



## BLUES WOMAN: ADA B. THOMAS

*Joe Kaneiowski*

A younger friend of mine recently asked me if I'd ever heard of Ted Corbitt, the trail blazing African American Olympic marathoner, former physical therapist, New York City Road Running Club President, and some might say Father of Long Distance and Ultramarathon Running in the United States. Ted was an amazing runner who inspired generations of runners in the New York City area and beyond.

I told my friend Pat that the DSE Running Club has had several Black members like her who have achieved Corbitt-like running excellence here in San Francisco. I explained how DSE is home to runners like Ada Thomas, Marian Lyons, and Gregory Brown, each of whom have made their mark in both their age groups and the SF running scene. I mean, who hasn't been impressed by Marian Lyons and her 117 marathons and Gregory Brown and his 350+ marathons? I had to tell Pat all about Marion, Greg, and the bench at Stow Lake that is dedicated to Ada B. Thomas.

In the long history of our club, only two DSE members have been honored with a bench in San Francisco. Most of us know about the Walt Stack bench on Marina Green, but there is the bench at Stow Lake to another club inspiration, Ada B. Thomas.

*...continued on p. 2*



## From the President's Desk

◆ ◆ ◆ JOE KANIEWSKI

Keeping our running motivation these days sure is a challenge. But it was great running the DSE Virtual races at Rockaway Beach again and taking in the boats, marinas and inlets of Sierra-Oyster Point, and running along the musical concourse and past the Japanese Tea Garden on the east side of the Golden Gate Park for the Art & Sciences 5K. Kevin Lee told us it would be a great run and it delivered. The Embarcadero 4 Miler was wide open when I ran it and it made for a fast, flat running experience. But this is 2020, so the lightning and forest fires came, and smoke took away our running for several days! At least we have smartphones and websites like [airqualitynow.com](https://airqualitynow.com) that allowed us to find moderate pockets of air to run in. Luckily, I got out to the Dipsea trail and ran in Marin the last few weeks in August.

In case you didn't see it, you can run the oldest cross country footrace in the US course this month. The Dipsea Trail race is a free virtual run this year. Yes, that Dipsea race, the single one way version is virtual. Just make sure you make arrangements to get back from Stinson Beach unless you want to make it a Double Dipsea run. I was able to catch a bus back from Stinson to Mill Valley. If you go, remember there are no course monitors out there, so make sure you stay

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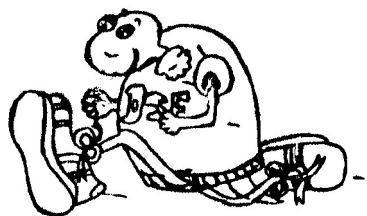
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clear of mountain lions, follow the signs, and don't forget to turn right after Cardiac Hill (because running on Highway 1 is not recommended if you get lost!) And when you hit the stairs near Old Mill Park, look for the plaques honoring DSE turtles like Ken Reed, Walt Stack, Tony Stratta, Russ Kiernan, and the plaque for All Double Dipsea Volunteers.

I hope you enjoyed our runner's choice this last week. It was our first Air Quality 5K Virtual and it got me out in Marin County again. This time I went for the flat and fast run along the lagoons and marshes between Mill Valley and Sausalito. If you ever want a change of pace, I recommend checking it out for its unique scenery.

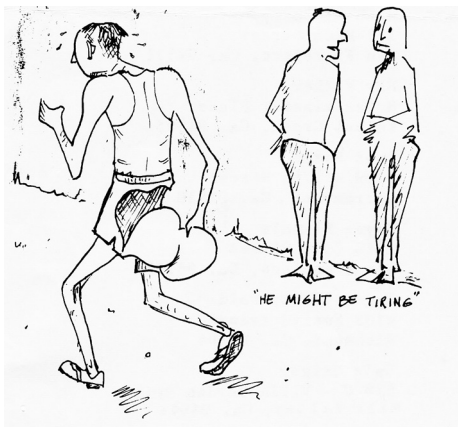
In this month's newsletter I contribute an article about Ada B. Thomas, a long time DSE Runner and club member. I never met Ada but I realized that we ran by her plaque and bench at Stow Lake in Golden Gate Park this month. I hope those members that remember her appreciate the pictures and article as much as I appreciated learning more about her.

