



Participants...Manchester 5Mile Road Race St. Croix 2010

Will Franks, Marathon Runner interview by Wallace Williams, Founder, The Virgin Islands Pace Runners November 2010

- 1. ww V.I.Pace: Will, every year your goal is to run the New York City Marathon. How many consecutive NYC Marathons have you run?**

The total NYC marathons I have finished (and started) is 24 but I started in 1982 (a 2:54 that year) then I took some years off when my second son was born. I began again in 1987 and since then I have only missed the running in 2000.

- 2. ww V.I.Pace: What is it about the NYC Marathon that makes it the one for you?**



Really Boston is the reason to run but I have slowed down faster than the age related qualifying times and haven't run there since the 100th running in 1996. But a weekend in New York which always includes the Saturday matinee at the Metropolitan Opera and my annual Monday visit to my brother is part of the package. I would not like to run a marathon again without the crowd support and entertainment along the way. But what it really comes down to is my apparent need to establish a tradition and then keep doing it. How could I not go to New York in 2011 to run my 25th.

**3. ww V.I.Pace: We want to hear more about the other races of course, but could you tell us about how NYC went for you this year?**

Had the race been a day or two earlier, I probably would not have bothered to go to the start, having been sick that week. But Sunday I went to the start with the goal of every first time marathoner, just finish. I thought that it would be challenging and indeed it was perhaps the most difficult I have ever run and it turns out a 4:40 is the slowest of my life. But the time does not seem to matter much these days. So I 'managed' a number of health issues along the way and gave Columbus (Columbus Circle about a half mile from the finish) a bow and salute, it was very satisfying to get to the finish.

**4. ww V.I.Pace: Over the years, there have been changes in the race to improve it, to accommodate, what is it 40,000 plus runners? What are some of the things you have seen as changes over the years?**

Chip time was not available in my early years, your time started when the cannon went off. A few years ago they went to three waves with three starts in each wave. Two starts merge at three miles and the third one merges around 7 miles. This year I was in the second wave and it seemed to free up some space for the early miles allowing one to get in and out of water stops. The starting area has much more to offer, food, all kinds of drinks and has gone high tech with large screens posting time, and information. The finish seems to be more congested. They have over the years slightly changed the course always starting and finishing in the same place though.

**5. ww V.I.Pace: If you would, talk about your best NYC Marathon...your best performance, the most memorable one...**



As I indicated earlier, my best time was in 1982. Without chip time I know my first mile was 9:30 and the average was I think 6:38 so I had to make up a little time. The 59th street bridge which is now closed to traffic and we take the whole bridge was only open on the side walk, two runners across. I remember trying to get back people at that point. I really would have like some power gels in the last 6 miles but they hadn't been invented yet. In 1987 I was completely fried at 16 miles but ran to the finish with a young woman who got me though. At the finish she vanished and I thought for many years that maybe she was just an angel sent to get me through it.

**6. ww V.I.Pace: Your friend, Amby Burfoot, Senior Editor for Runners World still runs, do you guys stay in touch? Compare notes on your running?**

I left a message for Amby this year at the Runner's World booth at the expo. They said he was running a marathon in Greece. I do not keep in touch with him except at New York and I always try to keep him aware of my continuing Thanksgiving five mile race streak. I think it is a very big deal that next year he will be running his 50th Manchester (Connecticut) Thanksgiving Race next year.

**7. ww V.I.Pace: Is NYC Marathon the only marathon you have run? If not tell us about the others.**

People have asked my how many marathons I have run. I say probably 45 or so, less than 50. I ran Boston seven times, I think and then there were a few marathons which I ran three time each. The first one I ran and qualified for Boston was called the Bay State Marathon. It was run in December in the late afternoon so it got dark before half way. It then rained (a cold December rain in Mass), there were no water stops, I ran it without any water and after we changed back into our clothes without showers in an unheated room.

**8. ww V.I.Pace: On Thanksgiving you have an annual road race on St. Croix, tell us about it...**

This is a celebration of my first race, after college, in 1972. I stayed the night at Amby's house and went to the race with him, he won and set a new course record. Women were not allowed to run this race and I ran stride for stride with that year's unofficial woman. I found her after and gave her my finishing card showing my



place. I then saw her each year after that for many years, just a part of my need to establish traditions. I continued to run this race each year until I moved to St. Croix in 1997. That first year here I did the race starting exactly at the same time as Manchester. I was alone that year but my family cheered me on like it was a 'real' race. The Army/Navy club in Manchester always sold cold beer after the race. Having just run, I never had any money on me and counted on some friend to buy me a beer. The beer tradition continues. My running log book always notes having many TG races and how many years of racing. 2010 will be my 39th, ten less than Amby. Amby once wrote that his streak at Manchester is more important to him than having won the Boston Marathon. I understand this but there are few others who do.

- 9. ww V.I.Pace: Some may not know what a marathon runner goes through to get to the start line of the race. Would you share with us your experience with managing injuries while training for the race and how your expectations have been impacted by them on race day?**

Preparing for a marathon requires much preparation. Injuries will come and go and they have to be managed. The month before I am constantly icing something. It gets more difficult as one gets older. I have learned which pains are ok and which ones to fear. I had a number of issues this year but when I ran the marathon, I had no problems with knees, hamstrings, ankles, a calf which had given me some concern. That may have been because I was so focused on my health and breathing problems. I do have great confidence in being able to get through a marathon just because I always do. I just count on things working out. What I look forward to the most in running a marathon is a negative split for the second half and powering past people in the last 10K. I missed that this year.

- 10. ww V.I.Pace: Just what does it take to get into the NYC Marathon? Allen Stanfield, former Race Director for the race told me recently that this year nearly 80 thousand runners applied to get into the race, that the race was sold out in just a day or two after registration opened...**

They do it but lottery so it is not first come first served, the way they did it years ago. International runners who sign up with tours or persons who want to raise money for charity can get in. I think we might have a little better chance here in the Virgin Islands because I believe they save so many slots for international runners. I would love to have more Virgin Islanders there and would encourage people to sign up on



line before the deadline next year. We had a bunch of people a couple of years ago and that was fun. If someone has been turned down three years in a row, the fourth year is guaranteed entry. And after 15 NYC marathons you have guaranteed entry.