

## Bloomsday #21—May 4, 1997

Bloomsday adds online registration as an option for entrants, becoming one of the first races in the nation to do so. Entries reach 55,270, and finishers total 49,467. The aftermath of Ice Storm '96 is reflected in Ken Spiering's poster, which shows a sculptor carving runners out of fallen trees. The Spokesman-Review reports that five Harvala sisters, ranging in age from 71 to 88, walk Bloomsday together, and that Blackfeet Indian youths from Browning, Montana, members of the Running Start for Blackfeet Youth program, run their 10th Bloomsday. Patrick Tabak proposes to his girlfriend by holding a sign on the hillside above Doomsday Hill saying, "I love you, Becky McKimmey. Will you marry me?" In elite competition, Lazarus Nyakeraka repeats as champion, but only after Jon Brown loses his place among the leaders twice when he has to stop to tie his shoelace. Kim Jones wins the women's division for the first time in eight attempts, becoming the first Spokane resident, male or female, to win Bloomsday. In wheelchair competition, Paul Wiggins and Jean Driscoll repeat as race winners, Driscoll for the ninth time.

## Bloomsday #22—May 3, 1998

In February, one of Riverfront Park's running statues is stolen. It is recovered later and reinstalled by artist Dave Govedare. Connie Bischoff is elected president of the Lilac Bloomsday Association, becoming the first woman to hold that position. Due to construction of River Park Square, the Bloomsday finish is moved from the corner of Spokane Falls Boulevard and Post to the Courthouse on Broadway. The course is adjusted in the West Central Neighborhood to make up the distance lost. The field is divided into eight color-coded sections at the start, with all runners, joggers and walkers eventually ending up on Riverside. Travel through Peaceful Valley and the resulting "merge" near Latah Creek are eliminated. 53,898 sign up for the event, and 47,215 finish. Skies are partly cloudy on race morning, but the temperature climbs steadily during the run until it is too warm for many Bloomies. In elite competition, Hezron Otworu and Jane Omoro win the men's and women's divisions by comfortable margins. It is the first of three straight victories for Omoro. Jean Driscoll makes it 10 in a row by winning the women's wheelchair division, and Saul Mendoza wins the first of his eight successive wheelchair titles.

## Bloomsday #23—May 2, 1999

The Lilac Bloomsday Association and the Bloomsday Road Runners Club host the annual Road Runners Club of America national convention for the second time (first was in 1980). Bloomsday adds \$5,000 in prize money for top finishers from the state of Washington in the first annual Washington Road Running Championships, a joint project of USA Track and Field and the Road Runners Club of America. Inaugural winners are

Eric Tollefson of Tacoma and Kari McKay of Spokane. 53,898 people sign up for the run, but cool temperatures result in more no-shows than normal on race morning, and 47,215 complete the course. Bloomies run in the rain for the first time, with the high temperature for the day only reaching 47 degrees. The oldest finisher is James Ferderer, 96, who completes the course in three hours 14 minutes. 94-year-old Golda Floyd does her first Bloomsday and clocks in with a finish time of three hours and nine minutes. In elite competition, Joshua Chelanga makes a strong move up Doomsday Hill to break away from defending champion Lazarus Nyakeraka, but Nyakeraka rallies and nearly reclaims the lead before Chelanga surges to victory. The women's race is one of the closest in history, with four racers together at the top of Doomsday Hill, but Jane Omoro proves the best of the field as she captures her second title. Wheelers Saul Mendoza and Jean Driscoll seem unfazed by the drizzly conditions and repeat as Bloomsday champions.

### Bloomsday #24—May 7, 2000

Entry fee is raised to \$10.00, the first increase in five years. 50,401 sign up and 45,538 finish. On Friday of Bloomsday weekend the U.S. Postal Service has a ceremony on the floating stage to issue a new commemorative stamp that depicts the blur of runners' legs during a race. Skies are sunny and the temperature is in the mid-40s at race start, excellent conditions for running. Josphat Machuka and Lazarus Nyakeraka, each with two Bloomsday wins, return to try for a third, but are thwarted by newcomer Reuben Cheruiyot. Jane Omoro outleans training partner Jane Ngotho at the line to become only the second runner to win three Bloomsdays in a row (Anne Audain is the other, in '81, '82, '83). Saul Mendoza and Jean Driscoll repeat their 1999 victories in the wheelchair divisions. It is the 12<sup>th</sup> and final victory for Driscoll. Simon Karori sets the current Bloomsday record for masters males (36:14). Two heart transplant recipients, Randy Twiggs and John Bottjer, finish together in 3 hours and 45 minutes. 40-year-old David McKay, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, completes his fourth Bloomsday with the aid of two canes, finishing in 10 hours and 58 minutes. His 7-year-old daughter Tashina, who is wheelchair bound after suffering burns on over 60% of her body in an accident, finishes with him.

