



by Jacqui Becker

I've always loved to run. In high school I was an athlete: running track and playing basketball, and my junior and senior year running cross country. I remember thinking how tough it would be for me to ever go a whole week without running. After coming to college, I vowed that I would stay best friends with my running shoes and keep off the "freshman 15." Well, today I can't honestly say I have kept off those dreaded pounds, and the last time I ran was on Thanksgiving, much longer than a week ago.

Still, I thought I could go on a run without any problems, especially if it was with a couple of "older" professors who run every day on the ISU campus over the noon hour. After contacting Mike Whiteford, professor in anthropology, for details about his informal

running club of faculty members, he welcomed my interest and informed me that two members were recovering from injuries so the run would be "slow and short." No problem, I thought.

I arrived at Beyer Hall at 11:40 a.m. to begin our run. Out walked Mike leading the pack followed by Jack Moore, manager of the Midwest Planning Service, and Judy Vance, associate professor in mechanical engineering, who was proudly wearing her magenta windbreaker with bright blue running tights. Mike asks if it should be a four- or six-mile run for the day. Jack answers with a three-mile wish. I quickly agreed with that option; I hadn't run four miles since high school. Mike decides that the four-mile loop would be sufficient for the day.

So the race is on — down past the design

building up to the Armory then over to Stange. It's still the first mile, and so far I've been able to keep up without huffing too much. I begin to ask questions about how the three started running together, why they run, what keeps them going.

The runners began during the early '70s when Charles Sage, former professor at Parks Library, and several other professors decided to take up running to kick their smoking habits. "There was also a physical fitness fad that was going on at the time," Sage says. "Each person had different reasons. It just helped us have better general condition, which in turn helped our mental condition."

After years of leisurely running, the group began to train for the Cyclone Marathon in 1978. The meeting place of Beyer Hall was the beginning and end of the marathon as the

trail took them to Gilbert and back twice for the full 26 miles.

Over the years, many joined the group for its daily noontime runs. "We have had a very mixed, diverse group," Sage says. Through years of training the group became close, and Friday night became pizza night for the runners and their spouses. But as the originals retired, the group that was once booming with marathon trainees is now down to three dedicated trotters.

Mike has been with the group since 1989 and loves the break from his busy days working with students and going to committee meetings. Mike, along with Jack and Judy, is training for the Lincoln, Neb., Marathon on May 6. "It's really nice to get a break at noon when we run," he says. "There's actual physical conditioning that takes place."

Jack has been training hard since 1980 and has run 16 marathons. He loves being a part of the group for the health benefits, friendship, relaxation, and to take a break from the publications he works on every day. He recalls seeing the originals as "pretty common physical specimens" and if they could run and train seriously, he could as well. "I guess I needed motivation to run every day and saw the group as a way to get involved and stay involved," Jack says.

Their runs are mixed with discussion, allowing less concentration on the exercise and more on the socializing. "All of us who run together and who have run together over the years enjoy each other's company," Jack says. "We have the university and Ames in common, and those things provide a wealth of topics for us to debate and resolve while running."

Jack and Mike badger Judy, who joined the group five years ago, about her running apparel. Judy says she knows that if she's having a bad day over in the College of Engineering, the guys will always make her laugh. "It's a release — one of the few things I can do for myself," she says. "When I have to be a faculty member, a wife and a mother, it's nice to have one hour a day where I can go out and do something for me."

My legs were moving but not as fast as they should be, and my diaphragm was beginning to heave. I would never have dreamed of stopping to walk in my prime but now I was consciously fighting my body just to keep going. Luckily, they slowed down for me, the one who is 20 years old. I caught up with them and struggled for the next two miles.

Beyer Hall seemed far away, but I knew if I could last a few more minutes I could go home and collapse. The runners weren't having any problems at all. I wanted to finish well, but I ended panting and flopping to a stop.

After we were done, I realized that the runners had inspired me (as well as frustrated me). You have to admire that sort of dedication. They may be getting older, but their dreams of marathons haven't stopped. Judy confides that she's going to request treadmills in the "old folks home." Mike says he'll stop when he's gotten so slow that "I think I'm running, but I'm really standing still."

I say goodbye and Judy yells back, "Get out there and go running. It keeps you sane."

Jacqui Becker is a junior in journalism and a staff writer for Ethos.

CLUB STATS



Name: Mike Whiteford
Age: 55
Profession: Professor in anthropology
Running since: 1980
Marathons completed: eight
Favorite marathon: Grandma's

Marathon outside Duluth, Minn.
Favorite running shoes: Mizuno
Longest injury break: Two weeks with a heel injury



Name: Jack Moore
Age: 57
Running since: 1980
Profession: Manager at Midwest Planning Service
Marathons completed: 16
Favorite marathon: Grandma's

Marathon outside Duluth, Minn.
Favorite running shoes: New Balance
Longest injury break: Two weeks



Name: Judy Vance
Age: 47
Running since: 1984
Profession: Professor in mechanical engineering
Marathons completed: Injured before Lincoln, Neb., marathon last year

Favorite running shoes: Asics
Longest injury break: Six months for a stress fracture in pelvis

