

**Speech given by Larry Allen
honoring OJ Logue
at his induction into the
Maine Running Hall of Fame**

November 5, 2006 | Waterville



Induction ceremony speech, Maine Running Hall of Fame

I've always been proud of my home state and I've particularly been full of pride for the runners and the running community here. I always knew it was special and close knit but I didn't know how unique until I moved away and was part of something else. This might be a bit self-indulgent but I've always felt that what I learned from being a Maine runner deserves some credit for most anything else I've gotten right in my life. When I heard that the Hall of Fame was inducting OJ Logue, I was happy that the hall had gotten it right too and I am flattered and delighted to be home for the induction of this modest man with these splendid accomplishments. Today we can all be pleased too, like he is--- thankful, like he is, that he could do and has done the things that he did do---and now that he has his rightful place in the Hall.

I first met OJ in the fall of 1972. He was a talented 10th grader running for Cliff McCormick's Orono team. I was a senior captain on Howie Richard's Mt Desert Island cross country team. Orono was a perennial class B state championship team. MDI was anything but, just in it's 4th year of existence and dead last in the state in class B in the fall of 1971. The powerhouse team in class A that year was Chevrus, their captain was a skinny senior named Peter Millard, of course, now Chairman of the Maine Hall of Fame. Another skinny 10th grader from Benton, Bruce Bickford was just beginning to make a mark that fall. It was a special time in Maine running. The US Olympic Distance running team had been training at Bowdoin that summer, prior to going to Munich for the late summer Olympic Games. Vern Putney in the Portland Press and Bob Haskell of the Bangor Daily News told us of the daily training exploits of Ryun, Shorter, Galloway, Prefontaine, Bachelor, Wottle... We all watched with a bit of hometown pride as Shorter, Wottle raced and won in Germany. Later that same fall, the first of a new brand of running shoes began to appear on the shelves of the Goldsmith's store on Main St. in Old Town, something we'd never heard of or seen, something called a Nike. I first remember OJ from a dual meet that Sept

at Orono High, he and they kicked our butts. The coaches for MDI and Orono were friends and naturally it resulted in a friendly rivalry between the teams.....except, that is, when we were racing. Through the fall including the state championships, that dual meet was the last time MDI would lose for the year, and fortunately that state meet is the last time I was able to beat OJ!

Our friendship was cemented in the late 70's and through the 80's as runners at the UM in Orono; OJ was working on his Master's degree, I was an undergrad on the GI Bill. We became training partners and I think we both knew, life long friends. OJ's quick wit, easy laugh, refusal to ever make an excuse for his fitness or his natural limitations has always been astonishing. I knew, but never said that I knew, that his balance was slightly limited by his inner ear and his asthmatic breathing by the extraordinary cold; yet some of my fondest memories are the two of us going for a run; midwinter on a pitch black, bitter cold Maine night and, hearing him wheezing slightly, but not seriously, and feeling his arm swing brush against mine each stride on a snow covered road as he trusted me to provide a source of stability, yet never slowing from something usually faster than the steady 6:30 per mile pace of his easy runs.

Fast forward to the Boston Marathon in 81, I was injured. OJ was very fit. I went to Boston and perched myself on the pedestal of a statue on Commonwealth Ave, across the St. from the old Eliot Lounge, maybe 2/3 mile from the old finish line at the Pru. I watched intently as the leaders came through and not long after, watched with anticipation and then excitement as someone with very familiar running form come into focus coming out of Kenmore Square. It was a huge breakthrough race and resulted in OJ running what would become the 5th fastest marathon by a Mainer in those white hot 1980s. I still have unreserved delight in what he had accomplished that day, perhaps not equaled until today.

