

RUNNERS REUNITED II

TRANSCRIPTS OF ON-CAMERA INTERVIEWS

WITH STATE'S ELITE HIGH SCHOOL RUNNERS FROM THE '60s THRU '80s
CONDUCTED 07/11/09 IN FULLERTON, CALIF. AT ROSCOE'S FAMOUS DELI

(Transcriptions herein represent excerpts from each athlete's much-longer, full-length interview. Not all persons interviewed during RRII are featured herein.)

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1. **ANGEL, ROBERT**

Huntington Beach High School, Class of 1975

H.S.: Mile (4:19.7), 2Mile (9:02.14)

Lifetime: 5,000 (14:38.0)

College: Golden West College / Long Beach State / Indiana U.

Noteworthy: Set national indoor prep sophomore 2-mile national record (9:14.8) in 1973.

(Re: reunion): This is the second get-together, and pretty much I have the same feelings about the second get-together as the first. I did have anxieties because I am not running anymore. And a little nervous about meeting some of my fellow runners who are still in shape, and I'm not quite in shape for that. But beyond all that, all the runners we ran with back in the '70s, even the '60s, they were always so polite and kind to each other. The guys who were seniors when we were freshmen, Marc Genet, Mark Schilling, you know. You couldn't help but come and have a good feeling to just be together with them again and meet them. (Event organizer) Ralph Serna has put together just a fantastic reunited get-together. And it's just fantastic. It's something that doesn't happen by accident.

(Re: the late Eric Hulst, champion two-miler from Laguna Beach High School, class of '76): Regarding the passing of Eric Hulst, it did hit me hard. I was friends with him, and he was a very nice person. It kind of hit home because my brother had passed away from a brain tumor. And it was like reliving that all over again when I heard about it. It was a terrible thing. Not much you can say. He was a great competitor, a great person, and track & field lost a great runner.

2. **BECK, CURTIS**

Santa Monica High School, '73

H.S.: 880 (1:51.5), Mile (4:04.2), 2Mile (8:48.8)

Lifetime: 880 (1:51.5), Mile (4:01.7), 2Mile (8:48.8)

College: UCLA

Noteworthy: Blazed a national junior class record of 8:48.8 in the 2-mile in 1972 (3rd best prep performance in history at the time). Only Steve Prefontaine (8:41.5) and Rick Riley (8:48.4) had run faster. And notched a 4:04.2 in the mile as a junior, representing 2nd best finish in the class behind Jim Ryun's 3:59.0 from 1964 and 6th best prep overall in 1972.

Running has absolutely benefited me. As the years progress, as you're, you know, going through (job) interviews and going through life I had a lot of guys that ended up being very successful and running businesses that remembered me and some of the meets I had. And guys that had literally, like, had been in cross country races with me, obviously people that I didn't know, but knew me from my success and I fortunately I ended up with a couple of great jobs from guys that I ran with in high school that had

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companies that had been very successful and wanted to bring me on board. It kinda broke the ice; I mean I had to get those jobs based on understanding what the position was. But at the same time it just opened the door and gave me that little element that allowed me to get that gig that the other guys didn't.

(Re: reunion): When I heard from (reunion organizer) Ralph Serna, I haven't been one of those kind of guys that goes to reunions. I haven't even been to a high school reunion. It's been 38 years since I graduated. And I had a little trepidation, 'cause I'm going, "God, how am I going to fit in?" I don't really have a lot of experience doing this, you know. I've always been sort of an outsider. And I have to say that I've had an absolutely incredible experience here. I actually ran into four guys that I actually was in college with that were college roommates, or college teammates, actually some roommates. And it's been an awesome experience. I'm glad they tracked me down. I guess I was... they told me, you know, Ralph said that Curtis you're a little bit hard to track down and, you know, so I... Yes, I am hard to track down. But it's been unreal. I'm so grateful that some guys that I spent some time with. In fact, I never met Ralph until tonight. You're in these races, you know, You get on a bus in high school, they take you out to the meet. You get on the starting line, the gun goes off, you run your eight laps, your four laps, whatever it is. And then you go home. I didn't meet any of these guys. And to have to have a chance to actually interact with them, so many -- three decades, four -- decades later, is absolutely incredible. And I am so grateful that someone put, you know, Ralph and some of his friends have made the effort to do something like this. And I have actually volunteered to, in the future, to go try to talk a few guys that still are holding out to actually get down here and experience this.

3. **BLUME, GARY**

Marina High School (Huntington Beach), Class of 1974

H.S.: 880 (1:57.), Mile (4:17.0), 2Mile (9:00.8), Steeple (9:36.6), 3Mile (14:36.6)

Lifetime: Mile (4:06.0), 2Mile (8:39.0), 5,000 (14:05.0), 5 Miles (23:39.0), Steeplechase (8:36.0), 10,000 (28:45.0), 1/2 Marathon (65:31:00)

College: UC Berkeley

I found that the success I had in running spilled onto my life afterwards, in that I set goals and became the top, what I considered the top when I was a teacher, was one of the best teachers, I felt. I took my kids to higher levels, did some amazing things with them. I was a cross country coach. I took them, as I was experiencing when I was a high school runner, I'd take them to Yosemite National Park and take them to places. In real estate I consider myself very successful. And all of that I kind of basically say is because of my running experiences and going above and beyond what I did in running has helped me to try to achieve those things, everything.

