

BLOOMSDAY YEAR-BY-YEAR HISTORY

Bloomsday #1—May 1, 1977

Olympic marathoner Don Kardong makes a suggestion to a reporter in the fall of 1976 that Spokane should have a downtown running event, and the suggestion finds its way into the newspaper. Spokane Mayor David Rogers voices his support, the Spokane Jaycees adopt the event as a club project, and Medical Service Corporation signs on as Bloomsday's first sponsor. A course of approximately eight miles is laid out, including a section across the Maple Street Bridge, a loop around the West Central Neighborhood, a trip down Pettet Drive and up Meenach Drive to Northwest Boulevard, and a return via Broadway to the finish under the Washington/Stevens couplet in Riverfront Park. Mayor Rogers is the official starter. With 1,198 finishers, the first Bloomsday exceeds everyone's expectations, but with a 1:30 p.m. starting time, many of those runners suffer through the hottest part of a day that reaches 81 degrees. Kardong's Olympic teammate Frank Shorter wins the race, and Joan Ulliot of San Francisco wins the women's division. Two wheelchair entrants, Craig Houston and Roger Nelson, complete the course. The entry fee is \$3.00.

Bloomsday #2—May 7, 1978

The Lilac Bloomsday Association becomes a Washington non-profit corporation with the mission of promoting cardiovascular fitness, primarily through organizing the annual Lilac Bloomsday Run. Bloomsday officials become embroiled in a major dispute with the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) over sanctioning, the main issue being whether entrants need to purchase an AAU card. In the end Bloomsday refuses to sanction the event, and the months of publicity surrounding the controversy lead to a surge of entries. Over 5,024 finishers cause the finish chutes under the Washington-Stevens couplet in Riverfront Park to become severely clogged. The entry fee is raised to \$5.00, and the race start moves to noon. A non-denominational worship service is held in Riverfront Park to accommodate entrants unable to attend their usual morning services. A snowstorm in Denver interferes with travel plans of a large number of the invited field, but Boston Marathon champion Bill Rodgers emerges as the men's winner, with Marty Cooksey taking top honors among the women. The finisher T-shirt is based on a logo designed by Brian Henderson, who will eventually design seven Bloomsday finisher T-shirts.

Bloomsday #3—May 6, 1979

A team category is added (although it isn't scored) and a spaghetti feed is held at the YMCA on Saturday as a way of providing additional activities for participants. To help relieve congestion caused by the field doubling to over 10,000 entrants, officials utilize a two-pronged start, with runners starting on both Riverside (for those capable of 8 minutes

per mile or faster) and Main Avenue. The two starts merge at Monroe, then continue on Riverside. The route near the end is adjusted to cross the Post Street Bridge and finish on Spokane Falls Boulevard by the Carrousel. It is estimated that nearly 12 people per second cross the finish line at peak times. In spite of the large numbers, start and finish areas work well, although a bottleneck at the on-ramp to the Maple Street Bridge causes big delays, and TV video of the bridge shows the lamp posts swaying back and forth due to the number of runners. For safety and logistical reasons, plans are made to change the course in 1980. Bloomsday becomes the third-largest run in the U.S., behind San Francisco's Bay to Breakers and Atlanta's Peachtree Road Race. Ric Rojas wins the men's race, Cathy Twomey the women's, with Bob Hall of Boston the wheelchair winner.

