

Foreword

My journey to being an athlete at Chico High School started from a different location than almost every other Chico High runner in *Toe the Mark*. I did not attend Chico Junior High School.

The journey began at Sierra View Elementary School, with stops at Bidwell Junior High School, and Pleasant Valley High School.

We did the Presidential Fitness Test in elementary school. I wasn't very good at the 50-yard dash, but discovered an ability to push hard over the longer haul in the 600-yard run.

I was on the track team at Bidwell Junior High in 9th grade. My event was the 1320-yard run, the longest offered in junior high. Such an odd distance!

Fast forward to 10th grade at Pleasant Valley High School. At the beginning of the track season in 1972, it was determined by the coaches that I needed a haircut in order to be a member of the track team (some sort of grooming code that I did not understand). I did not cut my hair, so I was removed from the team.

As a 16-year-old, being cut from a "no cut sport" was a very unpleasant and confusing experience, so much so that I transferred to Chico High School for my junior year in the fall of 1972. That was when I met my new coach, Chuck Sheley. Luckily for all of us, Chuck knew that the length of a runner's hair was not a reflection of the runner's character or ability.

Chuck is one of the most prepared and detail-oriented coaches I have ever met. He asked his athletes to trust him, to be disciplined, and to be dedicated to the team above and beyond individual goals. Chuck would not let us veer off path and held everyone accountable. In the moment, being held accountable by Chuck could feel harsh, but in hindsight, his manner was a blend of tough love, compassion, and truly caring about all of us.

I have been fortunate to be a successful high school coach. My success doesn't stem from a unique coaching philosophy or a distinctive training

plan that I created. My coaching is a product of the incredible influence and impact my coaches had on me and all of the athletes they taught and trained. My coaching roots are born from the seeds planted and nurtured by my coaches.

In *Toe the Mark*, David Bruhn describes in vivid detail the development, growth, and success of the running programs at Chico Junior High and Chico High under the guidance of Chuck Sheley. In the book's preface, David acknowledges the Chico Aqua Jets swim team's contributions to cross-over athletes who became part of "Charlie's Angels" along with the accomplishments of other Chico swimmers who were successful at national and international levels. The Aqua Jets were coached by Chico State's Ernie Maglischo. I was fortunate to be a member of the team and swam side by side with many of the swimmers David mentions. I owe much of my success to the fact that I was mentored at a young age by these two great coaches, Sheley and Maglischo, in the small town of Chico, CA. The book also tells great stories about Chico State runners, Gene Meyers and Kim Ellison. Both men coached me at Butte College and I am grateful to them for sharing their wisdom and experiences.

Like a family tree, a coaching tree shows the relationship between coaches. The term coaching tree can also refer to any idea or set of ideas originated by an individual or group. In both senses, I am a descendent of coaches Sheley, Maglischo, Meyers, and Ellison. Other younger branches on the tree include long time coaches Doug Avrit (Calaveras), Seth Roberts (Paradise), and Bobby Hastings (Las Plumas). Davis High alum, Drew Petersen, now coaches at UC Davis. My children, Kaitlin and Brendan, have developed thriving online coaching businesses. I firmly believe that a healthy portion of Chuck Sheley's coaching DNA lives on in their coaching today.

In recent correspondence with Chico High grad, Kurt Graves, we acknowledged how lucky we all are to be able to call Chuck Sheley "our coach." Those two words are magical!

David Bruhn has woven a beautiful fabric, full of detail and richness in *Toe the Mark*. I trust you will enjoy traveling back to those enchanted running times in the 70s.

Bill Gregg (Chico High Class of '74)