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(Re: reunion): Oh, I went to the one two years ago also. It's just as powerful right now, seeing all these people. What's really cool about it is, when you're in high school and you're running or college and running, usually you warm up with your teammates, you drive to the meet with your teammates. Just before you race you're warming up and you see your competitors from the other schools around, which is these guys out there, and you say hi. And it's kinda superficial and you get on the starting blocks or the starting line and "on your mark, set, go!" And you're running against them and at the finish you shake hands and then you go back to your coach or sometimes you cry or whatever the case is. So it's really fun to share the experiences of that one race with them because they're in a different position than you are, so... One of my top competitors was Ralph Serna. He was always someone I was trying to beat and he was in my league and he... I was the only one to defeat him his junior year, my senior year. But I always thought that the only time I ever beat him is when he's having a down day and I'm really not competition for him. So it's interesting talking to him about the race also, where he says, you know, "I was just focused on you, Gary, didn't know anything about Armando Cendejas and when he went taking off we just kinda ignored him because we were focusing on each other." So it was kind of interesting to hear that I was a threat to him even though I never thought I was. So that's what's fun talking to all these people about these races and how they looked at the same race differently from each other.

(Re: distance events like the two-mile): If there's a love affair with an event, it's probably because just the... it's more of an individual thing. In other words, I didn't have a lot of speed in high school -- foot speed, sprint speed -- so naturally you go to the longer distances. And other people were in those same fields. And so, you just keep pushing each other. So, I don't know if there was a special love affair with the two-mile. There are a lot of two-milers out there. But it was just incredibly competitive in the mid-'70s in that event. I don't know what it was about it. Possibly that there wasn't anything further, longer -- which I'm glad there wasn't for high school. But with me, I didn't have the foot speed, not even just a certain pace that you can keep. And what's also interesting is Ralph Serna was really good throughout his whole years, but you start off and -- with Robert Angel is another competitor with me, he's a year younger than me, and we were always with seconds but -- we would progress so that the next year we were together but at the next level. And so your friends were progressing. And that's what I saw happening -- is that everyone knew each other by the time you were seniors because you'd been running against each other as freshmen in freshmen races, sophomores in sophomore races. And then finally you're just exploding and competing. The two-mile was a great event.

4. **CENDEJAS, ARMANDO**

Buena Park High School, Class of 1977

H.S.: 440 (53.1), 880 (1:58.3), Mile (4:16.8), 2Mile (9:00.6)

Lifetime: 440 (49.8), 880 (1:51.0), 1,500 (3:43.6), Mile (4:01.3), 3,000 (8:11.0), 2Mile

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(8:41.0), 3Mile (13:41.0), 5,000 (14:01.0), Marathon (2:15:00)

College: Fullerton Junior College / Long Beach State

Running is very goal oriented. I mean, you set your goals. One of the best things I did as a freshman -- I didn't have a coach -- so what I did is my cross country coach was the high jumping coach for track, the head coach, was just a field events coach, and he didn't know anything about cross country and I came in and all of a sudden I was the only one that was really truly running -- I was our best runner as a freshman. But he gave me the Jim Ryan Story book. And I read it. And, you know, right away just set my goals. And it got me motivated to read books on the psychology of winning and basically there are formulas for winning, and they apply not only for athletics but for life in general. Starting off with setting goals, you do that and then you just work towards accomplishing those. And that's what I do as a coach and as a teacher.

5. **EMPFIELD, DAN**

Huntington Beach High School / South Lake Tahoe High School, Class of 1974

H.S.: Mile (4:19.4)

Lifetime: Mile (4:19.4)

College: University of Nevada at Reno

This reunion is very interesting in a number of ways. Two things in particular, I think, that are notable. First of all, there are things that we do between the years of, say, 13 years old, 18 years old, that really form, or establish a pattern for what's going to happen to us over the rest of our lives. Those things are very important. And those are the kinds of things that we all, as 40-, 50-, 60-year-olds, are celebrating -- the things that happened to us over our teenage years. The second thing is, there's a bit of changing of hierarchies when you walk into a reunion like this where the doctor or the dot com millionaire or anybody who's reached this tremendous height in his adult years, walks in and walks up to and shakes the hand of a janitor or just a blue collar worker from high school who is his absolute hero. So when you walk in the door, everything that you are outside this door gets shelved. And everything that all of these people meant to you during their high school years and your high school years, and that hierarchy of who is that four-minute miler and who is the 4:10 miler and the 4:20 miler and the 4:30 miler, that takes precedence. That overcomes everything you are when you're outside this building. And I find that really charming.

6. **ERNST, KEN**

El Dorado High School (Placentia), Class of 1979

H.S.: Mile (4:19.7), 2Mile (9:02.14)

Lifetime: 5,000 (14:38.0)

College: UCLA

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It (the reunion) is great. It's great seeing people that you really looked up to in high school and all of a sudden they're here -- obviously a lot older, but it's great talking to them and seeing how the training was at the time and being able to mingle with people.

