Our story begins on a snowy day in October. The town is Randolph, Vermont, it has been snowing since early July and will finally let up in late June for a few short weeks of spring, summer is rarely an option. The weather creates rugged people and our hero is no exception.

Terry was an exceptional baby. He was born talking; “Man was it dark in there, it was as dark as . . .” For the first and last time in Terry’s life he would not be able to compare an experience to another experience in his life.

Randolph proved to be too mild for the family and they feel it is necessary to move to yet a colder climate. Old Forge, New York was chosen as the temperatures rarely breaks 40 degrees. Terry attended high school in Old Forge and began his skiing career. There were no spring or fall sports as Old Forge did not believe in either season. He attended St. Lawrence University where he continued to ski and continue his love affair with snow. His great affinity for snow and the fact that most of his childhood years were spent in and around snow led to a place on the National Nordic Combined Team.

Now our story shifts into more familiar ground for all of us. In 1974 Terry became a coach at Middlebury College. He became the Young Chief of our running tribe, maybe somedays more of a Shaman or better yet a witch doctor, but without a doubt the keeper of our tribe’s oral history and most prolific of all storytellers.

Our tribe is unique among tribes and even unique among the many sports tribes. First of all we are a co-ed tribe where most sports tribe have single sex membership. I would be willing to bet that many of us are members of this tribe because of it allows the mingling of the genders. (I know it is very true for myself.) Our tribe spends a great deal of time talking with each other which is another reason why we have such a rich history of storytelling. We stretch together, we do LSD together (only this tribe would understand that joke), we have time at races to cheer on the other gender, and then there are the long van rides together. This time to talk has led to our stronger than usual oral history compared to the other sport tribes.

Now I would like to share a few stories from our tribal history. Most of these stories were told to me by our Chief Elder.
The first two stories were told to me at least once a season by the chief Elder. I am going to pause after the first line of each story and I would like you to raise your hands if you were also told the story by our chief elder.

“I’m a two miler story”  We were raising against Williams, when a half mile from the finish line a William’s runner caught a Middlebury runner . . . as he passed he informed the Midd runner that he was an 800 runner and would see him at the finish line. The next race against Middlebury the Middlebury runner came along side the William’s runner and announced that he was a two miler and promptly beat him to the finish line two miles away.

“The Dorcas story” “I remember when Dorcas Denhartog joined the team . . . Dorcas joined the team to get in shape for lacrosse. She had never raced competively and so at the first race she asked Terry what she should do. Terry told her to run with that woman over there. “That woman” was an All-American runner. Dorcas finished right behind her as instructed. So began the storied history of one of Middlebury’s legendary runners.

We laugh about how many times we were told these stories, but I know that I have related these stories since leaving the tribe’s home village. Could I have a show of hands of people who have also retold these legends.

During my four years as an active member of the tribe I added several stories to our oral history. I’m curious if any of you have heard the story about the Men’s Cross Country Intramural Basketball Team . . . It was my bright idea to form a Middlebury Cross Country Intramural Basketball Team. An oxymoron to be sure, and without a doubt it was one of my dumbest ideas. The captain left with a scratched cornea and one of the other top runners missed a race with a sprained ankle. Strangely, the team did not win any games . . .

As I said before, I’m sure other sports teams have similar oral histories. But our tribe, and specifically Middlebury College’s running tribe, has a very strong spoken legacy. There are two reasons for this strength and both are due to our Chief Elder. The first of course is his great love of the spoken word and when I say love I mean LOVE. Garrison Keiler calls up Terry for speaking advice. The second is the fact that our Chief Elder has made being a member of the cross country team more than just participation. It is about being a member of a group that is supportive, inclusive, and family.
I loved that when I ran at Middlebury there were athletes that were on the team that never were in the top 12 or top 7, but came back each season to be a part of the team. We were more like a family than a team. Terry and the other coaches not only allowed this to happen, but actively supported its happening.

For 36 years Terry has been our Chief Elder, our head spokesman, the family head. He really is the only one who knows the full oral history of these last 36 years and I do not doubt that he will continue to share it with anyone who will listen. Nicole will have some large vocal chords to fill but she has been fully immersed in tribe history as long as most and I’m sure she will do a wonderful job of sustaining the tribe.

So Terry, Mr. Chief Elder. We thank you for leading our tribe for so long and I know that my years at Middlebury were greatly defined by my tribal membership and I’m not sure it would have been the same without your guidance and I know it wouldn’t have been the same without your willingness to share our tribe’s oral history.