Clausen Rolls On

Clermont, Florida, Feb. 13—His studies haven’t slowed Curt Clausen too much. Following up on his 30 Km title last month, the U. of Wisconsin law school student powered to his seventh national 50 Km title today with a 4:09:35 effort. He has won every title starting in 1998 except for 2001, when Philip Dunn beat him. Dunn was second today. However, it was only the second time in those seven wins he has failed to better 4 hours.

In the women’s race, Dorit Attias also defended her national title and followed up on a second place finish in the 30. Dorit’s 5:47:31 effort left her only competitor, Erin Taylor, well back.

The race started in with a definite chill in the air, but the sun warmed things considerably by mid race. However, a refreshing breeze kept things from getting really uncomfortable.

In the early going, Clausen and Dunn were joined by Canadian Tim Berrett as they journeyed along at a 5 min/km pace. However, Dunn was not having a good day and started to drop away at 15 Km. Behind those three, Theron Kissinger and Ray Sharp were together for the first half of the race, with Dave McGovern not far back. The 45-year-old Sharp, who just returned to racing last year after some 13 years away, looked good as the he went through the first 25 in 2:10:38—a pace that eventually proved to be a bit too quick. But, at 25, he was solid third, as Kissinger was forced into repeated pit stops.

Berrett was only a training spin and dropped out at 35 Km as he intended to. That left Clausen on his own, but he maintained his steady pace to the finish. Dunn, never comfortable, still managed to finish only about 6 minutes down. Sharp hung on well through the second half, but then slowed to about 58 minutes on the next 10. When he really hit the wall with a nearly 66 minute final 10, McGovern swept by to capture third place. Relative newcomer Ed Parrot found the going rough in the final stages, but hung on to go under 5 hours in fifth, holding off 50-year-old Steve Pecinovsky, who walked his first 50 in 1978. Kissinger struggled with stomach cramps to finish the race, but the judges pulled him at 48 Km as his form deteriorated along with his ailing body.

Attias had complained of illness before the race, but was strong throughout and took nearly 25 minutes off her winning time of last year.

The team title went to the newly formed team of veterans—Varsano’s Chocolates Racewalking—composed of McGovern, Sharp, and Pecinovsky. They will be joined by Paul Schwartzburg in shorter races. Steve reports that they consumed tons of chocolates during the race, taken from secret aid stations. Chocolate power is now with us. The results (note the ages; not too beat a dead horse, but we need more involvement, and young involvement in this event):

The Ohio Racewalker is published monthly in Columbus, Ohio. Subscription rate is $12.00 per year ($15.00 outside the U.S.). Editor and Publisher: John E. Jack Mortein. Address all correspondence regarding both editorial and subscription matters to: Ohio Racewalker, 3184 Summit Street, Columbus, OH 43202. E-mail address is: jmortein@colbusrr.com. Approximate deadline for submission of material is the 24th of each month.


The victory gives him 21 national titles, beginning with the 5 Km outdoors in 1996. Zach Pollinger, still a junior, battled to stay with Seaman, but gradually dropped away to claim the title in 2:29:63. Joe Trapani was more than a minute further back in third.

The win was much more hotly contested. Moore, Deb Huberty, and Maria Michta were together for the first half, when Michta, now walking for C.W. Post College, found the pace a little too quick and began to lose ground. Moore managed to open a gap on Huberty over the final 300 meters and crossed the line in a Championship record of 6:51.19, bettering Teresa Vail’s 6:53.58 in 1986. Huberty was just 5 seconds back. The Wisconsin pair of Moore and Huberty are now walking for the NYAC. Michta was a solid third in 7:14:28. The results:


Other Results


High School 1500 meters, New York City, Jan. 30-1. Ralph Pilgrim 8:01.31 2. Denise Jones 8:20.94 32 finishers, 2 DQs) Millrose Games and USATF


From other lands


Looking For A Race? Well, Here's the Place.

