

# TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY SPORTS SPOTLITE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SHANAMAN SPORTS MUSEUM

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Sam Ring, winner of the first Sound to Narrows, at the start line (Courtesy *The News Tribune*)

## HISTORY OF THE SOUND TO NARROWS

By Sam Ring

The Sound to Narrows (S2N) road race was created by *The News Tribune* sports reporter Dick Kunkle. Just how he conceived this idea is open to speculation. Known is that he fostered the idea from the Bay to Breakers (B2B) Race in San Francisco that was sponsored by the *San Francisco Examiner* newspaper.

(article continued on page 3)

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The mission of the Shanaman Sports Museum of Tacoma-Pierce County is to recreate the history of sports in the community by chronicling the evolution of various sports through written, visual and audio mediums and to educate the public about our sports heritage.

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## **JOIN THE TEAM**

The Shanaman Sports Museum honors the history of sports and the rich culture of athletics in Tacoma-Pierce County. In order to maintain that tradition, the museum and the board of directors is pleased to invite the general public to show their support by becoming a member.

For more information about membership levels and to sign up, please visit our website here: [www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership](http://www.tacomasporthmuseum.com/membership)

Annual contributions will support the curation of SSM's online exhibits, including the Sports Narratives, Old School Programs, Clay Huntington Broadcast Center and Sports History projects.

Contributions of all sizes are vital to the museum's mission. Individuals, businesses and organizations will be recognized on our website as well as receive a quarterly newsletter featuring articles on items in the museum collection and sports stories written by local journalists. Four membership levels are being offered, and in addition to the newsletter, inaugural members will receive exclusive benefits from the following local Pierce County businesses that graciously support the mission of the SSM.

Benefits include vouchers to the following:

- Joesepi's Italian Ristorante
- Domino's of Pierce County
- Anthem Coffee & Tea
- Highlands Golf Course
- Tower Lanes Entertainment Center
- The Classic Golf Club, Oakbrook Golf Club

We thank you for your interest in joining the Shanaman Sports Museum and your contribution to preserving the history of the sports and athletes of Tacoma-Pierce County!

## S2N History, continued from page 1

That race had a lengthy history, as 1973 was the 63rd edition of the race. Whatever the reason for bringing the idea to Tacoma – the need for a community event, an athletic contest offered free to everyone, or some other, unknown reason – Dick Kunkle was a visionary who put together a great community event.



Pay Tyson, left, winner of two early S2N races, with Dick Kunkle  
(Courtesy *The News Tribune*)

Kunkle was a champion for the amateur athlete. Not the elite NBA types he covered and complained about as the Seattle SuperSonics beat writer for the Tribune, often stating, “I only need to be there the last two minutes to cover these games.” He also created the long running state high school track meet, Star Track, which ran for 20 years at Lincoln Bowl. Those who competed and coached at Star Track still consider it the best run track meet in state history. I was standing with Brooks Johnson, Stanford coach and U.S.A. Olympic coach when he said, unprompted, “this is the best high school meet I have ever seen. Hats off to Dick Kunkle. It’s no wonder the Sound to Narrows became a great success.”

## History of Road Racing in the Tacoma Area

In the early spring of 1964, a race was sponsored by the Sixth Avenue Business Association to celebrate Washington’s Diamond Anniversary. Originally, the race was to be run down Sixth Avenue, but to the surprise of the runners attending the 8-mile “marathon”, they would instead be running entirely in Wright Park. No reason was given for the change. According to the *News Tribune* article recapping the race, the “next action slated by the Sixth Avenue group will come in October when they sponsor a steeplechase. The proposed fall event is scheduled to cover the entire length of Sixth Avenue with the steeplechase barriers placed along the length of the course.” This race never took place. But it is interesting to note that this proposed route would start overlooking Commencement Bay and finish overlooking the Narrows at the Narrows Bridge.

