



Wolftracks

Newsletter of the Wolfpit Running Club

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Dear Wolfpitters:

Welcome back to **Wolftracks**, this time letter **number 48**. We are on the **eve** of an important event: **the running of the 40th Ridgefield Pamby Half Marathon**. The preparations for this events have seen a fortuitous cooperation between, on one side, Wolfpit Race Director and President, **Rick Favier** and his team of dedicated, time-tested volunteers, foremost among them **Jim Gerweck**. On the other side, and **new this year**, an important resource was added to the mix: **Megan Searfoss**, **co-owner of The Ridgefield Running Company and creator of the nationwide Mother's Day races known as Run-like-a Mother**. It was Rick's vision that saw the tremendous potential of such a cooperation between two rather different cultures.

The proof of the pudding is always in the eating. It shall be tasted tomorrow, Sunday, October 2nd. But judging by the numbers of preregistrations, Megan's state-of the art marketing suggestions and implementation approaches, it is looking very good. The **Wolf maybe 40 years** old, but, under skillful guidance and given the loyal enthusiasm of many Pack-members, it is still capable of causing stir in the community.

Wolfpit may consider itself very fortunate with the appearance of Megan and her network of talented runners and aficionados/as) and, with a wink to Old Bogey of Casablanca, it looks like **it might be the beginning of a wonderful friendship**.

That said, there is a flipside to this. **Rick Favier**, our President and inhouse Race-Director par excellence, has announced that he wishes to give over the reins to someone younger. He has been at it tirelessly for decades, and has always been there to keep Wolfpit on course, with unfailing dedication and good cheer. It won't be easy to fill his shoes: and this not only in a metaphorical sense. We all know his physical presence alone is awesome. But what he has done for Wolfpit and the sport of running is even more substantial. In recognition of that, we have dedicated this edition of **Woftracks** entirely to **Rick Favier**. The result is in your hand, or on your screen. Many of you have contributed to this edition, and expressed your personal appreciation for what Rick has meant, and done, for the club and for our favorite pastime.

In 2007, I wrote a **personal profile of Rick**. Such profiles were a regular feature of **Wolftracks** in those years. It is inside in its entirety and still very much applicable today. To those who contributed to this issue, **many thanks**.

Anton Deiters,
WT --Editor.



Rick Favier: a Profile

by Anton Deiters

The timing of this piece on Rick Favier is no coincidence. Rick has done much for Wolfpit and for the sport of running. The Ridgefield Half Marathon has for many years been his show-piece. This year's event, which took place this past Sunday, October 7, is covered extensively in this issue. Rick in his capacity of race director has, by his thoughtful preparation, been a major factor in saving the life of a runner.

Rick was born on February 5, 1952 in Needham, Massachusetts, on the floorboard of a Buick. Cars have in recent times again played an important role in Rick's life: he operates an airport livery service and drives a Lincoln Grand Marquee. Before his bad knees forced him to choose this line of work, Rick has had twenty plus years of active running. And today, he is still connected to the sport as a race director and event organizer, and volunteer. How did this love for the sport come about?

Until age 14, Rick attended St Joseph's parochial school in Needham. Then tragic family events forced him to move to New Jersey to live with his sister. In 1969, when Rick was 17, he and his sister moved to Ridgefield, where Rick graduated from Ridgefield High. As soon as he was out of school, he was on his own. Thus he entered college on a "9-year plan": he worked full time to make a living and finance his study. He eventually got his BA, in English Lit., from Western Connecticut University.

During these years Rick played basketball and baseball, but did not run. That changed abruptly one day in June 1977, when the newly founded Wolfpit Running Club organized a 5 Mile race. Rick, who had joined Wolfpit, entered in a field of about 200 that included celebrities like Dr. George Sheehan and Jim Fixx. He ran the 5M in 42 minutes, and was hooked. When asked about the one thing that made that first race memorable he said it was that he "beat Geoff Harrington by one minute." In that same year, Wolfpit organized the Ridgefield Marathon. Rick manned one of the water stops, beginning what has become an outstanding career as race volunteer.

