe qualified for the 2012 Olympic Marathon Trials. Emily Chaney won the women's title in 1:35:54. Overall participation was up nicely, with 572 finishers in the 15-mile race compared to 496 the year before, a 15% increase!

Chuck Barr did not finish the 2011 race leaving the author as the runner who has finished the most CDR 15-mile races, 38 of the first 39.

2012 marks the 40th running of the Charleston Distance Run. The Race Committee, led by John Palmer will put on an event worthy of its historic stature. High quality performance tee-shirts and a fabric 'pack sack' bag will be given to all participants; an optional souvenir jacket will be available and other surprises will be in store for runners in 2012. The Race joins the Road Runners Club of America in October, 2011 adding RRCA benefits to the event. Rachal Kutskill who joined the Committee in mid-2011 as the Walk Director will have a full year to work on improving participation in this portion of the event.

2013 to 2017

2013 saw starting line temps of 72% with 94% humidity. Kiprono Kurgat finished in 1:16:29 with Emmanuel Bor thirty seconds behind him. The first West Virginian was Jeff Weiss of Ravenswood who finished in 1:25:49. David Puzzuoli, 56 of Charleston finished in a handcycle in 1:14:17.

The 5K race had a surprise when 10-year-old Noah Castro finished first overall in 17:53.

In 2014 Jeff Weiss won in 1:22:36. He was followed by Jason Pyles, Bryan Harvey and Nick Bias for an all West Virginian top four. Sarah Glenn of Roanoke was the first female in 1:42:13, finishing sixth overall.

33 Relay teams competed this year.

Bryan Morseman of Bath NY won the 2015 race in 1:22:14 after several top five finishes in previous years, Sarah Glenn repeated as female winner cutting her time to 1:41:04.

In 2016 Juris Silenieks of Pittsburgh PA won in 1:21:42. Clara Santucci won the Women's crown in 1:33:13, finishing 3rd overall. That was the highest overall finish of a female in the race's history. In the Female 1-18 age group 12-year-old Nola Todd of Charleston took first place. Race Director John Palmer won the 70-74 age group. In June that year West Virginia suffered widespread and serious flooding and the CDR lost an icon in those floods. Joni Adams, a 40-time CDR finisher and 18-year member of the race committee drowned in her home by swiftly rising water. Joni originated the Relay event in 2007 and ran on family relay teams numerous times

2017 saw Jason Pyles of Elkins edge fellow West Virginian Brian Floyd by eleven seconds to win the race in 1:31:48. Ten of the top twelve finishers that year were from West Virginia.

Genesis Running a local group that provides coaching and motivation for new runners through 10-week courses made the CDR 5K a training culmination run and added significant numbers to our 5K race. The Friday night packet pick-up and Pasta Party were moved to the Beni Kedem Temple due to construction at the Civic Center. The Shriners made it such a great experience that the Friday activities have remained there ever since.

2018 to 2022

Bryan Morseman who won in 2015 won again in 2018 with a finish time of 1:23:45. Purity Munene of Columbia SC won the women's title in a time of 1:34:43. The CDR and Charleston lost another leader of the local running community when Ken Tallman, namesake of the Tallman Track Club died on June 5, 2018.

In 2019 Daniel Jaskowak of Blacksburg VA led all runners in 1:20:12 with the women's winner being Marian Pyles of Elkins. Her win made her and husband, Jason Pyles who won the race in 2017 the first husband and wife to share CDR titles.

Roger Boothe a wheelchair participant and fierce competitor during the years 1983 to 1986 died in August.

Pat Riley and Tri-State Racer performed race timing services for their 8th time in 2019.

The three-person relay event has added a lot of participants to the race since its introduction in 2007 but one team stands out. All Hustle Fitness entered the Male relay category every year since 2013 and has won first place 5 of those 7 years. Joey and T.J. Enright have been team members each year.

In 2020 the Coronavirus pandemic spread worldwide affecting health, business and travel and resulted in the cancellation of public events everywhere including the CDR. Our board was ready to make necessary changes to reduce the probability of disease transmission but the vaccines were not yet available and ultimately the city would not permit the race to be held. In September Bob Fretwell, local sportswriter and longtime participant and Board Member died.

2021 saw the return of the CDR. The 15 Miler was won by former University of Charleston runner, Jack Mastandrea, 23 of Mooresville NC. Jack finished with a time of 1:16:16, the fastest finish time since 2009. Purity Munene won the women's crown again in 1:32:07, two and a half minutes faster than her 2018 win. Temperature at the start of the race was 56 degrees.

Colton Meadows, 18 of Daniels WV won the 5K in 17:54. The female winner, Elise Leveel, 21 of Charleston finished second overall and was only 16 seconds behind Colton in 18:10.

In 2022 Genesis Running again put on a 15 Mile training program that culminated in the CDR 15 Mile race. Genesis has created a lot of dedicated runners in the Charleston area since 2007 and most of them have competed in the CDR 15 Miler or 5K.

Caleb Bowen, Marshall University Cross Country coach won the 15 in 1:22:46 edging out Caleb Keller of Charleston by a little over a minute. Third place and first woman finisher was Marshall assistant Cross Country coach, Hollyann Swann.

JR Sharp of Charleston and Katie Wendell of Ona were the male and female 5K winners.

As we prepare for 2023 and our historic 50th Event the CDR would like to thank all of our sponsors, especially the John and Lucille Pianfetti Foundation for their continued support. We plan to provide more benefits for the runners and walkers this year, don't miss it!

Over the years dozens of committee members, including Bob Tate, Danny Wells and Johnnie Barker who each served 40 years or more; dozens of sponsors, including the City of Charleston which has supported the race for 50 years; thousands of volunteers, thousands of spectators and tens of thousands of runners have made this race special. I wish we could tell the story of every one of them, they are all important.

Gary Smith