



# WORD from = the BIRD

BCRR MONTHLY NEWS

WWW.BCRR.ORG

February 2021

## Virtual Marathon IRL Success!



Christina Jones

On what would have been Marathon Sunday, January 17th, BCRR hosted a supported Houston Half and Full Marathon course for the club members who put their training to the test in a virtual event. Members endured a 6.5 mile loop 2 or 4 times to complete their 13.1 or 26.2 mile distance, respectively. Runners were supported by 2 aid stations thanks to **Fred Steves** and **Christina & Andrew Young**, with water, Gatorade, and snacks provided. Several members wore their official race bibs and BCRR paraphernalia to celebrate the occasion.

At the finish, beer was consumed and snacks were eaten in attempts to refuel the spent runners! Congrats to the many BCRR members who competed both in the BCRR supported event and



*In the predawn hours of Sunday, January 17, runners prepare to take on the challenge of a marathon, or half-marathon, in a BCRR supported event.*

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**Word from the Bird**

February 2021  
FREE

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Has your contact info changed?  
Send any updates to  
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# From the President

**Dear BCRR,**

I wanted to say just how amazed I am at the dedication, grit, and determination BCRR members had in completing the virtual Houston Half and Full Marathon! There were around 30 runners who participated in the BCRR supported event, and WOW! I have lost motivation to train, but clearly many of you haven't. Congratulations on completing 13.1 or 26.2 miles in 2021. Both are an impressive accomplishment.

Speaking of motivating reasons to run, BCRR's next virtual event is drawing near! Grab your Valentine and make a mad dash for the fastest 800m you've ever run! The *BCRR Valentine's Day 800m Relay* begins Sunday, February 7th and runs until February 14th. You can find more

details in your weekly email or the website. Results can be submitted on the [BCRR Website](#).

Although in person running events remain limited, or rather absent, the BCRR Board continues to work behind the scenes to keep the club "running."

I would like to formally announce the end of the current board's term in June of 2021. Although a banquet with an election will not be possible, we will find a



*Christina was elected president of BCRR during the summer of 2018 and joined a strong group of volunteers to help manage and support the club.*

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**REPORT YOUR RACE RESULTS**

We want to know what our members are doing on the roads and/or trails. Send all your results to us at [thatsjoesmail@yahoo.com](mailto:thatsjoesmail@yahoo.com) and we'll make sure they hit the next newsletter!

**ADVERTISING INFO**

How would you like to see your own ad in the Bayou City Road Runners Newsletter? For all personal or business advertising inquiries, please send an email to the Treasurer at [p\\_griffiths@bellsouth.net](mailto:p_griffiths@bellsouth.net).



## Get to Know Chuck Bracht



Mike Mangan

**Mike Mangan (MM):** Hi Chuck. Thanks for agreeing to be interviewed for the newsletter. I know you as a guy from Houston. Where are you originally from?

**Chuck Bracht (CB):** I was born in the Rio Grande Valley, Brownsville to be specific.

**MM:** What brought you to Houston?

**CB:** I attended Rice University, beginning

in 1965.

**MM:** When did you join BCRR?

**CB:** I think it was late 1994. I'd moved into my first Rice-area home on Bolsover in 1993 and BCRR's Valhalla runs were very convenient since I lived a block north of the campus.

**MM:** What was your reason for joining?

**CB:** I had run my first marathon in 1995 and wanted to find a place where I could do group runs on a regular basis.

**MM:** Have you done any of the foreign trips with BCRR?

**CB:** No, but I've done several US ski trips, and those were fun. My favorite was the trip to Steamboat Springs, a town I fell in love with.

**MM:** When I used to come to your BCRR pool parties, they were really fun. They must have been quite a bit of work to pull off. How did you manage it?

**CB:** **Cheryl Verlander** and I are organized that way. We love to entertain and we like people, so it's a labor of love.

**MM:** As I recall, you had quite a nice little car in your garage. What was it and why did you buy it?

**CB:** Still do; it's a 1996 Ferrari F355 Berlinetta, Ferrari red with tan interior. It's got about 11,000 miles

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## Prez letter (Continued from page 2)

way to hold a vote for a new board.

We will have several openings on the Board, so please reach out to me if you have any interest in supporting the club by serving on the Board.

