



# JOGGING *with* JORDAN

by

Stephen C. Baldwin

**J**ogging along with President I. King Jordan, the newest president of the 124-year-old internationally known Gallaudet University, has been one of my secret ambitions for 1988. Except for an unexpected brief chat with Dr. Jordan when I saw him in his jogging gear near the Gallaudet track two years ago, we have not seen each other since I graduated from the same university in 1968. My ambition was motivated by my own past interest in running, my pride in my alma mater, my conviction that a deaf person should be in a pivotal position dealing with deafness, and my zest for interviewing newsworthy deaf people.

When my 100-watt light flashed intermittently, little did I expect a call from the Office of President from one Miss Julliette saying that Dr. Jordan received my letter of request and that he would meet me at 5:30 a.m. in front of Hotel Worthington in Fort Worth. Before the polite secretary hung up, she said good-naturedly, "You're nuts!" Teasing words like "nuts," "crazy," and "great but still nuts" became a steady flow of reaction from friends. Only a week ago I resumed my jogging for the umpteenth time, and now I found myself faced with a rare chance to run with a seasoned marathoner. Quickly, I ran twice a day to get into instant shape. Then I dipped into my savings to buy some good running shoes that were on sale.

I checked the papers for the running weather. My gosh, sunrise at 6:52 a.m., with chances of a thunderstorm. Never a morning runner, by old habit I was either a late afternoon or night pavement pounder. So I had to train my body to wake up at 3:30 a.m. for the 45-minute drive from Denton to Fort Worth. The projected temperature was 76 degrees, which was far better than the triple digit heat wave that had plagued the Metroplex area for weeks. I also checked out the jogging trails and other route possibilities. Because of darkness and safety reasons, I chose the huge Tandy Corporation parking area which was near the Fort Worth police station. My faithful 1976 Toyota Corolla's odometer recorded a possible running mileage of four miles.

When I parked my car at 200 Main Street, right in front of the hotel, I startled an early morning baker who worked in front of a large kitchen win-



precipitates the challenges associated with marathon races.

Dr. Jordan ran his first marathon at the age of 34 when he covered the distance of 26 miles and 285 yards in a time of three hours and twenty-seven minutes. Since 1973, he has run in 25 marathons. Thus far, Jordan's personal best is a time of three hours and two minutes. So the challenge of breaking the three hour mark is utmost on his mind. He predicts that he will run a sub-three hour race within a year.

Marathon running seems to be on a decline since Jim Fixx, a physician who started the jogging craze with his precedent-setting book in the 1970's, died of a heart attack a few years ago. Bill Rogers, the four-time Boston marathon champion, filed for bankruptcy when his jogging gear shop business failed. Some annual races have folded across the country. Similarly, there seems to be less commercialism and fanfare at most races. People seemed to have taken up other sports that are less strenuous. Only the true marathon runners are left over now: Dr. Jordan is one of them.

In order to maintain his marathon condition, Dr. Jordan runs forty miles a week. Then he doubles the mileage to eighty whenever he trains for a marathon. He used to run eleven miles to the Gallaudet campus from his Silver Spring home (Maryland) twice or thrice a week. Now that he has moved into the historical fifteen-room executive mansion Gallaudet home, Dr. Jordan runs from work around the northeastern section of Washington, D.C. and then runs back to campus before the sun rises.

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DR. I. KING JORDAN AND THE PAST BOSTON MARATHON CHAMPIONS

	JORDAN	PAST CHAMPIONS*
AGE:	45	26.3
WEIGHT:	150	132
HEIGHT:	6'1"	5'6"
PRIMARY: OCCUPATION	University president	Mostly blue-collars

*\*Statistics were averaged from Joe Falls' 1977 book, Boston Marathon, which covered champions from 1897 to 1976.*

His running life has not been without injuries or the usual dangers faced by all runners. The worst injury he has sustained was bone spurs in his foot. He was sidelined for six months and now wears a heel cup in his regular shoe during the non-running hours. Speeding cars, cursing drivers and reckless bikers make up the rest of the inconvenience of jogging. At one time, a passenger threw a beer bottle at him. However, Dr. Jordan learned to build up nerves of steel during his early running years. In other words, running has taught him to keep his fear under control in face of such dangers commonly known to beset dedicated runners.