Bloomsday #4—May 4, 1980

The Lilac Bloomsday Association hosts a women's running clinic the day before the event to celebrate their increasing participation in Bloomsday. Dr. Robert Hedequist, OBGYN, speaks in favor of running, jogging and physical activity for women regardless of pregnancy or potential pregnancy. As the event's popularity grows, a Bloomsday board game is licensed to inventors Tom and Deanna Richards, selling for \$12.95, and the "Bloomsday Blues" is recorded by a local band affiliated with KJRB Radio. The Road Runners Club of America holds its annual convention in conjunction with Bloomsday, the first RRCA convention held in the West. Runners use a totally revamped course that for about half the field goes from downtown along Riverside to Latah Creek, and for the other half goes along Main and through Peaceful Valley to Latah Creek, creating the first "merge" in race history. From there the course continues to Government Way, Ft. George Wright Drive, and, for the first time, up Pettet Drive, which is immediately dubbed Doomsday Hill. Warm weather and a noon start cause heat concerns for the 13,576 entrants. Officials record 11,962 official finishers. Mark Anderson and Gail Volk are the male and female champions, with Spokane runners Mike Layman and Julie Horn finishing in runnerup positions. Bob Hall wins the wheelchair competition for the second year in a row.

Bloomsday #5—May 3, 1981

Spokane celebrates its 100th birthday, and Bloomsday participation grows to 17,011. Two American hostages recently freed in Iran, William Keough and William Royer, report that they stayed in shape during captivity by running, but attempts to bring them to Bloomsday are unsuccessful. Start time is moved to 9:00 a.m. to minimize heat problems, although the temperature during the run hovers around a cool 50 degrees. Founder Kardong suggests Bloomsday consider adding prize money as part of a national movement toward professional competition in road racing, but no action is taken for this year. Duncan Macdonald wins Bloomsday in his third try, and New Zealand newcomer Anne Audain notches the first of her seven Bloomsday victories. Jim Martinson of Puyallup upsets favorite Bob Hall in wheelchair competition. 15,546 Bloomies cross the

line, and officials estimate that at the one-hour mark 1,000 runners per minute were finishing. On Monday after the race, over an inch of snow falls in different areas in the Spokane region.

Bloomsday #6—May 2, 1982

Bloomsday's reputation as a destination for world-class runners grows as a prize purse totaling \$30,000 is added. Bloomsday joins the ARRA Circuit of major U.S. road races, and a field is announced that includes 9 Olympians, 2 defending champions, 2 course record holders, 3 past winners and 3 Boston Marathon champions. *Runner's World* magazine calls Bloomsday one of the best road races in the U.S. The first Corporate Cup competition is launched, with a \$100 charge for a 5-member team, and Bloomsday hires its first paid race director, Doug Kelley. The Lilac Bloomsday Association co-sponsors a slide show on the night before Bloomsday titled "Mt. Spokane to Mt. Everest," presented by Spokane native Chris Kopczynski, the ninth American to reach the summit of Mt. Everest. For the first time, vendor participation at the Convention Center is advertised as a Trade Show. Bloomsday participation grows to 22,210, which includes entrants from 35 different states ranging in age from 2 to 88. Females make up 41.1% of the field. Henry Rono and Anne Audain finish first among 20,540 finishers, and each wins \$5,000. George Murray of Florida captures the wheelchair competition, and Jennifer Skidmore becomes Bloomsday's first female wheelchair champion. A massive backup in the T-shirt distribution lines leads many entrants to suggest giving the shirts out before the run.

Bloomsday #7—May 1, 1983

The Lilac Bloomsday Association hosts aerobics pioneer Dr. Kenneth Cooper on Friday of Bloomsday weekend for a speech at the Opera House titled "Can You Afford Not To Exercise?" Vendor booths at the Convention Center rent for \$250. Sylvia Quinn serves as race director for the first of nine Bloomsdays. The purse bumps up to \$40,000, and for the first time prize money (\$6,000) is awarded to top wheelchair finishers. A reorganized T-shirt distribution process features 80 tables, and in spite of Bloomsday's field growing by an additional 6,000 participants (to 28,173), the process works beautifully. Bloomsday's growth reportedly nudges it ahead of San Francisco's Bay to Breakers as the largest race in the country. Officials consider limiting entries, but decide to leave it open for all comers. Estimates are that the event generates over \$675,000 in hotel revenue. Jon Sinclair wins his first Bloomsday after finishing second twice, and Anne Audain wins for a third time, finishing in step with 1982 winner Henry Rono. Californians Jim Knaub and Candace Cable are top wheelers. Eastern Washington University notches the first of its many Corporate Cup victories.

