JIMMY LEARS

Jimmy was a familiar face on the running and racing scene during the mid-70's to late 80's. He continued to run well into the 90's but less competitively. He is remembered as the man with the handsome "boyish" looks—described as the "cute" one to those spectators cheering at local races. While serious about his racing, Jimmy was the quiet competitor who could show up at a race and take charge of the age group contenders.

As many of you know, Jimmy Lears passed an untimely death at the age of 55.

Before highlighting some of Jimmy's statistics, BRRC friends and family have shared some personal comments.

Bill Diegel: I remember a BRRC summer race at Lake Montebello when the temperature was near 100 degrees. I heard Jim in a conversation with Mike Sabino. Jim and Mike were the class of the field that day, as in many other days, and the likely winner of the race would be one or the other of them. The conversation continued with each of them deciding they would take it easy because of the heat. Something along the lines of 'do you want to take it easy and go for a tie?' was overheard. The conversation did not last long and ended with 'Let's go for it!'

Mel Walton: Jimmy was one of the elite runners, but he was in a class of his own.

Bailey St.Clair: …a gentlemen's gentleman.

Donn Layne notes: My training runs with Jimmy got faster the more I talked.

Mike Hill remembers: When I started running races in 1974, there were three dominant runners—Mike Sabino who was tough as nails, Steve Mehieu who was strong as an ox, and Jimmy Lears who was, well—nice. He was kind, soft spoken, the classic introverted distance runner whose toughness emerged quietly through his efforts on the roads. It was never as if he [Jimmy] BEAT anybody. He just ran faster than they did!

Now and then he would show up at a 5K or 10K and blister the field in whatever age group he had ascended to. Then he would smile that bashful smile and you would be glad to be in the presence of such talent and dedication and…niceness.

Mark Johnson: …to those who knew Jimmy, 'Gentleman' fits perfectly. Back in the day, the annual Constellation 6 mile race brought out the best in the Baltimore area and beyond. Jimmy always did well. He was known for his fast starts, leaving everyone else to plan on saving a kick for second place. …Advantage Lears! Fast and Cute!

Marge and Steve Rosasco: Jimmy was ALWAYS---fast, a gentleman who exhibited humility regarding his impressive running ability, a good ambassador of the sport of road running, a fine human being.

Louise Lears (sister): My brother was a gentle, loving man who lived as he ran---with gusto, grace, purpose and humility.

Jimmy's performances showcased victories locally and stellar placement finishes elsewhere.

1975 Maryland Marathon (Satyr Hill)	2:27:39	9th place finish/PR
1976 Layne ½ Marathon	69:43	2nd
1976 Boston Marathon (100 degrees)	2:40:46	97th (5:38 per mile)
1976 Mt Vernon 3 Miles	15:31	1st
1976 Loch Raven 10 Miles	53:32	1st
1976 Satyr Hill 12 Miles	64:05	1st
1976 18 Mile Club Championship	97:11	1st
1977 Constellation 6 Miles	30:04	1st
1977 Boston Marathon (80 degrees)	2:33:07	88th

Even though Jimmy's times were fast, the placements usually 1st or 2nd, the sense of his general superiority irrefutable, remembering Jimmy was overwhelming on something else—his greatness as a runner was superseded only by his greatness as a person.

Mark Johnson befittingly sums it up: We have lost a wonderful member of our running family. If there is a Baltimore Road Runner's Hall of Fame, I nominate Jim Lears. He represented an era when we ran for the love of the competition, the reward of a race run (not money), and the camaraderie of an unspoken love and respect for all who ran.

Jimmy's daughter, Jennifer, and sister, Kate, are here today to receive this award on his behalf.

Congratulations on receiving this BRRC Hall of Fame award.

2004
Christy B. St.Clair