



The 8th St. Croix  
International  
Marathon  
December 6, 2009  
St. Croix,  
Virgin Islands



# PLAZA EXTRA

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The Virgin Islands Pace Runners

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## General overview

With the running of The 8<sup>th</sup> St.Croix International Marathon on December 6, 2009, we have a special opportunity to celebrate the 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of **The Virgin Islands Pace Runners**. It all started in 1978 with "The V.I.Pace Run for Fun, Run for Health, Run for Life" Saturday morning runs at the beautiful University of the Virgin Islands St.Croix Campus. One of the first long distance V.I. Pace runs was **The National Library Week Run to Your Library** which included a group that ran from the public library in Frederiksted (then located in the current V.I. Legislature building) via Centerline Road of St. Croix (now Queen Mary Highway) to the Florence Williams Public Library in Christiansted. It covered the distance of approximately 25 kilometers.

For each of its thirty-plus years, V.I.Pace has conducted an average of 30 events/races/running related activities totaling approximately 900 activities, representing and estimated \$1,260,000.00 in cost. We figure that there have been approximately 30,000 participations in these events over the 30+ year period (at an average of 30 per event). Thousands of miles run! Millions of calories burned! Tons of pounds lost! And thousands of lives saved!

V.I.Pace runs have helped raise thousands of dollars for abused women and children, the homeless, Muscular Dystrophy, Cancer and for the causes of numerous St. Croix non-profit organizations including: The Women's Coalition of St.Croix, Camp Araway, The Queen Louise Home, The Rotary Club of St.Croix, The Rotary Club West, The St. Croix Dolphins, The Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation, The Virgin Islands Olympic Committee, The Florence Williams Public Library, The American Cancer Society, MOTEEP; Muscular Dystrophy; The Ten Thousand Helpers of St.Croix; The University of the Virgin Islands, The St. Croix Environmental Association and others.

Runners associated with and benefiting from the V.I.Pace movement have represented the Virgin Islands in major competitions including: The Central America & Caribbean Championships, The Pan Am Games, The World Cross-Country Championships and The Olympic Games. They continue to participate in major races around the world including: The Boston Marathon, The Classic Athens Marathon, The Chicago Marathon, The New York City Marathon, The Marine Corp Marathon, The Comrades Marathon, among others. They run as members of numerous USA college and university teams.

V.I.Pace introduces children to running at an early age in the annual **Children Race** which kicks off the annual Children's Parade, **The Children Run Christiansted** at the start of the annual Triathlon Jump-up and in **The Annual V.I.Pace Runners/4-H Cross-Country Series** at the University of the Virgin Islands St. Croix Campus. Over the years there have been numerous sponsors, supporters and volunteers who have played a major role in keeping the idea, goals and objectives of V.I.Pace Runners alive.

Run for Fun, Run for Health, Run for Life, the motto for the Virgin Islands Pace Runners early on is being revisited as a major effort to continue to introduce running to the Virgin Islands community. To all the runners, sponsors, supporters, volunteers...we express our sincere appreciation.

<http://virginislandspace.org>



## About The Virgin Islands Pace Runners

The Virgin Islands Pace Runners organize and host running events and running related activities in the Virgin Islands, of the United States, particularly in St.Croix. This non-profit organization was founded in 1978 by Wallace Williams, an Olympic Marathon Runner at the Seoul Olympics in 1988. V.I.Pace serves runners throughout the Virgin Islands and the Caribbean, as well as visitors to the islands from the United States, North, Central, and South America, Africa, Europe and other countries.

V.I.Pace strives to develop the competition and physical fitness aspects of the sport of running. In addition, it places a heavy emphasis on public and community service and participation in club events. It accomplishes this by conducting races, fitness runs, fun runs, tour runs (for visitors), clinics, and safety sessions on running, fund raisers for charity, marathon classes at the University of the Virgin Islands and other running related activities. It gathers and provides literature and information on running.