Bloomsday #8—May 6, 1984

The Bloomsday entry fee is raised to \$6.00, and 33,312 people sign up, including many who decide to “Register by Computer” at Medical Service Corporation. The largest group is age 23-29, and the second largest is 1-12. 90-year-old Emmett Jones enters the run for the 3rd consecutive year. A commemorative medallion is offered for sale. The course is officially certified at the 12-kilometer distance. A third starting area on Sprague Avenue is added, and a computer seeds the field into six groups based on ability. Bloomies wake up to 1-2 inches of new snow on race morning, and while streets are clear by 9:00 a.m., the temperature stays just above freezing for most of the race. Ibrahim Hussein sets a new course record of 34:33, and Regina Joyce is women’s champion. Jim Martinson and Sharon Hedrick capture their wheelchair divisions, and Cheney wheeler Jerry Martin is presented with a new racing chair for being the first local wheelchair finisher. Mike Brady runs 36:29 to record the fastest Bloomsday time ever recorded by a local runner, and a Gonzaga point guard named John Stockton runs 46:03 for 374th place. Finisher T-shirt designed by Brian Henderson is selected as best in the nation by *Runner’s World* magazine.

Bloomsday #9—May 5, 1985

Bloomsday responds to an increasing inventory of undistributed finisher T-shirts by donating thousands to Catholic Charities. The shirts are shipped to Third World countries affected by famine and economic struggles. Sculptor David Govedare creates the Bloomsday statues, “The Joy of Running Together,” in Riverfront Park. In yet another year of growth, in-person computer registration is offered at Medical Service Corporation, which helps boost total registration to 39,662. An “official nonparticipant shirt” is designed by Brian Henderson and offered for sale, and Buffalo Shirts sells “Training for Bloomsday” T-shirts. Race conditions are cool for a second year, in the low 40s at race start, which results in some of the fastest times in Bloomsday history. Winner Paul Davies-Hale sets a new course record of 34:27, and Anne Audain returns from a one-year absence to win her fourth Bloomsday. Both earn \$7,000 for their performances, part of an increased purse of \$50,000. Gary Kerr and Candace Cable-Brooks win the men’s and women’s wheelchair races. In the worst disaster in Bloomsday history, a helicopter crashes at KREM-TV on Bloomsday morning, claiming the lives of pilot Cliff Richey and photographer Gary Brown. After the run, an economic impact study conducted by Gonzaga business students shows that Bloomsday has a \$1.2 million economic impact on the region.

Bloomsday #10—May 4, 1986

To celebrate Bloomsday’s tenth running, officials urge participants to “countdown” the days leading up to the run by wearing each of the nine previous years’ finisher T-shirts. Sponsor Nike sells a Bloomsday shoe at retail outlets in Spokane, and volunteers hand out commemorative pins to all 48,406 registrants at Check-In. Recognizing the growing number of young Bloomies, the Lilac Bloomsday Association launches the *Fit For*

Bloomsday...Fit For Life youth running/walking program. Over 30 elementary schools participate in the inaugural 10-week program by becoming an “Official Bloomsday Training School.” A group called the “Bloomsday Old Timers” is identified, made up of individuals who have completed all previous Bloomsdays (later to be called the Perennials). For the first time, female participation passes the 50% mark (50.7). Officials estimate that there are now about 5,000 Bloomsday volunteers to manage operations for the 45,541 finishers. Almost 500,000 cups are available at aid stations, but cool temperatures limit demand. Anne Audain sets a personal best and course record of 38:48, a time that won’t be beaten for nine years. Jon Sinclair becomes the event’s first repeat male winner with a 34:25 course record, and his closing (1:51 for the final .46 miles) is the fastest ever run. Priscilla Welch sets a Bloomsday record for masters females (41:01) that will remain unbroken in 2006. Candace Cable-Brookes and Andre Viger respond to a wheelchair purse that has increased to \$10,000 by winning their respective divisions.