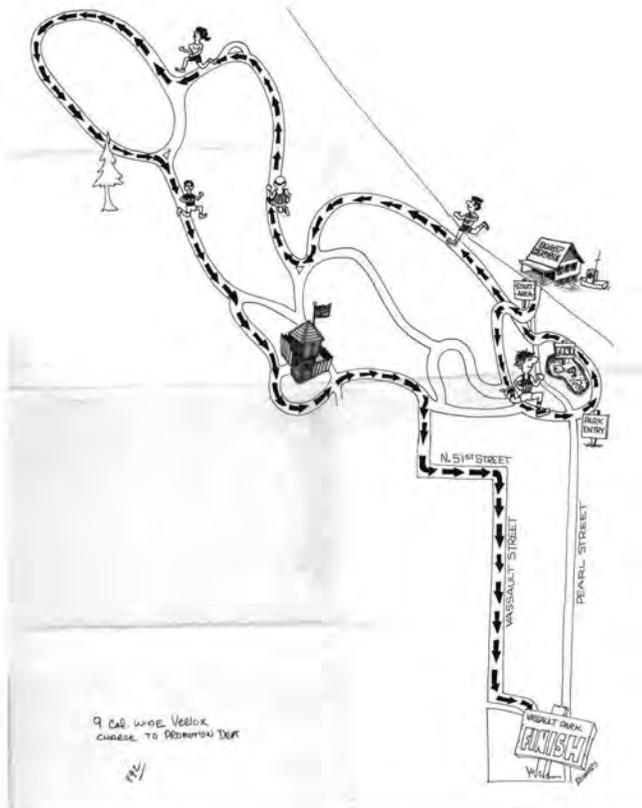
In the early seventies, prior to the S2N, Carl Glatz sponsored a series of road races, under the banner of the Puget Sound Running Club, which would later become the Fort Steilacoom Running Club. The events were run in area parks and local roads. No awards, no police on the routes, no T-shirts – simply a competition opportunity. Participation in these events was the first attempt to incorporate all persons who wanted to run, an idea picked up by the S2N race. Kunkle wrote an article appearing in the *News Tribune* shortly before the first race titled “Ordinary Runners on the List,” writing that among the 382 entrants, the majority entered were running “just for fun” – a theme that has followed the race for years.

## Finding the S2N Route

The original Sound to Narrows course was patterned on San Francisco’s Bay to Breakers (B2B) road race, which ran across San Francisco, Embarcadero to Golden Gate Park, San Francisco Bay to the Pacific Ocean. With this idea in mind,

Kunkle's first thoughts were 11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, now the Murray Morgan Bridge, to the Narrows Bridge right across Tacoma, perhaps running up 11<sup>th</sup> street and at some point joining 6th Avenue continuing to the bridge. This idea was nixed early on, as cooperation from the City to close streets simply was not there. Remember that road racing in that era was not part of the community's fabric.

Kunkle was set on the idea that the S2N route would include the old Aquarium Building, in Point Defiance Park, located on Commencement Bay just below the Narrows Bridge, making the run similar in concept to the B2B. He also tried to keep the S2N close to the B2B distance of 7.8 miles. The first route was Point Defiance Park to the Narrows Bridge. The highway department nixed that attempt because of potential overcrowding near the bridge, with 300 or so competitors! Certainly future numbers would have nixed that area as well.



1973 S2N Route Map (Courtesy Tacoma News Tribune)

The next route idea was to cut it short and run to Optimist Park on North 15<sup>th</sup> and James Street. This route was scrubbed by Metro Parks, as once again the "large" numbers were too much for this little park to handle. The complete loop behind the Zoo that was run in counter-clockwise direction was added during the first few years to make up the difference of not going to Optimist Park.

With no other viable choices, Vassault Park became the finish area. The original information sheet stated the race to be 7.4 miles ending at Vassault Park. Not being one to not give up on his original vision, Kunkle added a perimeter run around Vassault Park to make it 7.6 miles, closer to the B2B distance.

It is interesting to note that original road races, particularly in New England, were town to town, or destination to destination, and whatever the distance, that was it. The athletes' only point of comparison from year to year was that particular run. This was also the case for the S2N, as no thought was given to a pre-determined distance. Today all courses are certified by a complicated process to assure that they meet the acceptable distances 10K, 12K, etc. Take note because of the hills in the S2N it is very difficult to compare it to any other 12K course.

### What a Prize!

The announced first prize to the winner was a trip to watch the A.A.U. (National) Track Championships in Bakersfield, California. Having won that first race, I petitioned Kunkle that for a runner, going to "watch" a track meet (in Bakersfield, no less) was not an ideal reward. Knowing that he patterned the S2N after the B2B, I suggested an entry into that race. Once again, the salesman Kunkle was able to convince the *News Tribune* to accept that idea and he would be able to make the trip with me. That was important because with 5000+ entries, he was able to see how to manage future large

entry numbers and incorporate logistics solutions into the S2N. After witnessing that race I think he knew what the future held for his race.

### Inspiring Spokane's Bloomsday Run

Future Olympic marathoner Don Kardong was visiting near Tacoma and decided to run the S2N and loved the event. Kardong was a Spokane resident and based his training there. Being a Club Northwest teammate of mine, when in the area we would train together and often banter about running. In one of our chats, we discussed the fact that Spokane did not have a major race. Kardong's wheels began to turn and asked me if I knew who organized the S2N race. I did. I was able to connect Kardong with Dick Kunkle, the two met, and from that meeting Kardong learned the ins and outs of developing a road race, and Spokane's very popular Bloomsday Road Race resulted.

### A Tradition Established

Kunkle conceived the S2N idea in the early '70s, before the running boom was firmly established. One has to admire his salesmanship in convincing Tom Cross of Pierce County Parks, Dinwiddie Furmeister of The News Tribune and Steve Orfanos of the Metropolitan Park District to sponsor this event. Doctors were available for a quick physical at the starting area if you didn't have a medical certificate clearing you to run, busses were available to shuttle runners back to the start area and police were along the route to provide safe passage. This was the first attempt at an athletic event of this magnitude in our area. Could they have envisioned it would be going strong nearly 50 years later with thousands of participants of all abilities enjoying a run for fun on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in June?