### Bloomsday #25—May 6, 2001

Bloomsday celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> year by hosting three guest speakers on race weekend: John "The Penguin" Bingham, seven-time Bloomsday champion Anne Audain, and Spokane running legend Gerry Lindgren. 49,532 sign up. Entrants are reported to be from 16 different countries, and there are 132 "Silver Stars"—runners who haven't missed a race. The Stars, later to be termed Perennials, are treated to a luncheon and a special starting area. Bloomsday joins sister races Cherry Blossom (Washington, DC) and Peachtree (Atlanta, GA) in offering a bonus to any runner who wins all three in the same year. It is sunny, cool and calm for the second straight year, resulting in fast times and close finishes. Dominic Kirui outleans Reuben Cheruiyot for the men's victory, and Elana

Meyer outsprints Sally Barsosio by 2 seconds. It is the fastest women's race in history, as five women break 40 minutes. Saul Mendoza repeats as wheelchair champion, and Ariadne Hernandez takes advantage of Jean Driscoll's retirement to post her first victory. There are 45,346 finishers, and the city of Edmonton, Alberta, is reported to have the fastest finishers with an average time of 1:24:33. Four generations of race founder Don Kardong's family participate in the race. Kardong and Anne Audain run Bloomsday together, finishing in 47:45. 35-year old Brenda Gildehaus, a former three-sport collegiate athlete who is crippled with MS, wheels the course and stops 100 yards short of the line to walk the final stretch using a special walker. The Bloomsday poster and T-shirt—designed respectively by Spokane artists Ken Spiering and Steve Merryman—are both selected among the best in the nation by *Runner's World* magazine.

### Bloomsday #26—May 5, 2002

Security concerns are heightened at the first Bloomsday held since the 9-11 disaster, but no problems are experienced. Instead, officials focus on the fact that 2002 will see Bloomsday's one-millionth finisher. "It could be you," say the radio ads, and when finishers are counted, 33-year-old Dana Gaber of the Spokane Valley is identified as the millionth. Gaber, who is 24,481<sup>st</sup> out of 45,775 finishers, receives a trophy modeled after the runner statues in Riverfront Park, gifts donated by Bloomsday sponsors, and free Bloomsday entry for life. At the front of the Bloomsday pack, James Koskei nips fellow Kenyan John Itati by one second for the victory, and Colleen De Reuck becomes only the third female to win more than one Bloomsday (Anne Audain, Jane Omoro). Ariadne Hernandez and Saul Mendoza repeat as wheelchair champions, Mendoza setting a course record. Bill Rodgers underscores his return to Bloomsday for the first time since his 1978 victory by finishing second in the 50-54 age group with a time of 43:00. On Tuesday, two days after the race, well over a foot of snow falls about 20 miles west of town in a very unusual late season storm. While just a few flakes fall downtown, the storm is a reminder of the kind of weather that's possible on the first Sunday in May.

### Bloomsday #27—May 4, 2003

Bloomsday Overseas takes place for the first time since the 1991 Desert Storm operation, and 20 members of the Fairchild Air Force Base crew in Diego Garcia, India, run the required 7.46 miles and earn a special finisher's shirt. Back in Spokane, chilly weather in the days preceding the race yields a low turnout, as 44,641 sign up. Race morning is cool and overcast, and newcomer John Korir outruns three past champions to take top honors by a second. Lyudmila Biktasheva proves to be the best of a strong Russian contingent, holding off a late rally by Colleen DeReuck to win the women's race. DeReuck's time of 38:53 is recognized as the fastest 12 kilometers ever run by an American female in women's only competition (Bloomsday qualifies by virtue of the separate 8:45 elite women's start). Three other runners set single-age marks—June Machala (72) of Spokane, John Keston (78) of McMinnville, Oregon, and Regina Joyce (46) of

Lynnwood, Washington. Keston's performance comes after he sings "O, Canada" and "America the Beautiful" on the starting line. In wheelchair competition, Saul Mendoza takes his sixth Bloomsday title, while Cheri Blauwet takes an early lead but skids on wet pavement, takes a spill, and opens the way for Ariadne Hernandez to post her third straight Bloomsday victory.

