

Kathrine Switzer Biography

www.kathrineswitzer.com

Highlights:

- Broke the gender barrier at the 1967 Boston Marathon, when she was the first woman to officially enter the race.
- Winner of the 1974 New York City Marathon
- Leader in making the women's marathon an official event in the Olympic Games (1984). Received Billie Jean King Contribution Award from Women's Sports Foundation for making this happen in 1981.
- Emmy Award-winning television commentator
- Author of three books: *Marathon Woman: Running the Race to Revolutionize Women's Sports*; *Running and Walking for Women over 40...: the Road to Sanity and Vanity*; co-author *26.2: Marathon Stories*.
- Founder and Director, Avon Running Global Women's Circuit –27 countries, over 1 million women.
- Inducted into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame, July 1998, Inaugural Class
- Named Runner of the Decade (1967-77) and One of the Visionaries of the Century (2000) by Runners World Magazine
- Received Abebe Bikila Award from New York Road Runners for worldwide contribution to running, 2003
- Received Pioneer Award in Sports Management from University of South Carolina's College of Sports and Entertainment Business for creation of Avon International Running Circuit
- Received George Arents Pioneer Award for excellence in promoting and achievement in sports; this is the highest award given by Syracuse University to an alum.

Kathrine Switzer will always be best known as the woman who challenged the all-male tradition of the Boston Marathon and became the first woman to *officially* enter and run the event. Her entry created an uproar and worldwide notoriety when a race official tried to forcibly remove her from the competition. Three decades later, the incident continues to capture the public imagination and is, in part, the reason Switzer has dedicated her multi-faceted career to creating opportunities on all fronts for women.

Switzer has run 35 marathons, won the 1974 New York City Marathon and in 1975 was ranked 6th in the world and 3rd in the USA in women's marathon. After a successful athletic career, she turned her attention to the creation of women's opportunities in sport, a sports marketing career, communication, and motivating others in both fitness and business.

Having been denied many athletic opportunities herself, Switzer's original goal of establishing opportunities in women's running first emerged in a big way when she created the Avon International Running Circuit for cosmetics giant Avon Products, Inc. over 25 years ago. This worldwide series of women's events and Switzer's tireless lobbying were instrumental in making the women's marathon an official event in the Olympic Games. The first women's Olympic marathon was 1984. The Avon program also revolutionized global social and cultural thinking as it opened the door for public acceptance of women's sports in many countries where few, if any, existed before. (In 2003, Switzer was awarded the Pioneer in Sport Management Award by the University of South Carolina's School of Sports and Entertainment Management for the creation of this innovative program.)

As the then-Director of Sports and Public Relations, Switzer also was responsible for Avon's sponsorship of all the company's sports sponsorships when they reached a new height in the 1980s with over \$9 million annual budget. At this time, the company was the title sponsor of Women's Championship Tennis, the developmental Avon Futures Tennis circuit, the World Figure Skating Championship, the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship and miscellaneous equestrian and track and field events in addition to the Avon International Running Circuit. These programs were mostly discontinued in 1986 and Switzer left Avon to pursue other business options through her own company, AtAlanta Sports Promotions, Inc. which she had established in 1982.

A decade later, in 1997, in one of the more amazing turn-arounds in sports sponsorship, Avon decided to return to its sponsorship of women's running. With Switzer again at the helm as Program Director, the company rebuilt the program under the banner of Avon Running- Global Women's Circuit, with an aim of giving women around the world an accessible means of fitness and health through running and walking programs. The program was launched in 1997 in 15 countries with a starting budget of \$5 million. However, in 2002, like many companies, Avon downsized its operations and sponsorships, including Avon Running. Avon's sponsorship of women's running today is limited to the global portion of Avon Running, which continues in nine countries. As president of Atlanta Sports Promotions, Switzer continues to advise these various countries in a consulting capacity.

In 2002, RYKA, the women's performance athletic footwear company, launched *Take Fitness to Heart*, its own series of women's running and walking events, and named Switzer as Director of Women's Health and Fitness, where she served as a spokesperson and advisor for the company until 2004.

2004 saw the inauguration of the MORE Marathon, a women's only marathon event for women over 40, sponsored by MORE Magazine. Switzer, along with legendary marathoner Grete Waitz, serves as a spokesperson for this groundbreaking event and continues in that capacity today as this race grows.

As a communicator, Switzer works as a TV commentator, writer and public speaker. She has worked for all major American networks as well as TV New Zealand and the Asian Broadcasting Union and covered the Olympic, Commonwealth and Goodwill Games; World and National championships; Olympic Trials; 28 Boston, 19 Pittsburgh, 18 New York City, 16 Los Angeles and four Chicago Marathons, as well as hundreds of local road races. In 1997 she won an Emmy Award for her commentary for Los Angeles.