Over the next twenty years Rick ran scores of races including 43 marathons (he started 46 marathons, but did not finish 3 including his first attempt in '77 at the Ocean State when he hit the wall in a major way); 2 Iron Man triathlons on Cape Cod (his best, in '84, took him 12:04 hours); a good number of smaller triathlons, including the Sri Chinmoy Tri's at Misquamicut Beach, RI (where in '81, Rick, Geoff and Anton finished within minutes of each other, the latter then unaware that he would join Wolfpit 22 years later.) Rick ran his first full marathon in '78 in a time of 3:47. His best time in that event, in '84, was 3:27.



That was the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington DC, his favorite Marathon event. Rick ran it 9 times.

Wolfpitters used to go there with a group of as many as 30 runners and supporters, all staying at the Key Bridge Marriott. (Ed's Note: Wolfpitters still go there, although the groups may not be as big. Fifteen of us will go to DC in about two weeks; watch the next WT issue).

Rick's other PRs, all run in 1984, his top year, include a 1:20 in the Ridgefield Half Marathon; a 37:02 in the 10K; and a 62:14 in the 10M.

Rick was not only a road runner. In '78 he had his first taste of a trail run. It was not just a trail run; it was the "queen of trail runs": the Escarpment Trail. "If today I could do just one more run, it would be the Escarpment Trail" says Rick. This brutal 30K run near the Shwaggunks in NY State has a total of 12000 Foot elevation change. Rick ran this event "9 or 10 times", and he still holds the Wolfpit record, 3:52, which is quite a feat, given the competition: John D., Kathy Barry, Frank D. and Geoff H. So much does Rick loves that race, that he volunteers there every year, carrying up water over steep rocky paths to his water stop. Rick reminded me that the Escarpment Run was what got Frank D. started on trail running.

Rick kept running until '95, when he had knee surgery that ended his running career. It was not the only change that his bad knees had brought on. He also had to face changes in his work. When he got out of college Rick did roofing work. Eventually he got involved with, and became an owner in, the Athlete's Foot, and ran their stores in places like Stamford CT and Kingston NY. This work kept him in daily touch with the world of jogging, running and racing. He had to give up this business because standing became too much for his knees. That is when he set up the livery service. Driving is a sitting occupation.



These changes brought on a considerable weight gain. Although he swims and bikes whenever he finds some time, Rick still has a way to go toward his goal to shed the 50 lbs. that would bring him back to his former running shape. A major step in the right direction seemed to come a few years ago, when Rick set out to ride his bike across the country. He used the event to raise funds (and his Wolfpit friends responded!) for charities he supports, particularly the Diabetes Society. Unfortunately, six days into his Odyssey that had started on the Golden Gate Bridge, he crashed on the Nevada side of the Sierras, and was lucky to survive. He returned to Ridgefield to resume his livery service, make his donations and rejoin his Wolfpit friends, who had, over the years, become “more like my family.”

For the past three years, Rick has been living in Milford, CT with his best friend Diane. “She is the nicest thing in my life,” Rick said.



Rick may run no longer, but he is still very much involved in running. Over the years he has organized, directed, or officiated at over 200 events, from 5K's to Triathlons to Ultramarathons. He has done this always on a volunteer basis, and has only sporadically received a small amount to meet his expenses. “I have always enjoyed putting up running events; it is a chance to give back to the community.”

In his most recent event, The Ridgefield Half Marathon, Rick had given to key-volunteers who were manning intersections and drinking stations, instructions sheets marking the details of the location, the corresponding place on the race map, and the cell phone number of the EMT on stand-by, Jen Clados. This critical detail enabled Patrice to make the phone call that set into motion a series of life-saving actions that are reported elsewhere in this issue. A copy of the instruction sheet is shown there as well. It shows the care and concern Rick brings to his tasks.

