

Interview with Meet Director Fred Singleton



Fred, pictured with daughter Amanda and wife Margo

Loucks (LKS): Fred, when is the first time you heard the words “Loucks Games”?

Fred (FS): In March 1968, the meet’s first year, my coach at Mt Vernon High School, Dave Rider, told our team that a new meet was being created in White Plains, the Loucks Games. So, we ran in the first meet.

LKS: How did you do?

FS: It was my sophomore year and I ran on a relay with some of the seniors. It was my first experience running in a big meet. We ran a 4 X 220 yards (we were running yards in those days) and we didn’t make the finals.

LKS: How about the next year?

FS: I’ll never forget. I was teamed on another 4 X 220 with Dave Patterson, Larry Cox and the great Bill Collins and, in a very close race; we were able to upset the two favorites, Boys High and Archbishop Molloy.

LKS: So, you won a trophy.

FS: I was so excited. It was my first big trophy!

LKS: How about your senior year?

FS: That was 1970 and the big picture was that I was on one of the greatest teams in New York State History. We were loaded! That year we won the Cross Country State Championships (1969), the Indoor Eastern States (tied) and we really showed our stuff at the New York State Outdoor Meet. That day we placed in every race, with the exception of the 440, and that was ironic, as we ran the equivalent of a 3:14-point while taking second place at Penn that year. Our day at States (held in Rochester that year) ended with Mt. Vernon winning 5 gold medals (TJ – Ken McBryde, 100y and 220y – Bill Collins, 120HH, and 180LH), three silvers (120HH – Mike Young, 880y – Steve Groom and 4 x 220 – Al Owens-Dave Patterson-Tony Wells – Larry Cox), and a couple of bronzes (Mile – Greg Bryant and Two Miles – David Cannady). I don’t know if any other team, with the exception of the greatest of them all – the 1966 White Plains team - has ever had a better day.

Before then, at Loucks, we became the first New York State team to win the meet, and I was fortunate enough to win two trophies in the high and low hurdles.

LKS: Tell us about the rest of your running career.

FS: Spurred on by my wins at Loucks, I was able to win both hurdles at the State Meet and at the Golden West (13.4w and 18.3w). From there it was four years at Penn State.

LKS: You ran for Coach Harry Groves. Highlights there?

FS: Coach Groves was one of the top coaches in the nation. He knew his stuff. As for highlights, I was on a 4 X 110 that took 6th at the NCAA National Championships, held at LSU. We were the only team from the northeast in the final and for three legs we were in second place. Another was at a meet at the Garden, at which for three out of five hurdles I led the Olympic Champ, (before he blew by me). But, my biggest highlight was being a co-captain of the ICAAAA Champions. We were loaded and in 1974 we won the meet for the first time since 1959, winning by one of the largest margins in meet history.

LKS: And after college?

FS: In September of 1974 I started teaching social studies at the White Plains Community School, a position I would hold until I retired in 2010. Trackwise, for two years I ran for the New York Pioneer Club, under legendary Coach Joe Yancey. In 1976 an opening for an assistant coach developed and I was fortunate to be mentored by Nick Panaro, one of the top coaches in our area.

LKS: So, before you became meet director of Loucks, you were one of the coaches at White Plains.?

FS: Yes, and, as I do now, I took great pride in hosting the meet.

LKS: Tell us about being meet director?

FS: After 14 years as director, Nick chose to step aside. He felt that I was the logical choice and, for the 2001 Games, the Loucks Games Executive Committee named me to be the director.

LKS: What was the first thing that you did as meet director?

FS: The meet was in great shape, but I noticed that we weren't getting certain teams, especially those from New York City. So, I suggested that we make a few schedule changes, trying to get some of them back. I wanted to add a few events, but I didn't want to meet to go on forever. So, with the advent of FAT, I suggested that we drop several rounds of races, shortening the meet. The shorter meet allowed me to add a few events like the pentathlon. Also, I knew that some schools were going to other meets on our Saturday, so the only way to lure them to us would be on Thursday and with a race that few meets offered – the DMR! Thus, in 2004, the Thursday portion of our meet was born.

LKS: What other changes did you make?

FS: The big advantage that I had over Nick and the previous meet directors (Ed Kehe and Carol Coram) was the Internet. I was able to read about teams and individuals and invite them to Loucks. It was luck. At the same time that I became meet director, sites like armorytrack and dyestat opened up. That was a big aid to Loucks.

LKS: What else are you proud of concerning Loucks?