Stay tuned for an updated list of position openings and role expectations. It has been a roller coaster of fun and adventures serving BCRR for the past 3 years as President and I appreciate the opportunity! I'm looking forward to what the next reigning president will bring to BCRR!



Happy Running!  
Christina

**Chuck Bracht** (Continued from page 3)

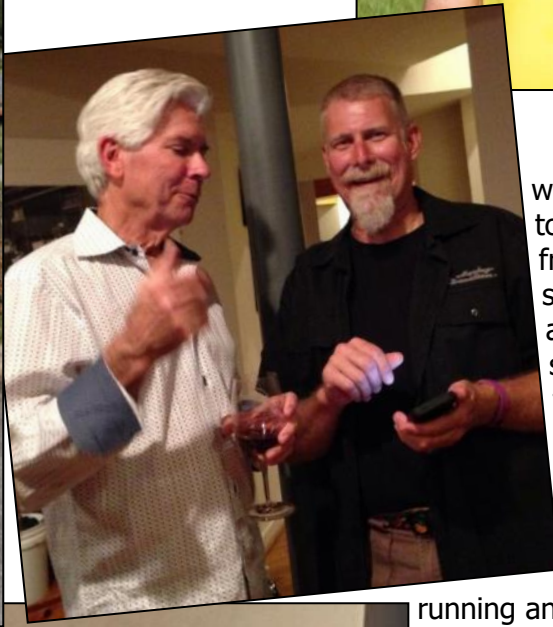
on it. I purchased it from its original owner in 2006. It will soon be an official antique.

**MM:** I know you as a friend, but not as a runner. Describe Chuck the runner.

**CB:** Not running much these days. it's embarrassing that my longish bike rides now are about the distance and pace of my marathons.

**MM:** How about marathons?

**CB:** Marathon days are behind me, but Cheryl and I love getting out on the streets, or the Rice trail, and getting some exercise.



**MM:** What got you running?

**CB:** Back in the mid-1980s, I was an overweight guy. Got up to 184, which on my small frame is not pretty. So, I started jogging to lose weight and get in shape. When I started, I could only go about two blocks (seriously).

**MM:** What was your first great running success?

**CB:** I'll never forget the thrill when I could finally jog one mile. In the process of running and other "stuff," I got down to 142 pounds (also not pretty) and now hang around 155 which I think is about right for me.

**MM:** So, what do you credit for your weight loss success?

**CB:** It's all about health and matching my caloric burn rate to my intake (not always easy); we like to cook and eat, right?

**MM:** When did you do your first marathon?

**CB:** With lots of help from my friend **Don Fizer** (RIP), I did my first *Chevron Houston Marathon* in 1995.

**MM:** How many marathons have you done?



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**Chuck Bracht** (Continued from page 4)

**CB:** I've done nine in all (seven Houstons) and my PR is 3:36 (1996 St George, UT).

**MM:** As I recall, you have a place in New Orleans. Tell me about that.

**CB:** We indeed have a place in the French Quarter. Cheryl's from New Orleans and both of my grandmothers were New Orleans natives. With that and our activities with Cheryl's alma mater, Tulane, we have lots of connections there.

**MM:** And races there?

**CB:** We have done the *Crescent City Classic* (CCC) 10K many



times. It's wonderful going through the streets of the city and, of course, the after party's pretty darned good. If BCRR ever wants to put a group together to run the CCC again (maybe 2022?) we'd love - OF COURSE - to host a function at our place!

**MM:** We really love what you have been doing for the post marathon party each year. How did you get involved in that and what keeps bringing you back?

**CB:** Before we got married, Cheryl used to host the post 30K party at her home. When I lived downtown, I hosted the 25K after party in the Hogg Palace Lofts. A few years after we got married, we started hosting the post-marathon party at our home in West University, then moved it to our current home. Now that **Sue Leone** and **Alan Svoboda** host the party, we



love to help out where we can. We and **Ivy Martino**, **Jim Knievel**, **Christina** and **Andrew Young** enjoy gathering together the day before with Sue and Alan to prep.

**MM:** And you like to try new food, right?

**CB:** In the last several years I've been into frying stuff, like cracklins and more recently fried chicken. The joy of being with friends - which we miss terribly with the pandemic - is great.

