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Kevin Hayes
Longboat's Marathon Man

Carol Sunohara
New Member Profile

**The True Power
of Sport**

Meditations
From the Breakdown Lane

Kevin Hayes

Longboat's Marathon Man

By Tina de Geus

One of the great joys of belonging to the Longboat Roadrunners is that you meet, and get to know, such amazingly interesting people. It would not be an understatement to say that Kevin Hayes belongs right up there in the amazing category.

By the time he was 48 years of age he had already run 50 marathons; and he only started when he was 30, as a way to lose weight. But he felt so good after that first one that he just kept on doing it, running two per year and then five per year for many years.

He ran the marathons with a friend and they became quite competitive about how many they could run. The friend stopped after a while but Kevin kept going, reaching his 50 at 50 goal two years ahead of time. His son Bob was at the finish line of that 50th race in Niagara. He shouted at Kevin to "Go for 100!" So continue he did. Kevin's last marathon, run in Barbados in 2002, was number 60, an amazing achievement in anybody's books.

Kevin's PB for the marathon was 3:03 in Hamilton in 1988 and his favourite marathon course was the one in Montreal. But the running story doesn't end with the marathon, of course. Kevin ran the Around the Bay 30k a total of 19 times. The first one of those happened to be the last one run on a Saturday. "I liked having it on Saturday. Then you have Sunday to recuperate." Recuperate? What's that? Kevin is famous in the

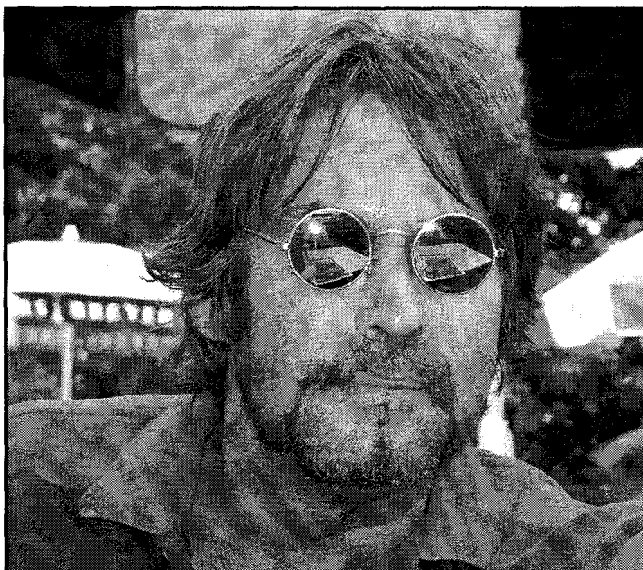


Photo by Paul Collier

Longboat Club for ignoring the advice of running specialists to take time to recover after a marathon. For four years, he ran the Waterfront Marathon one weekend, the Toronto International two weeks later and then followed it up with the Niagara Marathon one week after that.

Kevin doesn't remember when he joined Longboat, but says that he had

already run 27 marathons by then and that his best running was behind him. His training partner for about five years in the late 80's was Larry Quinlan. The two of them turned every training session into a race. One day, they ran down to the Lakeshore, discovered there was a race, ran it and then ran home. "In 1989, I was in the best shape of my life."

Kevin also ran Boston twice, New York once and Barbados 15 times. Those 15 times in Barbados are a bit of a wonder as Kevin describes those races as "a brutal ordeal", "a monster" under the blazing sun. To add insult to injury, he was called "fat boy" three times by the spectators during one race. But, says Kevin, Barbados replaced his family's cottage and he and his wife Melanie enjoyed getting to know the local people.

In the shorter-than-a-marathon category, Kevin has a couple of memorable stories. One involved the 5k Mental Health run about eight years ago. The frontrunners lost their way and couldn't find the finish line. Keeping his wits about him, Kevin stayed the course and won the race outright in

Kevin Hayes - continued

17:50. This just proves that you have to pick your races pretty carefully. And if you can't make up your mind which one to run, you do both. Kevin ran his best 10 k's during one weekend: the St. Andrew's Run on Saturday in a time of 36:39 and the ISMAIL Run on Sunday in 36:45. He was in his 30's then.