7. **GAMEZ, RALPH**

Berkeley High School, Class of 1966

H.S.: 440 (49.5), 660 (1:21.0), 880 (1:54.8), Mile (4:14.0), 2Mile (8:57.0)

Lifetime: 880 (1:54.8), Mile (4:14.0), 2Mile (8:57.0)

Noteworthy: State's initial (1965) and two-time (repeating in 1966) 2-mile prep champion.

(Re: reunion): This is the first one (runner's reunion) I've been to. I think it's fantastic. I think that (event organizer) Ralph Serna (Loara High School, Class of '75) and (event coordinator) Dan Martinez (Newark High School, '78) have done a fantastic job. It gives us an opportunity the previous athletes in high school to relive our glory days. It gives us a chance to look back instead of worrying about the future, especially at my age -- I'm probably the oldest one here.

I was the first one to win the first (California) two-mile championships (1965-66, after the event was officially added in 1965). I don't know very many of these athletes that followed me. I went on to college. We didn't really keep track of high school. It's nice to know that they (successor runners) appreciated what I've done to open doors for them. And it's really nice for me to appreciate what they've done: their times have been improving, records have been broken. For instance, my state championship record was broken the following year; it only last one lasted one year -- and I just met the man here who broke it. And I think he's done a wonderful job. And he told me that it was his goal.

(Re: setting the bar) We set the bar, all of us. We set the bar for the next generation, for the next class of students who came after us. And I think it's really great to meet those people who said "you set the bar that I wanted to break, and I broke it and then here I am and somebody after me came and broke that bar." And we keep improving." Our academic achievement keeps increasing and our physical achievements keep increasing.

(Re: Cow Palace): Running in the Cow Palace, for me, in San Francisco in 1964 was really important to me and was really special because I got to run against Gerry Lindgren, who, I feel, was the no. 1 American athlete who opened the door to distance running. I remember watching the Russian/U.S. track meet in 1962 or '63. And I remember the Russians really outclassed the Americans bad. And all of a sudden here comes Gerry Lindgren on the scene, who's running basically world-record times and he

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kinda opened the door and said “Americans can also run distance races. We’re not only a nation of sprinters; we’re a nation of distance runners.” And I think he opened the door, certainly for me. And I said “Yeah, if he can do this, I can do it.” And at the same time, Jim Ryan was there, who I also was running against, who was a junior who ended up holding the world record in the mile later on at 3:51.5 or something like that at Berkeley, where I went to high school, which was really special to me. So this race was really special ’cause Gerry Lindgren was there. Right at that particular race is where he really opened the door to American distance running. Jim Ryan was there who later became America’s greatest miler and showed also to the American public, the rest of the American athletes, track athletes, that we can be formidable, we are capable of running the world record times in the mile and in other distance races. So I think that that’s what made it so special for me. It made me set goals, that I could do this, too. These type of goals were not exclusive to Russians or Europeans, that we could do it also, and the door is open. Let’s just do it.

(Re: what championship performances mean): I didn’t really think about, but I know I really appreciated that the fact that the door was open (beginning in 1965) for us (California high schoolers) to run the two-mile. I always think that my life would have suffered tremendously. I’m not saying I would have ended up in prison, but the odds are that I would have never gone to college, I probably would have never gone to high school, finished high school, never would’ve graduated if the two-mile was not put in there. I wasn’t on a path where success was obvious. I was headed to prison. And the two-mile opened the door for me. And it gave me an opportunity to excel at something where I had never excelled at anything. It said, “Ralph, you can do something good” for once in my life. And it’s the truth. If it wasn’t put in there, and if I had to run the mile I might have run the mile really well. I don’t think I would have been the winner. I would have been up there, but I don’t think that it would have given me the sense of achievement I felt as winning, being the best at something that opened the door. It said you can really... you’re not a worthless human being. You are good at something and better than a lot of other people. And better than anybody in high school right now. And better than anybody in high school in California, Ralph.” And that sense of achievement made me realize that I was a person of worth. In ’65, if they were to put the two mile in ’67, and I talked to this already with Pete (Romero, 1967 two-mile CA state champion): “you (Pete) would’ve been the first winner. I would have never raced against you and I would have lost a tremendous amount of my life because I would never have known you and I would never be here. I would have probably been dead.”

(Re: Golden West): The Golden West was really a sidelight. After the high school championship in 1966, I was... they took away my high school uniform and said I didn’t represent Berkeley High anymore. I wasn’t really happy. I didn’t train. I went there basically just to be part of the experience. And to get whatever they were going to give me -- meaning, festivities. I was always looking for a good time. And when I went there I was really happy because they opened the door and there was a whole buffet full

