

100 Days

by John Farrow

It has now been 100 days since my election to the RRCA Board of Directors and therefore a good time to provide at least some preliminary assessment of where we are. Of course, during this time in New York, the lights have gone out and come back on again, but in the Saddam Hussein household in Iraq, they have simply gone out.

At the time of this year's national convention, the RRCA was in disarray. Bitterness lingered from the failed secretive attempt to amend the Bylaws at the 2002 convention that would have removed the right of member clubs to elect the officers of the organization and would have effectively given the executive director control over five Board members. The RRCA Forum, a popular site for the exchange of news and ideas among members, had been removed from the website due to threatened litigation. Publication of *Inside Track* and *Footnotes*, the quarterly magazine of the RRCA, was suspended, as was the awarding of funds to Roads Scholarship recipients.

Then the Board passed a resolution to bill member clubs for each individual in the club, disregarding long-standing practice of allowing clubs to provide for family memberships (counted as one member for dues purposes). This last act resulted in some clubs receiving dues increases of more than 100% in spite of a Bylaw provision that dues cannot be increased except with the approval of the membership.

The RRCA Legal Committee was asked for a legal opinion concerning the validity of this action by the Board and in a unanimous opinion - one that I largely authored - held that it was in violation of the Bylaws. But that opinion was ignored and the Board implemented the *de facto* dues increase anyway.

That was the last straw for many and 145 of the more than 700 member clubs - including some of the largest and oldest clubs - did not renew their membership in the RRCA for 2003. Further, some of them formed the American Association of Running Clubs (AARC), an organization similar to the RRCA.

It was in this atmosphere that I was elected to the Board of Directors on April 4th along with four other new Board members - Lisa Paige of Colorado, David Epstein of Alaska, Tom Downing of Alabama, and Bee Andrews of Virginia.

Since taking office, there have been a number of meetings by way of conference calls, a Board meeting at the national office in Alexandria, Virginia, and countless emails back and forth with some or all of the Board. An early consensus was that the executive director had lost his effectiveness as a leader of the organization and a generous offer was extended to him for the termination of his contract. Surprisingly, the offer was not accepted and on May 19, 2003, the

executive director's employment contract was terminated.

The Board quickly moved to hire Ed DeMoney, one of the finalists in the previous executive director search, as interim executive director until a permanent replacement could be found and also to retain the current office staff. Ed has proved to be a quiet and efficient administrator and has restored a sense of order to the national office.

Since little sponsorship or grant money was secured by the previous executive director during his one and a half-year tenure, a sponsorship sub-committee of the Board was appointed by President Freddi Carlip, with David Epstein as its chair. The Board also intends to bring back *Footnotes* with a Winter 2003-2004 edition and a publications sub-committee of the Board was appointed with Joe Seeley and Bee Andrews as co-chairs. *Inside Track* has already been restarted.

I was asked to review new agreements and procedures with the webmaster for bringing the Forum back online, and it is now back and functioning. I have also reviewed several sponsorship agreements obtained by the interim executive director and am in the process of soliciting new insurance proposals for the RRCA master insurance policies with the goal of reducing the cost of insurance that makes up a large part of the RRCA's budget.

The financial records of the RRCA have been brought current and the organization is some \$58,000 better off than it was at the time of this year's convention. Membership is back up to over 630 clubs, Roads Scholarship checks have been paid out (in joint effort with AARC) and all member clubs have been contacted for current membership data which will facilitate 2004 billing (clubs are now billed for each "household," whether one or more individuals).

Finally, discussions are under way with AARC concerning a possible merger of the organizations in the future. AARC has been invited to send representatives to the September Board meeting of the RRCA, and there is hope that good progress will be made towards bringing those clubs back to the RRCA.

At this year's convention, I stated that the RRCA must get back on track financially, establish more effective communication with its member clubs and other national organizations, and assume its position as a respected national leader in the sport of running. I believe that we are well on the way towards achieving those goals.□

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