

By Scott Benjamin

Below are excerpts from Dr. Bill Burley's memoir, "Unintentional Consequences," and some other information on the early development of the Roxbury Road Race Series, which he founded in the summer 1977.

In his memoir, "Unintentional Consequences," Dr. Bill Burley, who established the Roxbury Road Race Series in 1977, called it "the most remarkable running organization in the country."

He attributed that to the 10-month race schedule and the huge amount of donations that are made to charities, including Lyme Disease awareness, cancer research and a local land trust.

Dr. Burley, who spent more than two decades as an elementary school principal in the New Milford district, had started running in 1968 to control his weight after mostly competing in "bulk" sports – football and wrestling – in his younger years.

While teaching in Westport he learned of the summer road race series that was held at Staples High School and concluded with a 10-mile Labor Day race. It helped him train for the 1970 New York City Marathon. He then moved to race-walking and qualified for the U.S. Olympic trials in 1972 in that event. However, since it would have meant time away from his career and family he didn't compete at the trials.

After he landed the position in New Milford, his family moved to Roxbury and they started the Roxbury Road Race Series on July 2, 1977. He and his wife, Suzanne, who became a noted diving coach in the swimming program at Shepaug Valley High School in Washington, organized eight races on Saturday mornings over increasing distances through the final week of August.

The second head director, the late Dr. Larry Kershner, also a Roxbury resident and educator, expanded the schedule in 1984 to start the races in May and then took the steps to adopt the current 10-month format that began under former head director Bob Lewis in 1986.