V.I.Pace accommodates all types of runners, from beginners to international/world-class athletes. V.I. Pace projects are suited for children, adults and masters runners. It is a member of the Virgin Islands Track & Field Federation (the V.I. governing body for the sport) which is affiliated with the Virgin Islands Olympic Committee, The International Association of Athletic Federations (the world governing body for the sport), The Association of International Marathons and Distance Races and The Road Runners Club of America. V.I.Pace serves as consultant on long distance running, cross-country running, road racing, the marathon and track events. It also consults on triathlon, duathlon and ultra running. It organizes the V.I.National Cross-Country Championships and several V.I. Road Race Championships. A number of V.I.Pace Runners have represented the V.I. in Central America and Caribbean Championships, The North America, Central America and Caribbean Championships, The Pan American Games, The Olympic Games, The Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships, Cross-Country Championships, North America, Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships, World Cross-Country Championships and other events.

V.I.Pace was the initiator of the Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships. It was the organization responsible for organizing the staging of the Central America and Caribbean Cross-Country Championships held in St.Croix in 1990.

V.I.Pace produces a schedule of running events in the Virgin Islands annually and provides information on events in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, the U.S. and other international locations. Many children who go on to become V.I.National Team members have their first run in V.I.Pace Runners events. Its website is: <http://virginislandspace.org>



## Race History

The St.Croix International Marathon follows the trend established in the 70's during the initial stages of the running boom, popular in the USA. Wallace Williams, Olympic Marathon Runner, for the V.I. in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, continuing his efforts to develop the interest in running in the Virgin Islands realized that no marathon had been run in the Virgin Islands since 1979 and put into play the plans for the first marathon of the new millennium to be run in St. Croix.

With the coming of the "new millennium" his idea was to stage a major marathon to bring in the new year, the new century and the new millennium. As it turned out, The St.Croix Marathon Relay was staged instead and a couple of days after New Year's Day in the year 2000. That race started the Grapetree Bay Resort in the East of St. Croix and traveled West via the South Shore Road to Fort Frederik.

For 2001 (the actual new millennium) The St.Croix International Marathon was held and was technically the first to be run in the world for the new millennium. The race is now in its eighth year (12-06-09) and is now run in Frederiksted on an Association of International Marathons and Distance Races (AIMS)/International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) certified course. This makes it possible for runners to qualify for major events including: The Olympic Games, The Pan American Games, The Central America and Caribbean Championships, The Boston Marathon, among other races.

The marathon has become a major movement in the world. Most major cities have annual marathon races which attract as many as 40,000 runners each year. They have become major tourist attractions to the point that the Europeans have coined the term "marathon tourism".

The goal is to continue to develop The St.Croix International Marathon, to make St.Croix and the Virgin Islands a destination in the evolving "marathon tourism" tradition.

Annual sponsors, volunteers, The V.I. Police Department, St.Croix Rescue and of course marathon runners help make our race exist and continue to grow. To each we express our sincere thanks.

<http://virginislandspace.org>



## About The Society of Olympic Marathon Runners

The four year period between The Olympic Games is known as the "Olympiad". The one event considered by most to be the foundation of the Olympic Games of course, is the Marathon. This 26.2 mile road race is embraced by the city of Marathon, Greece, There the victory of the Athenians over the Persians who outnumbered them at The Battle of Marathon is associated the myth which task the runner Phillipedes (Phidipedes) to run from Marathon to Athens to tell of the Athenian victory in this historic battle.

The run from Marathon to Athens was key to the revitalization of the modern Olympic Games which were held in 1896 in Athens, Greece. The Greek marathon runners Spiridon Louis won the first Olympic Marathon. Since then over 2,000 Olympic Marathon runners (1984 women ran the marathon in the Olympics for the first time) have cover the distance of 26.2 miles (adjusted for the London Olympics Marathon on July 24, 1908). These runners have become heroes in their countries and around the world, indeed, they are a society of unique athletes!

The Society of Olympic Marathon Runners (SOMar) was founded by Wallace Williams, Olympic Marathon runner in the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games and a member of the Virgin Islands Olympic Team. The goal of SOMar is to chronicle the efforts of all the marathon runners who have run the Olympic marathon, including, of course, medal winners and non-medal winners.