Fri., March 4  
Metro 3 Km, New York City, 7:25 pm (G)  
NAIA Collegiate Indoor 3 Km, Johnson City, Tenn.  
Indoor Mile, Kenosha, Wis., 6 pm (F)

Sun. March 6  
Los Angeles Marathon (Y)  
Youth 1500 meters, Open 3 Km, Indoor, Louisville, 11 am (R)  
10 Mile, Yellow Springs, Ohio (M)  
5 Km, Denver, 9 am (H)

Sat. March 12  
2.8 Miles, Seattle, 9 am (C)

Sun. March 13  
5 and 20 Km, Huntington Beach, Cal. (Y)  
USATF National Indoor Masters 3 Km, Nampa, Idaho (D)  
7 Km, Denver, 10 am (M)  
5 Km, Palo Alto, Cal. (P)

Sun. March 20  
5 Km, Denver, 9 am (H)

Fri. March 25  
Indoor 3 Km, Cedarville, Ohio (M)

Sun. March 27  
5 Km, New York City, 9 am (G)

Sun. April 3  
Pan-Am Cup 20 Km Trials, 10 Km Junior, Men and Women,  
Hauppauge, N.Y. (DD)  
4 Mile, Denver, 9 am (H)  
Mt. SAC Relays 10 Km, Pasadena, Cal. (Y)

Sat. April 9  
2.8 Miles, Seattle, 9 am (C)

Sun. April 10  
North Region 10 Km, Columbia, Mo. (T)

Sat. April 16  
10 Km, Seattle ©

Sun. April 17  
5, 10, and 20 Km, Kenosha, Wis. (F)

Sun. April 24  
Ron Zinn Memorial 10 Km, Wall Twp., N.J. (A)  
Ohio 15 Km, Middletown (M)

North Region 8 Km, Wisconsin (F)

Fri. May 6  
Howard Wood Dakota Relays 5 Km, Sioux Falls, S.D., 2 pm (K)

Sat. May 7  
Western Regional 5 Km, California (J)

Sun. May 8  
South Region 20 Km, Raleigh, N.C. (B)

Sun. May 15  
USATF National Masters 15 Km, Riverside, Cal. (Y)  
North Region and Jack Mortland 20 Km, Yellow Springs, Ohio (M)

FUTURE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AND INTERNATIONAL QUALIFIERS

2006

Feb. 3  Men's Indoor 1 Mile, New York City
Feb. 12  50 Km Open and Masters, Clermont, Florida
Apr. 9  World Cup Trials, Men, Women, and Juniors, Hauppauge, N.Y.
June 3  10 Km and junior 3 Km, Niagara Falls, N.Y.
Aug. 6  15 Km open and junior, Watertown, Mass.
Sept. 10  40 Km Open and Masters, Ocean Twp., N.J.
Nov. 12  Masters 20 Km, Clermont, Fla.
Oct. 6  5 Km, Kingsport, Tenn.
TBD  15 Km Masters, 20 Km Open, Junior 10 Km, and 30 Km Open and Masters

2007

Feb. 2  Men's Indoor 1 Mile, New York City
Feb. 11  50 Km Open and Masters, Clermont, Fla.
April 3  Pan Am Cup Trials, Men, Women, and Juniors, Hauppauge, N.Y.
April 5-6  Pan Am Cup, site to be determined
June 2  10 Km and junior 3 Km, Niagara Falls, N.Y.
FROM HEEL TO TOE

Top 100 Lists. In the January issue, I ran tables ranking nations by the number of walkers in the top 100 for 2004 at 20 and 50 Km for men and 10 and 20 for women. I noted that I had forgotten the source of the tables. Wayne Armbrust has reminded me that the tables were compiled by Roger Ruth. He does these lists for all track and field events. The question now is where does he get his top 100 lists to compile the tables. Bob Bowman notes some errors in the tables based on the racewalking lists compiled by Emmerich Gotze, probably the world's leading RW stat guy (and the source of the top 40 lists I published in the December issue). Bob notes that China had only 16 in the top 100 at 20 Km for men, not 20, while Russia has 23 not 19. The 100th performer is at 1:23:27, not 1:23:44. For the men's 50, China has 27, not 26, in the top 100, with the 100th performer at 4:06:26, not 4:04:18. In the women's 20, China has 22 in the top 100, not 20, and Russia 18, not 19. The 100th performer is 1:34:35, not 1:35:02. So, while not particularly accurate, the tables still provide a picture of the power centers of racewalking across the world. Thanks to Wayne and Bob for keeping me straight.