of food. And I just went there basically to eat. And I wasn't even thinking about the race. I just said, "Oh, Ralph look at this: you get to eat." I came from a poor family. I'm not saying I didn't eat. But I would just say, that as soon as I got there the only thing that was on my mind is, "You can eat all you want here, Ralph, and you don't even have to pay. Isn't this great." When I went to get ready to race, I almost couldn't even breathe, I had eaten so much. I said "Oh, man, how you gonna run?" I go "I don't know, and it doesn't really matter. All we really came for is to have a good time." I remember that. And I had a side-ache trying to warm up. And I said, "Oh man, don't even worry about it, Ralph. It doesn't matter. You're here, you can party. You can eat now, you can eat later, you know. And here we are." Great experience, you know. "Let's just have a good time." And that's really what I went for. And of course once I got in the race, I'm the type of person who likes to compete. I don't like to lose. And so in my heart when I went out there, and I said, "Ralph you gotta... let's get this thing." And so I really tried hard to win. Unfortunately, I got outsprinted with about, I don't know, 200 yards to go maybe 150 yards to go by Tim Danielson. I gave him a lot of credit. I said to myself, "Ralphie, your food has gone down, you're really ready now. Now you can really run. Get in the stupid mile. Run the mile again. And I just said, "Ah, I don't know." So I talked myself out of it. And I didn't run the mile. But I should've run the mile 'cause I think I could've come back. I don't think I could've beat Tim Danielson. But I think I could've run a really outstanding double. And I'm really sorry I didn't.

(Re: seizing opportunities): And that reminds me to the same thing: that we have grasp opportunities when they come because they don't come very often. I think it's really important. Another thing I've learned throughout my athletic career is that when opportunity comes, take it. I've learned later that it's really important to not miss those opportunities because they're very few and they come less and less and less as you get older. And so we look in retrospect and we say we should've done this and we should've done that. But everybody's done it. We all have, you know, inevitable cares of life. We all evaluate what it takes to do things, facts and inferences, to arrive at assumptions: "How will this happen if I look at all this." And we just do what we can. And we're fallible. We make mistakes. 'Cause we're human beings.

(Re: greatest achievement): For all I know, in the final analysis when anybody asks me what was your greatest achievement in life, and I could look back and I say that because of track, because they put the two-mile in in 1965, my greatest achievement was I never went to prison -- 'cause I was on my way to prison. That is my greatest achievement. And that's not to say that can't happen -- I'm still alive. But today, it's my greatest achievement. I was headed right to San Quentin. Everybody knew it. The police told my parents when I was 11 years old, "See this kid." And my parents said, "Yeah." "He's no good. Eighteen, San Quentin." And my parents said, "Good." And I said, "No." In my brain I said "No." 'Cause I was a bad kid. Not bad; I just liked to have a good time. And I liked to have a good time because I was punished. When you're

punished at home, when you get out of the home you want to have a good time. You know. It wasn't so much I was bad.

(Re: channeling hyperactivity): So I went to school in Upton. And I learned to have a good time. I went everywhere to have a good time. Right. I went everywhere to eat. Eating was always on my brain. My parents, my relatives didn't want me around. Why? Because I ate too much. "We don't want him around. You put a chicken out, he'll eat the whole damn thing." I remember my aunt got all upset, they put out a Christmas fruitcake, "Have a piece." I didn't know you were supposed to have a piece like that. Shit, I took half the damn cake. "What do you think you're doing? What have you done with that cake? Half that stupid thing." "Half is only that big. It's a little tiny cake. I don't know why they make them so small." But see, when people get used to not having you around and you're always wrong and I'm now I'm punished. Why? 'Cause I ate too big a piece of cake. Always that.

Always something wrong, you know. "You don't fit in. something's wrong with him, he's too hyper. The guy can't sit still." And I still can't sit still. I have all this energy. Well then, the energy has to go somewhere. Somebody said, "let's put him on the track. This guy has a lot of energy." Now what do we do with the energy? I have metal hips now. I can't run. That's a problem. It's a tough one. What am I going to do with this energy. As you can probably see it in me, right? I'm ready. Well, ready for what? What can I going to do? We get old and they close the doors on us now 'cause of age. "Oh, you can't do that because you're too --" "Bullshit, I can't do that. You want to try with me?" I can walk from here 10 miles. I can't run. But you tell me to get from here to there, I can. Tell me to be on time, I can. I learned values, right. Because I was able to get an education. And why was I able to get an education? By running.

(Re: landing first real job): The guy that gave me my first job -- CEO of Hewlett-Packard, William Hewlett -- sent me a picture (he took of me as a sophomore challenging a senior for the lead in an historic cross country race), says, "You ran this great race when you were 15." My junior year I'm writing him a letter, "Can I have a summer job?" And he said "yeah." Because I ran. If I didn't run, he would have never sent me a picture and said "you did this great..." I would've never got a job. What would I be doing at 16 in the summer with no job, no school? Getting in trouble, following the path to San Quentin.

