

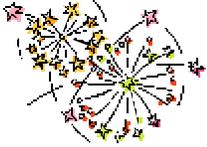


# THE NEW YORK WALKER

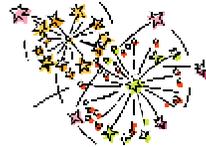
A Special Edition

Winter 2007

Volume 2, Issue 4



## A New Year is Coming!



### *Hi Walkers!*

As the year ends and a new one begins, one would wonder, can they be better than the year before?

Well discarding wealth and thinking about health the job comes basic. Start off with a check up. Many only go to see the doctor when they are ailing. Just because you are happy with your appearance and feeling no pain, that is not a guarantee of a healthy person.

Focus on being a smarter athlete instead of harder training. Take a little more time with your warm-up and cool-down. Alternate workouts; easy day, hard day, easy, hard, rest.

Write down your planned workouts, stick to them, and try not to do more, just because you are feeling good. Get one hour more sleep a night; take that afternoon nap if you can.

Set short and long-term goals, and keep it real. This will help your self esteem. Drink more water and eat more veggies and less meat. Keep the workouts fun; start off slow and develop the groove before picking up the pace. Ask fellow walkers to tell you about your style, so you can put in a positive adjustment. Always focus on technique over speed. The most common setback in any sport is injuries.

Check your walking shoes because they don't last forever. I like to buy two pair at the same time; one I will wear most of the time and the other once in a while. When I can feel a difference, then it is time for a replacement.

An active lifestyle is the key, so don't keep it to yourself. Spread the love and teach a friend or neighbor. Invite them to our clinic; each one, teach one. What a great gift! An active lifestyle makes a sound mind, in a sound body, in a sound community.

### Healthy Holidays

*Coach Lon*

"Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right"

*Oprah Winfrey*

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## Let's Hit the Woods!: Hard facts on soft trails

As race-walkers (and runners), what do we want from our sport? Get faster, get stronger, lose weight, have fun, and stay uninjured. With the latter goal in mind, running publications have for many years espoused the benefits of trail running. The typical article, accompanied by an advertisement for an expensive trail-running shoe, lays out the pros and cons associated with different running surfaces. The aim is to choose a surface that minimizes the impact on bones, joints, and other soft tissues, and – by extension – minimizes the potential for injury. Running on grass and woodland trails are usually favored. [Of course, there are the usual disclaimers to avoid tripping over roots, falling into holes, etc.] Other favored surfaces are synthetic and cinder tracks. The well-maintained trail around the Central Park Reservoir is a nice example of the latter. At the bottom of the list are asphalt and concrete surfaces. Accordingly, the typical article concludes that we should all “Hit the Woods”!

The argument is convincing and I buy it. In 2003, I laid off from race-walking, when worsening pain and foot numbness from herniated discs and spinal stenosis drove me to undergo back surgery. I made my “come-back” the next year and completed the 2004 NYC Marathon. However, marathon training was punctuated by recurrent calf strains and shin splints. [FYI, the term “shin splint” describes pain in the tibia that is produced when muscle pulls away from bone. It is one step short of a stress fracture].



I trained for another marathon in 2005, but this time did a majority of training on the dirt and crushed stone trails of the Rockefeller Preserve in Westchester County. After every long walk, I jumped in the ice bath, in hopes of reducing joint inflammation. Much to my delight, I managed to avoid injury until the bitter end of the training cycle. [A hamstring strain, no doubt due to “over-use”, was a little disconcerting but did not stop me from completing the 2005 NYC Marathon]. I attributed my relatively injury-free season to doing my workouts on the trails. To my chagrin, lab research does not support the belief that running (or race-walking) on very hard surfaces creates a higher risk of injury. Feehery RV et al [Clin Podiatr Med Surg 1986;3:649] found that ground-reaction forces at the foot and the

shock transmitted through the body all the way up to the head varied little as the runner moved from very soft to very hard surfaces. Ferris DP et al [Proc R Soc Lond Biol Sci 1998;265:989] offer a potential explanation: “All running animals coordinate the actions of the muscles, tendons and ligaments in their legs so that the overall leg behaves like a single, mechanical spring during ground contact”. In others words, runners and walkers create “soft” legs when they move across hard surfaces and “stiff” legs” when they move across soft surfaces. It gets even more confusing when you factor in the role of running and walking shoes. Robbins SE and Gouw GJ [Med Sci Sports Exercise 1991;23:217] conclude that the cushioning from running and walking shoes “creates a feeling of comfort which ‘knocks out’ an athlete’s intrinsic musculoskeletal defense mechanisms against impact forces and perhaps increases the risk of injury”. What is a confused race-walker to do? My recommendation: Do what works for you.