First class, Rick. Wolfpit is proud of you!

Ed. Note in 2016: In this final paragraph, Rick's concern for the safety of individual participants is evident. The above piece was written in 2007.



Tributes to Rick Favier from Wolfpit Members

Tom Nash, Founder of Wolfpit:

There's a saying that the way things start with a person is the way they end. I have known Rick Favier for many years, long before he became involved in Wolfpit. My first involvement with him was in high school when he came to the rescue of a classmate in distress. He did this instinctively and only because it was the "right thing to do." Years later, Rick joined Wolfpit and he began volunteering to help put on races. That led to him becoming race director, then club president. And, for all those years, Rick was the man who made sure the club races went off without a hitch. He's the reason the club has made it as far as it has. It's really as simple as: No Rick, no Wolfpit. Rick has never wavered in his dedication to the club. We owe it all to Rick.

Dick Gillespie:

Rick will be best remembered by the many recipients of scholarships that he created and by those that received gifts in times of needier the 40 years. My contribution to Rick is the following: He will always be remembered by the recipients of the scholarships he created and by those that received gifts when in need. He generated those funds through his own individual efforts over 40 years.

Joe Handelman:

“Rick! You are one of a kind. You have done so much for Wolfpit and running. You have always worked efficiently and in a pleasant manner. You are just a nice guy. That is why all the volunteers like to work for you, resulting in such a great half marathon. Having run well over 1,000 races since turning 40, I should be a good judge of the quality of a race. You get an A+ from me.

I will always remember the many years I stood at “Joe’s Corner” directing the runners where to go. I can’t tell you how much I miss my running and running experiences since my stroke over 6 years ago. I will always be in your corner. Thanks for everything.

Your running friend,
Joe”

Mary Ellen Loncto:

I admire Rick for so many things – like telling us about every race, being at races and encouraging the runners, handing out water, staying to the bitter end until every runner is finished, in the heat, cold, rain and snow!

There are two moments that especially stand out in my mind about Rick. One, I was running with a few other Wolfpitters on our usual 7 or 10-mile course and Rick came by on his bike and offered me a some of his water. This may sound like nothing but at that moment it was heavenly!! Two, I ran the Ridgefield Half the year that Roy went down on the ground and had a cardiac arrest. It was Rick who had made sure there was an EMT riding the course, that the volunteers had her cell phone number and had received instructions from Rick on how to get a hold of her immediately. Because of this foresight on Rick’s part, Roy was resuscitated on the course and transported immediately to the hospital and was back to run the half the following year! Rick, you are a lifesaver and I am so grateful to you.

Thank you for all you have done!

Barbara Nevins:

Dear Rick:

How many Ridgefield Halfs??

I cut my teeth with this race years ago!!

And you were there!!

Thank you for all your hard work and dedication over the years .. great course and great event .. the running community would not be the same without you!! All my love,

Barb

Barbara Soldano:

Thank you Rick.

Thank you Rick, for the decades of service that you provided to the Ridgefield Half, as well as Wolfpit Running Club. I truly believe that the Half could not have been done for so many years had it not been for you and your unwavering commitment. Wolfpit Running Club and the running community at large are indebted to you. If Greta Waitz was the Grand Dame of marathon running, then Rick Favier is truly the Grand Knight of the Ridgefield Half. Thank you Rick,

Barbara "Cheeks" Soldano

Megan Searfoss:

When I first moved to town, I was excited to find the Wolfpit Running Club as I was training for the NYC marathon on 2006. I hired Rick for my transport into NYC for the race. I was delighted to have a personal driver, at 4 am so that I could continue my sleep before the day began. Not so! During that ride into the city, I learned the history of the Wolfpit and running in Connecticut! The entire history! No rest for the weary, I was enthralled with all that Wolfpit and Rick had done for this close-knit community of runners. I ran the marathon, thinking of the stories he had told. Thank you Rick for the introduction to the running community in New England!