Yes, 2020 has been full of challenges but we keep moving forward. Go DSE, Go!



## CLASSIC STU-PEDS

Stu Ruth



## REMEMBERING ROBYN WOLF

Longtime DSE and Pamakid runner Robyn Wolf (Paulson) passed away on August 25. A true trailblazer in Bay Area sports, Robyn was known for crashing Dolphin Club swims in the early 1970's (when only men were allowed to participate) and was one of the first women to make the famed "Escape from Alcatraz" swim from the island to Aquatic Park. She was a dear friend and inspiration to so many DSEs, and will be deeply missed.

Robyn's obituary can be read [here](#). All of us at DSE send our sincerest condolences to her family and loved ones.

## BLUES WOMAN

...continued from p. 1

Like Walt Stack, Ada was a larger than life personality who inspired others with her effusive personality, charm, and energy. She also took up running later in life, running her first marathon at the age of 68. But it was her daily workouts, like Walt's, and her drive to run well into her 80's that garnered attention from lifestyle magazines like *Essence* and *American Fitness Magazine*, as well as various television specials. Always with a positive attitude and encouragement that was infectious, Ada inspired people as an active member of the club from the 1980's to 2010.

Ada grew up in Fresno, where she played baseball and volleyball before graduating from Edison High School. She was drawn to the San Francisco Bay Area by the great mobilization of World War II, and contributed to the war effort by working at Alameda Naval Station, Oakland Army Base, and our very own Fort Mason when the Bay Area served as Headquarters of the Pacific Fleet and the U.S. Army's Western Headquarters. San Francisco until recently was the jumping off point for soldiers heading toward the wars and military actions in the Pacific. Ada was right in the middle of it,

### How to contact the DSE News

The DSE Newsletter is published monthly for the DSE Running Club.

#### Contact:

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Email: [weenerdog@gmail.com](mailto:weenerdog@gmail.com)

#### Contributions:

We encourage our members to submit articles and photos for inclusion in the DSE Newsletter. Please send your contributions to the editor at the above e-mail address. Members without e-mail accounts can send their contributions to the DSE general mail-box (see address at right).

Please note that submissions may be edited for length and clarity.

#### Submission Deadline:

Please submit your material to the editor by the 25th of each month if you would like it to be published in the following month's newsletter.

### How to contact the DSE

#### Mail

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San Francisco, CA 94121-0482

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retiring in 1977 after decades of administrative service for the Department of Defense.

As I mentioned, Ada began running after retirement. One of her first races was the Bay to Breakers, where she met Marian Lyons. The two would become lifelong friends, and were a dynamic duo in DSE. They ran hard, supported each other and others with cheers, and supported by the club by being co-race directors and Gala organizers over the years.

Like Walt, Ada was known for colorful language and sayings. Her family collected a list of these sayings for her memorial in 2010. I saw the list and noted that it was over two pages long. A few of the Ada(isms) really make you smile. Here are some examples.

- When asked about her middle initial, Ada would say, "the B is for Black, Beautiful, and BAAAD."

- "You are a lifesaver and I don't mean the kind with a hole in it."

- "I'm no fool -- I know big timber from brush!"

Reading the Ada(isms) I was struck by her sayings for overcoming "hard times," especially since we could all stand to hear a few of these nowadays. "Hang Tough" was the cheer she would say during the DSE runs. "Keep in touch with your higher power" and "That's life, we got to take the bitter with the sweet" still ring true.

On her plaque, the words "Blues Woman" caused me to wonder: why is that there? I personally love blues music. Ada's long time friend, Marian Lyons, described Ada's love of music this way: "KPOO radio was her favorite station for listening to the blues; she personally knew all the DJs at the station and they knew her too, and what she liked." To recent transplants to San Francisco, the legacy and vibrancy of the SF music scene is almost taken for granted. But the San Francisco music scene grew out of Ada's generation. The nightclubs of the Fillmore District (Leola King's Bird Cage, Wesley Johnson's Texas PlayHouse, Shelton's Blue Mirror, and Jack's of Sutter) brought major musical icons including Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Johnny Lee Hooker, B.B. King, and Billie Holiday from the 1940's forward. I don't think you have rock & roll and the Summer of Love without the blues.