For three years, I have called the Rockefeller Preserve my home away from home. There are miles and miles of dirt and crushed stone trails to explore, interesting flora and fauna to observe, gorgeous scenery, lots of opportunity for hill work-outs, and reasonably injury-free training. And I do wear running shoes. Of course, if race-walking barefoot on the sidewalks of Flatbush Avenue is your thing, that’s cool too.

**David Wolf**

## Not the Last on FIRST

In a previous newsletter, I detailed how the training program developed by FIRST, the Furman Institute of Running and Scientific Training, could get runners and race-walkers to the marathon finish line. The FIRST program promises marathon training on “3 days per week”. However, two of those three days are FAST, with speed workouts and tempo workouts. The “long walk” is pretty much the standard that we are used to. The rest of the week is filled with cross training. In the end, FIRST lived up to its billing. I crossed the finish line of the 2007 NYC Marathon within 1 minute of my finish time in 2005. And that was with 28% less training mileage! Between July 1 and Marathon Sunday, I logged 513.5 miles in 2005 (mean 28.5 miles per week, maximum = 46 miles per week). That contrasts with

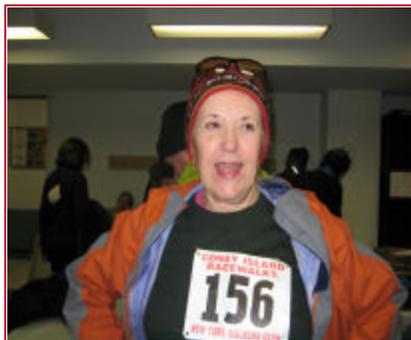


367.5 miles in 2007 (a mere 20.4 miles per week, maximum = 29.5 miles per week). For me, it was worth the trade off. Extra workout time was devoted to biking, swimming, and rowing. This summer, I completed my first triathlon, totally blasting through the run phase of the event. [I actually did run during the race, with no running training. It just goes to show that race-walking can get you in shape for other events]. I was also able to scull 3 days per week. [Plans for my debut in a rowing regatta were dashed when the event was cancelled on account of too much debris in the Passaic River!].

Now, it’s December and it’s time to make plans for a new year. Athletically, FIRST is sure to be part of the New Year’s resolution.

**David Wolf**

## Coney Island Racewalk



After coming off a late babysitting night, 2 little grandchildren 2 and 5, I went home hoping it would rain on Sunday or that my buddies, Rose and Sandy would call and

say they were tired and let's forget it. Well it did not happen. The phone rang at 7am and Rose's cheery voice came up "are you roaring to go?". I groaned into the phone and said "Oh yeah, been up already". "See you in 45 minutes she said". Off I was to a quick wakeup shower, getting dressed, glunking down my coffee, a kiss goodbye from my honey wishing me luck, and out the door. Well we breezed to Coney Island (Sandy's great directions, and driving ability) Upon arriving the excitement built up and I thought, I am glad we did it. It would have been easy to roll over but here we were. We lined up as the gun went off (hah, only fooling) and started pumping away. It was a cool brisk day and great for walking. I did get tired, but as it came

close to the end I felt more energized, and coming across the finish line was certainly invigorating. The fact that I won a medal really made me feel the accomplishment. I now have something new to look forward to. I intend to perfect my walking style, which I definitely know lacks perfection, and hope to continue walking and competing. I have my close friends to share this with and it has certainly opened a new door to a new experience. Thanks to Gary Brynes who got us started with his email about the Saturday program, thanks to Lon who motivates us every Saturday, and thanks to all the great people who are there walking. See you soon.

