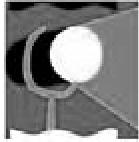


**A former smoker, Wally Capps shelved golf to launch his running career,  
then had to overcome an injury that sidelined him for 12 years**

By Wally Capps



*Runner  
in  
the Spotlight*

When I first started running, I was an electrical engineer and project manager in Texas Instruments defense electronics group in Lewisville. I was the rocket scientist

that it didn't take to figure something out.



I was heavily involved with golf and served three years as golf commissioner for the Dallas Texas Instrument employee golf league. I often had to travel to the Los Angeles area with a running co-worker. I envied his ability to go out in the evening to run along the ocean. I had stopped smoking three years earlier (after 20 years with a pack-a-day habit), and I thought running might help clear out the respiratory system. I bought my first pair of Asics (ugly yellow things) from James Thruston and started training. The golf clubs were abandoned. It took me 2½ years to go from 0 to 26.2. (Little known fact: James and I were co-workers on the same missile project at TI before he opened Phidippides. James also founded and timed many races in the DFW area.)

My first race was the Muenster Germanfest 5K in 1983. There were flatbed trucks with beer kegs afterward. That hooked me. The post-race activities, sitting around in camp chairs and enjoying a beer or two, are still the best part of most races.

I continued to run into my early 50's, when my work schedule and a bout of planter's fasciitis brought my running career to a halt. I was running about 20 races a year, tapering to about 10 near the end. I was faster then, but middle of the pack in my age groups. I had run four White Rock marathons and one London marathon. My personal best was 3:21:07. The others were in the 3:40+ range. (Wish I could do that now!)

After 12 years of layoff, I started again at age 65. I was retired and had the free time. I was challenged by my brother-in-law to run the Detroit marathon, where he and his family lived. After a year of gradually adding distance, I was there at age 66 to complete my first state marathon other than in Texas. That provided the motivation to start the 50-state effort. That in turn led to my wife Vivian and me traveling to places, including other countries, that we might not have visited otherwise.

I now run about 80 competitive races a year, from 1 mile through marathons, but normally going long when I have a choice. I am now old enough to be competitive in my age group. A fractured hip in 2008 and a torn hamstring have slowed me twice. Since turning 65, I have completed 43 marathons (35 states) and a Cowtown 50K. My PB after 65 is 3:43:05 (Austin 2008). Most marathons take over 4 hours now.

I ran in the first five Texas Independence Relays. I am a member of the Texas Instruments Corporate track team, doing 5K and 10K roads, which are age-graded. I am an officer in Texins Striders and a member of DRC, Plano Pacers, 50 States, and Marathon Maniacs (4 stars). I do very little formal training now, other than an occasional 3-mile loop or two around my Brookhaven neighborhood, plus a Wednesday night social run at Preston-Forrest RunOn! The weekend race schedule seems to be sufficient to maintain my endurance. For cross training, I try to do elliptical workouts and weight machine rotations at least once a week. Not always successful.

## Running Story #1: The Hip Fracture

Before I knew what alignment was or how critical it was to avoiding injury, I suddenly went severely out of alignment to the point where running was difficult. All reservations had been made to run the 2008 New Mexico marathon two weeks later. In the interim, I was able to complete a 5-mile and a half marathon competition, but only after a long gradual warm-up to dull the pain. So, I went to Albuquerque.

Walking to and from the expo was difficult, but I was on the starting line the next morning. My pace was slower than normal, but I made it about 20 miles before the fracture occurred. There was still a state to be conquered, so I ran-walked for another 3 miles. I slowly limped through the final 3 miles to the finish line, watching all the other runners in my age group pass me. I finished just under 5 hours, which is my personal worst.

As soon as I stopped, the hip froze. I couldn't put any weight on it at all. Fortunately, some friends from Dallas were also at the race. They helped me to my hotel room. From there, I arranged a cab to the hospital. A pair of crutches and some pain pills later, I was on my way back to Dallas the next morning. Nine months of recovery later, I ran Grandma's.

## Running Story #2: The Wally Run

For my 70th birthday, my family arranged a surprise party for me: The Wally Run. They rented the Big Thicket cabin at White Rock Lake, invited a few dozen of my running buddies along with family members, and actually staged a 5K timed run along an Ken Ashby-measured course. There were banners and running shirts with the Wally Run logo. This was the only competition in which I somehow managed to place first overall. Tex-Mex and beer followed. My kind of a run!

Wally's PRs since his early 70s and before his hamstring problem: 1 mile -- 7:00; 3K -- 13:48; 5K -- 22:22; 4 miles -- 29:12; 8K -- 37:54; 5 miles -- 37:11; 10K -- 47:21; 8 miles -- 1:00:22; 15K -- 1:11:49; 10 miles -- 1:19:36; 20K -- 1:40:13; half marathon -- 1:43:25; 25K -- 2:18:21; 30K -- 2:41:13; 20 miles -- 2:53:58; marathon -- 3:51:01; 50K -- 5:09:30.