

FrontRunners moving forward

BY PAUL

Are you lesbian or gay, and like to run? Come and join FrontRunners, a gay running group here in town.

Frontrunners began in 1973 when a group of San Francisco gays formed a running group as one of the clubs participating in a free newsletter called Lavender U. The newsletter was a practical expression of the free universities concept of the times, reflected in part by the "new age" philosophy of the era. It is mostly remembered for the study of arts, literature, philosophy, yoga and meditation.

Two individuals, Jack Baker and

Gardner Pond, decided to put an ad in the newsletter for a "learn to jog" class. Individuals would run a half mile a week, and add a half mile each week until they graduated at a level of five miles a week. The group eventually became known as the Lavender U joggers.

The club continued to expand and for many of the runners it was the first gay association they had that was not centred around bars. For more than a few members it was their first experience knowing and being around other gays. Although no membership lists were kept, many members only revealed their first names for fear of exposure.

In 1978, the club first staffed a water table at the San Francisco Marathon. Later in 1978 the Lavender U newsletter folded and the runners organized themselves into FrontRunners, named after the book by Patricia Nell Warren about a gay university student who became an Olympic runner. There was consensus that the club should be a "running club", with other activities secondary; that it should welcome runners of all abilities, from beginners to serious competitors; and that it should serve not only gays and lesbians, but be open to all who wanted to join, including those who could not (or would not) pay.

The first two club newsletters were published in December 1978 and January 1979 and contained mostly information about joining and voting. About 40 people paid their dues and became "charter members". All but three or four members listed their full names and addresses in the membership directory, a brave showing for that time, which surprised many people. It was the first time that many of the members knew each other's full names. By the end of 1979, there were 75 members.

The club name appeared on its 1980 T-shirt as FrontRunners (one word), which became the club's "official" name thereafter. The Advocate magazine approached the club and asked if they would put on a race, which the magazine would sponsor, and call it the "Gay Run". After much discussion about affiliating with a sponsor, the members of FrontRunners decided to do it. The race consisted of 5K and 10K runs, with awards for women and men in four or five age categories. It was a great success with about 400 runners entered.

The first "other" FrontRunners Club was founded in the spring of 1980. Bob Plantz of FrontRunners got a call from Malcolm Benjamin, editor of the club magazine for the New York Roadrunners (a huge club with about six or seven thousand members which puts on the New York Marathon). Malcolm said that he was starting a gay running club, wanted to call it FrontRunners New York, and wanted permission to use the name. Bob explained that he did not control the name, and that yes, it was OK.

Malcolm was a nationally-rated runner and knew many other top runners who were gay. He wanted to have these top runners enter (and win) major races as members of a gay club. He liked the way that FrontRunners welcomed all runners, and discarded the idea of forming a club for elite runners. Other FrontRunners clubs formed in rapid succession.

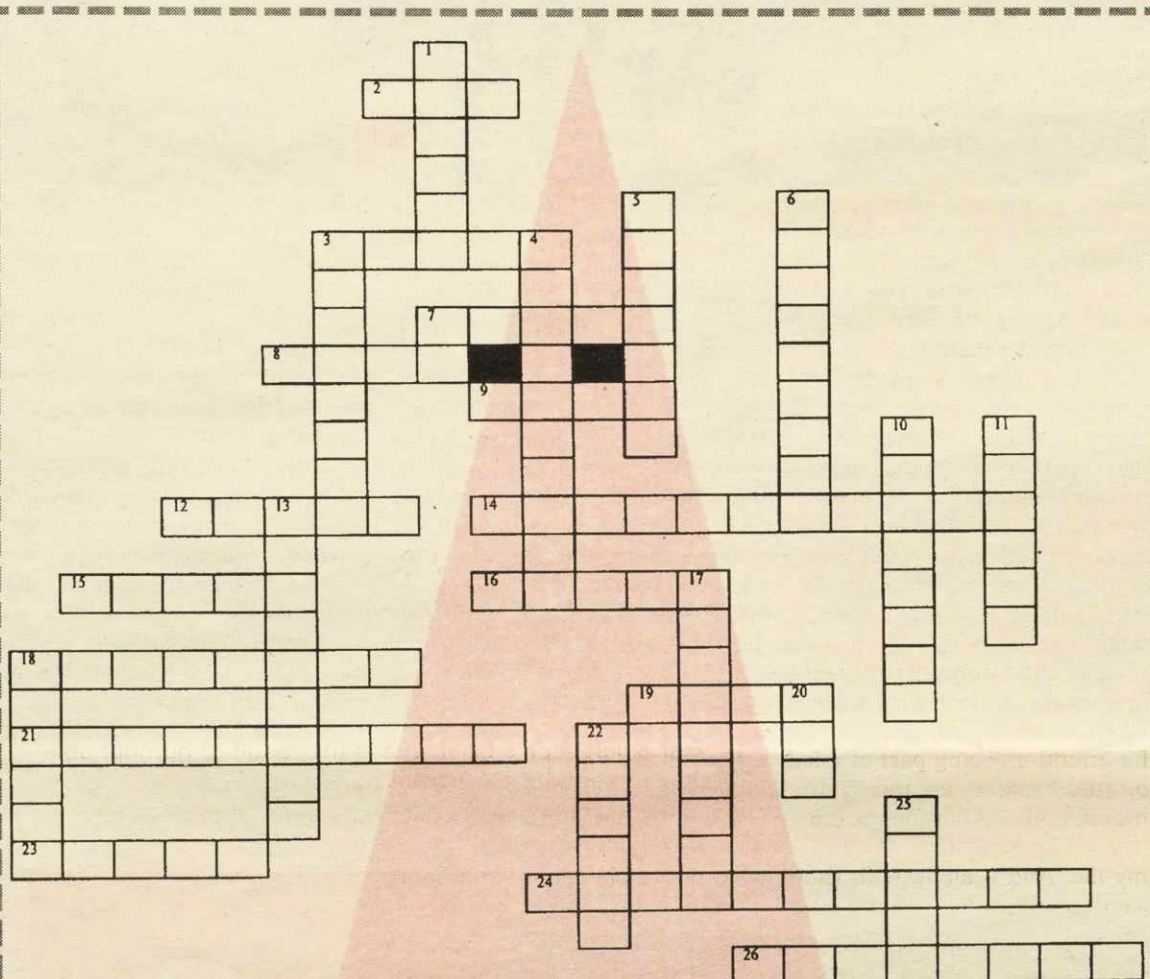
FrontRunners Halifax is a group of men (and hopefully someday, women) who enjoy the athletic and social aspects of running together up to three times weekly. The local chapter has been "running" since the fall