**Barbara Lee Chase**

## My Strange NYC Marathon Experience

If you check the results of the 2007 NYC Marathon, you'll notice that 2 Darwin Johnson's finished the race. The younger finished in 3:32 and the elder in 5:19. I race-walked my previous 4 marathons. However, when my son announced that he was running his 1<sup>st</sup> marathon, I started running again with the intent of running the race with my son. Along the way he became very fast. I knew that he could possibly run under 3:30. So I adjusted my goals and merely hoped to finish 30 to 45 minute behind. I got in fantastic shape, increased my speed sessions, increased my mileage, but aggravated an old hamstring injury during the very end (within seconds) of my final speed workout. I arrived in NYC after having not run or race walked for the prior 8 days. I expected to cancel, but decided to at least start the race after I saw the disappointment in my son's face. After all, I felt that I might be able to handle running a few miles and race walk the balance. At this point let me digress as I tell you about a series of interesting experiences that happened that weekend. For the prior 3 or 4 months I never got around to renewing my NY Walkers Club membership. So the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> I finally filled out my renewal form and was going to mail it. Since I didn't have a stamp, I decided to put it in my pocket and mail it later that afternoon. When I arrived at the expo the 1<sup>st</sup> person I ran into was Lon. No stamp needed. I just handed him the envelope.

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After picking up my number I received my goody bag from one of my brother's employees. He didn't even know that she left work for the expo. At the expo I stopped to talk with the medics about my sore hamstring. Of course they told me not to run. During marathon morning at Fort Wadsworth, I encountered that same medic as I was putting on Vaseline. That was the only medic that I spoke with during that entire weekend.

My son raised money for the Dystonia-Parkinson Foundation. Saturday evening we had dinner in midtown.

The fundraising chairman was very interested in my advice about the race. He was also running his 1<sup>st</sup> marathon. Would you believe that we arrived and entered Fort Wadsworth side by side. Again, this was just a strange coincidence. Saturday before the race I was approximately at mile 5.75 of the US Olympic Trials course. A woman came up to me to ask where was the best place to stand. After some conversation I asked her if she knew anyone in the race. She said that she was there to support her son-in-law Ryan Shay. I told her that I knew who he was and that he had a chance to contend for one of the 3 spots. Several minutes later the runners passed, but Ryan didn't. Little did we know that her son-in-law had just collapsed a 1/4 mile away. The 72<sup>nd</sup> St Transverse curves so we couldn't see what was happening around the corner. Several hours later I let out a loud gasp when I realized that Ryan Shay was dying a 1/4 mile away at the same moment that I was talking to his mother-in-law. Anyway, much to my surprise the next day I ran very, very slowly for 20 miles. Fortunately, I am also a race walker. So I race walked the final 10k. I was shocked that I finished and overjoyed by my son's performance. That was the end of a very MEMORABLE & STRANGE weekend. I didn't even mention that Lon was doing the hula hoop at mile 20.

**Darwin Johnson**

## A Long Walk off a Short State



The Breakers Marathon in Newport, Rhode Island had its third run this October 20, and its first run as a single loop course. Historically, it was a 50K/50M race, raced over an eight-mile loop in Middletown with the runners doing as many loops as necessary. It was the only marathon/ultra race in Rhode Island for years. In 2005, a marathon option was added in response to demand from the 50 States Marathon Club, and in 2006, the 50K was dropped. This year, the 50M was dropped and the course was changed to include much of Newport. There were 541 marathon finishers and 51 5-person relay teams. This is 50% more participation than in 2006! There was no time limit and the last finisher came in at 9:06, and the second to last at 7:34.

This race is the antithesis of the NYCM and is the quintessential 50 State experience. I was surrounded by many runners wearing either the white 50 State or the yellow Marathon Maniac jerseys. There were no Kenyans, few spectators,

no music, few porta-pots, and water stops every 3 miles. The course remained open to traffic with some police car protection, and the difficulty was definitely weighted towards the second half. Definitely an "E" ticket!

