

RUSSIANS

continued from page 9

people."

Spoken like a true diplomat. And he backed up his kind words with heroic action. While Opsahl soared ahead to finish in 3:35, Denisov struggled. He couldn't even admire the Manhattan skyline. "After 18 miles, it was difficult to look at anything but the pavement," he admitted.

Still, he said, he was impressed by the crowds, the support, the music, and the festive nature of the entire event. "It was like a great holiday," he said. "And even in the not-so-nice parts of the city, I was glad to see so many people who had such genuine goodwill and feelings for the runners."

Denisov, a native Muscovite, was particularly taken at the finish line, which he crossed in 4:18. "I finished side by side with an American woman who cried when she crossed the finish line. 'I made it! I made it!' she said." And how did he react to this touching scene? "I suppressed my own emotions and transferred my attention to the cramps in my legs," he chuckled.

Yet there was time to emote later on, as Denisov reflected on the foreign exchange he and Opsahl had worked so hard to complete. "We came here to see your country, to meet your people, to extend the hand of friendship," he said. "And I'm very, very glad we did."

The next move is for a group of New York area runners to participate in the White Knights Marathon next year in St. Petersburg. And in November 1992, the Russians will be back in New York. "Maybe it will become a tradition," Denisov said.

Back in Opsahl's Long Island home the night of the Marathon, the two friends celebrated their own perestroika in East-meets-West fashion. "We had some white wine, some beer, soup, and pizza," laughed Denisov. "A sort of Russian-American feast."

SERNICK SISTERS

continued from page 20

faster. Ask each of them who is quicker, and they'll say the other. The most they will acknowledge is that Ilaina is faster at the beginning and Tina at the end. By August, their training was progressing exactly according to schedule. Then,

Ilaina was assigned to a project out west for three months.

While Tina's training continued on as before, Ilaina's took a less traditional turn. In San Francisco, working an average of 16 hours a day, she was forced to run very early in the morning. Afraid to venture outdoors at 5 am in an unfamiliar city, she opted for the treadmill, but the health club at her hotel didn't open until 6 am. Convincing someone at the front desk to open the club early wasn't always easy. When she did run outdoors on the weekends, she tried to do too much, especially on San Francisco's hilly terrain. Within three weeks she had tendonitis in her feet. In Denver, she moved her workouts outdoors. On one run, she heard chains behind her, and turned to find a dog chasing her. Not wanting to panic, Ilaina kept her pace. But the noise got louder and louder. The next time she turned around, there were eight dogs behind her.

But ask the Sernicks what the most difficult part of their first marathon was and they'll both say telling their parents about it. Their father couldn't have been happier, chuckling that maybe his daughters were jocks after all. Their mother, meanwhile, responded as only a mother can. "I'll come watch you run," Carole Sernick told her daughters.

"But Mom, you have to be close to home [Commack, Long Island, 50 miles from Manhattan] on Sunday," Ilaina told her.

"I know, but aren't you running by the house?" Carole replied.

"No," Tina answered.

"You mean to tell me you're running all those miles and you won't be anywhere near the house?"

MAIN COURSE

continued from page 32

A. I know I have better times in me. The stress of racing was magnified by Charlie's death. But now I hope to pick up my training by adding a little more mileage and being consistent with my speedwork and tempo runs. I'd like to get down to 37:00 for 10k. I think I'm capable of that—or even lower. [Greeley's PRs include: 1:06:00 for 10 miles, 39:50 for 10k, 19:05 for 5k, and 5:23 for the mile.] I also plan to do more indoor track. They say your speed slows when you get older, but I'll still train hard because I don't want to let that stop me.

NEWLYWEDS

continued from page 44

ried a doctor."

SEVERAL YEARS LATER

In the fall of 1989, Mary, back in town and back in shape, reappeared at the NYRRC. Says Bill, "I had my intelligence sources check it out. I heard she was unattached, so I started my plan of attack." They became friendly, meeting and chatting at the Winter Series races. It wasn't until the Women's Mini Marathon that Bill made his move.

THE FIRST DATE

Bill recalls "standing at the finish line with a dozen roses. It was a big race for her—hoping to break 40 minutes. She finished just seconds shy of 40, and I could tell she was disappointed. I was scared she'd say no when I asked her to have breakfast with me. She said she would, and when we walked into the restaurant with Mary's roses and the medal around her neck, everyone thought she had won and started clapping. As far as I was concerned, she was the winner."

POPPING THE QUESTION

Bill woke Mary at 1 am after his nightshift at the hospital. "Bill stood by the bed and asked me if I was of sound mind and body. I didn't know what he was talking about," recalls Mary. Bill stood speechless for some time, repeating "Will you . . ." a number of times until Mary caught on and drew it out of him. The question was officially popped at 1:18 am.

THE WEDDING

A year later, on October 26, 1991 at the Good Shephard Church at Isham and Broadway. A reception followed at the Binghampton Ferry in Edgewater, New Jersey. In honor of Bill's mother's maiden name, McDonald, Mary was "piped" down and back up the aisle by New York Fire Department bagpiper Jack Duggan. All ushers and the best man joined Bill in wearing kilts.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER

Although he's still an avid runner (Bill ran every day on their San Francisco honeymoon), he confesses: "Running is extremely important to me, and years ago I never thought I'd say this, but Mary's the most important thing in my life. She's number one."