

# College friends again returning to honor Frank in run

■ John Frank's former teammates from Oregon State University return each year to honor the late Central Valley High graduate.

By Elmer Ramos  
R-S sports reporter

Three times Mark Fricker has raced in the Nor-Cal John Frank Memorial Run. Three times he has come away a winner. And each time, his victory has been a tribute to the man for whom the event is named.

John Frank, a 1980 Central Valley High graduate, died in an industrial accident in 1986. But before his death, he and Fricker nurtured a friendship that began when both were on the Oregon

State University track and cross-country teams in the early '80s.

On Saturday, Frank will be honored for the fourth straight year. The Nor-Cal John Frank Memorial Run — featuring 10- and three-mile runs and a three-mile walk — will start 10 a.m. at Diestlehorst Bridge and end at Lake Redding Park.

As usual, several of Frank's old Oregon State teammates will compete: Fricker and Gid Rysdam in the three-mile run, and Karl Van Calcar in the 10-mile race.

In fact, Frank's buddies have a lock on the event's three- and 10-mile runs. Fricker has won the three-mile twice, including last year, and the 10-mile once. Rysdam has taken the 10-mile twice, including last year, and Dick Oldfield has captured the three-mile once.

"Our goal is to maintain that as long as possible," said Fricker, who lives in Oregon.

Considering their credentials, the monopoly could endure for a while. For instance, Fricker qualified for the 1988 U.S. Olympic Trials in the 1,500-meter run and was one of the world's top-ranked indoor milers a few years ago. And Van Calcar won the 1988 NCAA title in the steeplechase.

For Frank's father, also named John Frank, it's gratifying to see the Oregon State contingent show up every year.

"It does mean a lot," he said. "We're glad the guys come. It makes us feel good that they care."

The caring began a decade ago. After closing his prep career with consecutive undefeated

Northern Athletic League seasons and a state cross-country title, Frank received a scholarship to attend Oregon State.

While there, Frank became the Beavers' No. 2 runner in cross country and No. 1 in track in the 1,500 and 5,000. He also befriended Fricker and the others. There was much to admire about Frank, especially his curiosity.

"He wasn't shy at all," Fricker said. "If he was curious about someone or what they were doing, he'd just go and ask them. At times it was kind of embarrassing, but he wanted to know. More power to him."

Even after he graduated with a business degree in 1985, Frank and the others remained close. He went on to form Arcadian Enterprises, a Summit City construction company, with his brother, Dan,

and another Central Valley High graduate, Lee Young. And he served as best man at Rysdam's wedding in September 1986.

Less than a month later, the 24-year-old Frank was working on a subcontracting job in Yosemite National Park when he died at the bottom of a 14-foot-deep excavation for a sewer line.

Fricker said he and the others always will strive to compete in the annual event, which benefits the John Frank scholarship fund.

"It's kind of a reunion with John Frank's family," he said. "We don't care whether we're in shape or out of shape. It's just being there that counts."

About 550 competitors are expected. Participants can register from 7-9 a.m. Saturday at Lake Redding Park for a \$16 fee.