Definitely!



Runners start the 1977 S2N (Courtesy *The News Tribune*)



Fun for all ages at the 1974 S2N (Courtesy *The News Tribune*)



Clay Huntington, Pierce County Commissioner and Tom Cross, Director of Pierce County Parks & Recreation Department at the finish of the first S2N (Courtesy Marc Blau)

## **OUR MEMBERS**

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## **TRIBUTE TO CHAMPIONS MAY 12, 2020**

This special event recognizes those within our community who have achieved the highest levels in sports. We honor them for their positive contributions in the areas of sports, recreation and civic betterment. Save the date and get your tickets now at:

**[tributetochampions.org](http://tributetochampions.org)**

## HALL OF FAME SPOTLIGHT **ARLEY KANGAS**



From high school to college and on to pro ball, Arley Kangas was a standout performer and a leader. Mostly due to his talent as a baseball catcher, Kangas was inducted in the Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame in 2006.

Kangas, born in 1938 in Tacoma, played football, basketball and baseball at Stadium High. He won all-state recognition playing baseball for fellow Tacoma-Pierce County Hall of Famer Marv Scott. He went on to play at Washington State University after leading the Post #138 American Legion team to the 1956 state title.

Kangas was named first-team all-conference at WSU for three consecutive seasons, 1958-60. In 1959 he led Pac-8 Northern Division in batting average and runs batted in. After that season, he was member of the United States team that placed third at the Pan-American Games. Kangas served as captain of coach Bobo Brayton's 1960 WSU baseball team, which went 29-6 and won the conference title.

During the summer months, Kangas played for the region's top amateur baseball clubs. He was behind the plate for Tacoma's Woodworth Contractors when they finished second at the American Amateur Baseball Congress championships in 1958, and he starred for two seasons in the Tacoma City League.

After finishing his career at WSU, Kangas played two seasons in the San Francisco Giants

organization. Kangas, a 5-foot-10, 170-pound right-handed batter, was primarily a catcher but played some third base and outfield. Over two professional seasons for the Fresno Giants in the California League and the Eugene Emeralds in the Northwest League, Kangas hit .253 in 541 at-bats. He knocked in 63 runs, scored 60 and hit one home run.

Kangas left pro ball and became a successful high school coach and realtor in the Tigard and Beaverton, Oregon area.



## **WANTED**

We are always looking for artifacts that will more effectively allow us to preserve our sports heritage. Whether it be an old family scrapbook, a uniform, glove, programs, photos, posters, or even an old baseball from the turn of the century, each artifact tells a story and contributes to the folklore that we strive to preserve for generations to come. We must understand the past in order to appreciate the present and unique memorabilia will allow us to accomplish this objective.

To make a contribution or for further information, contact Marc Blau at [marc@tacomasportsmuseum.com](mailto:marc@tacomasportsmuseum.com).

## HALL OF FAME SPOTLITE JOYCE (JONES) WOLF



Joyce (Jones) Wolf, a 1949 graduate of Stadium High School, considered herself lucky when at age 18 she joined Pacific Mutual Fuels, a team of young women who “lived and breathed softball.” Joyce, who played both second and third base, spent two seasons with the Fuelerettes, who each year provided some of the top individual and team talent in the Tacoma circuit. The 1949 Fuelerettes placed third in the state tournament and in 1951 they won 15 games while losing just one to capture the Pierce County Women’s Softball title.

Joyce went on to play locally for two seasons with PVT Rustlers and for three seasons with Hollywood Boat & Motor, along with teammate Margaret Heinrick. Joyce had a great experience playing for HB&M, which competed in a high-level travel league with teams from such places at Vancouver, B.C., Portland, Utah, California and Arizona. Following her fastpitch career, Joyce played slowpitch softball with The Cage Tavern, the first women’s team from Tacoma to play in a national slowpitch tournament.

A competitive swimmer and diver at Stadium High School, Joyce was also a nationally-rated basketball official, regularly working games at UPS and PLU. Joyce was inducted into the Softball category of the Tacoma-Pierce County Sports Hall of Fame in 2009 and received Hall of Fame honors from the Tacoma-Pierce County Baseball-Softball Oldtimers Association in 2004 for fastpitch and in 2007 for slowpitch.

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## LOCKER ROOM CHAT

The Locker Room Chat is our podcast that highlights athletes, coaches, officials, teams and great events, moments and accomplishments in the history of sports in Tacoma-Pierce County.

The podcast is off to a running start with three episodes recorded since its launch in August of 2019.

In case you missed it, visit our website to view the most recent episode in full: 1976 Olympic Gold medalist boxer Leo Randolph and Tacoma Boxing Club coach Joe Clough sat down for a conversation with host Mark Aucutt.

