

Waterman continues father's running legacy

MIDDLETOWN – Bob Waterman was 2 months old when he got the chicken pox. It produced a high fever, which brought a seizure that affected speech and coordination and motor functions. Brain damage left delays. He didn't walk until 3 years old.

"It took me a while to get going," Bob was saying. "I never thought about running. I was the one who was always pushed down and bullied."

He was standing on the Middletown High School football field 15 yards from the finish line of his "25th or 26th" running of this great road race. It was before 9 on Sunday morning and there wasn't another place on the planet that Bob Waterman would



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have chosen to be than the Crystal Run Healthcare Classic 10K through the streets of Middletown.

You remember Herbie Waterman? He was one of the faces of this event for decades, first the Orange Classic, then The Classic after the Times Herald-Record stopped as the major sponsor in 2005. Crystal Run has helped the race maintain a special glow in the running community, and folks who wouldn't miss this event for anything, folks such as Bob Waterman, have made sure it flows sweetly into a 37th running.

Bob is Herbie's kid, only he's not a kid anymore. He's 50. Took him a while to get going, then he proceeded to make up for lost time. He spent five years in the Navy, from ages 18-23. He accrued bonus mileage in the form of six marathons and who-knows-how-many-footsteps without the clock running, miles spent cajoling and coaxing and inspiring others.

Just like his dad.

Herbie passed away in 2010 at age 75 after battling a brain tumor. He was a guy who, as his wife said, "didn't have an enemy in the world." And not just that, Herbie humbly shared the greatest gift known



Bob Waterman ran the Crystal Run Healthcare Classic 10K again on Sunday, by his estimation the 25th or 26th time he's run the event and its predecessor, the Orange Classic. Waterman, of Middletown, is constantly reminded of all the goodness spread by his father, Herbie, a longtime runner who passed away in 2010, shown finishing one of the many Classics he ran. [KEVIN GLEASON/TIMES HERALD-RECORD]

to mankind: He made a difference in peoples' lives. There's a reason it's called "The Herbie Waterman Orange Runner's Club 5K Winter Series" in tribute to the longtime club member. Herbie was a friend to everyone. He gravitated toward those who might not look or sound or act like the populace. Next thing you knew Herbie had them running crazy miles and sprinting from their cocoon.

And boy did he love this race. Herbie's very first race was the inaugural Orange Classic in 1981.

Bob started running seriously

in 2000. His dad got him to the track workouts and Bob's times started to drastically improve. In 2002 they finished neck-in-neck at the Orange Classic. "We were right there next to each other to the finish line," Bob said. "That was something."

Bob saw his father do marathons, 28 in all, so Bob started the grueling process of training for and finishing 26.2-milers. He saw his father dedicate himself to volunteer work, so Bob started to volunteer.

"I have a hard legacy to live up to," Bob was saying. "Running, I

think it helped me a little bit."

Herbie is always on Bob's mind during road work, but especially in this race, Herbie's town. When the gun went off at 7:30, amid a picture-perfect running day of 50 degrees, no humidity, blue skies and soft sun, Bob thought of all the joy his dad got from running.

"How he always had to have fun," Bob said. "The (finishing) time was only a part of it. He'd help others; he'd keep good thoughts. That was always his thing – he enjoyed it. His saying was, 'If you can't enjoy yourself

running, it's not worth it.' "

That could have been Herbie's saying for any aspect of life. On Sunday, Bob fought off a bum back that messed with his left leg. Herbie's kid wasn't complaining, though. It might take him a while to get going sometimes. But he finished another race with the finish line nowhere in sight.

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