Clinical. The Indiana RaceWalkers Club, in conjunction with the National Institute for Fitness and Sport, is sponsoring a racewalking clinic conducted by Jeff Salvage on March 19 and 20 in Indianapolis. Jeff will analyze technique through observation, digital photos, and video, and provide immediate feedback on strengths and weaknesses. The clinic will run from 9 to 4 each day at a cost of $145 per person. For more information contact Jeff at WalkingProductions, 79 North Lakeside Drive, Medina, NY 14553 or David Harriman at david.harriman@bxglobal.net. Racewalking marriage. Belatedly, we bring you news (or perhaps it isn't news to you) of a marriage made in racewalking heaven. It comes belatedly because the grapevine only recently spread to the Ohio Race Walker. Anyway, not to keep you in suspense any longer, international walkers of years past and long-time contributors to the sport in many ways Maryanne Torrelbls and Ron Daniel were married last July on Mt. Shasta. Maryanne says the event was in July because that's the best time to climb Mt. Shasta. She notes parenthetically that the Mt. Shasta site is another story—perhaps one she can be persuaded to tell us at some time. Anyway, Ron had closed out his work at Lockheed in California and is in the process of moving to Connecticut to join his lovely wife. Our congratulations to a pair who have found a lot of space in these pages through the years.

So, when you see Maryanne Daniel mentioned in future issues, be it known, she is not a newcomer to the sport. Korzeniowski retirement official. In a recent letter from the Polish Athletics Association, the IAAF has been informed of the official declaration of retirement by the world's greatest ever race walker (Ed. The IAAF's words, not ours, but we might be hard put to argue the point), Robert Korzeniowski. The 36-year-old Pole, who is the reigning World, Olympic, and European champion and World record holder for the 50 Km racewalk wrote to his national federation on Jan. 14 to confirm that his sports career officially ended on December 31, 2004. When Korzeniowski won his third Olympic 50 Km gold (he also has one at 20 Km) in Athens last summer, it was understood that marked his international retirement from the sport. However, when he competed in a couple of minor races in the fall—a 5 Km win (19:14.74) in Krakow on Sept. 11 and a 10 Km win (39:36) in Piacenza on Sept. 26—questions were raised about how official his retirement was. His statement would seem to end such speculation. Shoes for Ghana. This from Dave McGovern: "It's time again for another shoe and fund drive to support racewalking in Ghana. If you have any racewalking shoes or racewalking flats in reasonable condition that you are not using, they will be gladly worn by the Ghanaian racewalkers for training and racing. Vincent "ace Walker" Asumang is coming for a training camp at the end of the month. He will collect shoes, and will also be bringing new "Let's Walk" Ghana t-shirts. I've requested that he include the "Elephant Ointment" logo on the back. The grapevine says some have been upset that some of the World Cup shirts had the EE logo while others wound up with Energizer or Parlay's biscuits. Seems like everybody wanted to show their support for the Elephant Ointment." Well, now that I've typed that, I realize that he was referring to the end of February, which will have passed by the time you read this. However, I'm sure shoes would still be accepted and t-shirts available ($20 each). Send shoes to Dave McGovern, 96 Maiden Lane, Kingston, NY 12401, or check Dave's web site at www.racewalking.com, or contact Dave at rayzwocker@aol.com.