**MM:** Now, what should I really know about **Chuck Bracht**?

**CB:** Looking at life's inevitable trajectory, I gotta say I'm pretty happy with where I am. Still able to get out on the streets and the golf course, which is a gift. I love my family and enjoy being with people.

**MM:** And in the future?

**CB:** My goals are to balance involvement in my business (as long as my head works right) with the other things I love doing, like seeing more of the world, including more of the U.S. (with at least some of that in our Airstream trailer).

**MM:** Do you have anything additional you would like to add?

**CB:** A toast might sum it up... this is by **Jerome K. Jerome** from *Three Men in a Boat*: "Let your boat of life be light, packed with only what you need - a homely home and simple pleasures, one or two friends, worth the name, someone to love and someone to love you, a cat, a dog, and a pipe or two, enough to eat and enough to wear, and a little more than enough to drink; for thirst is a dangerous thing."

**MM:** It seems like that would be the perfect BCRR club toast! Thanks, Chuck.



## Virtually Celebrating Alex's 5K



David Piper

Interview with **Sian Evans** and **Kern Hankins** who participated remotely from Wales in *Alex's 5K*. (Edited for space and clarity.)

**Dave Piper (DP):** What was your motivation for participating in *Alex's 5K* this go around?

**Sian Evans (SE):** We wanted to carry on supporting *Alex's 5K*. We have participated in the race every year and think it is a worthwhile cause we can support while running.

**Kern Hankins (KH):** It was very easy to work a virtual run into our everyday activity and it was very user friendly in terms of having a long period of time to complete the run. Also we had experience with the race in the past and with BCRR. We love that the funds raised go to extremely needy organizations. Once you find a charitable cause like *Alex's 5K* you don't give up on it just because your circumstances have changed. We really appreciated the opportunity to be able to continue to contribute to this cause.

**DP:** You both won your respective age groups - which I suspect does not happen too frequently. Tell us about your races.

**SE:** That was great.

**KH:** We ran together on the same course, but not head-to-head.

**SE:** He killed my ass.

**KH:** We have done well in *Alex's 5K* in the past – one earning first place and a couple of second place finishes. We were able to pick a favorable course that was slightly downhill. It was about three miles away from our house and a tarmac road around a lake.

**SE:** It was a mixture of roads.

**KH:** We actually also ran a 5K on a track, but it was not as favorable a course.

**DP:** What has running in Wales been like during the COVID pandemic?

**SE:** We have been on strict lockdown for quite a while. You are only supposed to exercise from your house. We haven't run an actual race since a Parkrun last March. There have been several virtual races and one local trail run. And we participated virtually for BCRR in the relay last year. It was nice to have a goal and something to train for.

**KH:** Yes, the relay was fun.

**DP:** So the question on everyone's mind – how is Biggles?

**SE:** Biggles is great – he is sitting here right next to me.

**KH:** Biggles is in great shape. He lost about three pounds that he converted into muscle and is quite the running dog. He loves to run without a lead (leash) on the beach.

**DP:** Thanks and we hope to be able to see you both soon!



*Kern Hankins and Sian Evans (and Biggles) supporting Alex's 5K remotely.*



## Photobook

Supported Race *(Continued from page 1)*

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solo in other locations around Houston. Here's hoping next year brings a larger event, filled with group celebrations!





## CRAW – Circumpolar Race Around the World



Joel DuBois

The *Circumpolar Race Around the World* (CRAW) virtual contest will eventually encompass just over 30,000 miles or approximately 50,000 kilometers. It started September 1, 2020 and teams have two years to complete the adventure. Gold belt buckles will be provided to run/walk teams that finish in under 12 months, silver belt buckles to those that finish in under 16 months. My team's original goal was to get the silver buckles, but we are currently ahead of the pace needed to qualify for gold (we just need to stay healthy!!). Medals are provided at the end of each region, and these will reflect the entire route when we finish. A picture of the three received thus far is shown at right. It shows how they medals fit together. A case will be provided to hold them, but that picture will need to wait until we are further into the race and qualify to receive it. The following in italics, is a summary of the CRAW from the race director's team, revised to make it from my perspective. At the end, I will provide some details on where our team currently stands.