Before it became a phenomenon in Sweden called "plogging," Ada loved to collect cans and bottles while she ran. Because she and most of us aren't going to break any world records, she encouraged others to pick up ones they saw as well. Bobby Marty recently shared with me how he went from running races to the satisfaction that comes from cleaning up the parks and beaches because of encouragement from Ada. I share that perspective, and I know that the rest of the club appreciates that we should leave the park

parks and race courses in better shape than they were before we showed up. Taking care of our parks by picking up cans and recycling are now all just part of being good stewards. Ada was ahead of her time.

Ada's bench is adjacent to the boat house at Stow Lake, a prime spot. Phyllis Nabhan remembers it as Ada's favorite running course and a meeting point for the regular runs she organized for other women and beginning runners. If you have ever run the path around the Stow Lake island and up Strawberry Hill, you know what a great spot it is to run in the city with its lush tall trees, soft trails, geese, squirrels, pagoda, and waterfall. There is so much to see and experience, so it is a great place to have a plaque and bench.

Finally, I wanted to mention that I had been hearing stories about Ada for years. I would like to thank Marian Lyons for filling in some of the details about Ada and everyone else who shared stories about her. As a club, we give a lot of love to the memory of good old Walt Stack. I feel like Ada deserves some of that admiration as well. Marian sure has some great memories and mementos of Ada. If you have time, please read her eulogy of Ada that DSE printed in the February 2010 edition of the DSE Newsletter, which is [online](#) at our website. It will warm your heart. She sounded like a great person to know. It just reminds me of how running can be such a great medium for friendships. DSE is about the running but it is also about our friendships, diversity, humanity and common history.



Top: Ms. Ada and Marian  
Bottom: The Stow Lake bench plaque





# THE CREATION OF THE WALT STACK MEMORIAL BENCH

*Jane Colman*

Last month's DSE News features photos of the plaques on the DSE Walt Stack Memorial Bench along the Marina. Here is the story of how it came to be, thanks to the single-handed work of the late longtime DSE member Don Watson, plus monetary contributions from many DSE members.

Don was active in both the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (he had spent his career as a ship clerk on the San Francisco waterfront) and support for the farmworkers' union, and he knew just about everyone in San Francisco politics. He had also known Walt since the late 1940s, when they had been members of the Merchant Marines serving on the same ship.

In the spring of 1994, when a new bridge was being built at Lake Merced to replace one damaged by the 1989 earthquake, Don started a quest to have the bridge named for Walt Stack. I'm not sure why that never came to pass, but part of the problem was that Walt was still alive.

In November 1994, Joe Oakes and Don formed the Walt Stack Memorial Committee and tried to get the route from Aquatic Park to Sausalito named the Walt Stack Trail, but the official policy of the National Park Service was that no commemorative plaque or other recognition could be erected until five years after the death of the person honored, and Walt was still alive.

Walt died in January 1995, and in April the DSE hosted the 25K Walt Stack Trail Run from Aquatic Park over the Golden Gate Bridge to Sausalito and back, but no progress was made on a memorial plaque until 2000, five years after Walt's death. The proposal then was a memorial bench along the Walt Stack Trail. There was a place available on the north side of the Marina Green, looking out toward Alcatraz (Walt claimed to be the only person incarcerated on Alcatraz who swam to San Francisco, but he was sent to Alcatraz, then a military prison, as a young man after going AWOL from the armed forces, and swam to San Francisco many years later in a race). However, a memorial bench required either an act of Congress or a \$3000 donation. Don felt that waiting for Congress to act (even with help from San Francisco Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi) would take so much time that the space might no longer be available, so he recommended raising the \$3000 donation, and the club agreed. Seventy-four DSE members contributed, as did several organizations, and a dedication was organized for the morning of May 20,

2000, to be followed by a run along the trail.

It took pulling some strings to get the bench painted and the plaques installed, and it didn't take place until the evening before the dedication. Fortunately the paint was more or less dry by the time of the dedication, which was attended by many DSE members and others of Walt's family and friends.

And the bench is still there, 20 years later.

## RACE REPORT: MARLETTE 50K/10M

*George Rehmet*

After five months, it was blessedly wonderful to do a race. Located in the Nevada part of the Lake Tahoe region, the Marlette 50K was a RRCA Western Region Championship while the 10 Mile race was a Nevada State Championship. The race name refers to Marlette Lake, as the 50K circumnavigated the lake while the 10 mile was an out and back. As RRCA President, I was grateful that I would be able to represent the RRCA in my new position at this race.