Everybody has abilities. I've been working with kids. I'm working with adults who've been to prison, trying to get them their GED. And I'm trying to tell them, "You are behind. We've got to try and move you up. The main thing is you have to concentrate. The main goal is you have to do more stuff good than you do bad. And try to keep a list of that. If you do three things bad, do four things good, right. Try to move ahead. And the only way you can move ahead is to see that the door is open somehow." Somebody needs to help people who are behind. I had a mentor, and if wasn't for him

I'd be lost, too. Some guy looked at me when I was 14 and I was in juvenile camp and said "I'm going to make Ralph a runner." And then he took his time on his free time a year later and said, when I called him up, "Hey, will you take me to the All Comers Meet at McClymonds High School (in Oakland)?" "Okay." And drove and picked me up. Took me over there, bought me a hot dog, bought me a hamburger, took me home like a dad. And he wasn't my dad. And just did that every week for the whole summer. From Hayward to El Cerrito, from Hayward to Oakland, to different meets, you know. And was there for me, instead of saying "I don't have time." "Well, I'm not going. So, what else can I get in trouble with now? I'm not going to run this. What am I going to do?" Kids need to have some kind of channel because we all have ability. Music. It could be... everything that's good, the school is cutting out because of money. But the things that are really important is to find that opportunity for a child. To say "if you're not good at math, what would you be good at? Let's find this. Maybe you're good at driving, maybe you're good at helping somebody else, right. Maybe you're good at baseball, football," all these different sports. And now we're taking them away. We're cutting down the sports. Money. We're cutting out all these extras door that make an individual an individual, that separate a person from going through this door that might not lead to money or a career but it keeps them from going through the bad door that leads to prison and jails. So it's really important that students find that niche. Everybody has a niche, everybody has a quality. We have that ability, we have that desire. And we're good at it because we like to do it. Everybody has that. We just have to find that niche.

(Re: hard-knocks mentor): I was lucky. I had been thrown out of school all my life. Kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade, fourth grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade, tenth grade. In the tenth grade I was expelled. I couldn't go to school in California. I said, "You ain't never gonna finish high school." I was on my way to San Quentin. "What good does running do? You're not even going to be in school?" And some guy who was a probation officer got to know me when I was 14 and saw that I had some running ability. He said, "I'm not going to let Ralph go to San Quentin. I am Eldridge Cleaver's parole officer in San Quentin right now." And he said "Ralph, I'm going to arrange for you to see an execution." Unfortunately, he was not able to do that because the execution was halted in California. But I called him up more than once and said, "I ain't going to school today. I don't care. I ain't getting anywhere." He says, "Stay right there. We'll pick you up." And he took me to a federal office in San Francisco where he worked and said, "Here, sit in this court for a while and see what goes on." In other words, people come into your life and helped me. Not just the coach that I talked about, but this man. And he helped me. And he said in his mind that "this guy can be changed. He just doesn't have anybody who gives a shit about him as a human being. And this guy doesn't have to be there. He doesn't have to go the San Quentin. He ain't going to be the president. He ain't going to the moon. He's not going to be a rocket science engineer or a computer scientist. But he is not going to be a parolee. He is not going to be in prison. We can help him from that." And that was important.

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(Re: plight of Latinos): If they made a movie of my life they would have to call it “A Chicano Overcoming Adversity.” We have a big problem in the United States. The Chicanos are no. 1 in dropout rates. We don’t finish high school. We equal all the other races -- blacks, Asians, and the Anglos -- all of them together equal the same dropout rate of the Latinos’ total. We have a big problem there and we’re channeled there and it’s bad. We are the largest minority population in the United States. I remember that I was in Los Angeles and homeless and I had a chance to go back to San Jose State University and I went full-time for five years in 1993. And I majored in criminology and I have a degree in criminology. And I said, “Why do I major in criminology? I want to know what happened to me. Because I’m not unique. There’s other people out there with abilities, that don’t have the manner. Physical abilities, they have other abilities that no one gets to discover because they’re channeled into this area to believe that you either work in the fields or there’s nothing else. Or you go to jail, you know. There’s no other opportunities. We’re not successful at anything. And I think that that they would have to cover that we, I’m a second generation Mexican-American. I’m a Chicano. I believe in the political process. My father’s side of the family was colonized. His family was indigenous Apache Indian and half Mexican and living in Arizona when they were conquered. And had a chance to go back to Mexico or stay here and said, “Well, we’ve been here for 300 years, 500 years, and we’re going to stay here.” I think that that would have to be included in there for that. It doesn’t start with me or end with me or finish with me. It goes on and on for the last 500 years. And it continues to go on. We’re still no. 1 one in dropout rates. And it doesn’t need to be like that. We need to be a little bit more equal. We’re starting to break fields but very little. We’re not world-renowned athletes in basketball and football. There may be a little in soccer from South America, but we’re a subjugated people. I have been a subjugated human being. My parents thought I was worthless. And I’m not the only one. There’s a lot of people that are brought up that way. And they don’t need to be that way. We’re unique. I think we’re all valuable. I think we all can contribute to something to somebody else’s life.

(Re: ageism): The biggest thing (remaining) for me to overcome is the problem I’m having today. The problem everybody has, and it’s called ageism. We all get old. It’s not an accident that my hair is all black. It isn’t normally black. It’s all gray. I haven’t worked full-time for almost two years. I have two part-time jobs in education, which I’m happy to say, ’cause I believe I can make a difference in people’s lives. But ageism is out there and I can remember when the high-tech industry was going big. And a lot of high-tech entrepreneurs would say, “We don’t have anybody over 40, ever” -- until they got to be 40 and then they said, “Oh, my God, people over 40 can still function.” We can function. We can do a lot of stuff. We’re basically better on time. We’re on time more because our kids are gone now. We don’t have to take time off to take our kids to school or take them to the hospital, take them to the dentist or whatever. We are really good people. We’re really well educated. We don’t get opportunities. We’re called -- I’m a sociology major, a criminology major -- we’re called social junk.

