

The Truth, the Whole Truth - well, close enough!

Recollections of the first Annapolis 10-Miler

As the 35th Annual Annapolis 10-Miler approaches, we feel compelled to correct a few inaccuracies and misconceptions. The race, which started from humble beginnings, has evolved into one of the Top Six Ten-Milers (selected by Runner's World), boasting 5,000 runners and countless volunteers.

The idea of an organized race to Annapolis was born after seven friends answered a challenge to run to Annapolis from Severna Park. A casual remark at a party where the men, who had been involved in athletics since childhood couldn't fathom that women aspiring to be Aerobic Dance instructors could possibly be fit enough to run ten miles. How much time elapsed between the challenge and the actual run comes into question - was it the next day, was it a few days, or was it a week? Memories fade and tales grow; but there was enough time to roughly organize the run.

On an early August morning in 1976, the runners (listed in alphabetical order), John Astle, Phyllis Beardmore, Debby Fox, Randy Fox, Donna Jay, Bonnie Phillips, and Bart Rohrbach, gathered at the Monumental Title Building at the intersection of Ritchie Highway and Cypress Creek Road. The course had been determined by setting a car odometer for approximately 10 miles. There was a festive spirit to the run: the women runners jokingly warmed up with can-can kicks from an Aerobic Dancing routine, while the men smirked as they did more traditional stretches, and our "official photographer and support crew" Buddy Beardmore snapped photos of what was to be an historic event.

At 6:30 am, the runners had Ritchie Highway all to themselves as they made their way to the City Dock in Annapolis. In keeping with the light-hearted spirit of the run, Phyllis Beardmore did a cartwheel before reaching the old Naval Academy Bridge, while her husband, Buddy followed in a station wagon taking pictures and handing out water along the way.

The seven runners finished at the City Dock to the shouts of encouragement from John's wife Jayne Astle, her twin sister (and Bart's wife), JoAnn Rohrbach, and JoAnn and Bart's daughter, Susie. There was no competition, no official time, and no official winner - just seven friends running for fun!

As a matter of fact, it was so much fun that Randy Fox suggested inviting other runners to join in on a proposed second run to Annapolis the next year, and the group promptly declared themselves the Severna Park Fun Runners.

That following year, acting as the first official race director for the Second Annual Annapolis 10-Miler, Randy Fox's vision and leadership turned a fun run into a competitive event. Starting at Severna Park High School and ending at the Annapolis City Dock, approximately 76 runners completed the course. Race packets included an iron-on decal to commemorate the event.

Randy worked tirelessly, always coming up with innovative ways to make the race even more of an event. He was the driving force behind securing sponsors to defray the costs of supporting an ever-growing field of competitive runners; finding volunteers to man the water stations and clean up, arranging for traffic control and first aid, planning for more sophisticated registration and time-keeping; organizing practice runs for the official race; and having the foresight to know when changes were needed for the success of future races.

The efforts of the Severna Park Fun Runners under the guidance of Randy became so successful that on the third year of the run the organizers donated \$5,000 to the American Heart Association paving the way for continued philanthropic support generated by the now renowned event.

As the race grew in popularity and the demand for entries increased, the Severna Park Fun Runners could no longer handle the logistics of such a task and in 1979, when the field of runners reached 1,000 the Severna Park Fun Runners partnered up with the fledgling running club, the Annapolis Striders. The next year the Striders took over race direction completely. In the mid-1990's, John Astle used his Maryland General Assembly legislative seat to submit a bill that made road races permissible in the State; thus keeping the Annapolis 10-Miler alive.

We are proud of our small and humble role in the making of this event and very pleased that the Annapolis Striders have taken our "fun run" to a much higher and more prestigious level.

In an effort to contribute to the historical accuracy of future references to the inception of the annual Annapolis-10 Miler, we respectfully submit this document and wish the Annapolis Striders continued success and recognition in the field of top race direction,

John Astle
Phyllis Beardmore
Debby Fox
Randy Fox
Donna Jay
Bart Rohrbach
Bonnie (Phillips) Seidelmann

July 2010

Editor's Note: Scroll down for race photos.



Above: Annapolis Ten Mile Warm Up 1976 — From left to right, Phyllis Beardmore, Debby Fox, Bonnie (Phillips) Seidelmann, Donna Jay, and Bart Rohrbach. Below: Randy Fox, director from 1976 to 1979, warms up. Photos by Buddy Beardmore.





First Post Race Party —Top Row: Jayne Astle, John Astle, and Debby Fox.
Front Row: Joann Rohrbach, Susie Rohrbach, Donna Jay, Phyllis Beardmore, Bonnie (Phillips) Seidelmann, Randy Fox, and Bart Rohrbach. Photo by Buddy Beardmore.