A person reading this profile so far and who does not know Kevin already would surely be tempted to assume that running is all there is to Kevin's life. How could he possibly have time for any other activity? Nothing is further from the truth, of course. For example, how's this for an interesting juxtaposition. This man, who has obviously spent a great deal of time on his feet, owned eight cars at one time. He says he has only four now, one of which works, and "a very tolerant wife." And let's not forget the four motorcycles!

Besides being a prodigious runner and car lover, Kevin is also well known in the Longboat Club and in the rest of the running community for his designs of race t-shirts. He says that he was always a "doodler" and loved to paint. His running friends saw his paintings and suggested he do a t-shirt. His first one was for a favourite race, the New Hamburg 8 km Classic. Alan Brooks was involved with that race and that is how Kevin ended up doing the t-shirts for Alan's Barbados races and also the ones for the Runners Choice series.

Kevin also designed a medal for Longboat and thereby raised his artistic profile in the Club. Images of Toronto, Toronto Island and the Club's connection to the First Nations community grace the many t-shirts he designed for the Longboat races over the years. He admits to sometimes sneaking in figures that might be more properly found on the Barbados shirts. Just don't ask him

about meeting deadlines.

For five years, Kevin was a valued member of the Longboat Dragon Boat team - the Wildfire. He designed the Wildfire singlet and Allen Groome did him the honour of having the design tattooed on his arm.

Another aspect of Kevin's artistic side is photography. Many of us have favourite photos of ourselves or of friends taken by Kevin. He contributed many great pictures to Longboat newsletters, and also did wedding photography.

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Besides being a runner, a car lover and an artist, Kevin is also, most definitely, a family man. Come to the Rex on any Wednesday night after the run and you will find the Hayes family, Kevin, Melanie and Bob, standing (usually) together, having a drink and talking - Melanie holding the single

rose Kevin has bought her that night (as he does every Wednesday night).

Melanie, whom Kevin calls the "Gym Queen", is also a runner, and Bob, at age seven, was already doing his bit to uphold the family tradition by running 10 and 15 km races. "The best day for the family," says Kevin, "was the Toronto International Marathon two years ago. We all ran it." Their times were an impressive 3:20 for Bob, 4:02 for Kevin and 4:08 for Melanie.

What, of course, could not have been foreseen by Kevin and Melanie and Bob, was that so many of the events of their lives, up to now, the starting and finishing of so many races, the meeting of deadlines, the care given to their family life, would be preparing them to deal with a much greater challenge.

It was four years ago (10 marathons), Kevin said, that he "started running like Frankenstein." His

Kevin Hayes - continued

feet lost their spring, became numb, and his speaking started to be difficult. After many tests, Kevin received the diagnosis of ALS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, a progressive neuromuscular disease.

Kevin is no longer working, but he has maintained a tremendous spirit and a great sense of humour. "This is the best neurological disorder I've ever had," he claims. He is carrying on in the best tradition of his life, with the support of his family, participating recently in two runs - the Bread and Honey 5 km in June and the New Hamburg 8 km Classic in July.

And he has been cycling as well. "I feel normal when I'm cycling," he says. As usual, Kevin doesn't do anything by halves. He recently cycled to Ottawa by himself and then went again, with Bob this time, via Pembroke.

Yes, Kevin, you're an inspiration to us all and we wish you well.

Favourite marathon: Hamilton

Favourite race: Burlington 25 K

Favourite junk food: French Fries

Favourite healthy food: Fish

Favourite training route: Martin Goodman Trail

Favourite running shoe: Nike Air Pegasus

PB's: 5K: 17:50

8K: 29:45

10K: 36:39

15K: 58:58

fi marathon: 1:28 (Peterborough)

Around the Bay: 2:06

Marathon: 3:03 (Hamilton)

50K: 5:00:26



Bob, Melanie and Kevin enjoy an evening at the Rex.