

## ***Steve Kartalia's Induction Speech – Delivered Friday, 17 April 2009***

Hello and thank you all for coming tonight. Thank you to the Rotary Club for electing me to the Hall of Fame and congratulations to the other inductees. I am very honored and happy to be included.

This year marks 30 years that I've been a distance runner. I am humbled and amazed by the support and encouragement I have received from my family, coaches, friends, teammates, and this community.

Dad was my first coach and training partner. Five a.m. runs in the summer are not what every 13-year-old dreams of, but by the end of the summer of '79 I could run 8 miles and I was ready to join the high school team. I still can't run down Beggs Rd without thinking of that summer. From that point forward, Mom, Dad, and my sisters Sarah and Anna were my main support, coming to all my races, and celebrating the successes with me. From those early days, I always knew that I wasn't running by myself. People who cared about me were with me.

My XC coach freshman year was Jim Bullock. Coach Bullock picked up where Dad left off, emphasizing hard work and being part of a larger distance running community. He got us to appreciate that distance running is hard but rewarding. With hard work we would be proud of our progress. He and my older teammate Scott Rosenzweig got me permanently hooked on distance running.

I first met Doug Renner in the spring of my freshman year and he would be my coach during track season for the rest of my high school career. He got us to understand that the athletes we read about in Track and Field News started out just the way we were starting. He got us to set our goals high and encouraged us to think big. By the time I was a senior, Doug had helped me break the Westminster school record in the 2 mile and win the state championship in that event.

Bill Hill was the head track coach. His specialty was field events but he was also the ideal head coach. We had a well-rounded and cohesive team because he made us understand that even though sprinters, pole vaulters, and distance runners didn't really train together, we relied on each others' hard work and dedication to be successful. We all felt and acted like teammates.

Starting my sophomore year, I had a new cross country coach, Jim Gilford. In the three XC seasons Gil coached me, I won 3 county, 3 regional, and 2 state championships. The biggest thing we achieved, though, was bringing Westminster its first state team championship in '82. I learned from Gil what a potent combination hard work and love of the sport and your teammates can be. Just about every moment we weren't doubled over trying to catch our breath, we were laughing together.

I also had great coaching at Wake Forest, as a freshman under Ramsey Thomas, and then John Goodridge. By the end of my career at Wake, I had earned All-ACC honors and set the school record in the 10K. I also met my wife Natalie in my senior year and she was by far the best thing I left North Carolina with.

In the summer of '88 I moved back to Carroll County. After a short break, Doug encouraged me to get back to serious training. He believed I could qualify for the '92 Olympic Trials if I focused and trained hard. I am extremely grateful to Doug for his encouragement at that time. It turned out that my best running was still to come, but had he not cared enough to mention that possibility, I might well have missed the chance of a lifetime.

Over the next four years, some here and some in Clemson, SC, Doug and I planned my training months in advance and focused on our main goal of making the Trials. At the '92 Trials, I finished 9<sup>th</sup> place. Of course, I had dreamed of being top 3 and making the team, but I was also very happy with what we'd achieved. I knew I had trained and raced as hard as I could. As had been the case for my whole career, my family and friends came from all over the place to New Orleans to cheer me on.

During those same 4 years between college and the Trials, Natalie travelled with me to almost every race. Sometimes the races were in places like L.A. or New York and we would try to make a vacation out of it. But I know that traveling with a guy who's trying to rest before the big race is not the same as a vacation. Still, those were fun times and having Natalie's support and encouragement during those years was key to my success and happiness.

1992, between the Trials, several very good road races, and a trip to Portugal to compete with the U.S. National Team, was the peak of my career, even though I didn't know it at the time. I went through a gradual and frustrating realization that I wasn't going to get any faster. Like all athletes who dream big, the only downside is that at some point you have to end up at least a little bit disappointed. But a better way of looking at it, I now realize, is that I made it a lot farther than I ever could have on my own.

Now I've come full circle. I'm back in Westminster and I still love running. Winning the 40-and-over national XC championship in February with teammate and good friend, Mark Gilmore, and hearing Paul, Anna, Jack, and Charlie's cheers out on the course was, honestly, as much fun as I've had racing since the fall of '82. I still enjoy running down Bachman Valley getting waves from neighbors like John Meyers and I think about neighbors we've lost recently like Jack Price and Paul Hering and Dave Herlocker, guys who always had an encouraging word for me. I realize that people in this community have been supporting me continuously for 30 years. I could easily spend two hours thanking people and that still wouldn't be enough.

Now it's my turn to encourage my daughters Emma and Annie over the coming years at whatever they put their time and effort into, whether that's running this week's Main St. Mile, lacrosse, gymnastics, or something they haven't even discovered yet.

I am truly happy to be here among the family, coaches, friends, and community that helped me realize my dreams. I thank God every day for all the blessings in my life. From the bottom of my heart, thank you all very, very much.