



Full Name: Philip Lamont
Year of birth: 1955
Place of birth: Adelaide
Currently living: East Malvern, Victoria
Marital status: Married to Marg
Occupation: Registered Nurse
Height: 169cm
Weight: 65kg
Shoe size: 8.5 U.S
Hair colour: Shaved head
Favorite pair of runners: Asics Gel Kayano
Personal Bests: 10km: 33.40; 21.1km: 73.52
Three favourite races:
 1. Great Ocean Road Half Marathon: Love it for the views of the GOR. Which I ran last year but not this year because of injury.
 2. Great Train Race: Against Puffing Billy...I like it for the challenge.
 3. For third can't split the parochial favourite of the Melbourne Half Marathon, and the Sydney City to Surf, its pretty special to run with 60,000 people and finish at Bondi.

by Kym Morgan

A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Meet Philip Lamont, Run For Your Life's 1000th subscriber and an example of what makes this such a fantastic sport!

THERE is a degree of fate about the circumstances in which Philip Lamont found himself the subject of a feature article for this issue of Run For Your Life. The 51 year old from East Malvern in Melbourne is not likely to feature prominently on the results pages of the international update section of this magazine over the coming months. However, his story is every bit as worthy and interesting as that of some of Australia's top athletes.

It is a story that is typical of so many runners throughout Australia and the world. He is the runner who is all too often forgotten. The runner who participates purely for the enjoyment, the relaxation and the sense of satisfaction it gives him. The runner who has been pounding the pavement, the trails and the tracks for over 20 years without ever really expecting or being given any recognition for it. The runner who has hundreds of stories to tell about the adventures he has had while enjoying his favorite pastime. His story deserves to be told, and it almost seems like more than a coincidence that when Lamont was given a subscription to Run For Your Life as a gift from his daughters, he just happened to become the lucky 1000th subscriber, and the subject of a feature article.

The first chapter of Lamont's running career was hardly an indication of where the sport would

lead this father of five. A short but speedy teenager, Lamont got his first taste of track and field as a sprinter for Watsonia High School.

"At secondary school, I really only ran because I was reasonably successful at it," he recalls.

He represented his high school with distinction and went on to run for the Ivanhoe Harriers in Athletics Victoria competitions, setting a best 200m time of 23.2 seconds. But in those days running never really captured Lamont's imagination and absorbed him the way it did others, and as the demands of starting a family took over, he took an extended break from the sport.

However in his early twenties, Lamont began to realise that his lifestyle was lacking any physical activity.

"As a teenager, I'd had asthma, and the problems of that started reoccurring in my early twenties."

Another influencing factor on Lamont's decision to return to running after a four year absence was his long term physical wellbeing.

"I've got a family history of coronary artery disease, so that was a big incentive for me."

Determined to improve his physical health and inspired by reading the writings of legendary coach, Percy Cerutti, Lamont decided to return to the sport as a distance runner. Little did he know it would be a decision which would have a long lasting and wonderful influence on his life. Almost immediately, Lamont discovered an enjoyment and an enthusiasm for running that wasn't there in his

Left: Competing in the Melbourne Half Marathon, in 2003.

Like so many athletes who start out in distance running purely to improve their fitness and general wellbeing, Lamont found that it went from being a hobby to an addiction.

days as a sprinter. And he was further motivated to persist with his new lifestyle choice on a daily basis, working as a registered nurse in the operating rooms of the Alfred Hospital in Prahan.

"I work in theatre, and a lot of the work I do is specifically with patients who are having open heart surgery. Just in day-to-day work, I see a lot of really diseased hearts, and I just think to myself, I'm going to keep running."

Lamont made the transition from sprinter to distance runner look easy and became an accomplished athlete on the roads. Preferring not to get back into the club scene, he made the fun runs, which were booming in the wake of Rob DeCastella's success, his focus. Running about 70km a week, around

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the hills of Diamond Valley, Lamont got his 10km road best down to an impressive 33 minutes as a 25-year-old. By the age of 27, he'd moved up to the half marathon with similar success and clocked 73 minutes for the distance.

Like so many athletes who start out in distance running purely to improve their fitness and general wellbeing, Lamont found that it went from being a hobby to an addiction.

"I became a little bit obsessive compulsive," he recalls.

Running even became a big enough passion to influence his choice of family holidays. Every January for twenty years, he would take his family to Wilson's Promontory, partly because it was a great spot for a break, but the area's magnificent running trails must have played a major part in keeping him coming back year after year.

"My favorite run was the Sealers Cove/Waterloo Bay circuit. It's just beautiful country, with the ocean and the bush."