We met under a tent near downtown at 7am where there was plenty of breakfast for all runners and volunteers. At 8am, the gun went off and we ran through the historic part of Newport for the first mile. We then ran a loop around Fort Adams State Park with Narragansett Bay on our right and the remnants of historic Fort Adams on our left. We then got back on the road and headed out to Brenton Point State Park. This part of the race had rolling hills from miles 4.5 through mile 10. At Brenton Point, we got a great view of the Atlantic Ocean and we continued on the coastline until we reached Bellevue Ave at mile 10. Here, we passed by the famous Newport Mansions and we all shopped for our future retirement "cottage" (LOL). We reached our first real hill around mile 12 and we went up and down onto a little land bridge on Memorial Boulevard that connects Newport and Middletown at Easton's Beach.

We ran by the finish line at this point, and as I walked through, the fifth leg of the winning relay team was just coming in. Some people got discouraged because they knew we had 13 more miles to go before we'd see the finish line again. This was followed by another up and down hill that ended at Surfer's Beach. At mile 15, we entered the flat Sachuest Point Wildlife Refuge and did an out and back with wonderful ocean and marsh views where we saw people coming and going. At mile 17, we turned into the Norman Bird Sanctuary and started the hilly portion of the course. This portion was pretty much country and had many challenging hills. There were many vineyards, farms and farmhouses, and the spectator density went up and down according to the proximity of the nearest houses. It's basically a square around the Norman Bird Sanctuary neighborhood and ends at mile 25.

We passed the last official water station

at mile 22 (consistent with a 7.5 min/mile pace). (There is an unwritten rule of thumb that one should not drink water during the last 30 minutes of any race). There was an unofficial water stop set up by a nice neighbor at the 23 mile mark. Many reviewers on [marathonguide.com](http://marathonguide.com) thanked these people profusely since it was consistent with a 10 min/mile pace. At this point, the course became rolling hills again and we started to see more houses and everyone started to relax. Around mile 24, we turned a corner near the St George's Academy campus and the road just seemed to go up and up. This was the last and largest hill and it ended about mile 25. Ironically, the street is called Purgatory Road. We then had a long gliding downhill to endure. At this point, everyone was too tired to enjoy this much. We walked/ran through a business district and continued on to Memorial Boulevard and the finish line at Easton's Beach.

We received our medals and got on a bus that took us back to the starting line. I finished with a pretty high density of people and only had to wait 5 minutes for the bus. The ride was about a mile and took less than 10 minutes. At the finish line, I picked up my sweats, (runners had the option of having their sweats waiting at the finish line or the start line) and settled down to a nice sit-down lunch. The race organizers had a lobster for all marathoners and plenty of clam chowder for all runners, relay teams, and volunteers. There even were some slim vegetarian and kosher options. Not your typical NYCM experience!

I thoroughly enjoyed this marathon, and its toughness led me to a course record at NYCM two weeks later. My only complaint was that it rained the night before, and there was plenty of puddles on the road, and the environment was a bit foggy. I would definitely recommend this one to anyone looking for a change from NYCM or as a relay team event. (Just make sure you talk someone else into doing the last two legs).

Alexis Davidson



## GLORIA MERRIDY – RACEWALKER PERSONIFIED

This is about an outstanding race walker that has inspired many others and me with her spirit and enthusiasm for race walking and life. I met Gloria after taking Lon's race-walk class on a Saturday morning race walk. Over the months and years, I was impressed with Gloria's speed and commitment and sense of fun. She was fun to walk with and most of the time I could not even catch up to her.

Visiting Gloria's home, I saw the many medals, trophies, and ribbons she's collected over the years – almost fills an entire wall. Gloria loves the sport and sends her love and support to our New York Walkers Club.



Jodell and Gloria

Nereida, Vee, Lon, Bruni and I have been spending time with Gloria and we all are astounded at her continued zest for life. Gloria is fighting cancer and is currently in the Calvary Hospice. We honor and love Gloria and think of her every time we walk in Central Park.

Gloria just celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and we had champagne and cake with her. This is just to acknowledge how Gloria Merridy has inspired us all to keep walking and have a healthy lifestyle.

**JoDell Shields**

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The Executive Director and Staff would like to wish you and your family  
A Healthy and Happy Holiday Season!

**Rose Savage-Jackman, MPH**  
Senior Editor