Another Ladany connection. Robert Ready in Los Alamos, N.M., a long-time subscriber referenced our article about the Shaul Ladany-Kevin Eastler connection when he wrote: "I knew Tom Eastler while I was graduate student at Columbia from 1964 to 1969. Like Tom, it was Shaul who got me into walking. Tom and I did several races together. I saw Tom in the DC area a few years after we left New York City, but I have not corresponded with him in about three decades. While in New York, I did many races with Shaul. We often rode with John Kelly in John's VW Beetle. Shaul always sat in the Beetle's tiny rear seat. I once asked Shaul if he wanted to switch and ride in front, but he did not want to do so. He later told me that John's habit of turning his head for long periods of time to talk to us while driving got him very nervous, and he felt safer in the rear seat." Speaking of John Kelly. And since John Kelly's name has come up, I may as well betray a confidence at the risk of breaking up a marriage and a friendship. Kati Kelly, John's wife of a few years and my high school classmate (she was Kati Rhoads), sent me some clippings a few days ago with a note: "John would be embarrassed to send these, but I'm so proud for him that I will. It's just for your information..." Well, I had intended to honor that admonishment, but now that John's name has innocently come up, I feel our tight-knit racewalking community should know of honors within the group. So, please forgive me John and Kati, but I announce to the world: Back in his native Ireland, the Annual Tipperary United Sports Panel Cidona Awards are a cherished annual event. One of the great highlights of this year's evening of awards in early February was that of the Knocknagow Cidona Awards to a noted sportsperson of the same name. John Kelly are we talking about, originally from Loughmore, Ireland. The award came for his many accomplishments in many athletic endeavors. And while we are embarrassing John and betraying Kati, just a bit about our hero. He represented Ireland in the 1968 Olympics in the 50 Km racewalk, represented the U.S. in both long-distance running and racewalking, won Golden Gloves boxing titles in Australia in 1953, narrowly missed making the Australian Olympic team as a hammer thrower in 1956, has won many Masters titles in racewalking, won the Philadelphia Marathon (running) in 1964, and in 1973 walked the 120 miles across Death Valley in blistering temperature in a record 34:09:09. So let us extend our congratulations and all celebrate with the rad-faced Mr. Kelly. I hope I am forgiven... The Byrd outcome. Sometime ago we had an item about the unfortunate suspension of Junior race walker Dominic Byrd on a doping violation. Here is the happy outcome. On Feb. 17, the 18-year-old was found by the US Anti-Doping Agency not to be in violation of doping rules, and was released from his provisional suspension. The case stemmed from a prescription medication containing a small amount of an amphetamine.
Dominic has been at Virginia Intermount University on a racewalking scholarship since January, but has yet to establish his academic eligibility. Look for him to compete sparingly until the school declares him ready. He's aware of the major junior competitions on the calendar. Thanks to Dave Gwyn for this information. 

Racewalk retreat. The 10th Annual NW Regional Retreat will be held in Beavertown, Oregon May 20-22. The Retreat is presented by EvoFit and Associates and is conducted by coaches Judy Heller, John Hanan II, and Kelly Murphy-Glenn. This year, two-time Olympian Philip Dun is returning to Oregon as a guest coach. 

The staff welcomes walkers of all levels of experience as they cover technique, rule, flexibility and mobility drill, stretching, injury prevention, nutrition and proper footwear, and offer hands-on, one-on-one coaching. Visit www.evorfit.com for further information, testimonials, and the registration form.

Would You Believe? 40 Years!

After a run of almost 3½ years, Chris McCarthy's Racewalker newsletter (originally the Midwest Walker) had disappeared with the "Early Summer 1964" issue. Chris had started in February 1961. So, Jack Blackburn says to Jack Mortland, "We should start a newsletter on our sport," or some such words. Mortland reluctantly says "OK." Thus, in March 1965, we launched the Ohio Racewalker. Mortland had an MA in Journalism, though he wasn't a practicing journalist, so he became Editor and Blackburn took on the Publisher title. He had access to a ditto machine as Supervisor in the Columbus Recreation Department. (Marty Mortland—nee Wright—had been one of his recreation leaders and that's how Marty and Jack got together, but that was earlier, and as Maryanne Daniel would say, another story.) The ditto machine meant Jack B got to take care of the reproduction and mailing along with contributing some material.

A few early readers may remember ditto machines—a ditto master produced perhaps 100 copies in a bluish-purple shade. But the first issue went to perhaps 20 or 25 walkers across the country for whom we had an address. The first page of my copy of that first issue is now partly illegible, but the other pages can be read rather easily. It was five pages of local news and upcoming local races, except for the Editor's reflections on his 1964 Olympic experiences. And, there was a statement of policy, which read:

"With the thought that too little is written about the sport of racewalking, we bring you the first issue of the Ohio Racewalker. On these pages each month you will find complete news coverage of walking in this state, plus any results we receive from elsewhere, together with features and commentary on racewalking in general. In short, any information on the sport that we come across, and that is of sufficient significance, will be passed on to you, the reader. (And one comes across so little on racewalking it is hard to imagine anything of too little significance.)

Our purpose is mainly to present information and news on the sport (and to keep our own names in print) and we are not planning any crusading-type journalism. However, when controversy arises in any way regarding our sport, we will not hesitate to take a strong editorial stand. At the same time, we make our pages available for the opinions of others, though they may disagree with our own.