The race started and finished in Spooner Lake Park, about 20 minutes from Carson City. Folks were happy to be able to do a race after all these months. The race organizers at Big Blue Adventure were happy to put on a race and hoped that putting on this race safely and successfully would be able to lead to more races being put on. [note: Go to <https://tahoetrailrunning.com/> to see what other races may happen in the Tahoe region.]

I was happy to bump into fellow DSE'rs Chikara Omine and Diann Leo-Omine and Erika and Jason Reed. Chikara and Erika would compete in the 10 mile while Jason and I would run in the 50K. After welcoming the runners as RRCA President, we were off. The race started at 7100 feet. Luckily the 9,200 ft. peaks came early as the elevation gain would be 4600 feet. The views were spectacular, especially running several miles along the Flume Trail in which I can see down to Lake Tahoe. We all finished with Chikara securing a podium finish.



*Looking down on the world's prettiest lake.*

The race organizers did an excellent job putting a safe race with COVID-19 precautions.

Hopefully, this race can serve as a model as to what similar event management companies can do to put on safe races during the pandemic. Below are the COVID-19 precautions I witnessed that led to this event being safe:

- On the race website, COVID-19 information was posted prominently and description of the precautions were very clear.
- At the race start/finish area and aid stations, race workers and volunteers were wearing masks and gloves. There was sanitizer located in every location. Items were handled individually.
- At check-in, the procedures were announced. Participants used sanitizer first; signed a waiver with a pen and then placed the pen in another tray; used sanitizer again; and then obtained their race materials which was packaged in individual envelopes.
- Prior to the race, the race director went through the COVID-19 precautions and stated clearly the procedures for starting the race and finishing the race.
- The use of a rolling start in which participants lined up according to predicted finishing times while socially distancing went off successfully.
- Staff made sure that participants practiced social distancing. Participants for the most part were compliant in wearing masks before and after the race and maintaining social distance.
- Participants' companions were instructed not to be on the course or go to the aid stations.
- The finish went well with participants getting their items and then leaving the finish area soon afterwards, or social distancing much further away from the finish line and aid station.
- The elimination of the awards ceremony was compensated by handing out awards as runners finished. This worked successfully due to the smaller size of the race.
- Finally, participants were an important component by following social distancing measures and wearing masks before the race and finishing. My sense was that participants understood their role in ensuring that future races can take place.

To get a better sense of what happened, There and Back Films made a short documentary (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQ4MmyowdDY>) about the

about the race with the focus on safety precautions. The film director was very complimentary of the race.

In my opinion, I felt safe during race day. Moreover, I felt so elated just to race, especially an ultra. I strongly feel that trail races and small races like DSE's will come back soon. But we all have to do our part in keeping things safe and cutting race organizers slack as they have to spend extra time and resources on COVID-19 precautions.

Note: The RRCA has also put out precautions to put on races and group runs on its website ([www.rrca.org](http://www.rrca.org)).



50K at 7,100 feet? No problem!

## RUNNING SAFELY DURING FIRE SEASON

*Amber Wipfler*

We all know from experience that smoky air can result in itchy eyes and a sore throat, but it's much more serious than that! The fine particulate matter that fills the air during fires can lodge in your lungs and even infiltrate your bloodstream, causing bronchitis, reduced lung function, and in some cases permanent lung damage. And because the particles that cause this damage are less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter, they don't get filtered out by a bandana or buff--only an N95 or similar specialized mask will do.

So what's a runner to do? Before you head out for your run, check the Bay Area Air Quality Management District website (<https://www.baaqmd.gov/>) and make sure the air quality in your area is in the green zone. If the air quality is only moderate, consider an abbreviated workout with a mask. And if it's creeping up into that orange or red zone, stay inside and do some cross-training. We only get one pair of lungs, so we gotta treat them well!

# Virtual Weekly Race Series

## SEPTEMBER 2020 VIRTUAL RACE SCHEDULE

Here is the Virtual Race Schedule for September 2020. You may run our suggested course or a similar course close to home. Each week also includes a 1/2 mile Kids Race. **Please email your name, age, gender, and results to [dsevirtual@gmail.com](mailto:dsevirtual@gmail.com) each week by 3pm.** Be sure to include the name of the race in the subject line.