As a writer, Switzer is also widely recognized as an innovator and leader in women's fitness, health and longevity as well as running. For many years, she has motivated hundreds of thousands of women around the world to the starting line of fitness, using running or walking as a cost-effective and time efficient means for women to obtain health, optimum weight and self-esteem. Her book, *Running and Walking For Women over 40 ..the Road to Sanity and Vanity* (St. Martin's Press) is a best seller in the both the United States and New Zealand and is published also in national versions in Germany, Hungary, New Zealand and Australia.

April, 2006 saw the launch of *26.2: Marathon Stories* (Rodale Press), which she co-authored with her husband Roger Robinson. Runner's World Magazine has named this book as one of the five best running books ever. *26.2 Marathon Stories* is published in foreign editions in Germany, Australia and New Zealand.

In April 2007, to commemorate the 40th anniversary of her first running the Boston Marathon, Switzer launched her memoir, *Marathon Woman: Running the Race to Revolutionize Women's Sports*. Reviews and feedback from this inspiring and rollicking story have been tremendous and Switzer had been on a demanding speaking and book-signing tour. (See her website for specific speaking engagements). *Marathon Woman* won the prestigious 'Billie Award' for journalism in April 2008 and in 2009, *Marathon Woman* was launched in an updated paperback edition.

Switzer's articles have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Parade*, *Women Today*, *Runners World*, *Running Times*, *Marathon & Beyond* and other publications and websites.

Kathrine Switzer is also in demand as a personality, with compelling and inspirational stories to tell. She has been featured in publications around the world and on hundreds of radio and TV shows, including Oprah, Today, Good Morning America, Tonight, Nightline, HBO, NPR, BBC and CBC, and is often sought out for a visionary opinion on the future of women's sports or controversial issues.

Kathrine Switzer is a dynamic and effective speaker. She is a woman who has pioneered an obscure activity into global movement, and has parlayed her success as an iconoclastic athlete also into successful corporate sports marketing and public relations careers with Avon, AMF Incorporated, and Bristol Myers. Whether business, sports or health, Switzer is sought after to speak to corporate, university, association and convention groups because she is a fit, authentic success herself, and conveys high energy in the following topic areas:

- **Business:** Switzer's pioneering work in women's sports marketing has served as a design model for many in business and education. She is in demand as a leader and speaker in the field, especially showing how to make adversity work as a business-generating opportunity by creating innovative programs. Her speeches and workshops can be tailored specifically to address the areas of Event Management, Sports Marketing, Public Relations, Media Events and Destination Tourism
- **"Becoming the Hero in Your Own Life"--** a get-real health and fitness experience, Switzer motivates audiences to make fitness a part of their time-constrained lives, telling why and showing how to take charge of their own health and well-being. (Switzer is also in demand to lead interactive events and fitness clinics for men and women of all ages, sizes and previous experience. She receives a constant stream of thank you letters from people whose lives she's changed.)
- **Sports:** Switzer is a pivotal figure in women's sports history, as well as the women's Olympic movement and the global history of running. She captivates audiences with her often rollicking and always moving talks on the history of women in sports and in particular the tremendous social and cultural change that has occurred through the women's sports movement. She is a visionary and offers up her thought-provoking glimpses of the future for all audiences.
- **Forestalling the Aging Process:** We're living longer, and Switzer shows us how to live better. She deals with the realities of aging, dispels the myths and fears, and shows us how to fight back effectively, with an emphasis on prevention of the major killers of today: heart disease, diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis.

(Speaking references supplied on request).

Switzer has also received numerous citations and awards for her efforts in advancing sports opportunities for women, including a New York State Regents Medal of Excellence and the Billie Jean King Award from the Women's Sports Foundation for her contribution to sports. She was named "Runner of the Decade" and one of four "Visionaries of the Century" by *Runner's World* magazine, and an Honor Fellow from the National Association of Girls and Women in Sports. In 1998 she was one of the five inaugural inductees into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame, and in 2000, the Road Runners Club of America honored her with the Fred Lebow Award for contribution to women's running. In 2002, she was the first woman awarded the Emil Zatopek Award from the Fifty+ Fitness Association for her lifelong contributions to fitness; in 2003, she was awarded the prestigious Abebe Bikila Award by the New York Road Runners for her worldwide contributions to running and was inducted into the International Scholar-Athlete Hall of Fame. In 2004 she was inducted into the New England Women's Sports Hall of Fame, and in June, 2006 she received a George Arents Award from Syracuse University, the highest achievement award the university confers on an alum. Additionally, she is in the Halls of Fame at Syracuse University, Lynchburg College, and the Road Runners Club of America.

Switzer received both her BA (dual degree in journalism and English, with the College of Arts and Sciences) and her MA (in Public Relations) from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications. She is married to Dr. Roger Robinson, professor, author and noted age-group runner. The couple divide their time living in the Hudson Valley of New York and Wellington, New Zealand. Kathrine Switzer continues to run six miles a day.

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