

## Convention 2004: The Fun Is Back

by John Farrow

**A**lbuquerque had the last fun convention. That was the word at the past two RRCA conventions. No more. Lake Tahoe will be remembered as the convention when the fun returned to the RRCA.

This year's convention got off to a dazzling start with the traditional Meet the Board reception convening on the decks and the dining room of the *Tahoe Queen*, a paddle-wheeled river-boat transplanted to Lake Tahoe. As diners tasted a delicious salmon, the spectacular snow-capped peaks that surround the lake glided silently by, soon bathed in the glow of a Western sunset over the lake.

After dark, rock and roll blasted away down below as runners exhibited a different form. And it all continued late into the night in the Elvis Presley Suite, the same one where The King stayed when he played the convention resort in the early 1970s. Yes, the Tahoe Mountain Milers and Carson City's Sagebrush Stompers know how to party.

Mark Twain, an early resident on the lake in 1860, welcomed everyone in the opening ceremony but, when informed that everyone in attendance was a runner, exclaimed "I myself occasionally get the urge to exercise. But then I think it best to lie down until the feeling passes!" But our friend turned out to be an elite triathlete moonlighting between 100-mile bike rides and 20-mile runs.

The RRCA has experienced some very difficult times during the last few years but it is a testament to the fundamental strength of the organization that it has survived and is on course for a full recovery. This was clearly evident at the annual business meeting, the scene of acrimonious exchanges the past two years.

This year, the membership unanimously approved the nominating committee slate of board members for the coming two years, including new members Brent Ayre and Beth Onines and then unanimously approved a Letter of Agreement with the American Association of Running Clubs that sets up a timetable for the merger of the two organizations as of January 1, 2005. (The AARC unanimously approved the Letter of Agreement the following week).

The RRCA Board of Directors set in motion a number of other initiatives for the improvement of the organization. A new State Rep Task Force is being formed by State Rep Coordinator Ken Bendy and Georgia State Rep Marlene Atwood to examine the structure of the State Rep program as well as explore funding options for the program. Road Dace Management is also providing each State Rep with a copy of its 2004 Road Race Management Directory, containing a listing of athletes, agents, events, businesses, organizations and officials in the running community.

The Board also approved a move of the national office to Columbia, Maryland, as soon as space can be located. This move should allow for better access for local clubs at a significant savings in rent. As part of this office upgrade, there has been a technology upgrade in the national office, as well, with the purchase of two new computers and software for increased productivity and security. And to help with these upgrades, the Credit Union Cherry Blossom 10 Mile Race presented the RRCA with a \$1,000 contribution to be used to restructure our membership database.

Of course, not the least of the upgrades for the RRCA is our new executive director, the

vibrant Becky Lambros, whose wonderful smile and unbounded energy seemed to be everywhere during the convention. Becky comes to the RRCA from the Credit Union Cherry Blossom race and has been a most welcome addition to the national office.

The Ugly Feet Contest reared its ugly head again this year, at Saturday's lunch, unfortunately. After much stomach-churning deliberations, Southern Region Director Tom Downing's crooked, blackened big toe was held to have edged out Oklahoman Jerry Crockett's right foot, so misshapen that it appeared at first to have a second big toe attempting to emerge.

And this year's convention also saw the return of Bart Yasso and his slides of running in every imaginable (and some unimaginable) place of the world. Bart took the crowd from the depths of Death Valley to the top of Mt. Whitney, to the Great Pyramids Marathon, the South Pole Marathon, the Kilimanjaro Marathon, the World Hill Running Championships to a run Sri Lanka with the turn-around point marked by an angry rhinoceros blocking the trail. And of course, there was the Bare Buns 5k, which raises the questions of where to pin your race number and whether to show your medal to your mother.

Bart's trip was mostly paid for by Runner's World magazine where he is in charge of special projects, but also by his wife, who dropped three quarters in a slot machine in the casino and was rewarded with a \$400 pay-out.

And every night, the Elvis Presley Suite was the center of the convention. Any time you can come in from a run through Ponderosa pines and along the sparkling shore of Lake

Tahoe to play 8-ball on the pool table Elvis played on, sip a beer at his bar or lie in the same bed where The King once lay, you just know things are going to be okay.

ARR News, June 2004  
Albuquerque Road Runners Club