Kathy Barry:

With your years of sacrifice and loyalty we know that we would not be here without you. Someone planted a seed in you that has grown and flourished over the years. It has not only kept this club together but has encouraged this town to promote running as a healthy form of exercise for both body and mind, as a TEAM- and individual sport. Praise to you always!

Eric Burkhardt

I didn't become involved with the Wolfpit Running Club until about 1999, so I missed out on the opportunity to run with Rick during his marathoning days. I do remember seeing him often during our weekend "fun runs", as he would call them, mounted on his bike. He would also offer us encouragement while we were doing longer runs during training for our own marathons. Through the years I've come to learn of Rick's love for the running sports not only through his steadfast hard work for all Wolfpit events, his involvement with other race events such as the Escarpment Trail Run, but also just in conversation during our travels to and from local airports as a client of RWF Services. Rick is the type of guy who is always at the appointed spot at least 10 minutes early and always thorough in making certain that you have everything you need for your trip. These qualities are reflected in how he approaches his many years of making sure that each Wolfpit Half Marathon is a success.

Emmy Stocker:

I have known Rick for 20-plus years, since I moved to CT in 1992. I started running for Wolfpit on the recommendation of my neighbor Mick, who was a longtime Wolfpit member, and friend of Rick's. Rick has been a committed volunteer for the Boston Buildup series, and I would see him handing out water at almost every 15K and 25K -cheerful in spite of the raw temps. The first time I ran the BB 25K (1992)-Rick was volunteering. The times that I ran Ridgefield half (missed 5-6 years due to running Hartford marathon), Rick was clearly the best race director -everything was organized and perfectly executed. He also headed up the 10K aid station for the Escarpment 30K for 15-20 years! No small feat as his team had to carry into the woods food and water. I remember the first time I did Escarpment (first and last! -2008?) it was seeing Rick and getting his encouragement that kept me going, as I really wanted to stop at 10K.

I really got to know Rick through his airport driving for my family. He had a long history of endurance running-JFK 50; VT 100 and also marathons -he knew a lot of history about local events and also gave me training advice for my first JFK 50 and 100 milers-in fact, Rick picked me up from the airport after my first 100-miler (Umstead-2008?). I will never forget talking to him about it- although I know he was just being nice to listen!

Although over the years I have mostly seen Rick at Boston buildup races -he has been busy with Wolfpit and with his airport driving - and my kids/husband picked me up from the airport- but I count him as a longtime friend and mentor, and Wolfpit is lucky to have him.

Maude Brady:

Just my few words of tribute to Rick. He is a guy...." one always knows that whatever needs to be done will be done if Rick is responsible". Backbone of the running club. He picked me up at the airport once and I was surprised when he greeted me at the arrival gate rather than baggage pick-up. His response was "just want to make it easy for you". Always helpful and dependable....all around great guy.

Jim Gerweck:

Look up the word "volunteer" in Webster's and there should be a picture of Rick Favier. I cannot think of a human being who has unselfishly done more for others than Rick.

While his contributions to Wolfpit and the Ridgefield Half are well known, Rick has also helped selflessly at many other races. For many years he almost single-handedly kept the Lake Waramaug Ultras alive, often losing money and always losing sleep in the process.

In addition, he has always been a huge aid at several of the larger races I have directed, such as the Boston Buildup, where he helps organize the Ridgefield 15k and mans aid stations at the other three races, and the Four on the Fourth, where he has routinely assisted at the turnaround, setting up a clock so the runners can get their halfway split. And he continues to make the pre-dawn drive to the Catskills to hump water a mile uphill on a rugged trail to man a water stop for the Escarpment Trail.

What has always impressed and amazed me about Rick is the way he apologizes for not being able to help at a race because he has a work commitment. I think he genuinely cares about the welfare of each and every runner, and feels his absence could adversely affect their race experience.