Any news, comments, criticisms, or general features on walking from our readers will be more than welcome. We are sending this first issue to you for free. Future issues will sell for ten cents a copy or $1.20 a year.... Needless to say, editorial preference will be given to material that comes in envelopes also containing $1.20.)"

Except for a 1000 percent increase in price, I think we have kept fairly close to that

The second issue was still mostly local news, although the schedule of races now included races in New York and even Canada. The only national news was labeled, surprisingly "National News" and read as follows: "It may not be news to anyone else, but we just learned while reading Long Distance Log that Ron Zimm is now a married man. Congratulations to Ron, and we selfishly hope that he is one of those who cannot mix athletics and marriage." We had received our first letter from a reader, Arne Richards in Chicago, primarily a runner who had dabbled in racewalking. Arne wrote:

"Since I am enclosing $1.20, I assume you will print any nonsense I should write.

You are following in the noble footsteps of one Christopher McCarthy (the Fearless one), and I trust you will present the news (while keeping your own names before your admiring public) and do your bit to promote a grand sport—cheers!

Personally, I use racewalking to (1) get to class quickly, especially right after meals, (2) get up long hills in the last part of marathon runs, when the other plodders are just walking (you know what I mean), (3) get the soreness out of my legs the day after a long race, (4) discourage people (especially cops) who see me gaily racewalking along the local sidewalks late at night! More darn fun."

Our comment on Arne's letter: "As you see, we will print any nonsense when accompanied by cash. Even when not accompanied by cash. Our publisher, who opens the mail, failed to find the above mentioned $1.20, but we are generous with our space (also desperate to fill it). And maybe Blackburn was smoking one of his foul cigars at the time he opened Arne's letter and inadvertently burned up the $1.20, or maybe he is just holding out on me. Anyway, Arne, thanks for the moral support, but please don't compare us to the lecherous Chris McCarthy, noted for his yellow journalism, and the man who folded up his rag just after receiving generous contributions from Ohio Track Club members. And a man we have yet to hear from our new venture, after years of faithful support for his sheet. And we will continue to send him a free copy and say nasty things about him until we at least get a postcard. Thanks for reminding us of that fink."

Actually, we liked Chris and we did eventually hear from him and get a subscription, but we were a bit irrevocable in those days. Not sure if we ever got the $1.20 from Arne.

By the May issue, news from around the country and even from England was making our pages and we were off and running. It remained as a ditto publication through the September 1968 issue, when Blackburn left Columbus. It thus became a man-operation, and we turned to mimeograph reproduction for lack of a ditto machine (and perhaps because our circulation had risen to a point beyond the capabilities of a single ditto master.) The subscription rate was up to $2.00. That first issue in the new format covered the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.

We went to our printed format with the January 1972 issue, though we goofed on setting margins and had to reduce it to a nearly unreadable type size to get it to fit the format. That was ironed out the next month and we apologized and provided a capsule review. We also received a record number of letters, all commenting on the new format... not favorably but for one, which must have been tongue in cheek, but no one dropped their subscription. Our little publisher's blurb that month read:

"The Ohio Racewalker is a monthly collection of unedited news, opinion, and miscellaneous on the world of racewalking hastily prepared at the last moment by Jack Mortland. Subscription rate is 2½ bucks per annum. Address all correspondence to 3184 Summit St., Columbus, Ohio 43202. My wife tells me that this copy is replete with errors and omitted words,
Indoor 2 Mile (which had replaced the I Mile and eventually stretched to today’s)
couldn’t avoid being lapped on the 22-yard track. The next day, the traveling duo contested a
35 Years Ago

Ester Marquez ... Bob Henderson captured the OS-U Invitational 3 Mile in 21:52. In the
Ron Kulik, Todd Scully, and Dave Romansky followed closely (13:43 for Romansky) ... The
had a 6:16 mile in Baltimore and an American record of 5:50.2 for 1500 meters in New York.
record 20:48, a second ahead of Gochvin.

