



President's Column

By Steve Moland

Gate City has dropped its long time membership in the RRCA for reasons of calculated necessity. I feel that a detailed explanation is required because on the surface, to many long time members, it would not seem like a wise thing to do. The Strider executive board would just as soon have ducked the entire situation, but it didn't seem prudent to do so.

Here's some background on what the RRCA is. I've not been involved in the good parts over the years so I'm sure this description is incomplete and if it's inaccurate, I hope it's only in details that are minor.

The RRCA is a long time running organization whose membership is mostly about 700 running clubs in USA. It was formed to provide the clubs with central information, running programs, annual wards, club recognition and most importantly, the procurement of reasonably priced liability insurance and a shareable non-profit status for running clubs that are not non-profit entities. Gate City was large enough to obtain its own non-profit status many years ago. That status is important because it helps with postal costs and it's a shell under which any profit from an event or excess dues can be held over to the following year. Without the status, the income is personal and taxable to someone. At least that's how I understand it.

Why did we drop our membership? The RRCA, which is run by a board of directors, had always been managed according to the wishes of the member clubs who had a heavy and functionally dominant input to decisions. The board seldom went counter to what the member clubs wanted. The current RRCA management feels it knows better about what to do than the members. Back over a year ago some of the board and/or the executive director attempted to grab more of the decision making authority but trying to get the by-laws changed to take some decisions away from the member clubs. There was a big donnybrook

over it and the member clubs were successful in stopping the attempt. During all this time, it now appears that the management crew was not keeping its financial house in order. The RRCA management has also gotten rather arrogant about being questioned about this stuff. Could a more common bell, announcing a bureaucracy in trouble, be tolling?

Member clubs, former RRCA presidents and board members pushed very hard to get information about the specific but were rebuffed. Other issues ensued and member club sympathetic board members who didn't like the direction of the RRCA were threatened with legal action by some other board members. There is a ton of memos and correspondence on this available for your review at <http://www.huntsvilletrackclub.org/RRCAForum/info.html>

The RRCA sent an appeal last summer to the member clubs for a volunteer donation to help offset what was stated to be a \$200,000 deficit. Gate City responded with the suggested donation of \$1 per member. After we did that, the real disquieting stuff started to happen. Rather than just admitting, they had screwed up big time and then just raising the dues and be done with it, the RRCA embarked on an intelligence insulting rouse over how the dues were going to be calculated for 2003. This consumed months of wasted time. Prior to all this the RRCA was noticeably detailed in response to any written questions. Once this started, they would send only brief, nothing type responses or would only call you back on the phone so that nothing was in writing. Even the phone calls were strained because it was clear the staff was told not say anything because the RRCA was issuing information releases that were not true and went counter to the content of their own written brochures and prior office administration forms.

The RRCA announced that dues would now be

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

calculated strictly on a member basis and not on the household basis that had been the practice for years. The RRCA's main statement on all this was that it was done to "clear up the confusion" over how the dues were calculated. There was no confusion and even though the bylaws of RRCA only refer to members, it has always considered a household as a member. Even the RRCA literature, brochures and prior year's dues assessment forms clearly stated that household counts are acceptable for a member count. "Households" recognizes that many clubs are family oriented and members often list non-running members of the family. The RRCA said it was appropriate that all members of families be charged because they might show up at an event to volunteer. Volunteers, member or not, are already covered under the event insurance for specific events. Almost every statement the RRCA said to try to justify their position was easily refutable with facts, yet they persisted in the charade.

The effect of this for many clubs was that their RRCA 2003 dues per family based on the number in the family would exceed the dues collected. Gate City's dues would have increased by almost 50 percent under the new edict. The RRCA even went so far as to engage a law firm to rule that it was OK to do this based on the bylaws. In the past the RRCA had asked the clubs how they wanted things to be handled.

Some directors resigned late last fall in protest and because their personal values on dealing the truth were in conflict with official line they had to follow while still directors.

Though members of Gate City had been involved more with the RRCA in the past and had attended their policy making conventions, our main functional reason for belonging today is the liability insurance for club activities and Directors and Officer (D & O) insurance. Faced with a huge dues increase and the haunting thought that businesses do stupid things when there isn't enough money to go around, it isn't a stretch to surmise the insurance carrier could possibly not being paid down the road, we had to seek away around this.

In seeking an alternative I found that thanks to the Enrons and the Arthur Anderson's of the business world, D & O quotes would put the cost to a number that was 25 to 40 times our \$175 D & O this current

year. Then there is requirement for liability insurance. Essentially, liability insurance because of what we do (like running on roads) is non-existent to non-group entities. The USATF has event insurance that would be more expensive and still wouldn't cover general club activities and is quite restrictive in the coverage of workouts and the environment in which they take place.

The solution to this problem was clear from the first insulting memo from the RRCA, making it happen was another thing. Some major clubs with the promised support of a bunch next level clubs including Gate City Striders, Monandnock Regional Milers and the new formed Moose Milers and Marathoners, along with former RRCA presidents and directors formed the American Association of Running Clubs (AARC) for the specific purpose of providing insurance and the shared non-profit status that so many clubs relied on. The AARC secured the same insurance, with the same underwriting rules, from same carrier, through the same agent as that of the RRCA. They got this done before 1/1/03 and the cost to Gate City is only 2/3rds of what our RRCA dues had been for the last few years.