This compassion is Rick's greatest characteristic, one that has carried over into the Ridgefield Half for the many decades he has directed it. His legacy will be a race that the runners love just as much as he loves them.

Patrice Gillespie:

Things I've heard Rick Favier say...



“We are looking for some volunteers for next weekend’s road race...”
-- Heard once a month or so, in support of a good cause.

“THANG’ YA... THANG’ YA VERY MUCH,”

-- Every year at the Annual Dinner, when Rick does his Elvis Presley impression.

“I’m running out of ambulances.”

-- 2009?, when *three* runners needed emergency medical assistance during the Half.

“GO RED SOX!!!!!!!!!!”

-- Every summer.



“Rick’s Airport Service!”

-- Any time he can’t answer his phone, and also when he can.

“Today I need to scrounge up a couple thousand cups for the water stops; the cups that were supposed to be delivered didn’t arrive.” -- Oct 1, 2016

Just a few of the gracious yet often unsung good deeds that Rick has done, with quiet dedication, include:

- Managing some or all of the logistics of perhaps more than 250 road races;
- Painting the mile markers along the Pamby Half’s race course every year before dawn, so the paint might dry before someone drives over the numbers.

- Biking the course each year (with some other dedicated Wolfpitters) a few days before the Half to deliver the Club’s “Neighbor’s Letter” to 400 residents who live along or near the course. The letter reminds people that they should plan their Sunday morning outings with the understanding that runners will be on the roads... This is just one of many courteous traditions that Rick practices every day of his life.

Thank you for being you, Rick! -- Patrice Gillespie



John Dugdale:

Rick is the backbone of Wolfpit and the half marathon. I'm nominally the co-director, but Rick does all the heavy lifting and I do the remaining 5%.

I've known Rick since the beginning of Wolfpit in 1977. We have a friendship that has lasted over the many years and he is one of the most loyal friends you can have.

He deserves all the accolades we can give him.

Nobody is more supportive or hard working in the running community, always volunteering and assisting anyone who asks.

John

Tom Elliott:

Si Monumentum Requires, Circumspice!

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the Wolfpit Running Club's (WRC) Fall classic and the schwanengesang for RD Rick Favier, it behooves us to consider his magic:

Rick has managed to shepherd this race through difficult and competitive times. He has outlasted the organizations that projected incorrectly that sponsoring a road race was an easy buck. And once the last runner had crossed the line Rick turned the hard earned proceeds of the WRC races over to numerous charities and scholarship assistance. I believe it is this of which he is most proud and it has increased steadily during his tenure. It should be pointed out that (after exhaustive consultation with running scholar Professor Gerweck) the WRC Fall classic is either the 2nd or 3rd oldest road race in Connecticut. At a spry 40 years of age, Rick's race has outlasted most club member's marriages as well (not mine!) With the KFC 5K and the Yeast Infection 10K now a fond memory, Rick will welcome almost 600 competitors to the starting line this October 2nd!

Now of course Rick could not have accomplished this alone. The WRC, whose Saturday morning fun runs were so demanding that few would participate is now principally a group of cheerful walkers. The on-time scourge of the local road running circuit is now a post-op orthopedic study group. I can say this not only because I fit the description but because WRC members have been as generous with abuse as encouragement over the years. There is a lot of love in this confraternity of pain from which Rick has drawn his corps of volunteers. And you know who you are!

Rick has not indicated whether he will also retire as president of WRC, a position he has held since club members long ago recognized the amount of work associated with the position. It is therefore difficult to predict whether Wolfpit will remain an endangered species or simply go extinct. While the wag irreverently points out that the older we get the faster we were, we forget neither the good times nor the bad. The finish line may be in sight but we are not there yet. There is a running community that needs attention and with the new friends and associates that now buoy the old WRC may we continue in the great tradition established by Rick Favier!

Tom Elliott

1 Oct 2016