National Indoor 1 Mile title race, 6:14 to 6:19.7. Ron Kulik was third in 6:20.5, Steve
Looking Back

35 Years Ago (From the February 1970 ORW)—Dave Romansky topped Ron Laird in the
National Indoor 1 Mile title race, 6:14 to 6:19.7. Ron Kulik was third in 6:20.5, Steve
Hayden fourth in 6:22.5, Larry Walker fifth in 6:23.7, and Floyd Godwin sixth in 6:29, just
0.1 ahead of Ron Daniel. ... Laird and Godwin flew into Columbus the next morning and
hooked up in a hot Indoor 3 Mile at the OSU Invitational. Laird just won in an American
record 20:48, a second ahead of Godwin. Our old editor, a spry 35, managed 22:05, but
couldn’t avoid being lapped on the 22-yard track. The next day, the traveling duo contested a
15 Km race in Denver. I guess there was a craving to race in those days ... Romansky also
had a 6:16 mile in Baltimore and an American record of 5:50.2 for 1500 meters in New York.
Laird was named recipient of the 1969 Ron Zinn Award as the outstanding walker in the
U.S., the fifth time he had won it in its 9 years of existence.

30 Years Ago (From the February 1975 ORW)—Ron Daniel walked off with the National
Indoor 2 Mile (which had replaced the 1 Mile and eventually stretched to today’s 5 Kms in
13:36.8, with Ron Laird and Larry Walker both less than a second behind in a blanket finish.
Ron Kulik, Todd Scully, and Dave Romansky followed closely (13:43 for Romansky) ... The
women’s 1 Mile title went to Sue Brodock in 7:22.5, 3 seconds ahead of her sister Linda and
Esther Marquez ... Bob Henderson captured the OSU Invitational 3 Mile in 21:52. In the
5-year interval, your editor had slowed to 23:17, but took second, although still lapped.
Henderson posted a 45:24 for 10 Km in Champaign, Illinois (indoors) the next afternoon
after riding all night in the Mortland car (and also competing in the National 2 Mile in New
York the night before the Columbus race, as he apparently tried to match the Laird-Godwin
odyssey. Young Jim Heiring showed his potential in Champaign with a 47:35 and your editor
came third in 50:07 ... Sue Brodock had a world’s best of 7:15.2 for 1 Mile in Los Angeles
and then bettered that with a 7:13.9 ... Vladimir Golubichiev, nearing age 40, won the 3 Mile
in the US-SSSR indoor dual in a world’s best 19:46.2. Veniamin Soldatenko edged out Ron
Laird for second, 20:24.8 to 20:27.6.

25 Years Ago (From the February 1980 ORW)—Marcel Jobin of Canada won a 1 Mile race in
the Houston Astrodome in a blazing 5:54.6, a North American best. ... Two weeks earlier, Jim
Heiring had done 5:57.5 in L.A. In that same L.A. meet, Sue Brodock recorded a women’s
world best of 6:58.1 ... Jeff Ellis, U. Of Wisconsin Stevens Point, won the NAIA 2 Mile in
13:53.4, with Mel McGinnis second ... Chris Hansen did 5:54.6, a national record.

20 Years Ago (From the February 1985 ORW)—U.S. Indoor titles went to Jim Heiring at 2
Miles in 12:07.5 and Teresa Vaill at 1 Mile in 6:58. Tim Lewis was nearly 20 seconds
back of Heiring with Gary Morgan third and Tom Edwards fourth. Maryanne Torrellas trailed
Vaill by 5 seconds with Esther Lopez on her heels. Carol Brown and Susan Liers were fourth
and fifth. ... France’s Gerard Lebeuf won the World Indoor 5 Kms title in 10:06.22. Maurizio
Damilano, Italy, was second in 19:41, Australia’s Dave Smith third in 19:16.04, and
Czechoslovakia’s Roman Mrzou fourth in 19:39.73. Jim Heiring set an American record on

Bucharesti ’81

A racewalking odyssey by Ray Sharp

World University Games, 1981 in Bucharest, Romania (Bucharesti) was a highlight
of my athletic career, not for the quality of the performance but for the quirky memories that I
treasure as the true ribbons and medals of my racewalking years.