A big thanks to our wonderful volunteer race results preparers Jim Buck, Marsi Hidekawa, Jane McFarland, Wendy Newman, and Terri Rourke!

### September 7 - 13: Fort Mason 5K [Course Map](#)

Course description: Start at the intersection of Jefferson and Hyde. Run westbound on Aquatic Park promenade, up and over Fort Mason hill, right turn onto Marina Blvd. Continue on Marina Blvd. to the 1.55 mile turnaround, return same way to finish.

### September 14 - 20: Polo Field 5K [Course Map](#)

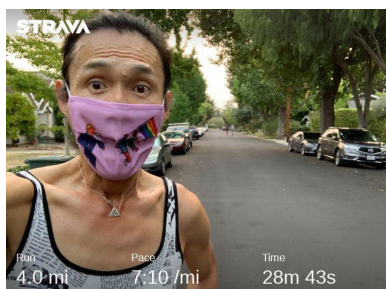
Course description: Start at the intersection of Middle Drive and Metson Road. Run westbound on Middle Drive, right onto MLK then Bernice Rogers Way, and right onto Kennedy Drive. Run up Kennedy Drive to Transverse Drive, right onto Transverse Drive, right onto Overlook (dirt trail) and right onto Middle Drive to finish.

### September 21 - 27: Bay Trail 4 Mile [Course Map](#)

Course description: Start at the Oyster Point Marina (95 Harbor Master Road, South San Francisco, CA). Run southbound on paved Bay Trail. Turn around at the 2 mile mark, and return same way to finish.

### September 28 - October 4: Embarcadero 10K [Course Map](#)

Course description: Start at the intersection of Jefferson and Hyde, near the Dolphin Club. Run east along the Embarcadero for 3.1 miles, and return the same way to finish.





# Membership Information

The DSE was founded in 1966 by members of three clubs who were also interested in running — the Dolphin Club, the South End Rowing Club and the San Francisco Rowing Club. The DSE has grown into San Francisco's largest running club with about 450 members. The club holds races throughout the city almost every Sunday, with courses that range in difficulty and distance ( 2–6+ miles).

- Standard membership includes reduced entry fees to weekly races (\$3 unless otherwise noted)
- Unlimited GOLD membership includes free pre-registration to all 2020 races
- Members who earn at least 3 volunteer points are eligible for annual awards

## 2020 Membership Pricing

- Standard Adult Membership: \$20
- Unlimited GOLD Adult Membership: \$100
- Child Membership (under age 18): FREE

*Membership pricing includes electronic newsletter. Members can opt to receive a paper newsletter for an additional \$10 per year.*

Membership purchase is available online at <http://dserunners.com/membership>.

Membership questions? Email [info@dserunners.com](mailto:info@dserunners.com).

# Folding Session

Folding sessions are on hold until its safe to hold gatherings. In the meantime, we can't thank Jane Colman enough for taking care of the newsletter printing, folding, and mailing!

# Weather Report

Meteorologist Mike Pechner

Another heat wave will come just in time for Labor Day weekend and last all week into the 2nd week of September. The City should see highs in the 90's with inland valleys reaching 106. Increasing onshore flow and a deepening marine layer will begin a cooling trend around the 10th, with temperatures cool to below normal except for SF and the coast. Below normal temps will continue into the 3rd week of September. The first fall weather system could bring the first light rain to the Bay Area at the end of the third week of the month or perhaps the beginning of the first few days of the 4th week. Dry and warmer weather is expected the last few days of the month.

## ◆◆◆ Club Officers & Coordinators ◆◆◆

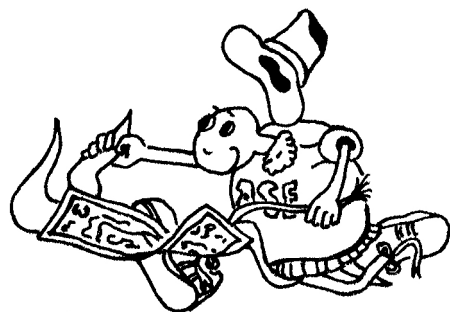
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# Happy Birthday! ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆

## SEPTEMBER

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