As we trotted along the parking area, we nearly tripped over an obscure speed bumper. Surely, we were not running that fast. Then I told him about the city jogging trail across the Trinity River, which was closeby. By that time, our visual purple rods made night seeing better, we ran across the bridge to reach the start of the trail that had convenient mile markers. As we reached the trail, in my subconscious mind, I was hoping that we would not encounter any nocturnal animals like snakes, raccoons or armadillos, which were common critters on that side of the river. After one mile, we turned back and Dr. Jordan decided to put on the gas, running at a six-

minute-thirty-second mile clip. As a matter of fact, it takes an estimated average of five minutes to win a major marathon in two hours and ten minutes.

His running style is not hard to describe. At six feet, one inch, Dr. Jordan runs a mechanical energy-saving pace. He keeps his back and shoulders straight while his arms and legs move laterally and evenly. Unlike most runners for his height, he does not take long steps between each foot landing. He is a typical heel-ball-toe runner with a common leg pronation. He has excellent control of his breathing, and his lung capacity must be twice the size of most men his age. His ability to concentrate totally on his running comes from years of practice. In short, his running style shows impressive poise, seriousness, resourcefulness, and determination.

Now I started to pant, seeking my second wind on the dusty trail, some 200 yards behind my celebrated friend. I had removed my perspiration-soaked Laurent Clerc T-shirt, which I had purchased during the same week I bumped into Dr. Jordan two years ago, but had never worn until this early morning run. While watching the newest president of Gallaudet University giving himself a good workout, I analyzed the experience of interviewing him from a philosophical angle. There I was, holding a shirt that honors the first deaf teacher in America, Laurent Clerc (1785-1869), and watching the first deaf president while he ran a paced mile. The momentous experience struck me as being strange

### WHY DR. JORDAN BELIEVES THAT RUNNING WILL REAP BENEFITS FOR A POSTSECONDARY PRESIDENT:

- 1) Running clears the mind of everyday pressure.
- 2) Running allows a president to have a time for himself.
- 3) Running releases tension and stress.
- 4) With uninterrupted concentration, running helps one to filter through a myriad of problems, and then come up with soluble approaches.

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dow. As I crossed the street, two hotel security men popped up suddenly out of nowhere, talking feverishly and furtively on their walkie talkies. Uncomfortable about this situation, I hurried into the freezing lobby.

Before Dr. King showed up, four of my colleagues came into the empty lobby, one after another, not expecting me and half-scaring the daylighters out of each other. I swear I saw a deaf San Antonian friend half-sleep walking before he disappeared back into the elevator. Next came my faithful editor and publisher of the *The Voice* magazine, Paula Bartone, who agreed to take pictures and follow us in her van. The third person was a state administrator who escorted his lady friend to a valet-driven car. The fourth early bird was Jerry Hassell, a long-time deaf Texan leader and advocate, who kept my company while I limbered up. A signing hearing jogger invited me to join him, but I declined politely. Then a tall, lanky man came right up to me. Shaking my hand, in the midst of supportive company, Dr. Jordan smiled and said: "Good morning, Steve, I didn't think you would get up this early." (He's right, neither did I). Before I knew it, we were running on the streets of Fort Worth. For me, it was a matter of mind over body.

