

THE LAST WORD

We lived for a period of time when I was young in housing projects in St. Louis. I saw a lot of things growing up that, if given the opportunity, I would have changed. And I guess you could say that I have spent the better part of my life, as far as volunteer activities, trying to change those things. For example, I co-founded the National Black Marathoners' Association in part because I felt it was important to promote a healthy lifestyle, through walking and running, within the black community.

Right now we have over 500 members, and new people are joining virtually every day. In five years, I would like to have 2,000 to 3,000 members. I envision us going to a race wearing our red jerseys and black shorts and just seeing a sea of red going along the course. I want us to inspire other blacks—children as well as adults. I want them to see that it's all right to go ahead and run and that your athletic career doesn't end when you get out of high school or college. When I was in high school, I ran cross country as well as track and I played soccer for four seasons. So that really perked my interest in running. Compared to other sports, it was inexpensive, and it was also a lifetime sport. As of today, I've completed 88 marathons.

At the time I started trying to complete marathons on all seven continents, I didn't realize that no blacks had accomplished this goal. I wanted to prove three points by completing the 7C goal. I wanted to: Show black youths that you can have dreams and aspirations to move from poverty to exploring faraway lands; show black adults, regardless of their age, that you can maintain a healthy lifestyle as you get older—I was 52 years old when I completed this goal; and I wanted to dispel the myth that CPAs, accountants and IT professionals are geeky, nonathletic homebodies.

My favorite race was the Great Wall Marathon in China. You're running on a piece of history. That was the one thing about running a lot of the international marathons—it was just like you were living in a *National Geographic* special. At times

it's like trying to describe color to a blind person. No matter how many photos I took during the races or at the different locations, it's really hard to get the real feeling of being there.

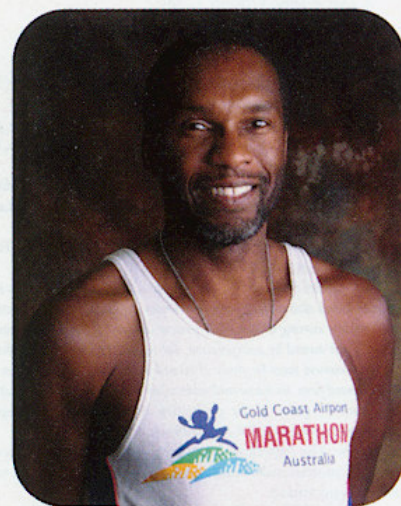
Over the years I've found myself borrowing more from the skills I've learned in long-distance

running to make projects successful. For example, with long-distance running, especially when you get into marathon running, you set specific goals. A lot of marathoners are thrill seekers, but before we do something, we acknowledge what the risk is. We start putting plans in place to mitigate that risk. I try to make sure that people working on a project are comfortably pacing themselves and that we have checkpoints along the way in a project where people will stop, catch their breath, take a look at where they've been and how far they've come and how much farther they have to go.

I've worked in information technology for about 30 years now. When I first started off, a lot of the IT departments reported up through finance. I found myself over the years going to a lot of meetings, and the one recurring statement I heard was that people in IT just didn't understand accounting. We were managing some of the larger budgets in corporations, but we didn't have an idea of how to go about managing money. So around 1990, I returned to college part time in the evenings.

Since I got my master's in accounting and passed the CPA exam, I have never led or worked on an unsuccessful project. Had I not become a CPA, I don't feel I would have been able to appreciate the business side of organizations. I think I would have just continued to look at things in terms of bits and bytes.

—As told to Kim Nilsen



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Reed snapped these photos while in Kenya and Antarctica to run marathons.