FS: During the meet, our White Plains athletes work so very hard. They're moving hurdles, raking pits, running results and so many other valuable tasks. I am so proud of their efforts, as the meet wouldn't be able to be held without them. Also, the coaching staff, Head coaches Carlos Agudelo and Lamont McCormick, and their assistances Dan Furry and Ed Zimmel, are so important to the meet. It wouldn't run without them, either. Our team parents provide housing for out-of-state athletes, and they also run the food stand on Thursday, donating many of the items that are sold. They cherish the meet as much as the team does.

I am also so happy that our school district sees the meet as an important event. There is a great amount of spirit displayed, and as I walk the halls of the school many people say, "How's the meet look this year?" or "Good luck. How's the weather going to be?" Even the City of White Plains takes pride in the meet, as some restaurants give deals to teams.

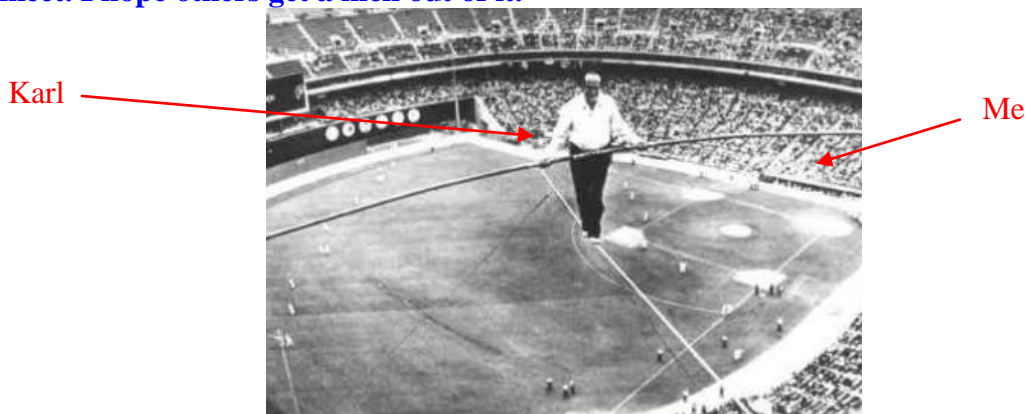
I am also proud that every athlete gets a number with his or her name on it, no matter how fast or slow he or she is. It is a small token of thanks from our meet for their participation.

LKS: And your proudest moment?

FS: Having my daughter Amanda run in the 2007 meet.

LKS: What was the origin for the idea of the "Name the Artist" Contest?

FS: (Laughter). Believe it or not, the idea was put into my mind in 1972. My brother, Ken was a professional baseball player. At the time he was playing for the Montreal Expos and that summer they had a doubleheader at Philadelphia's Veterans Stadium, which I attended. While I was sitting in the stands I noticed that there was a wire which ran across the top of the stadium. I had no clue what it was for, but between games I learned about it. The wire was there for The Great Karl Wallenda, a famous high-wire walker, who, in his day, walked high above many sites. As he slowly and carefully took each step, the PA system played songs, all of which had a walking theme. I was so impressed; especially as he took his last strides and the song, "You'll Never Walk Alone" was playing. Years later, I put the idea to use for our meet. I hope others get a kick out of it.



Picture courtesy of website: <http://highonadventure.com/Hoa09jun/SteveLynn/GreatWallendas.htm>

LKS: What is the hardest part of being meet director?

FS: One might think it is the time commitment, but it isn't. Although the meet takes up a great deal of time, I enjoy doing it. In a sense, I'm paying back the meet that helped me when I was young. The first of the toughest parts happens about a few days prior to the meet, as coaches try to change their entries or even worse, try to enter the meet after the deadline. At the meet the worst part is telling coaches that their athletes can't run because the coach forgot to check off the athlete.

Another hard part is trying to raise money. We have hundreds of people who give us some of their hard-earned money; \$25 here, \$50 there, some donate more than \$250 each year. That's so appreciated, it

helps us so much. There are groups of others, who also help; restaurants, doctors, physical therapists and others donate to the meet too. The Rotary Club of White Plains goes a long way in helping, donating money, time and sweat to aid us. They are the best! Pepsi donates cases of water. Other individuals and corporations donate too. But there are some who won't give us the time of day. This year one Fortune 500 company of Westchester, who will remain nameless, upon receiving my request for \$150, yes, \$150, sent me a postcard (not even a letter) telling me that they had no interest. I didn't ask them for thousands, I asked this billion dollar company for a mere \$150. That bothers me to no end. They can spend millions for commercials, but not \$150 to help close to 3,000 athletes. Not even 45cents for a first class letter. Wow.

LKS: Are you busy at the meet?