And that is the biggest problem now, for me: ageism. And I think that I'm not the only one that suffers from that; everybody does. We finally all get to that "ism." And it's terrible. Because we need to work longer now because of the economy to survive to have any quality of life. And we're not getting the opportunities. "What kind of experience do you have?" "Too much. It's like we're back to square one. Not enough or too much. And that's really a challenge for American people and for our society. I remember, especially when I was watching the Russians run, and I was watching (Pyotr) Bolotnikov, (1960 & 1962) world record holder in the 10K, and they had a weight-lifter and they said, "Oh, yeah, this is no good. Their society is no good." And I go, "Why is their society no good?" "Cause after they're done competing they get to be a coach." "What's wrong with that?" I wanted to be a coach after I got done competing. I went to San Jose State as a P.E. major. I said, "After my running days I want to coach. I think I can really inspire athletes to give 100 percent and do good." So I'm like, "What's wrong with that?" "Well, it just shows favoritism, it's not competitive." We see all this kind of stuff. But I think that senior people, older people, we have a lot to contribute. We ain't dead. We are not dead. We have a lot to contribute.

(Re: bias towards revenue-generating sports): Track & field is slipping really bad. I think that they're disappearing from the United States scene. I think that we put a lot of emphasis on baseball and football, because they generate a lot of interest. And running and revenue and because of television audience. Unfortunately our track program and cross country program, especially, has gone down. It's always been down. But I think it's especially down. We see people breaking world records in track & field on page three now. I'm hoping that that changes. I'm hoping that there's a resurgence of interest and a resurgence of support so maybe we can maybe have some sort of team competition as well to draw interest in there. Because when a person runs under 3:50 for a mile, that's a tremendous accomplishment. It's not done every day. It's special. It's not like catching a touchdown pass with five seconds to go. There's a big, big difference. But people don't understand that.

8. **GARCIA, LUIS**

Marina High School (Huntington Beach), Class of 1979
H.S.: 440 (53.2), 880 (2:01.3), Mile (4:23.7), 2Mile (9:34.6)
Lifetime: 10,000 (31:24.0), Marathon (2:48:40)
College: Golden West College

The thing about running that makes it interesting to people and makes people want to do it, or the reason I went into it, is because it's more of an individual sport. You're testing yourself, you're testing your abilities, you're testing your stamina, you're testing your work ethic constantly. And those things play back later in life. Like I say, when you're very young you don't realize a lot of those things. But all those that you built up from running and training and the miles and all those things play back later

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because it builds that work ethic into you for later on in life. And a lot of the simple things people do that they get frustrated or whatever. You say, “Well, I’ve done more than that. I’ve achieved more than that through running.” It’s persistence, patience and doing those things that pretty much make it an individual thing. When you’re a runner you’re not like everyone else. You’re a little bit different you’re off the beaten path. The average person is not going to want to wake up at six o’clock in the morning and go put in six or eight miles before they go to school and then go running again later in the afternoon. The average person wouldn’t even think of doing that. But when you’re a runner you’re sort of beating to a different drum. You’re an individual. That’s why this group and these gatherings are a lot of fun because you’re talking, you’re seeing friends that are also individuals that also sort of wanted to beat to that different drum, didn’t want to be the same as everyone else, didn’t want to play the team sports. Weren’t interested in football or their size or things wouldn’t allow them to do it. And yet everyone here was able to find a chance to excel in what they were doing through running.

9. **HUNT, THOM**

Patrick Henry High School, San Diego, Class of 1976

H.S.: 880 (1:53.7), Mile (4:02.7), 2Mile (8:45.2), 5,000 (14:18.1), 10,000 (29:46.2), Marathon (2:24:16)

College: University of Arizona

Noteworthy: Indoor mile national prep record (4:02.7) holder until Virginian Alan Webb bested his time in 2001 with a 3:59.86. Hunt and Webb still claim the #2 and #1 national spots, respectively. Hunt now coaches at San Diego Mesa College

The thing about running for me is that running was my life and so it affected me, I think, in, I think, every possible way imaginable. In other words, I don’t think I am the person who I was without what I put into my running, without the persistence that I put into running, without the effort levels I put into my running, without the consistency that I had to put into my running. And I think that everything that helped make me successful as a runner is what contributed to my life in every other way also. So I don’t think you can even separate them. I think that my running career exemplified who I was in later on in life and I think it had everything to with who I became.

(Re: reunion): This reunion has been a lot of fun. people that I haven’t seen in years, it’s been great to see them again, people that I see all the time, it’s great to see them in this setting. There are some people here that I’ve never met before but knew of and it was fun to meet them for the first time. But just the overall energy level of all the great talent here, all the great careers that are here. I think that everyone’s... having a great time. And it’s really been a great experience. It was a great idea to do this.