### Bloomsday #28—May 2, 2004

Failure of a sales tax increase on the ballot jeopardizes STA's Bloomsday shuttle service, but in the end STA is able to continue, shuttling 20% of the 43,514 entrants to and from the race. 1984 Olympic gold medalist Joan Benoit Samuelson is guest speaker on race weekend, and Samuelson runs Bloomsday for the first time. Race morning is one of the warmest on record, nearly 60 degrees at race start. Pre-race predictions focus on 2002 Bloomsday champion James Koskei and up-and-comer Nelson Kiplagat Birgen, but in the end it is another Kenyan, Simon Wangai, who claims the title. Russian Albina Ivanova pulls a similar upset in the women's division, as she outduels Sally Barsosio of Kenya for a 39:22 victory. Ivanova's 2:17 over the final .46 miles ties Delillah Asiago's 1995 closing as the fastest in Bloomsday history. In the wheelchair race, Saul Mendoza of Mexico posts his seventh Bloomsday victory in 25:30, just four seconds shy of his course record. Ariadne Hernandez of Mexico easily wins the women's division. Roughly a dozen heart recipients are reported to be Bloomsday entrants. One of them, Joseph Urlacher of Spokane Valley, walks in memory of his heart donor, Casey Bauer of Montana. In the first-ever voting for best Bloomsday performer, the Red Hot Mamas win by a landslide. After the race Karen Heaps, who has served as Race Coordinator for thirteen years, announces that she is retiring. Later in the year, students at Gonzaga University's School of Business release a report showing that the 28<sup>th</sup> Bloomsday had an economic impact of over \$9,500,000.

### Bloomsday #29—May 1, 2005

Bloomsday founder Don Kardong is hired by Bloomsday's Board of Directors as the new Race Director. Number of entrants (43,842) and finishers (40,012) are up slightly over 2004. For the first time, Bloomsday is officially designated as a Tobacco Free Event, and participants and spectators alike are encouraged to avoid tobacco use on race weekend. Brian Kenna, a reservist in the US Army stationed in Iraq, plans his leave so he can keep his streak alive of having completed every Bloomsday. Guest speaker on race weekend is former WSU star Bernard Lagat, who shows footage of his silver medal performance in the 2004 Olympic 1500 meters. On race morning, participants enjoy some of the best weather in Bloomsday history, with clear skies and mild temperatures. John Korir takes top honors among the men, and Morocco's Asmae Leghzaoui posts her first Bloomsday victory. Course record holder Saul Mendoza notches his eighth Bloomsday win, while 19-year-old Shirley Reilly of Tucson, Arizona, upsets Ariadne Hernandez to take top women's honors. Farther back in the crowd, 39-year-old Sean Spicer celebrates his loss

of 470 pounds by finishing Bloomsday in just over 2 hours, and 37-year-old leg amputee Laurie Bartalamay finishes on crutches, vowing to finish in 2006 without them. Official 2005 Bloomsday Charity the Susan G. Komen Foundation receives a check from Bloomsday for \$15,928.67, a combination of donations from participants and purchases of pink bracelets sold in the weeks leading up to Bloomsday. The Inlander takes over the role of publishing results, distributing a beautiful 84-page Souvenir Results Booklet.

### Bloomsday #30—May 7, 2006

Bloomsday's 30<sup>th</sup> year is promoted with a triple X logo, and the event undergoes major renovations in the start, finish, and timing system. Participants are issued a radio frequency ID chip that attaches to the ankle, which allows each runner, jogger and walker to receive his or her individual time from start to finish. The chip replaces the timing system that Bloomsday volunteers invented and implemented for nearly three decades. Using the chip system, officials are able to move all starting groups to Riverside Avenue and start in waves of about 5,000, which allows a mostly uncluttered course for all participants. The finish is moved to the north end of the newly refurbished Monroe Street Bridge, just above the falls. A new event in Riverfront Park called the Marmot March, for kids first grade and younger (and their parents), is added to the Bloomsday weekend schedule. Among those celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> year are 124 "Perennials" who have completed every Bloomsday. An online vote determines that Ken Spiering's 1996 T-shirt, which features crushed water aid station cups and puddles of water that spell out the numeral "20" and "Bloomsday 96", is the all-time favorite. The 2005 T-shirt "wins" the tally as least favorite. On a chilly Sunday morning, 2005 runnerup Gilbert Okari easily wins the men's race, while Isabella Ochichi outsprints Tetyana Hladyr for the women's title. Saul Mendoza notches his ninth straight wheelchair victory, and Shirley Reilly wins her second. 40,809 finishers are recorded.