

Kathy Van Riper Inspiration Award 2011



Bob Shor

Every runner who races in this county, perhaps in the entire Bay Area, knows him, if not by name at least by his familiar figure, poised before the starting line, pistol raised to the sky, booming voice commanding every attention, “Runners, ON your mark!”

No one in Sonoma County’s history has done more to support track and cross country than Bob Shor—by far. He is ubiquitous. He fires his starter’s pistol for more than 100 running events each year, but that’s only a small part of his story. Bob is a certified USATF official and one of their top technical experts. He officiates at races all over the country and last year was Co-Technical Chairman of both the USATF National Junior Olympic Track & Field Championships and the USA Masters Outdoor T&F Championships. He also served until about a year ago as the Pacific Association Youth Cross County Chairman.

For all his skill, experience, and knowledge, you’d think a guy like Bob could command a lot of money for what he does. But he does it all—ALL OF IT!!!!—for free.

“Born, raised, and thrown out of Brooklyn,” Bob’s interest in running began in high school where he ran cross country and track (4:45 mile), but even then he often helped out by firing the gun at the start of races. Bob continued running cross country and the one and two-mile track events at Pennsylvania Military College, graduating in 1962 as a 2nd Lieutenant. After college he served in

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Vietnam and obtained the rank of US Army Infantry Captain. Even in the military, Bob started races, volunteering at high school meets while doing a stint at Ft. Polk in Louisiana.

After the military Bob worked in New York for awhile, then moved to Arcata where he lived for 7 years and worked as assistant track and cross country coach at Humboldt State University. In Arcata, he served as starter at local high school and college meets and for AAU events in Oregon.

In 1976, Bob moved to Santa Rosa and continued running for health and recreation but not as a competitor. Several years later, Bob encouraged his daughter to join the Santa Rosa Express.

She eventually lost interest in running, but Bob did not. In 1989 he began assisting Doug Courtemarche who was then the Express head coach. In 1992, he took over Doug's position.

Locally, hundreds of young runners from 7 years old to high school age, including several who went on to gain college scholarships and become running super stars, began their careers with Santa Rosa Express, an organization Bob headed for nearly 20 years and for which he still coaches. Bob also helps coach Santa Rosa High School cross country and track & field teams and is a mainstay with the Empire Runners Club, officiating and starting nearly every club event and always lending his expertise and wisdom to club issues.

Bob turns 70 in 2011. Last year he lost a third of one lung in surgery to remove a cancerous tumor—found in time, thank goodness. This leaves him a bit short-winded as he peddles his bike up and down the hills of Howarth and Spring Lake Parks on workouts with his young Santa Rosa Express protégés. It was serendipitous that the tumor was discovered as part a routine TB clearance exam required for volunteer coaches.

The Kathy Van Riper Inspiration Award is presented annually to an Empire Runners Club member whose personal courage, generosity of spirit, and/or dedication to the sport of running extraordinarily inspires us as runners and fellow human beings.

No one is more deserving of this award and of our respect and gratitude than Bob Shor.