

Empire Runners Club Hall of Fame 2011

Ralph Harms

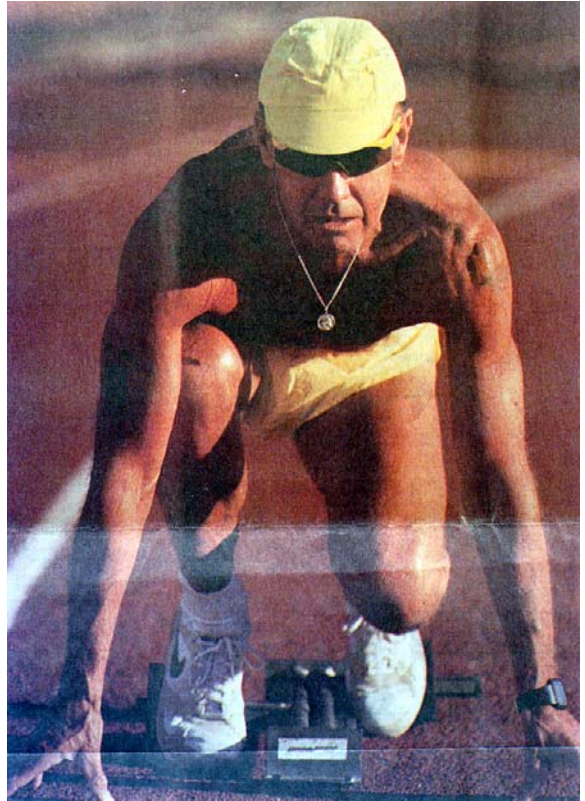
b. 10/1/1935

Qualify Standard met: numerous (at least 20), including

- Palm Springs Senior Olympics, 1995 (age 60) 1500m, 5:06. Age Grading: 85.81%

Ralph was born and raised in San Francisco, married his high school sweetheart, Kathleen, with whom he raised 4 children, and moved to Santa Rosa in 1980. Ralph was a baker by trade, operating his own bakery in San Francisco, and later in Santa Rosa he co-owned a sporting goods store catering to runners and tennis players.

In junior and senior high school Ralph ran the 100 yard dash but never raced a longer distance until he was nearly 40 and entered the 1974 Bay to Breakers. He must have liked that experience because he continued to race competitively on road, track, and cross country for 34 consecutive years.



Not one for moderation, three years after his first Bay to Breakers, Ralph strung together 13 marathon races in 12 months and then enlisted in the Army Special Forces for a stint as a Green Beret. At age 42 he was at the time the oldest volunteer ever to pass the fitness qualifications and be accepted into this elite military group. Needless to say, Ralph was and is beyond tough. Always a fierce competitor, he completed 29 life-time marathons. In 1985 he won his age group division in 3 Sonoma County races—in one weekend!

Ralph has competed in races locally and all over the country, including several national senior and veteran track meets. In 1995, he qualified as a *Masters News* All-American in 5 events—the 800m, 1500m, mile, 3000m, and 5000m, and won gold medals in the 800m (2:33) and 1500m (5:23) at the Huntsman World Veteran Games in St. George, Utah. Ralph also helped set 2 world 4 x 1600m relay records—in the 60 & older division in 1996 and in the 70+ division in 2008, both times running with members of the Tamalpa Runners at the College of Marin.

For twenty years (1980 to 2000) Ralph led exercise classes at the Sonoma County YMCA, where he continues to work out and lift weights religiously. His commitment to the health and welfare of young people has been demonstrated by his years as assistant coach of track and cross country at Santa Rosa Junior High (1981) and High School (1982-1995) and currently as coach and trainer at Double Punches Boxing Club. (Ralph is a former college, Golden Gloves, and U.S. Army boxer.) Ralph also serves on the Sonoma County Youth Gang Prevention Task Force.

At 75 Ralph, still runs up in Annadel and has not lost his invincible demeanor. At Double Punches he humbles his young protégés in push-up contests. As you can imagine, he commands respect. The kids know not to mess with this guy—and that he loves them.