After a while, not even the Melbourne winters could keep Lamont off the roads.

"I just put the hat, the long sleeves and the gloves on and off I go," he laughs.

"I usually get up first thing in the morning and run."

*Generally a motivated character,
Lamont's energy and enthusiasm for
running were almost thrown into overdrive
after watching the track and field action at
the Commonwealth Games.*

Sometimes, however, running too early in the morning along the St Kilda foreshore, a notorious Melbourne party district, can have its drawbacks. Lamont discovered this one morning when running just before sunrise. Not even the sound of his approaching footsteps could deter a young couple who were letting their passions run just a little bit too wild in clear public view.

It may have been an experience like this that drove Lamont to seek more tranquil surroundings for his Sunday morning run. Every Sunday morning in his twenties, Philip and a friend would run from Hurstbridge up through Arthurs Creek. It was a punishing, hilly run of about 25km, but the scenery and countryside were inspiring enough to make the hard work bearable. These runs would often provide Lamont with an opportunity to call on his nursing skills.

"Every time we'd stop for a drink, my mate would actually faint if he didn't keep walking and keep his venous retainer working. Often, to wake him up I'd have to lift his legs and get his blood pressure back to his head."

Nowadays, Lamont has lost a little bit of the

speed which helped him set quick times in his twenties. But his enthusiasm for the sport is as strong as ever.

"I just love running and the enjoyment it gives me."

Still running about 50km a week, Lamont is motivated by his own personal challenges.

Percy Cerutti's all conquering protégé, Herb Elliot, wrote about the invisible man (the ghost runner) that he'd imagine, right on his shoulder as he ran, to help push him to great heights. Lamont's version of the ghost runner comes in the form of an old steam train.

"The thing that I really get satisfaction from these days is beating Puffing Billy, each time I race him."

Every year Lamont takes part in the Great Train Race, a 13.2km event that snakes its way through the Dandenong Mountains, east of Melbourne, following the train line from Belgrave to Emerald Lake. As the runners start their journey, so does the great old steam train, Puffing Billy. The challenge for runners is to beat Puffing Billy to the end of the line, a journey which usually takes the train about 53 minutes. Lamont has a near faultless record.

"Currently the scoreboard reads Lamont seven, Puffing Billy one. The only time it's beaten me is when I pulled a calf half way through it"

Whether it's the thought of Puffing Billy bearing down on his shoulder, or whether it's just the sheer enjoyment he derives from running, something has driven Lamont to take on some colossal challenges during his twenty years as a runner.

In 1998 he completed a 10.5km run from the peak of Thredbo to Mt Kosciuszko and back again.

"The scenery and the countryside were just so inspiring that it drove me on. It was a tough but brilliant experience"

He has also completed a Melbourne Marathon, an experience which he admits scarred him for quite a while. Passing through 36km in 2 hours 36 minutes, Lamont put himself within reach of cracking the three hour barrier. But in the last six kilometers he discovered that the wall that marathon runners talk of is no myth.

"I could barely move towards the end of the race."

It took him 49 minutes to complete the last 6.2km. Nevertheless, he completed the event, but then vowed never to attempt the punishing race again.

Generally a motivated character, Lamont's energy and enthusiasm for running were almost thrown into overdrive after watching the track and field action at the Commonwealth Games, where he discovered a new inspiration to go with Cerutti and Decastella.



Above: Philip was a satisfied finisher after the 2003 Melbourne Half Marathon

"I just think Craig Mottram is such an inspiration, as a white Anglo Saxon running and competing against the Africans and flying the flag the way he is. I really don't think he gets the recognition he deserves."

"I was at his 5000m (at the Commonwealth Games) which was fantastic, but the way he handled his disappointment in the 1500m (which Lamont also watched from the stands) just showed so much class"

Philip Lamont will not be compared to Craig Mottram when Australian distance running enthusiasts debate who is the greatest we've ever produced, and nor did he ever set out to be mentioned in such conversations. Lamont has never measured himself on how he fares against others. For him, it's all about the thrill of achieving personal challenges, and he'll probably keep doing it for the rest of his life.

"I often joke with the doctors at work that one day I'll help fund their retirement because they'll have to replace my knees, and hips that I'll wear out from running."

But even if I have to get prosthetic joint replacements, they've assured me that I'll still be able to run."

This year Lamont will contest his fifth consecutive City to Surf, and, inspired by what he saw at the Commonwealth Games, believes he is on track to break his best time of 54.55. He also hopes to complete the Melbourne Half Marathon in under eighty five minutes. Whether he achieves his targets or not, one thing is for sure, Lamont will continue to set a great example for other runners to follow, with his commendable attitude.

RAYL