The run of a lifetime is underway, a run that will eventually completely circumnavigate the Earth. The real Earth. Going through real countries, on real roads. We can follow ourselves around the Globe on a route that will cover just over 30,000 miles. We will cross the greatest desert that we never knew existed and countless mountain ranges that we had never heard of. We will pass through tropical jungles, vast plains, and temperate forests. We will ride crowded ferries, and hop between landmasses on one of a fleet of Dornier X 1929 Air Boats. Now, this is not a trek that one person could accomplish in less than a lifetime, so we formed a relay team of 10 people, so that we can make this journey in between one and two years. We were issued a passport, visas have been expedited, and we are filling our passports with stamps of the various exotic countries through which we have traveled. This is not so much a race, as a journey, and an adventure.

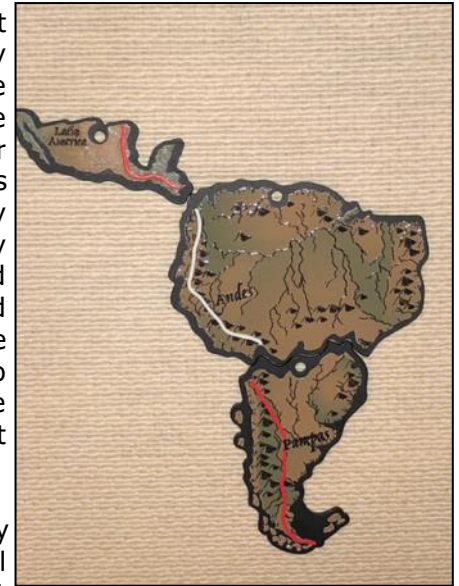
In school they taught us about directions all wrong. East, West, North, South. The four directions, as if they were all the same. But they are not the same at all. And our whole view of the earth is changed by the way they differ. If you go East, you go East forever, no matter how many times you pass the place you started. It never becomes West. But, if you go North, it only goes so far, and then you start going South. Then it eventually becomes North again. We treat the earth as if it had a top and a bottom, but no ends. We don't see it as a sphere, but as a tube.

Truth is, our planet is a ball from every direction. Because of our rather limited vision of the planet there are some things that miss our attention... Like the fact that the tip of South America is only separated from Tasmania by the great land mass of the Antarctic continent. Or that it is only a hop and a skip across the North Pole between the top of Norway and the top of Alaska.

We cannot run around the Earth in any meaningful manner because we give the earth a middle and call it the "Equator." It runs from East to West; or is it West to East? Little matter, because the Equator only passes through South America and Africa from side-to-side. There is hardly any land at all. There is a largely land route around the planet, but it is far to the North, creating a double issue of being only a small part of the actual circumference, and being so far North that there are hardly any roads! To hit the Equator at any point during the land passage would require traveling an entire continent to the South, and then back.

But what if we look at the earth in a whole new way? What if we lay that classic globe on its side, and make a new "equator" that passes through both North and South Poles? The race director likes this new Earth, with its circumpolar

(Continued on page 9)



*CRAW medals awarded for the first three regions completed.*





**CRAW** (Continued from page 8)

Equator. Because he was able to lay out a route around the world that is 80% on land!!!