It was the apex of the Cold War, seven months after Reagan’s first inaugural, when
Peter Timmons and I were selected for the 20 Kms race in the Soviet-bloc capital once known
as the Paris of the Balkans for its wide, tree-lined boulevards and immaculate rose gardens.
By 1981, Bucharest had lost some of her gracefulness, her soulful simplicity. To racewalking
experts, Bucharest looked like a world-class racewalking capital with Canada’s
Micheline Rohl won the World Cup Trial 10 Kms race, 45.12 to 45.26. Lyn Brubaker was
distant third in 46:52, 10 seconds ahead of Teresa Vaill. Debora Van Orden took the final
spot on the team in 47:22. In the men’s 20 Kms Trial, Allen James led Dave McGovern by 12
seconds in 1:28:21. Andrew Herrmann (1:28:47), Philip Dunn (1:29:29), and Rob Cole
(1:29:21) filled out the top five. Will Van Axen (1:29:41) just missed the team ... In an open
10 Kms race with the women’s trials at Walt Disney World, Rob Cole did 44:16.
5 Years Ago (From the February 2000 ORW)—It was cold (sub 50 F), rainy, and very windy
in Sacramento for the Olympic 50 Kms Trial race, but the conditions couldn’t deter Curt
Clausen, Andrew Herrmann, and Philip Dunn who captured spots on the team. Clausen
was doeged by Hermann for 45 Kms, but broke free to win in a brilliant 3:56:16 with Hermann
in 3:57.56. Dunn came home third in 4:07:00 and was on the team, having gone under the
4 hour qualifying standard in an earlier race. Jonathan Matthews was fourth in 4:21:39. ... The
day before the Trial race, both Tim Seaman and Danielle Kirk broke American 20 Km
records on the track in Sacramento. Kirk had 1:38:19 and Seaman 1:24:25.4. In the women’s
race, Susan Armenta was second in 1:38:54. Denmark’s Claus Jorgensen followed Seaman
in 1:25:51.4, with Kevin Eaker third in 1:26:08.8
probably running the 400 and 800 in those days, before the years she blazed bright across the American walking firmament.

Pete had that tough-guy East Coast accent, like Dan O' Connor, Ron Kulik, Bob Mimm and most of the other great characters from the days when American racewalking centered around Madison Square Garden, Coney Island and Long Branch. Pete, like Dan, loved good conspiracy theories and the intrigue of the era, and spent much of the next three weeks reading Le Carre and Follet and imagining KGB agents behind every bush and across the aisles of the trolleys and buses we rode on our daily excursions around the city. Pete and I roomed with a javelin thrower. I forget his name, but it was not Petranoff.

We flew in on a USOC-chartered 707 full of runners and jumpers and throwers, swimmers and divers and gymnasts, fencers and weightlifters and wrestlers and coaches and managers and us, two 21-year-olds bound for glory and adventure. This was the only way in and the only way out, which many athletes discovered as they tried to leave after their races and join the European track circuit. As for me, every day in the athletes village with thousands of young and beautiful people and $20 per diem was another day well spent. WUG took over a university campus about 5 km from the city center where the stadium was located. The campus was bounded on three sides by high wire fences and on one side by a large creek or small river that had been turned into a straight channel between two steep banks.

I was feeling fit and confident. My 3-times-a-mile tuneup at a track near JFK was quick and smooth, something like 6:30, 6:20, 6:10. I was hoping to atone for a miserable April-May and a seventh place at the national 20 k. I had beaten Heiring and Scullly in the Indoor 2-Mile, and in March I won the 30 k over O'Connor and Evninuk, but in May I was suffering from acute overtraining syndrome. By June I had finished third in the 50 k in Seattle and won the 5 k in Sacramento the next week, so I was ready for a breakthrough 20 k performance.

We walked in the opening ceremonies on a hot afternoon after several hours of standing in the sun lining up. Too bad they hadn't invented water bottles yet. The ceremony was awe-inspiring. By evening I was flat on my back on a cot in a miserable cement-block dorm room with a 103-degree (39.4 C) fever, reading a poorly-written, predictable spy novel about a Mossad agent and his beautiful but dangerous true love. Two days until the race.

The race was a struggle, to say the least. I was up against a field of 10, and at least seven could probably kick my butt even if I was healthy. Chief among the "university students" was Olympic champion Maurizio Damilano. I warmed up well and stood grimly on the line, ready to accept my fate manfully.