Almost a year later, I was with OJ on a cold snowy February day, on a long run; typical of OJ he had decided to run a 30 mile run from Orono through Old Town and Veazie ending in Bangor, to raise money for a terminally ill child. I volunteered to keep him company for 20 miles. As we were making our way through the slush on the Maine campus, OJ spied a pretty redhead offering support as we made our way across campus, after we passed her, he said to me with his usual absolute certainty, I am going to marry that woman. I don't think he had ever seen or met Barbara before that moment. I am pleased to report that, as always, OJ was right and I am also happy to report that Barbara is with us today, I might add, still recovering from her first marathon a few weeks ago.

Some of my most gratifying memories came in the early 80s as OJ and I coached the Bangor HS team running teams. When we arrived at the Bangor High there was no tradition of running whatsoever. In a few short years, there

were state champions, all-america runners and one of the oldest state records remaining on the books. We both moved on, OJ in his academic pursuits, as a college coach and successful road runner. I moved to Gainesville Fla. I continued to run with modest success and surprisingly found myself training with Grete Waitz most every Sunday as she prepared to run the 84 games in LA. Since this is the Maine running hall of fame, I feel obliged to share a sidebar story here... Grete and her coach/husband, Jack, peppered me with questions about a certain Maine runner that she expected to face in LA. I remember telling Grete that Joanie was tough but I doubted she'd be recovered from her knee surgery OR ideally suited to the heat and a course on the highway in LA. (loyalty among runners in Maine isn't something that I was about to explain). I remember coming back from Gainesville to Maine to visit late that summer and going out for a hard 20 mile run in Acadia on a hot day (for Maine) with my brother Gary and OJ, given what I was used to from the heat and humidity of the Florida summer, I actually thought I might run OJ off his feet for once. I was as wrong as he was tough. It ended up being a 23 miler, very hot and hilly, we actually did the seemingly impossible and managed to drop Brother Gary but OJ was there every step of the way. In the succeeding years, we lost track of each other for a while. OJ was in the midst of starting a family, earning his PHD and ultimately the position he holds today as a Dean at that University near his hometown of Orono.

Fast forward again to 2000, my brother's MDI marathon was in its inaugural year. I came home from NY to offer my assistance for the week. I was signing up volunteers in the town hall, up comes a familiar smiling face. It was OJ with Barbara, their daughter Amanda, and sons, Peter and Robbie, offering to set up and man a water station. We rekindled the friendship we knew all along would last a lifetime. Oh, by the way, I should mention that OJ did finally come to his senses - he now lives on Mt. Desert Island with his family. His son, Peter is a talented freshman runner on the varsity of a team that still almost never loses to Orono HS.

Marc Bloom wondered in his book, *Run with the Champions*, how great runners accomplish what they do.. He said... " it's like analyzing love or passion to ask why they have to run. It remains one of the great mysteries of life". Someone shared a short poem a bit ago that might answer some of the unanswerable, at least for me. It was written by Charles Hamilton Sorley in 1915 and it's called "The Song of the Ungirt Runner". So if you'll bear with me, I'd like to read it.

We swing ungirded hips,

And lightened are our eyes,

The rain is on our lips,

We do not run for prize.

We know not whom we trust

Nor whitherward we fare,

But we run because we must

Through the great wide air.

The waters of the seas

Are troubled as by storm.

The tempest strips the trees

And does not leave them warm.

Does the tearing tempest pause?

Do the tree-tops ask it why?

So we run without a cause

'Neath the big bare sky.

The rain is on our lips,

We do not run for prize.

But the storm the water whips

And the wave howls to the skies.

The winds arise and strike it

And scatter it like sand,

And we run because we like it

Through the broad bright land

OJ didn't choose or run down the middle. He raced to the edges, embracing all extremes, overcoming impossible obstacles, achieving beyond reason. He wanted everything and did it seemingly all at the same time and with extraordinary grace; Good Son, Proud Father, Brother, Husband, Maine Man, Dedicated Man, Running Man, Coach Man, Wild Man, Loyal Man, Teacher Man, Family Man, Barbara's Man, Gentle Man, Strong Man, HuMan..... Maine Running Hall of Fame Man. It is with great pride and fond remembrance of those miles well run that I present to you, my dear friend; Owen Joseph Logue III.