

RUNNER'S PROFILE

by Joe Howell

If your running group is anything like mine, the discussion topics can be quite diverse, but there seem to be a few recurring themes. In the noontime, East Beach crowd, there are frequently trivia questions, often with a sports or local twist. Everyone in the group was stumped by the following: Name the former rock 'n' roll superstar who owns a local restaurant and turns in some good (and sometimes even great) 5K race times.

Well, the test of a good trivia question is when you give everyone the answer and they respond "oh yeah, I knew that". In this case, the answer--Alan Gratzer--was met with "so who in the world is Alan Gratzer?"

As the following profile indicates, Alan was the drummer for R.E.O. Speedwagon (as well as its founder and a co-producer of the band's albums) for over 20 years. Alan can now be seen as the friendly owner/host/everything else at Mona Lisa Cafe, located at Paseo Nuevo. Alan and Mona Lisa Cafe support the local running community not only by feeding us well, but also by supporting many local events and employing local running phenom Misty Allen.

Say hello to Alan when you recognize him at one of the upcoming Nite Moves races or stop by for a great meal at Mona Lisa Cafe. You could comment that you loved his drum solo on the fifth cut of the second side of his eighth album--watch him try to figure that one out.

Basic Information

Name: Alan Gratzer

Age: 48

Employment/Family: Owner, with my wife Nancy, of Mona Lisa Cafe. Former drummer, founder and co-producer of R.E.O. Speedwagon for 21 years and 16 albums. Married for 21 years with three teenage children, Abby, Ryan and Mandy.

Other Sports/Interests: My favorite sports to watch and play are basketball, golf and baseball. I try to play golf once a week (walking and carrying my own bag of course). I love spending time with my family, and I also enjoy home improvement projects. I just put wood floors in my house. Wielding a hammer just comes naturally after all those years of pounding drums.

Running Highlights

Favorite Distance & PR at same: 5K - 16:28 - 1985

Best Race and Why: West Hollywood 10K 1986. Just one of those races where I felt really prepared and really "light".

Worst Race and Why: Steve Sax 5K, Pierce College 1987. The race had an early severe uphill and I tried to keep up with the pack early and paid for it later. I think I ran 17:50, but I thought I was going to die afterward.

Average Weekly Mileage (last 12 months): 20 miles

Favorite Local Race: Nite Moves. Beautiful setting with the sailboats racing, the sunset, the food, the music, the camaraderie.

Goals (Realistic) for 1997: Run 5 or 6 days a week. Stay in reasonably good shape for a middle-aged wanna be, pseudo athlete and run some decent Nite Moves races this summer.

Goals (Wildly Optimistic) before Year 2000: Increase my weekly mileage to get a better base and to beat Joe Howell in a race! (No swimming involved.)

Additional Information

Why I Run: I don't drink coffee in the morning and rolling out of bed and going on a brisk run is very relaxing and gives me energy for the rest of the day. It's a good time for introspection and planning the day and it's just good for my body and soul.



"Alan Gratzer—famous drummer"

My Runner Hero & Why: Steve Prefontaine, because he set records at so many distances and still maintained his unique individuality and was a bit of a rebel. Also Misty Allen, because I admire her personal dedication and love of running.

Personal Training Tips: Your run should be something to look forward to. I always try to start slow as a warm up so that I have enough energy to almost sprint at the end.

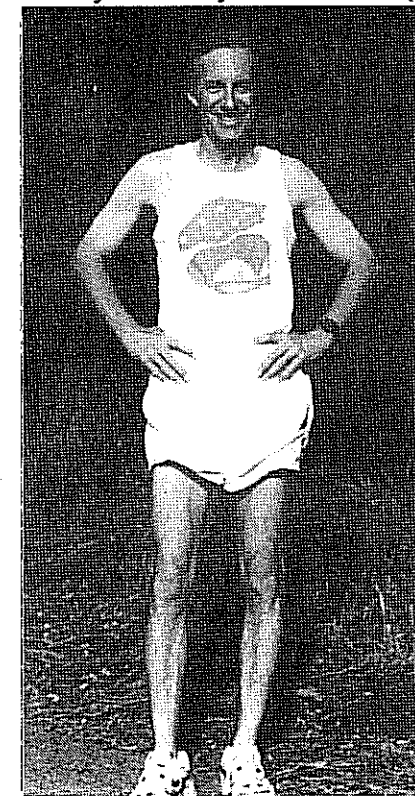
I love runners who ...: will at least wave back or say hi as you pass.

I hate runners who...: only talk about running (except for my hero Misty Allen and she just can't stop talking!).

Suggestions for local races: Throw some 8Ks back into the Nite Moves for a little variety.

My views on ...: Running. Being long and lean, no one ever pointed out to me in my youth that I have a good distance runner's body. Encourage children that it's a great way to stay in shape mentally and physically. The later years when I was in R.E.O. and finally started running, it was a true awakening, because I was really seeing all the cities I'd been in 10 or 20 times and not just the hotel, airport and arena. Running is a great way to explore.

Quote: "Come on down to Mona Lisa Cafe for great food in a beautiful atmosphere and you may even have Misty Allen as your waitress!" (Blatant Plug)



"Alan Gratzer—not so famous runner"

THE FINISH LINE - L.A.'s NEXT TOURIST ATTRACTION

by Chuck Trunks

What's so great about the 'City of Angels?' Come on, get real. Aside from all the natural disasters that plague this city, we also have to contend with Angelenos who riot with each other, who shoot at each other as we drive along our freeways and those more creative Angelenos who continue to keep L.A. in the national spotlight with one heinous crime after another. But in L.A.'s defense, I don't think things are any better elsewhere. Several years ago, while strolling through City Hall in the 'City of Brotherly Love,' I was mugged for my jacket. Well, maybe 'Lipstick City' ain't so bad after all!

It's been almost 10 years since I drove my truck up and over the San Gabriel Mountains. Since then, I've spent plenty of weekends exploring and learning about the many diverse cultures that define this sprawling western metropolis. Benefiting from these excursions are family and friends, who travel from cold, wet, cloudy cities to visit me and get a quick tour of T.V.'s illustrious 'Tinsel Town.' Now that I've run this year's L.A. Marathon, I no longer can speak with conviction when I recommend the Sunset Strip, Dodger Stadium, Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade, Venice Beach or UCLA's Westwood District as good places to learn about us sun-drenched, wave-riding Angelenos. Instead, if I could have it my way, I'd send them to the finish line of the L.A. Marathon!

You'd think that after almost a decade of Laker games, beach path bike rides from the Santa Monica Pier to Redondo Beach, Saturday afternoon lunches in Chinatown and UCLA-USC gridiron rivalries, I would have at least bumped into the true flavor of the cultural soup that defines our unique city. Encountering thousands of supportive and cheering Angelenos along the 26.2 mile course is a good way to learn about L.A. but that's not what this story is about. This is a story about the volunteers I encountered as I crossed that glorious finish line at Figueroa and 5th streets in downtown L.A. last March.

With my head down and legs pumping towards the finish line scaffolding, everything around me seems so slow and unreal. I can hear the roar of the massive crowd clapping and shouting after loved ones as they run beside me with new found vigor. I, on the other hand, can only concentrate on waiting