RUN FOR LIFE.COM
"I'M A RUNNER!"

I am Proud to Say!!

What Running has meant to me.

I am proud to say: "I am a runner". Actually, I'm a very old runner…..old enough to be have Great Grand Kids the age of a typical Cub Scout.

Here' my story. How I got started. And what it has done for me.

About 60 years ago I was a senior in high school. Our school had one senior award that I thought would be really great to achieve. It was the award for best student/ athlete.

My athletic capabilities were let's say above average but not going to do much for my life goals. I lettered in soccer. I lettered in basketball. And I was a fairly good baseball pitcher.

Academically, let's just say I was in pretty good shape.

So. I decided to go out for spring track and focus on the mile run. Why I chose the mile I don't know. But I was too slow for anything else. And I was too weak for any field event. So, the mile it was.

To my surprise, shock actually, I won my first race and also every other mile race that year. Running it turned out was by far my best sport and I would never have known that had I had not tried to win the senior award.

Now, here's what running has meant to me.

1. I can say simply I got my college education through running. We didn't have great scholarships for runners. The football team had all of those. But I did get all kind of jobs which paid for my college costs. In short, not a runner……. no college. No college…….. no successful career.
2. I met my wife of now approaching 60 years through running. How? We'll I was there for preseason training and she was there as a frosh, one year behind me. I couldn't be more proud of the legacy we have left together.
3. On the unique side, I owe my career to running. One afternoon, as we always did, showing up at the coach's office around 4:00 PM, I asked him: "Doc Tuttle if you would ever have worked in industry, who would you have worked for?" He said: "There's a great company in Minnesota called Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing".

I asked: "How do you know about that company, spending your whole life in western NY?"

His answer: "Well, I got my PhD from Illinois and there's a great connection with (3M)."

About 3 years later just before graduating I went to the annual meeting of our technical society in Philadelphia. As I walked into the hotel lobby there it was: "Interviewing today, Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing". I said "Hot Dog. That's the company Doc Tuttle told me about."

The rest is history and it was a perfect fit for me.

1. Finally, running kept me from smoking……..one of the single worse things someone can do to damage their health. In our college days, almost everyone smoked. Cigarettes were given out free in small packages. They hooked everybody. I was fortunate because all my friends knew runners couldn't smoke so they did not tempt or taunt me.

Runners fall into two baskets. About 1% or possibly less run to compete. I'm in that basket. At 77 I still train 7 hours per week, sometimes up to 10 or more if I'm really working on a race. All this is for just a few seconds per mile. Crazy? Yes. But a few seconds is the difference between winning and losing.

The second basket is the other 99%. They pound the streets and run when their schedules permits. They have families and careers and still find time to run. They often run with friends. They enter races mostly for the social value.

I respect every runner regardless of how fast they run. Every time I see someone finishing a race who is disadvantaged in some fashion, I actually choke up.

Now you've heard my story. I would only hope one or more of you young folks could benefit from running as I have.

In today's world every young person needs an anchor. "Run for Life" has been a defining anchor for me. I truly hope it might be so for you. Now having said all this, everyone needs the encouragement to start running. It's not like going out to the ball field and hitting ball. Someone has to take the time to encourage you. This is simply how runners get started. Someone or some event helps us get started and then we simply "Run for Life" and all the benefits that will bring.

Larry Eaton

September, 2015