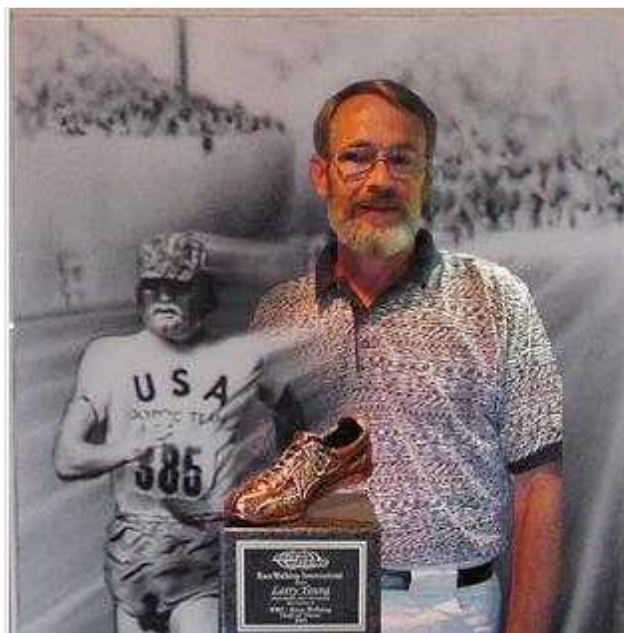


**CONGRATULATIONS TO LARRY YOUNG, AMERICAN CENTURION, ON HIS INDUCTION
INTO THE 2002 USA TRACK AND FIELD HALL OF FAME.**



Larry Young was one of four 2002 inductees into the National Track & Field Hall of Fame, USA Track & Field. But who is Larry Young, you might ask. Those of us with long memories will have no trouble answering that one. He is the best performed USA walker of all time, having two Olympic bronze medals as follows

1968 Olympic 50 km walk	Mexico City	3 rd	4:31:55
1972 Olympic 50 km walk	Munich	3 rd	4:00:46



1968 Olympic 50km podium: Antal Kiss of Hungary, Christoph Hohne of East Germany and Larry Young

But these 2 wonderful international performances were just the icing on the top of the cake for Larry whose other achievements included

- winning 30 American national titles
- winning 8 U.S. crowns at 50 kilometers and never losing a national championship race at that distance
- breaking the American 50 km record
- winning eight national titles at various distances in 1972
- winning the 1967 and 1971 Pan American Games championships at 50 kilometers
- representing the U.S. in international competition eight times

- winning the 1971 American Centurions 100 mile event in an American record of 18:07:12. This record still stands.

Larry, born Feb. 10, 1943, was the last American walker to win an Olympic medal and he had a long career at the top of racewalking from the mid sixties till the mid seventies.

As his international racewalking career was coming to and end, Larry went back to study and graduated in 1976 with an arts degree from Columbia College, Missouri. His last international walk was at the 1976 IAAF World 50 km championship at Malmo in Sweden. On that occasion, he finished 21st in 4:16:07, just ahead of Willi Sawall (22nd) and me (23rd). I still remember his effortless style and the way he made racewalking look so easy.

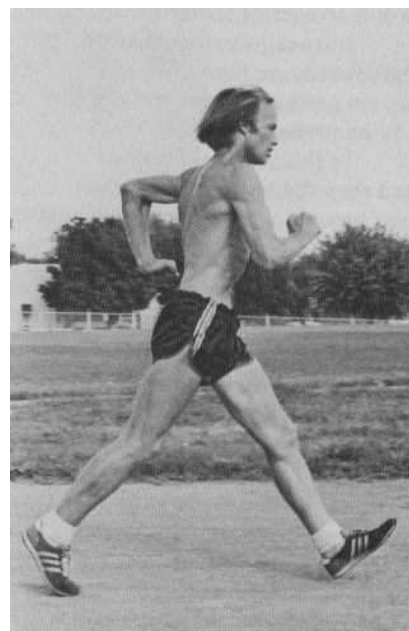
Since then, he has been a full-time artist (for the last 25 years) and has placed over 50 monumental outdoor sculptures nationally and abroad. He owns and operates Larry Young Sculpture, a 6,000 square foot foundry in Columbia, where he personally creates and produces most of his work. His bronze sculptures have appeared all over the United States. He currently is working on a commission for a 33-foot-tall stainless steel sculpture titled "hope for Life" for the Stowers Institute for Medical Research in Kansas City. Columbia College is home to one of his bronze sculptures and there are several other pieces throughout the city of Columbia. You can get a very good feel for his work by visiting <http://www.youngsculpture.com/>.



Hope by Larry Young

But perhaps the thing most talked about even now is Larry's racewalking style which was as close as you can get to perfect. The following comments from a couple of fellow Americans sums up Larry's style and his contribution to the sport.

