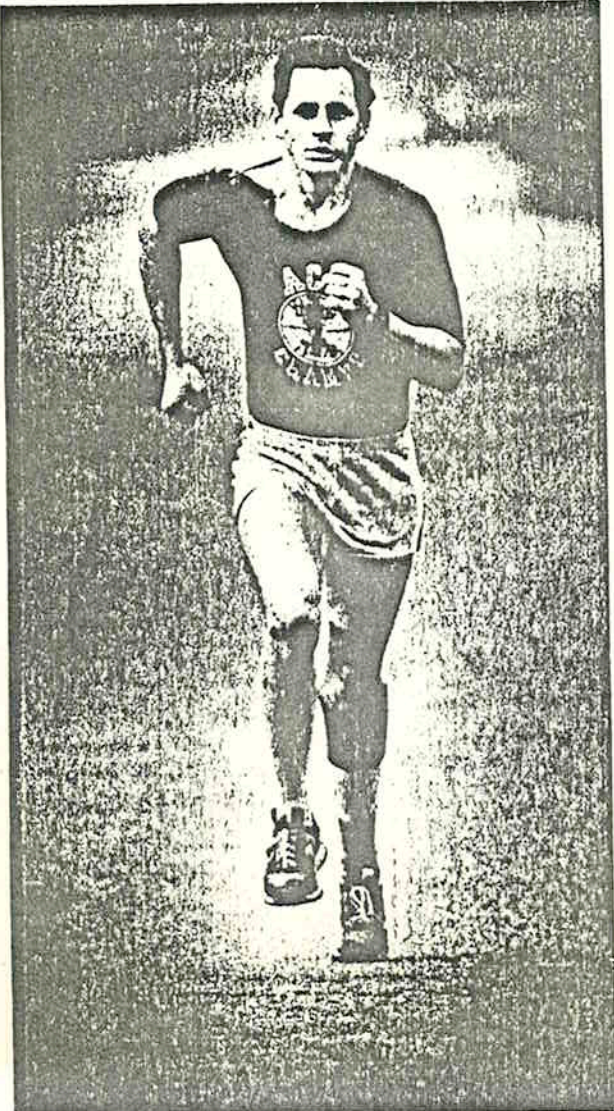


Hartford Courant 3/30/83

Marathon Hurdled, New Peak on Horizon

Waterbury Amputee Runs 26 Miles in 4:11

By **AMBY BURFOOT**
Special to The Courant



Stephen Dunn / The Hartford Courant

Unbeknownst to anyone save a few close friends, a Waterbury man with an artificial leg entered and completed the John W. English Marathon in Middletown this month. Thirty-five-year-old Pat Griskus crossed the finish line in 4:11:09, ahead of eight of the 120 runners who completed the 26.2-mile grind.

Griskus lost his left leg six inches below the knee 15 years ago. He was serving in the Marines in Kansas City and taking an off-duty spin on his motorcycle

when he was broadsided by a drunk driver.

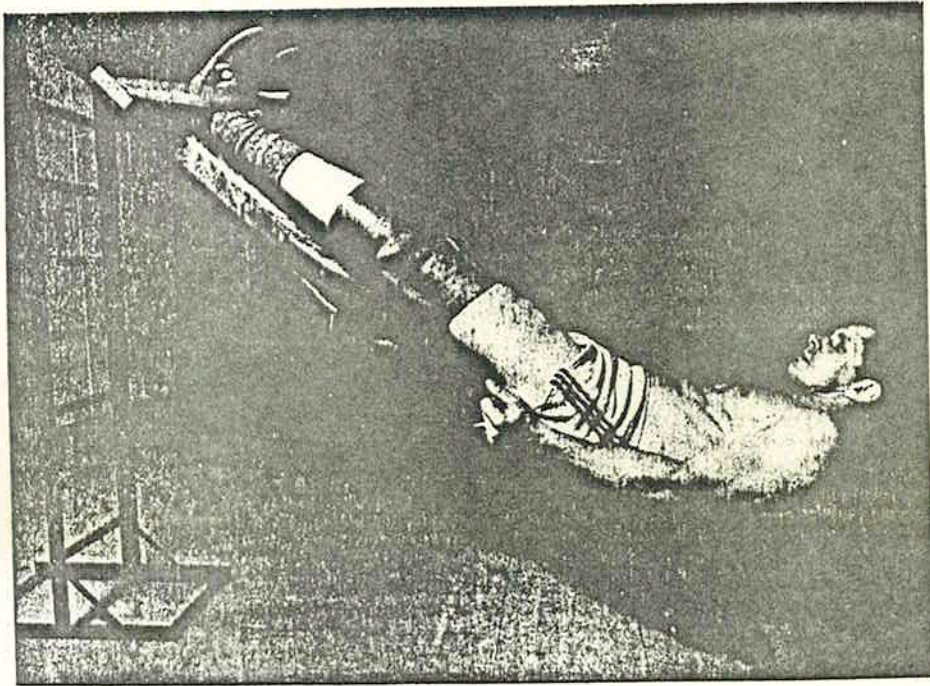
"The next thing I remember I woke up in a hospital," he says. "I looked down and saw this big wad of bandages. I remember thinking, 'I wonder if there's still a leg on the other side of the bandages.' It was quite a while before I got the nerve to hoist myself up and look. There wasn't."

According to Dick Traum of the New York Road Runners' Club, only three or four amputees have ever finished a marathon. Traum, an above-the-knee amputee, was the first. He ran the New York City Marathon in 1976. "It wasn't until several years later that I realized no one like me had ever done it before," he said.

Since 1976 Traum has finished three other New York City Marathons with a personal record of 6:44. Before being informed of Griskus' performance he had never heard of another amputee running faster than his own best. "That's a very, very fine time," he said. "In fact, that's the first quality time I've heard of."

If Griskus had run a 4:11 in last October's New York City Marathon, he would have finished ahead of over 3,000 other runners. And the Middletown marathon course is considered a very tough one — more difficult than either New York or Boston.

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"I figured I'd get through the last couple of miles on pluck if I had to," said Pat Griskus of Waterbury, who ran a 26.2-mile marathon in 4:11:09 in Middletown this month despite an artificial leg.