He divided the planet into 12 Regions, so that we can complete an entire section in a relatively short time, and we get a medal for each region. When we have completed our journey, there will be a world puzzle into which your pieces will fit to show your complete journey around the earth. We began the trek at the US/Mexico border, and took on Latin America first, traveling down through Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, before taking a Ferry to Colombia to complete the first Region. From Colombia, we crossed the Mountains to travel down the Pacific coast through Ecuador and Peru into Chile to complete the Andes Region. Crossing the mountains back to Argentina to travel all the way to the tip of South America finishing the Pampas region by taking the Dornier to Antarctica. Antarctica was our longest continental region, crossing the South Pole on the way to boarding the Dornier for the flight to Tasmania. Antarctica was, unfortunately, the only continent where we were unable to use existing roads, however, the race director's team spared no expense in cutting a narrow track all the way across for us and our accompanying support team in tracked vehicles. (Thankfully, we ran in Antarctica during the southern hemisphere's summer season...). After running the length of Tasmania, we took the short hop to Australia, and are currently running straight across the center of the ancient land until we finish the Down Under Region with a flight to Timor. This initiates the Pacific Islands Region, as we will run the length of one island after another, taking ferries in between: East Nusa Tenggara, Komodo, West Nusa Tenggara, Lombok, Bali, Java, and Sumatra, before completing our Pacific Island Journey with a ferry ride to Singapore. From there we will journey up the Malay Peninsula and across Southeast Asia across Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar (Burma). After Southeast Asia we will travel all the way across India (and the inclusion of Bangladesh) to reach the Pakistan border. Due to tensions in the area, the race director has arranged for human smugglers to spirit us across the border into Pakistan during the dead of night, after which we will have high adventure crossing Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan (calling this region The Stans) to reach Eastern Europe in Russia. Our Eastern European tour will also include Ukraine, Belarus, and Estonia, before finishing with a trip across Finland and Sweden to reach the northernmost tip of Norway, ending in a remarkably short trip on the Dornier over the North Pole to reach the tip of Point Barrow, Alaska. They tried to arrange a "land" route across the North Pole, but sea ice being sea ice, they were unable to build a road that would stay in place. Once in Alaska, we begin the long and arduous trip across the Great North region of Alaska and Canada. Trust me, it is far, and the most sparsely populated part of the voyage excepting Antarctica! The circuit is completed with a straight shot across the Lower 48 back to our starting point on the Mexico border. (If you want to find out more about this race, the website is at [www.craw.racing](http://www.craw.racing)).

The race director's team has put together travel guides for each of the regions we are running through. These write-ups and pictures provide a great way to help visualize the routes, even though the race is only virtual. Race



*Amy and Joel after Amy finished her Full and completed her Triple.*

members can add pictures and comments from personal experience in any of these countries or regions.

As of the end of January, our team, *Bayou City Voyagers*, has completed the first four regions (Latin America, Andes, Pampas and Antarctica) and are roughly halfway through Region 5 (Australia) having amassed over 13,300 miles of running/walking since the start on September 1, averaging just under 90 miles per day (or 9 miles per day per person). This puts us in roughly 20th place out of approximately 200 teams in the Running/Walking category (there is also a Multisport category that includes cycling, swimming, rowing, etc.). I say "roughly 20th place" because it depends on exactly who has input what days' miles at any given time.



*Sam and Andrew celebrating after setting their Half Marathon PRs.*

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# CRAW (Continued from page 9)



Robin and Lee after running their Half.

Half the first weekend, then ran with Amy for her Full the following weekend. Vince, after running 15 straight Houston Marathons, was a slog, didn't run any of the virtual events (but has been averaging around 14 miles a day for the team – we think he drives them... J). Several of us have signed up to run the Brazos Bend 50k/50 Miler in early April, a real live, in-person event.

From my perspective, this has been a great incentive to get out and put in miles. I typically run 4 days a week and walk the other three, logging just shy of 1,560 miles in the 5 months since it began, so am averaging just over 10 miles per day, a significant increase over my previous mileage. It gets me out of the house and has helped keep Sharon (my wife) from committing murder - thus far.... Most, if not all, team members have similar stories to tell. More to come in future newsletters.



Ragan (left) and Robin with Lily, who is not a member of our CRAW team, but ran the Half with Ragan.



Vince, during an airport run.



Tracey (center) with friend Graciela who ran 1st 15 miles with her & husband Don who ran the last 12 with her.

Gentine (left) after running her unofficial Half with friends.





## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
<b>Current</b>	All public areas	For health and safety most events canceled or gone virtual.
<b>Mondays</b>	Memorial Park	Mello Monday casual run
<b>Wednesdays</b>	Rice University/First Christian Church	Wednesday night run
<b>Fridays</b>	Online event	Watch for Friday occasional virtual happy hours on Zoom
<b>Sundays</b>	Memorial Park Tennis Center	Sunday morning long run through River Oaks
<b>February</b>	Houston, TX	HARRA's Houston Black Historical Landmark Challenge
<b>2/7-2/14</b>	Virtual Event	BCRR Virtual Valentine's Couple's Relay
<b>2/12-2/21</b>	Virtual Event	8K Law Week Fun Run*
<b>3/27</b>	Virtual Event	Bayou City Classic 10k Race*

\*Official HARRA race series event.



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