Just thought I would put up a few more thoughts about Larry on the occasion of his induction into the Hall of Fame. I would suggest that the national coaching staff try to dig up some footage of Larry during some of his memorable performances (or any performance, for that matter!). Show these films to our elite walkers and watch their mouths drop! No one, in my opinion, either American or from overseas, was able to match the perfection of technique that this man achieved during his competitive career. It's an overworked phrase, but he was truly "poetry in motion." The economy of style made it look so easy and relaxed, you couldn't believe he was actually moving as fast as he was. Some walkers are dynamic powerhouses when confronted with a tough uphill. But Mr. Young was, hands down, the most amazing walker on downhills that I have ever witnessed. And he could motor downhill with the same smooth efficiency he displayed on the flats and ascents, without ever arousing the attention of the judges. No one could keep up with him (legally, at least!). That is some skill! He didn't attack the AAU/TAC yearly



competitive race calendar with the same aggressiveness for acquiring championship titles that Ron Laird did, but he still won 30 individual races. He probably could have won nearly twice that many if he had elected to! And he even won a national title at 100 miles, setting a record that still stands! As you know, Larry is a sculptor and artist of some accomplishment as well. To my mind, he was the first world-class race walker to approach our sport as an art form. His racing was an expression of his artistic soul and fervor. We won't soon see his like again! Heartiest congratulations, Larry! Your election is a vindication for all of us.

And again...

Perhaps some folks have forgotten the brouhaha over Larry's decision to double in both the 20 and 50 in Munich in 1972. Some people in high places thought that he should put all his eggs in one basket and concentrate exclusively on the longer race, his specialty. The motive of these naysayers was to allow another walker to be placed on the track and field squad. But Larry stuck to his guns, saying that he thought he could be competitive in the 20. His unheralded 10th place finish in 1:30:10 was quite amazing and a foreboding of his fabulous performance in the 50 a few days later. Larry turned in a repeat of his bronze medal achievement in Mexico City with a 4:00:46. I remember watching it unfold on ABC and jumping up and down in front of the TV set. West German Bernd Kannenberg and Russian Venyamin Soldatenko had both finished under 4 hours and, of course, Larry just missed. The results of this race were a mindblower at the time. East German great Christophe Hohne had set the standards in the late 60's and early 70's with his world-best races in the sub-4:10 area, edging closer and closer to the magic 4-hour mark. But the Munich race was a barrier buster and Larry Young had replaced Ron Laird as my hero!

Larry is mentioned in many books and many websites and the following extract is from a book called '**Aerobic Walking**' by **Casey Meyers**, published in USA in 1987. Chapter 9 of that book was concerned with his American Centurion walk in 1971. (The American Centurions were founded by the Columbia Track Club in 1967. From that year onwards, they held an annual 100 mile / 24 hour walk to give Americans the chance to become a Centurion.)

In its first year, 1967, a quiet sixty-year-old lumberman from Kalispell, Montana, named Larry O'Neil came to Columbia and walked the "100" in 19 hours 24 minutes and 34 seconds. This was an American outdoor record for the distance that stood for eleven years. O'Neil averaged a mile every 11.6 minutes. They grow them tough in Montana, because O'Neil completed six "100"s. The last was ten years later at the age of seventy, in 21 hours 55 minutes and 23 seconds. That was averaging just over 13 minutes per mile. At seventy, O'Neil slowed down a little, but how many people can walk even one mile at a 13-minute pace, let alone a hundred miles?

In 1971, a cloudburst left three inches of water on the track, and the event was moved to a 220 yard indoor track. O'Neil's outdoor record would have surely fallen that year if it hadn't rained. Our 50K Olympic medalist, twenty-eight-year-old Larry Young, who was at his prime and preparing for the 1972 Olympics at Munich, entered the race. He set an American indoor record of 18 hours 7 minutes and 12 seconds that still stands. O'Neil's outdoor record remained intact. Young said he had never experienced any physical challenge equal to the "100" in his entire racewalking career. Over such an extended period of time, it requires enormous mental concentration and courage to force burning shins and throbbing muscles to keep moving in spite of the pain.

Larry became American C6 with this walk. **Chris Clegg** (Aust C11) became American C7, finishing behind Larry.

The September 1971 issue of the Ohio Racewalker reported the occasion as follows, following a report on the National 30Km which had been won by Larry Young in 2:25:40).

Twelve days later, On September in Columbia, Mo., Young started his first race over 50 Km. Eighteen hours, seven minutes, and 12 seconds later he had taken 77:40 off of Larry O'Neil's American record in this fifth annual edition of the Columbia madness (100 miles). As a matter of fact, this was even madder than usual and the circumstances will probably prevent official recognition of the record. Because of an all-day torrential downpour, the race was moved indoors to a 220-yard dirt track.