FS: Not as busy as others, as they are the ones who are really busy during the meet. The officials and timing crew are the real busy ones during the meet, hardly even getting a break. I'm usually answering questions or a couple of concerns during the meet or talking to others. By the time of the meet, most of my hard work has already been done.

LKS: What's it like to be in charge of the meet?

FS: It's like running a wedding. As soon as the last team in the top-seeded girl's 4 X 400 crosses the line, it's like the bride and groom are walking down the aisle. It's over.

LKS: What do you do when you're not concentrating on Loucks?

FS: I like to spend time with my wife Margo and my daughter Amanda; things like watching television, cooking new recipes, going to the movies. One of my favorite things is going to Cold Spring with Margo and watching the boats go by on the Hudson. Also watching sports with Amanda and/or Margo! I am also finishing up writing my first novel.

LKS: A novel? Do you have much writing experience?

FS: Only emails and grocery lists! But to give you a serious answer, 'NO'.

LKS: What's it about?

FS: It's fiction taking place in the year 2020. It's about a flaw I detected in the US Constitution. Nothing major! One has to really look for it. The odds of the circumstances happening are so remote, but it is a possibility. I was amazed to learn that others had found it and that a Yale professor had even petitioned Congress about it.

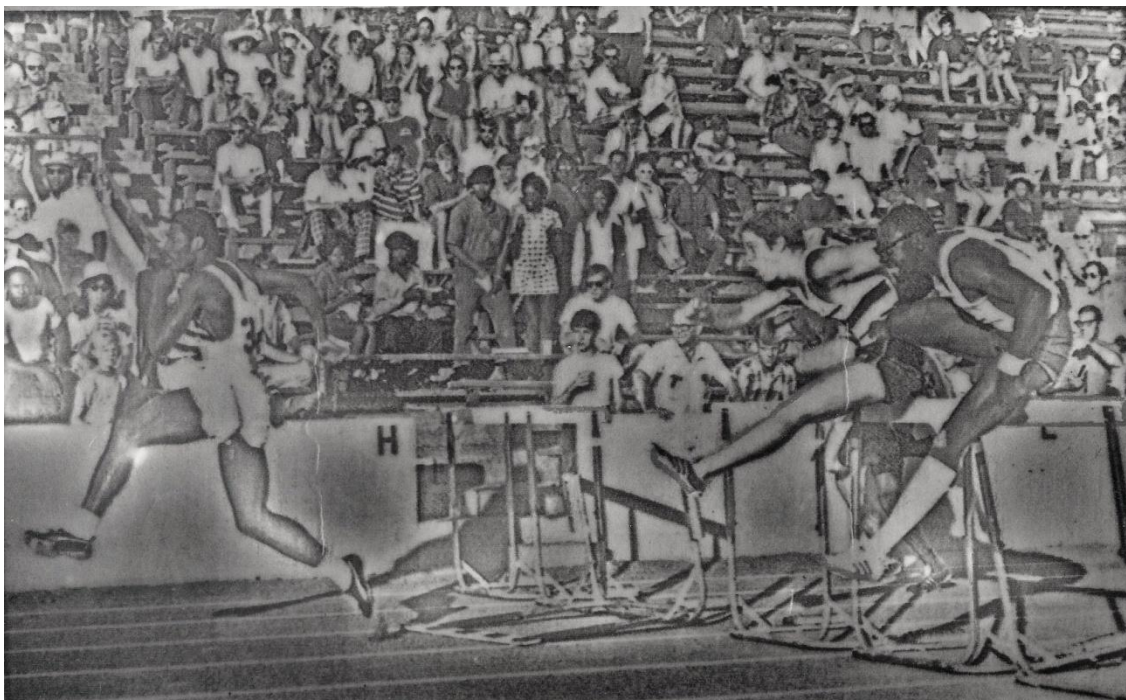
LKS: When will it be out?

FS: Heck, I don't know, I'm still working on it. But, if everything goes correctly, and if some company likes it, perhaps it might be available in 2013 or 14.

LKS: Finally, we have heard about your, let's say, "keen" sense of humor. Hopefully it is in the book. Can you give us a quick example?

FS: I do like to tell puns. One day in class I was writing something on the blackboard, when I heard a commotion behind me. I turned to see one of my students out of seat swinging his arms wildly. When I asked him what he was doing, he told me that a bee had flown into the classroom and was flying near his head. Without hesitation, I told him to sit down, as, "That's the closest you'll ever get to B in this class."

LKS: Well good luck with the book and, of course, with Loucks.



**June 1970: Golden West.
Fred going over the last high hurdle.
“Stay a step ahead”**