

Ed Thomas

A Distinguished Pioneer of the Hudson Mohawk Road Runners Club

By Bob McFarland

Ed Thomas has ascended a great many peaks, both literally and figuratively, in an extraordinary life of achievements, contribution, and bonhomie. That panorama of heights include a superb record of scholarly success though the earning of a Ph.D. in mathematics, football prowess at the high school and college level, awarding of a Distinguished Professorship for an acclaimed record at the University at Albany, and securing broadly recognized status as a truly accomplished technical rock (mountain) climber. But for so many of us in Ed's immediate orbit, it is his unceasing dedication to our sport of running and his inspiring devotion and service to the Hudson Mohawk Road Runners Club that has endeared him to us and has captured our admiration and respect.

I was delighted to join Mike McCarthy, Pat Glover, and Dale Keenan in nominating one of the Hudson Mohawk Road Runners Club's dedicated, deserving, and pioneering members for its Hall of Fame. The HMRRC has indeed set the bar exceedingly high for membership in the Hall of Fame as its present membership so graphically attests to that exalted condition. It is a pleasure and an honor to note that Ed Thomas meets superbly the exacting standards that qualifies one for elevation to the Hall of Fame. His inclusion this year (accompanied by fellow inductee, the remarkably gifted and involved Chris Rush) in this distinguished cohort not only will honor him...and Chris...but add additional luster and depth to this stellar group of runners and devoted club citizens.

Ed began his running career at the urging of his colleague, Don Wilken, who recruited Ed to run in a challenge race pitting the University at Albany Math Department against the UCLA Math Department. I am pleased to note that Albany defeated its West Coast rivals. This was the beginning of over thirty years of Ed's significant commitment to the sport of running and record of incredible service to the HMRRC. Ed has been a member of the club since its inception. It has been reported by Don Wilken that Ed ran in the first HMRRC race, and since then he has completed hundreds of its diverse events.

In the most blatant understatement I have ever heard from someone who is modest and self-effacing to the extreme, Ed has said "Over the years I have enjoyed doing odds and ends for the club when it would be helpful." I can think of very few people, perhaps, who have done more to ensure the continuity, success, and vitality of our club. Additionally, each December, Ed and his wife Harriet host a neighborhood pre-Christmas run and raucous part for running friends and University colleagues who have also contributed to the HMRRC.

Ed Thomas's resume of club service is a historically valuable trek through the evolution of the HMRRC. Ed has served as a co-president of the HMRRC. He has been for decades the organizer and godfather of the HMRRC's Winter Series. Additionally, not only has he provided the general leadership for this important series, he has also personally directed numerous HMRRC races. The HMRRC enjoys exceptional hospitality from the University at Albany for its campus races. This is mostly due to Ed forging a credible and diplomatically effective ongoing relationship with the University's senior administration, its police department, and its athletic department. He has also dealt effectively with the University's administration in putting on the New York State Department of Correction and the Annual Police and Firemen's cross-country and 10-K race for over fifteen years. Ed has also directed races for external organizations on the Niskayuna/Colonie bike path.

In addition to providing sustained leadership and direct involvement in HMRRC race management and programs, Ed has written over a hundred articles for The Pacesetter. These include his long-time editing of the "Profile of a Runner" series and the current exceedingly

popular "Been There-Done That" nostalgic column that graces the Pacesetter's current issues. He has also reported in the Pacesetter on scores of races, most recently the first race in the 2004 Winter Series. Ed has also served in the trenches as a mailing team leader for the Pacesetter. Does the range of his contributions to our club know no boundaries? Finally, as a long-overdue recognition of his extraordinary service and devotion to the HMRRC, Ed was awarded the club's Distinguished Service Award in 2003 to overwhelming acclaim.

Before initiating his career as a runner, Ed had excelled on the football fields in California. A second spot at which he currently excels and has established an awe-inspiring reputation is that of Technical Rock-Climbing, which he has performed in the United States and Europe, most recently last summer in Germany. That Ed can excel in such diverse sports so different from running makes his accomplishments as a distance runner all the more remarkable. Ed runs every day, regardless of weather conditions, except for those days he goes mountain climbing. As Mike McCarthy has so succinctly said, "Ed Thomas is a unique individual who has performed some amazing feats of endurance." For example, with former HMRRC standout Doug Allen, Ed ran ten consecutive 3-mile perimeter loops at the University at Albany, and two consecutive 12-mile Voorheesville loops. Moreover, Ed and his teammate Tom Kiernan completed the challenging Kaaterskill Spring Rush, where they skied, ran, ported, and boated for many hours – a feat accomplished by few. Additionally, Ed has run twenty-five marathons, stretching from Ottawa (Canada) down to South Carolina. Among these, he has a solid 3:14 marathon at Boston, and a sterling sub-3:06 marathon at the HMRRC Marathon. Other significant racing personal records for this football lineman/mountain climber/road racer include a sub-40 minute time on the tough Masters 10-K course in Guilderland, a 2:06 in the Chopperthon, an excellent sub-92 minute half-marathon, a sub-62 minute for the Stockadeathon, and a swift 19:30 for a three mile Albany perimeter. Two of his favorite international races were the Great North Run in England (a half marathon at New Castle) and the Maski Courons (a 20 kilometer jaunt around a beautiful glacier lake north of Montreal). At the age of 67, Ed continues to participate regularly in HMRRC events, and of course continues his involvement in providing leadership for the Winter Series and in writing articles for the Pacesetter.

In conclusion, in addition to his remarkable record of service to the HMRRC and the depth and breadth of his thirty-some years of running and competing, Ed is distinguished by a personality that is balanced, supportive, and engaging to all he meets. He exemplifies the teacher/athlete; gentleman that each of us would wish to have as a friend...and to be accepted as his friend. He is definitely one of those special people who make the sport of running and the existence of the HMRC attractive to so very many and so valuable to our community. What a great pleasure and a privilege for all of us to acknowledge and celebrate the entry of Ed Thomas into HMRRC Hall of Fame corps of distinguished athletes and citizens!