The race left the stadium for 10 laps around a nearby neighborhood. The trees were large and the shade was ample. The conditions were pretty favorable for a good time, despite the mid-summer, mid-afternoon heat. I stayed with the pack through 5 km in about 21:30 and could still see the leaders at 10 km. I gradually slowed from there on as I succumbed to the effects of a 48-hour flu, but was still on pace for about 1:33, firmly in sixth place and gaining on fifth as I completed my tenth lap and approached the turn for the stadium in about 1:27 or 1:28. I can still see in my mind's eye the little Mexican walker head for the stadium and as I followed, two soldiers armed with rifles stepped in my path and pointed me to do another lap. I gestured wildly and spoke a bit of broken Romanian (their language is derived from Latin roots, not Slavic, and so I was able to get by a little) but they were firm in their insistence that the the American was going to walk another lap. I was completely spent by then, and although the additional lap was only 1600 or 1700 meters, I stumbled around and finally reached the track and the finish line in 1:45. To my surprise, Pete came in a few minutes after me. We were the only two walkers "mistakenly" sent on an extra lap. The coaches protested to no avail.

What ensued after I recovered my strength and good spirits was a couple glorious weeks marooned in Bucharest with free sports events to watch and nowhere to spend my per diem. One night we were guests at the American Consulate and enjoyed a great cookout in the back yard with lots of fancy, delicious food and cold beer, courtesy of the ambassador and the State Department. I went to lots of basketball and diving. I remember a Russian player who was at least 7 feet, 4 inches tall (224 cm) and had the grotesquely jutting chin and brow ridges of Frankenstein's monster (or someone who had taken a whole lot of HGH). I loved diving, both for the graceful perfection of the Chinese men and women, who were emerging as the world's best team, and for the sexy women divers who tossed their wet hair seductively and hugged at skin-tight lycra suits and walked all beautifully with their strong legs and butts.

One morning after working out we were out in the sun by the riverbank tossing a frisbee, chatting idly about how to pass another day, without a care in the world. The river was slow and murky and foul-smelling. In Eastern Europe at that time, factory farming and industrial production were definitely a higher policy priority than environmental regulation. Who knows what agricultural run-off or chemicals coursed through that putrid stew. The frisbee floated lazily on currents of warm air. I followed its path down the steep grassy bank and pulled in the frisbee like the say Hey Kid in cennet field at the Polo Grounds. I planted my two feet securely in bounds, swung my arms wildly, and tumbled head first into the river. It was deep, way over my head. I clung to the frisbee and swam wildly to shore, spitting and snorting all the way out onto the grass, sure I had been infected with cholera or radiation that would make me shrink to a height of one centimeter and I would have to battle the hairy spider with a straight-pin lance, or else my future child would grow to be 30 meters tall and terrorize small Oklahoma towns. I ran upstairs and jumped in the shower and scrubbed my skin and every bodily orifice, my clothes and my adidas marathon racing flats (the dark blue ones like Grete Waitz wore in the NY Marathon).

We spent the afternoons downtown, trying to have as much fun as possible without getting arrested. Basically, this entailed nervously changing twenty dollars for the local currency on the street and getting 10 times the official rate. Then we would head to the Western-style hotel tower, go to the top floor, and spend the rest of the day eating the most expensive dishes on the menu and drinking Pilsner Urquel beer, imported from Prague. Yummy. A great grandmother (my father's mother's mother) was Romanian, and she handed down a spicy eggplant recipe, a favorite of mine to this day. Communism had done little to diminish Romanian farming, and the food was excellent.

One night back at the dorm, things were getting a little desperate. The throwers, prodigious smokers all, were down to their last cigarettes and cans of snuff. They broke out the vodka and a bunch of us got more than a little tipsy. I tried chewing tobacco for the first time. I didn't fully understand how important it was not to swallow even a little bit of the juice, and I got suddenly and violently sick. I threw up all over those same adidas marathons. Ah, youth.

As Berni Kannenberg once said, all good things must come to an end. I went back to Waukegs to my parent's house for a month of training, and then to Valencia, Spain for the World Cup. I finished 28th out of 60 (only 15 teams and 4 walkers each) in about 1:32:30, second American and about two minutes behind Jimmy. Ernesto Canto, only a year my senior, won the race in about 1:24. My enduring memory of that trip was Vince O'Sullivan tossing a tiny Australian woman up and down in his long, red-haired arms on a third-floor balcony overlooking the pool, but that's another story from another trip.