of 1995 when four keen runners in various states of physical condition met at the Spring Garden Road and South Park Street entrance to the Halifax Public Gardens on a crisp Saturday morning. The group ambled down South Park Street to the park, circled the park and returned via Tower Road to the starting point. They then headed into the Daily Grind coffee shop for some conversation, muffins and coffee. The general route has remained the same to this day. Since then some of the keener runners have been running on Tuesdays and Thursdays, normally running a little further and at a slightly faster pace than the more social Saturday run. Walkers are also encouraged to join the group on Saturdays.

Since we are one of the fifty-five FrontRunners chapters around the world, we receive newsletters from clubs near and far. With this network in place it becomes quite convenient to run with other clubs when travelling, and to get to know fellow runners in these communities. There is no such thing as a strange city for a FrontRunner as long as there is a FrontRunners chapter in that community.

Halifax FrontRunners recently hosted a visiting runner from San Francisco who did not know anyone and helped turn his visit into a very enjoyable stay. More guests are expected in 1997 as we become better known to the international gay running fraternity! Many of the clubs host weekend runs such as one in Washington at the end of April and a special invitation has been extended to Halifax FrontRunners to attend. Every second year Frontrunners converge on one site for a FrontRunners International running and partying weekend.

All TUNS, SMU, DAL and MSVU gays and lesbians are invited to join the Halifax FrontRunners. We run from the Public Gardens at 5 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and at 9:30 a.m. on Saturdays. The Saturday run is more social, and we meet for coffee in the Daily Grind on Spring Garden Road afterwards. Run at your own pace, and enjoy the social gathering after the Saturday run. For more information please call Paul at 425-3144, or e-mail gleatuns@tuns.ca.



A Cross(dressing)word Puzzle

BY FARHAD DASTUR

Across

2. adj. Happy and carefree; merry.
3. Member of the same sex. (acronym)
7. Acronym for Bisexual, Gay, and Lesbian Association of Dalhousie.
8. The god of love and son of Aphrodite.
9. The opposite of the meaning of Valentine's Day
12. Synonymous with the word "strange".
14. A person who has undergone a sex change.
15. This food category is one of four recommended food groups.
16. These structures are used in Holland to prevent flooding.
18. Olympic diver (last name).
19. The abbreviation of the brain structure that Simon LeVay examined.
21. A type of stereo.
23. Openly gay member of Parliament (first name).
24. What you see when you look in the mirror.
26. Half of a quadrasexual.

Down

1. A bundle of sticks, twigs, or branches used for fuel.
3. The union of two loving people.
4. Canadian-Sir Lankan author of *Funny Boy* (last name).
5. The author of *The Pianoman's Daughter* (last name).
6. American female singer: Melissa _____
7. Acronym for Roseanne Skoke's belief's.
10. One of the mottoes of the French Revolution.
11. Famous female singer from Western Canada.
13. The singer of "Circle of Life".
17. A wall made of rocks.
18. The home of Sappho.
20. Acronym for Humans Against Homophobia.
22. A place where you store coats.
25. A group of lions.

Name:

Phone Number:

In recognition of Pink Triangle Day, the Gazette and Entitlement Books are giving you the chance to win a free book.

If you can solve this crossword puzzle, then you might be the lucky winner of *Out Our Way: Gay and lesbian life in the country* by Michael Riordan. The book chronicles Riordan's conversations with gay men and women about their lives in rural areas across Canada.

You can win by correctly filling in the puzzle, and your name and phone number, and dropping it off in the box on the Gazette's front door, SUB room 312. We'll draw for the book from among all the correct entries and print the answers in next week's Gazette.

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