Young's performance was just slightly fantastic for a guy in his first try at this sort of tng. After going through 50 miles in 8:56:47, which would have left him just over a minute back of Elliott Denman in last spring's 50 miler, he slowed to miles in the 11-minute range for the next 46 miles. Then, apparently tiring of the boredom, he finished with miles in 9:40, 9:41, 7:59, and 7:50!!!! All this with

no opposition and only one other finisher, that being Centurion Chris Clegg, who turned in a 22:46:14 after passing through 50 in 10:31:30. . . Of 31 starters, Dave Eidahl got to 72 miles and Bob Chapin to 70, with 14 others going 50 or more. Larry O'Neill, who has finished this grind three times (with a best of 1924:34), plus an indoor 100-miler in Los Angeles, had picked up some bad blisters in the Black Diamond 30 Km and had to drop out of this one at 50 miles.

We congratulate Larry Young on his wonderful achievements both in racewalking and in life.

Tim Erickson
2002 - last updated 2014

The following article was published in December 2010 and sheds further light on this fantastic athlete.

Larry Young - Considering a unique U.S. Olympic medalist, by Larry Eder

Larry Young is the confluence of creative energy and athletic discipline. The only U.S. athlete to medal in the Olympic race walk, Young did it twice, in 1968 and 1972, over 50,000 meters, or 50k. The 50k race walk, which is 31.6 miles for those who still do not understand metric distances, is the longest and most arduous event on the Olympic schedule. Like cross country skiers, race walkers push themselves to exhaustion, over 3 1/2-4 hours, while having to follow the arcane technique of their event. Someone once equated race walking to the act of whispering while running for several hours.

Young was great at the distance, in 1972, added the 20k to his Olympic racing regimen. The man now makes his living as a well respected sculpture, (see Larry Young Sculpture). I remember Kenny Moore noting that he could write papers on his 30 mile runs. For myself, I worked on my paintings on weekly 20 milers, and would then go into the studio and paint all day. I was always curious if Mr. Young had that creative experience?

In researching Mr. Young, I also found out that the guy race walked 100 miles in 18:07:12. Now that is amazing! Larry Young is in the USATF Hall of Fame.

Larry Young is a unique person in U.S. Olympic history. He is the only person to win Olympic medals in the race walks. The race walks, which got their start in the 18th and 19th century pedestrian races, are walked over 20 kilometers and 50 kilometers.

The race walk requires the endurance of a cross country skier and the agility of a hurdler. One must not bend one's knee with this modified walking style, and holding one's style while walking 31 plus miles, to near exhaustion, is exceedingly difficult. The athlete who succeeds at this event is unique: Larry Young was such a unique athlete.

Larry Young got his start in track & field running the mile and half mile. While in high school, at all comers meets in upstate New York, Larry tried the race walk, learning the walk and doing pretty well, improving to just under 8 minutes for the mile. During this time, Larry Young met USATF Hall of Famer and Olympian Ron Laird, who convinced Young to walk indoors in California.

In two famous meets, the LA Invite and the San Diego Invite, Young finished dead last in loaded fields. Just about to throw in the towel, Olympian Laird convinced Larry Young to run a handicapped race (where, based on one's skill, runners or walkers run a certain part of the distance, so the best athlete would walk, say, ten miles and the next best, 9 miles 1,200 yards, and perhaps the newest competitor might walk seven miles). Well, finally, Larry Young had some success at the 10 mile distance, finishing fourth.

In 1966, Larry Young walked his first 50k, that's 31.6 miles, the longest distance on the Olympic schedule. In 1967, Larry Young won his first major event, the Pan Am Games, walking 50k in 4:26, an American record at the time!

In 1968, in Mexico City, Larry Young listened to his own counsel, and started out very slow, not going out with the leaders. In the heat, humidity and altitude, Young started passing walkers about 20k, and by 35k, was within striking distance of the leaders. What kept him focused over the last 15k? As he passed fellow walkers, he noticed how exhausted they were, and unfocused, and he knew that his plan had worked! Larry Young, in extraordinary conditions, walked 4:31:55, to take the Olympic bronze.

The next year, Larry took a scholarship at Columbia College in Columbia, Missouri, to study art, with his focus on sculpture. Young trained in earnest in 1969, and again took gold medal at 50k in the Pan Am Games in 1971, defending his gold from 1967.

In 1972, Larry Young walked his fastest 50,000 meters of his career, in 4:00:46, still, 38 years later, the ten best EVER in U.S. history. While Young walked through 1977-79, his dream of another Olympics were shattered when the boycott on the Moscow Olympics was announced. After that, Larry Young retired to focus on his large sculptures.

Who will be the next Larry Young? If you want to learn more about the race walk, please send us an email to larry@runningnetwork.com and we will help you find a race walking club or coach. (A great web site is www.racewalking.com).

Special thanks to Mr. Larry Young, (www.youngsculpture.com) for the use of the photos showcasing his sculpture. Special thanks to USA Track & Field (www.usatf.org) for the use of the hall of fame photo.