This is not a situation to be savored, in spite of the monetary saving. The RRCA is a great concept and its demise would be a loss. Though AARC started with 20,000 members in late December and is currently up to 25,000 members, the AARC has clearly stated that should the RRCA return to its roots and become a member driven club again it will gladly accept a merger. This is quite possible because there are some larger clubs with memberships in excess of 10,000 members each who were buried by the dues increase and couldn't extricate themselves in time to avoid a 2003 membership in the RRCA. Their potential exit would put the final nail in a coffin that does not need to ultimately have an occupant. This is all too bad because it has taken a lot of organization energy, angst and fun from the member clubs management in the last year. If you would like to follow the AARC yourselves, their new home page is <http://www.huntsvilletrackclub.org/AARC/AARC.htm>

And final, you all have made an overwhelming response to the club survey. We didn't plan on the amazing 50 percent return and it's taking a bit longer to organized the results. We should have it for you at the annual meeting on February 19.

Dealing with the COLD

By Steve Moland

It's shaping up to be quite a winter. My training group is planning to run the Disney Marathon in January 2004 so in preparation for a fall/winter marathon we won't have to try to get some of our long runs in July & August. This past summer's heat served up some uncomfortable and unproductive long runs. Regardless of those memories, it seems that old saying about "being careful of what you wish for" is wreaking havoc. With faces often to be covered with Vaseline and a balaclavas as we are now encountering the opposite challenge in getting out the door and completing our long runs in preparation for the Boston Marathon. It's been a long winter already and I had lots of time to think about this long story.

Have my friends and I really found some extra courage to get out there and run in the cold? Well, a distance runner probably needs a bit of courage initially, but for the most part the secret is a recurring theme of mine. Some people think the secret is a "put-on", but that's exactly what high tech running apparel is. I believe in "putting it on" and I'm out there running. Others believe it's nothing but a big marketing "put-on" and they are not out there. Yes, I know there are some who can't afford the stuff, but cut me a break, I'm writing an opinion article here.

What also helps get me out the door is that I have faith and for the times when my faith waivers I remember that I hate running on my treadmill. (Not a miss spelling and I'll touch on the faith further on). I bought a better treadmill my second time around in an attempt to solve what I thought were issues why I didn't like my first treadmill. In the end it was clear that even if I bought the best treadmill available it wasn't going to matter. I tried the music, the TV, a fan, I even read a few chapters in book once and I'd sooner have my teeth cleaned. The only time I can endure the treadmill is when it's below 32F and the air has descending non-frozen water (rain), a somewhat rare and miserable scenario.

Enough of the drudgery stuff, let's shift to the positive side of this. Beyond the type of fabric, the other "secret" is layers, which is an old theme. This means one doesn't just go out and buy one techno item and complain that it is ineffective. That isn't going to work. How does one buy what they need? Mostly a reallocation of assets or an adjustment in attitude is how you do it, and I'll explain this later. What you need are wicking fabrics. Coolmax is a brand name that is often applied to all polypro wicking fabrics. Many of the other brand names have "Dry" or "DRI" somewhere in their names. Other synthetic fabrics, like nylon and rayon are not wicking and are like wearing a plastic bag.

HANDS - Once temperatures dip below 20F, hands can be warm with a pair of medium to light weight polar-fleece gloves over which you may place a lightweight pair of polar-fleece mittens. Once I've been running for a few minutes, most often I can remove my mittens. Because they are not thick they will fit easily in a pocket or waistband. Cost for each is only about \$10 from National Running Center. Oh, about size. If one perceives a tight fit, comfort may not last long. A minute air space is what is needed for the body heat to keep us warm, and a tight fit also cuts off the circulation just below the skin. Body heat arrives with fresh blood.

HEAD - As for the head, wool is wonderful, warm and nostalgic but it is too hot once we get moving, and I find it heavy. Again, the lightweight polar-fleece is good as a single layer, but a more flexible solution is using a hat made of two layers of thin polypro over which one can put a lightweight polar-fleece headband. Once we've been running and warmed up, most often we can remove one of these items.

FEET - The only time my feet have been cold is when are they are getting continually wet from slush. A double layer Coolmax sock normally does the job, heavy weight in winter and lightweight in summer. For the slush, I'd recommend an extra layer of very thin polypro socks; though slush is something I forget to think about until I'm already out the door. A comment about shoe size is important here. If your shoes are too small, little in this section may help and you may get cold feet no matter what. Remember the small air space concept. Also, if you get black toe or your toes hurt often after running, you've got an even better reason to wear larger shoes. Your feet can easily spread out a whole size once you run regularly. If shoes feel snug in the store, they won't get better later.

LEGS - For the legs there are tights that come in thin, medium, and heavier. Notice I said "heavier and not just "heavy". If it's heavy it will get too warm and/or your legs may feel like they are always lifting more than just themselves. Medium is about a 10-11 oz fabric and "heavier" for the real cold is 14 Oz fabric that has a tighter weave. \$30-50 will get you what you need. Medium also works great with deep cold if you wear those thin, silk-like long underwear bottoms. Because it's too bulky and too warm, there is no place for polar-fleece from the waist down while running. For men, at lower than 20F, particularly when there is a wind, a pair of shielded briefs are SO comfortable

(Continued on page 15)