

Seasonings generally don't go bad, but they do lose their potency.



LARRY MAYER/Gazette Staff

Members of the Yellowstone Rim Runners club look over historic photographs from the club's history during a recent gathering at Montana State University-Billings. From left are Dave Coppock, Kate Novakovich, Dave Omen, Vince Grewe, Cheryl Hoover, Sue Johnston and Ryan Grubb.

MILES OF MEMORIES

Yellowstone Rim Runners celebrate 25th anniversary

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A quarter of a century ago, thousands of teenage girls wore leg warmers while listening to Michael Jackson's "Thriller" album. Guys with mullets were considered cool.

And somewhere in Billings, Montana, Dave Coppock, Debbie Magilke and Dave Omen were probably running.

"This was during the running boom that started in '78 and '79," said Coppock. "There were running groups all over the state — 'Big Sky Wind

■ In it for the long run: When regular people attempt marathons, 3C

Drinkers' and 'Rocky Mountain Road Runners.' All kinds of groups of people were running in town, and finally someone thought of having a club."

The Yellowstone Rim Runners started with about a dozen members who held their first meeting at St. Vincent Healthcare in

the fall of 1981.

Coppock, a member since the group's origin, said the first run of the Yellowstone Rim Runners was a "Turkey Trot" in November of 1981.

The following year, group members began the process of filling out paperwork through the state of Montana to become an official club.

"We wanted to be able to put on races, and we needed to be nonprofit to be tax exempt," explained Coppock. "That meant the money we made from the races could then go back to the club."

The Yellowstone Rim Runners received its status in spring of 1982, and its members haven't looked back — until now.

On Saturday, a 25th anniversary event, which will include dinner, awards and a video and slideshow presentation, is being held at North Park.

Longtime Rim Runner Kate Novakovich said all past and present

members, as well as the community, may attend.

Recently, several members found great pleasure in rooting through old race photographs.

"It's just fun to look through all that," said Ryan Grubb. "We have always said we are really an eating club with a running disorder."

In the 80s, Coppock remembers there were running races almost every weekend between May and September, somewhere within 100 miles of Billings. The events, and the gatherings afterwards, were usually very social atmospheres. And, since so many of the runs were sponsored by beer companies, there was plenty of brew to go around.

"It was always a real social gathering," Coppock said. "Someone would always have a big barbeque at their house after the races."

As the Rim Runners evolved, the members tried to make running more of a year-round sport, hosting races such as the "Jingle Jog" in December, the



"Froze Nose" in January and the "Red Dress Run" in February.

These days, Coppock thinks some public interest has been lost in competitive road races.

"Sometimes it seems like the people who started doing this in their 20s and 30s are the same ones doing it now in their 40s and 50s," he said.

Yet numbers for the Montana Women's Run, an ever-expanding event which is also 25 years old, and the Montana Marathon increase every year.

"I think there are a lot more whole families running the Montana Marathon together," said Rim Runner Sue Johnston. "And I think

Details

A 25th anniversary party for the Yellowstone Rim Runners will be held Saturday at 6 p.m. at North Park Recreation Center. Events include dinner, awards for 25-year members, a video presentation of the Montana Marathon and a slide show.

The community and all Rim Runners, past and present, are welcome to attend.

For more information, contact Rim Runner president Brad Coutant at 248-8765, or by e-mailing brad.coutant@mcn.net.

people do a lot more cross training now. They aren't just running. They realize they need to be healthier, and they are skiing and dancing and doing Pilates."

Yellowstone Rim Runner member numbers are up as well — to about 400.

"When runners get together, it doesn't matter if they are rich or poor," said 25-year Rim Runner Magilke. "There's no equipment involved with running. It's not like biking where you get a bike, then you have to get a more expensive bike and then another."

"You discover yourself in your own unique way when you start running. You'll be surprised where your legs will take you."

The Yellowstone Rim Runners hold club runs on several days of the week for runners of all levels. The run distances and times are listed at www.rimrunners.org.

Top photo, Dave Coppock heads out for a race in 1981. Second from top, Yellowstone Rim Runners take advantage of nice weather and Lake Elmo as they celebrate during a Halloween race early on. Second from bottom, original member Dave French during a practice run. Bottom photo, original member Debbie Magilke hits the streets of Billings during the club's Fun Run in 1982.

Courtesy photos