The friendly jogger I saw previously came running opposite us and he turned out to be someone I knew from Austin, but his name I forgot. Dr. King probably thought I knew every jogger in Fort Worth. Actually, I seldom visit Fort Worth, maybe ten times in my eight-year sojourn in Texas. The lonely and quiet streets of Fort Worth had a romantic touch to them. Gas-lit lamps, brick streets, old stores, western wear shops, and Mexican restaurants provided a nice environment. Of course, we saw graveyard-shift workers at a bus stop staring at us, two ungodly-hour joggers. At the next bus stop we saw a transient in deep slumber. While I stayed close to the curb, Dr. Jordan ran partially on the sidewalk. Later he said he did that for safety reasons, based on bad encounters with speeding cars and bikes. Before we entered the wide-open space of the Tandy (a/k/a Radio Shack) parking area, the interview started as we continued jogging, with Paula driving behind us, creating an artificial lighting with her flashing camera.



Paula Bartone

Two smiling runners pound the pavement in early-morning Ft. Worth. (Jordan, left; Baldwin, right)

In just five blocks Dr. Jordan updated me on his family. His wife, Linda, is a first-grade public school teacher who loves going to the races he enters, especially in the last fifteen years. Their son, King, had just begun his freshman year at the University of Colorado, and he too is a good runner. Heidi is a typical "sweet-sixteen" year-old daughter. The family, as a whole,

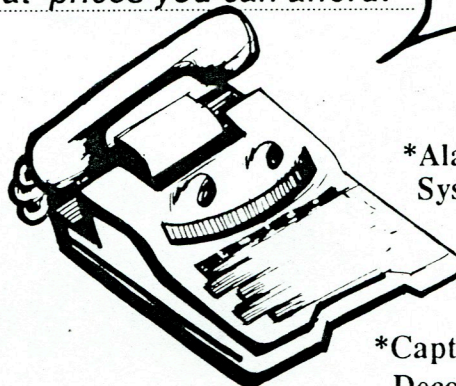
has always supported his habitual "vice" of jogging.

By all accounts, Dr. Jordan is not a typical jogging addict. Unlike addicted runners who spend considerable time and money attending races in expensive vans or ignoring spouses and children, Dr. Jordan runs for reasons of health and sanity. Most of all, he enjoys running and ap-

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but truly exalting. With due respect to the last three Gallaudet presidents, namely, Leonard Elstad, Edward Merrill, Jr., and Jerry Lee, I don't think I would have thought of running with any of them. Maybe it was a strong cultural feeling that clicked inside of me. In that moment of truth, my pride as a deaf person manifested itself naturally.

Dr. King came back, full of energy, and we chatted the rest of the way about his time for that last mile. He has a strong estimation of time and distance. For the last part of the morning run, I decided to hop into the van to review my interview notes (not to be excused from running, honest!). Dr. Jordan ran alone for the last three-fourths mile. After four traffic stop lights, Paula and I parked in front of the hotel. Dr. Jordan came right up as I poured some Gatorade drink for him. Sweating profusely now, Dr. King said that the little hill that paralleled the police station was a "killer" one (but surely not as notorious as the Heartbreak Hill of the Boston Marathon). His one-hundred-fifty-pound physique was definitely devoid of body fat. His stamina showed no sign of abating after running six miles. He was ready to tackle the day of speeches, meetings, and a reception. We shook hands once again, wished each other well and hoped to do another run someday.

An hour after the morning run, Dr. I. King Jordan gave an inspiring breakfast speech before more than one thousand participants at a Texas conference on education for the deaf at the same hotel. From the deaf grapevine, within hours after his speech, I learned that President Jordan asked that the opinions of the deaf be seriously respected. Knowing well that Texas is categorically behind other states in terms of advocacy, affirmative action, and solidarity, I can't help but applaud Dr. Jordan for giving the deaf Texan the needed respect which had been neglected in recent years at various levels and fields. Now, here is a deaf university president who would not just walk, but **run** a mile for his fellow deaf people anytime. If his presidency is destined to signify a new era for the social betterment of deaf and hearing impaired people in America, then Dr. Jordan has the energy, stamina and capability to carry the torch for that population.