Williams, other scholars and fellow marathon runners concur that each of these runners has a special story and that they have made significant efforts and sacrifices to achieve the life-time goal of a long distance runner, to run the Olympic Marathon. Many legendary stories are associated with the Olympic Marathon runner their race and their lives outside of the Olympic Games.

With each opportunity, Williams takes the photos of Olympic Marathon runners he comes into contact with on his travels and is continuing to build a database of these storied Olympians.

Contributions of information, photographic images are welcome and will accessioned to the SoMar database.



Tribute to Joan Benoit-Samuelsn

When Joan Benoit entered the tunnel of the Los Angeles Coliseum as the leader of the women's Olympic Marathon on August 5, 1984, she was to become the first female to win the Olympic Gold medal in the event, her time was 2:24.52.

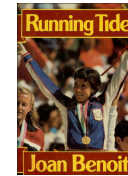
In addition to becoming the first woman to win the Olympic Gold Medal in the marathon, Benoit (now Joan Benoit-Samuelsn), was one of three women on the USA team whose name started with the letter "J", Julie Brown (36<sup>th</sup>, 2:47.53), Julie Ihphording (DNF). Only seventeen days before the Olympic Marathon, Benoit underwent arthroscopic surgery on her knee and she ran the third fastest time in history on a hot and humid day. From a little more than fifteen minutes into the race, Benoit made the decision to increase the pace and run according to her own race plan. That strategy enabled her to establish a comfortable lead over a field of 49 women runners from 28 countries. The temperature in the early going was 68 degrees and the humidity was high and the temperature would get higher later in the race which made it more difficult for the field to close the gap.

Coming into the race, Benoit held the world's fastest time for the marathon, 2:22.43 at Boston in 1983. Her first marathon was in Bermuda in 1979 where she came in second in 2:50.54.

I had the pleasure of being in the stadium when Joan Benoit won the Olympic Marathon. Her pace was strong as she completed the traditional final lap around the track, at about the 200m mark she pulled her white painter's cap and waived to the fans with a smile. One of her childhood coaches was gentleman named Frank Wright, Frank lived on St. Croix for several years, we both were Rotarians, and he used to tell accounts of Benoit's running days as a child, in high school and college.

Frank was able to get Benoit to provide me with a personal autographed copy of her autobiography Running for Women. Benoit's fastest time in the marathon was 2:21.21 in 1985 in Chicago. I had the pleasure of running Chicago that day and appeared in the NBC news (Peter Jennings) coverage of the first few meters of the race and happened to be alongside Benoit in the footage.

Joan Benoit-Samuelsn continues to run competitively. She finished first in her age-group with a time of 2:49.09 in this year's New York City Marathon, she is 52 years old.



Wallace Williams

Founder,

The Society of Olympic Marathon Runners

We much appreciate the work of David E. Martin and Roger W.H. Gynn in the book The Olympic marathon / David E. Martin, Roger W.H. Gynn.

Champaign, IL : Human Kinetics, c2000. And others who have also study and written and documented this special event.

### AFFILIATIONS

- V.I.Pace Runners Training Camp
- Road Runners Club of America
- The Virgin Islands Track and Field Federation
- The Association of International Marathons and Distance Races
- The Women's Coalition of St.Croix  
(The Women Race)
- The FRIENDS of The Florence Williams Public Library  
(National Library Week Run To Your Library)
- The Martin Luther King Jr. Committee of Raleigh, North Carolina  
(MLK Fort-To-Fort Run)
- The National Conservancy (CoastWeeks Beach Relay)
- The Fort-To-Fort Relay Road Race—Run For Respect  
(Ten Thousand Helpers of St.Croix)
- The University of the Virgin Islands  
(The 4-H Program Cross-Country Series)  
(The Queen Mary/UVI 5K Road Race)
- The Virgin Islands Olympic Committee (Olympic Day Run)
- The American Cancer Society/Relay For Life