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10. **INNES, GORDON**

Upland High School, Class of 1972

H.S.: Mile (4:18.0), 2Mile (8:54.4), 3Mile (14:43.8), High Jump (6'0")

Lifetime: 1,500 (3:47.0), Mile (4:05.0), Steeple (8:38.0), 2Mile (8:48.0), 3Mile (13:35.0), 10Mile (49:46.0), Marathon (2:23:36)

College: UCLA / Humboldt State

(Re: reunion): It's something you feel. A lot of these people I've never really met before. Some people you may have competed against but not really talked to that much during that time. But I think it's fairly easy here that these kind of experiences are all fairly similar you can kinda talk about what races you've had in the past and what their perspective was and what your perspective was during that time, find out what they've done in the time period since then. Yeah, it's been fun.

11. **KIMBALL, RICH**

De La Salle High School (Concord), Class of 1974

H.S.: 880 (1:51.1), 1,500 (3:48.9), Mile (4:02.4), Steeple (9:33.6), 2Mile (8:46.6), 3Mile (13:43.6), 5,000 (14:22.0), 6Mile (29:57.0)

College: Oregon State / San Jose State

Noteworthy: First American male to win a world junior (19 and under) cross country title (1974, Milan, Italy) who is also state's first prep athlete ever to attempt/complete/win the distance double (2M/1M). His 8:46.5 (state record in 1974) prep 2-mile ranks 20th on the all-time national list, while his world cross country feat garnered him a photo cover in *Runner's World*

(Re: track & field vs. cross country): Track is very intense, it's more one on one (than cross country). And a different kind of workout schedule. Cross country is kinda more of a free, you just go and run and your workout schedules are more into longer distance running and not as hard as it is during the track season. I like 'em both. Track is very fast. Cross country is fast, but you're out on the road and it's kinda like a freedom.

(Re: cross country in Europe): I did with the world cross country championships in juniors in Milan, Italy, for the United States. Very different cross country running. In Europe, the cross country runners do not like Americans so they like to box you. And so I learned very quickly about boxing. My coach had told me about. There are a lot of elbows, and they purposely try to box Americans in. So, over the first three or four hundred yards, I found that out real quickly. And got out of that real quick. And just took off. But the cross country in Europe is unreal because they turn the ground up for you. They put out bales of hay. They, make you run the creeks. They actually put barriers up for you to go over, too. So, it was actually a lot of fun doing it that way, European cross country.

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(Re: reunion): I'm having a blast with the reunion. I enjoy the reunion. I haven't seen a lot of people, some of them, in 20 or 30 years. So it's been fun seeing them, rekindling, the emails have been fun back and forth prior to the reunion, so it's just kinda fun and kinda gets you going, "I want to go back racing again."

12. **KISSIN, ROY**

San Ramon Valley High School (Danville), Class of 1975

H.S.: 880 (1:56.8), Mile (4:13.0), 2Mile (8:56.2), 5,000 (14:25.9), 6Mile (29:21.2), 10,000 (30:20.0)

Lifetime: 1,500 (3:46.0), 5,000 (13:42.2), 10,000 (28:19.5), Marathon (2:20:13)

College: Stanford

(Re: favorite race memories): Two races really stick out in my memory. One was I was a sophomore and I remember it more because it was maybe the time of my career when I felt like ran the hardest. And that was the section meet where I made state meet as a sophomore. I ran 9:17. And the other time was in fall of '74, the junior national cross country. I was just hanging. A lot guys that are at this (reunion) event here at that race. I remember just hanging on to that pack and I wanted to give up and let go. It seemed like I just, you know, couldn't stick with it. But I suddenly found myself passing people in the last 200 and would up third, which was sort of amazing to me.

(Re: running as an adult): I'm still running. So, there's no sort of post-running for me. I feel lucky that I'm able to still running that I'm physically able to do it, 'cause I know a lot of my cohort here is isn't able to. For me, it's just been a lifelong thing that's been basically the most fun thing, where I've gotten the most fun out of life, I guess. Pretty simple.

(Re: reunion): It's great. I was thinking, I don't really remember too many people from high school. In fact, I don't remember that much about high school. This reunion -- these are the people that I remember. They're people that are associated with all the really intense memories. So it's very cool.

13. **McCONNELL, COLIN**

Edison High School (Huntington Beach), Class of 1976

H.S.: 880 (1:59.7), Mile (4:15.6), 2Mile (8:55.0)

Lifetime: 800 (1:57.3), 1,500 (3:48.8), Mile (4:06.1), 3Mile (13:42.1), 5,000 (14:12.2), 10,000 (29:28)

College: Cal State Long Beach

-in tandem with-

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14. **GOMEZ, JOEY**

Valencia High School, Class of 1978

H.S.: 880 (2:03.0), Mile (4:19.0), 2Mile (9:25.0), 10,000 (31:05.1)

Lifetime: Mile (4:10.0), 2Mile (9:01.0), 5,000 (14:16.0), 10,000 (29.:22.0), Marathon (2:20:46)

College: Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Noteworthy: Set world 1-hr. distance record for a 14-year-old (10 mi., 1,089 yards); manages Roscoe's Famous Deli, host venue for Runners Reunited II.

JOEY: I love this guy (Colin) right here. I'm so sorry that I had to make this thing not serious for a minute. But I just have to say this guy (Colin) has a history with me and the whole thing is amazing. Looking at him now brings all of us back, the whole thing. All of us getting together makes us young again. And always be young together. And I look up to these people. It's amazing to see people in person that you looked up to, and then now we're friends. We were competitors at one point. Didn't know him. Know him now. It's an amazing thing. And that's what it is for all these people here. Wonderful thing. I don't want to cry.

COLIN: People that you would have never seen, that you'd never relate to, you see tonight. And you talk to them like it's such a small community of people that you can relate to. People like him (Joey), other people like you've interviewed throughout the night. And you never would have talked to them outside of this setting, this type of environment. And it's very important because it makes what you did as a young person worthwhile as far as in the distance running community.

JOEY: Well, I'm just glad that I'm not old like him (Colin) yet. But, being younger...

COLIN: We really appreciate that Roscoe's (Famous Deli) gave us this opportunity to relate, to mingle with people we haven't seen in 20, 25 years. And as far as for us -- I don't know if Joey can say this but for me -- it's very important to feel that you're part of something that not too many people can understand or relate to or...

JOEY: It's a part of history that, if you look at the record books, and everybody here, it's a big part of the record books, it's just amazing that we could get these people together and that it's still there. The bond that brought us together will be here forever. And I'm glad that Ralph (Serna) took the time and energy to put this together 'cause otherwise I wouldn't have the opportunity to meet some of these people that I look up to. I don't think I even belong in this group. But, personally, I'm f***ng amazed... Excuse me for the f-bomb. I don't even care; it's only a little Ralph thing, right?!

COLIN: Who would have even thought of this?

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JOEY: It's all about Ralph.

15. **ROMERO, PETE**

Reedley High School, Class of 1967

H.S.: 880 (1:52.0), Mile (4:06.0), Steeple (9:27.6), 2Mile (8:54.6), 5,000 (14:48.2), 10,000 (32:03.4)

Lifetime: Mile (4:04.0)

College: University of Texas at El Paso

Noteworthy: 2-mile prep state champion (1967 in state record 8:54.6) and subject of a 1967 *Sports Illustrated* article.

The reunion is something that I'm glad that it happened and I'm glad that I came. I got to relive a lot of memories and meet a lot of great people that I read about, and it was just a phenomenal meeting. Just really an excellent opportunity.

16. **SERNA, RALPH**

Loara High School, Anaheim, Class of 1975

H.S.: 880 (1:55.6), 1,500 (3:50.4), Mile (4:07.0), 2Mile (8:45.9), 3Mile (13:45.6), 5,000 (14:16.4), Steeple 9:24.0), 10Miles (50:30)

Lifetime: 1,320 (2:53.0), Mile (4:02.7), 2Mile (8:45.9), 3Mile (13:45.6), 5,000 (14:16.4), Steeple (9:24.0), 10Miles (50:30)

College: UC Irvine

Noteworthy: Founder and organizer of "Runners Reunited II"; 2-mile national runner-up (8:45.9) to the late Eric Hulst (8:44.9) of Laguna Beach in one of the state's most dramatic finishes ever. Serna's 8:44.9 remains 14th on all-time national list. Serna has become a leading international shoe designer.

I think tonight was great because we saw some people that we had never seen before, met people we'd never met before. And certainly a domino effect of people that inspired us or, possibly, we inspired others. And so on and so forth. So the idea, the fact that we keep inspiring the next generation possibly. I've been inspired by a lot of people here. So it's been a great thing. Ralph (Gamez) is an example. How can you not do a good thing when your name is Ralph. Ralph and Ralph.

17. **WYSOCKI, RUTH**

Azusa High School, Class of 1974

H.S.: 880 (2:10.7)

Lifetime: 440 (55.0), 800 (1:58.65), 1,500 (4:00.18), Mile (4:21.78), 3,000 (8:49.93), 5,000 (16:37.22), 10,000 (34:24.0), 10Mile (57:24.0)

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College: Redlands College / Citrus Junior College

Noteworthy: 1984 Olympian in the 800 and 1,500; beat Mary Decker Slaney in the 1,500 at the Olympic Trials in 1984.

Looking back on high school, I was in a little bit different situation because girls weren't a part of CIF. But my junior year of high school they allowed girls to run what's now the CIF Masters Meet for the first time. And I won both the 440 and the 880. So it was exciting to say that I was the first one.

I actually can't imagine my life without running. It's just always been a part, ever since I was a kid. Everybody in my family, now even all my relatives, it's just always been there.

Being here tonight, I'm looking at people I admired before I even started running. Now, you know, mingling with them and seeing them and just kinda watching that perspective change to where I ended up taking it a step beyond what many of them here did here tonight. But we all started from the same roots and have the same basic story of getting going. I just had some opportunities, I guess, that some of them didn't.

I sort of feel like the token female in this crowd. And growing up through high school I actually ran on my high school boys team because there wasn't girls athletics. So opportunities opened up after that, of course, culminating in running the Olympics in 1984.

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