

Gerry Garcia

Born: Feb 23, 1948, El Rito, New Mexico

High School: Northern New Mexico Normal School aka El Rito High School El Rito, New Mexico 1966

College: Eastern New Mexico University 1966-1968

Lamar University (Texas) Bachelor of Science in Physical Education 1971

Master of Special Education 1973

Master of Public Administration 1975

Master of Educational Administration 1985

On leave from the doctoral program at the University of New Mexico. Participated in the Harvard Graduate School of Education "Principals Center." He was the only New Mexican among the thirty individuals selected from the U.S. and six other countries to participate in the program.

Gerry Garcia is a native New Mexican, born and raised in the small village of El Rito in Northern New Mexico. In the second grade, Gerry got in trouble for running in the classroom. The substitute teacher had him run for 15 minutes around the playground as punishment. "I never had so much fun," chuckled Garcia. Garcia started his running adventure when he was in 7th grade. After his running career, he would become a teacher for 34 years.

High School

- His high school coach, Ruben Lucero, entered him in an invitational cross-country meet. He beat the state high school champion.
- 1961 to 1965 Holds a big piece of New Mexico sport history. He was a five-time state cross country champion, a New Mexico record. If Jerry had been eligible, some believe Garcia might have won a sixth state meet. There were two classes of schools—A and B—and tiny El Rito High School competed in the B division. However, when Garcia won the state cross country meets in his sophomore, junior, and senior years, his times were better than the any of the A champions.
- In the nation, there are several runners who have won their state cross-country titles four times, but Gerry may be one of the few prep runners in the nation who has won five state titles in high school cross-country.
- 1963 Won the Class B State Championship in the Mile with a time of 4:47.4.
- 1964 Won the Class B State Championship in the Mile with a time of 4:33.7.
- 1965 Won the Class B State Championship in the Mile with a time of 4:24.1.
- 1966 Won the Class B State Championship in the Mile with a time of 4:24.6 and the 880-yard run with a time of 1:57.1

College

- After El Rito High, several colleges, including track powerhouse Kansas, showed an interest, but Garcia chose to attend Eastern New Mexico University.
- 1966 and 1967 At ENMU, he was also a National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) All-American in cross-country.
- 1967 As a sophomore, Gerry placed fourth in a field of 320 runners at the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I meet held in Wheaton, Illinois. He was named All-American.
- That same year in a dual meet with the University of New Mexico, he took first place. He covered the 3.9 course in a time of 18:27.8, but because of a sprained ankle, Gerry missed the 1967 NAIA National Cross-Country Meet. UNM runners included: John Baker, George Scott, Ron Elar, and Web Loudat.
- 1967 Competed in indoor track. He won third place in the two miles at the NAIA Indoor track and field championships. In another two-mile race that year, he placed third behind George Scott and Kerry Pierce (Pierce went on to shock the track world that year by setting a new indoor two-mile world record.).
- 1968 Received Greatest Greyhound Award, which is given to the best athlete at ENMU each year. Gerry was runner-up for the award in 1967.
- 1968 Transferred to Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas when his coach, Carl Babcock, left ENMU to coach at the east Texas school.
- 1968 Ran unattached and won the Southland Conference cross-country meet with a time of 19:11 over the four-mile course.
- 1968, Participated at the U.S. Olympic Trails but did not qualify for the finals.
- 1969 Lost, which was an upset at the Southland Conference cross-country meet by Bob Gray from Arkansas State, but at later that year, Gray placed 25th at the NCAA cross-country championship and Gerry placed 23rd. Both Gray and Garcia won All-American status. Gerry was considered one of the finest college distance runners in Texas in 1970, and while at Lamar, he consistently ran the mile under 4:10.
- 1970 Southland Cross Country Champion and 44th at the NCAA Championship Meet.

Post College Competition

- After graduating from Lamar in 1971, Gerry finished in a tie for ninth place at the National AAU cross-country championships at San Diego. He led at the end of the first mile, which he turned in 4:18, but suffered a slight muscle pull. He continued, despite injury, and stayed with the leaders the rest of the way. During the closing ceremony, Gerry was recognized for setting a record for 1.6 kilometers in route to his 9th place finish.
- 1972 Ran in the 1972 U.S. Olympic Trials but did not advance to the finals.
- 1973, Finished second to Jack Bachelor at the Texas Relays in the 10,000 meters. Frank Shorter finished third.

- 1975 joined the United States Army.
- 1976, Ran the two-mile at the Modesto Relays, in California, entering the race at the request of meet director Tom Moore. Moore wanted someone to pace Steve Prefontaine past Brendan Foster's world record. However, Prefontaine hung back in the pack and said later that he was not running well enough for a world record.
- While in the U.S. Army, Garcia ran in the 1976 Bay to Breakers race in San Francisco. Twelve thousand ran in the race. Boxed in at the start, Gerry got off to a slow start and finished 11th.
- 1976 Represented the U.S. Army at the Pacific AAU Track and Field Championships at San Mateo College. Garcia's 27:50 for six miles on the San Mateo track was a meet record and the fastest ever run by a PA-AAU athlete and broke Don Kardong's mark by 1.2 seconds. Kardong went on to finish 4th in the 1976 Montreal Olympics.
- 1976 Ran in the U.S. Olympic Trials but did not advance to the finals.
- 1976 Ended his running career with the All-Army team at the United States Armed Forces Championship at Laney College in Oakland, California, setting a new meet record in the 10,000 meters.

Professional

- 1974 Special education teacher Franklin Junior High, Grants, NM
- 1979 Special education teacher Albuquerque Job Corps
- 1980 – 2007 Special Education Teacher in the Albuquerque Public Schools
- 1985 Volunteer cross-country assistant to Coach Ron Maestas, New Mexico Highlands University
- 1986-1987 New Mexico Highlands University admissions counselor
- 1996 Albuquerque Public Schools, Risk Management Department, safety training and education as an intern
- 2003 Albuquerque Public Schools Mentor for New Teachers and Teachers under Waivers at Van Buren Middle School
- 2003 Literacy Leader Van Buren Middle School
- 2010 Last Race Gerry's last race was in 2010 at the Duke City Marathon, in Albuquerque. He finished 20th overall and first in his age group. Gerry was 60 years old.
- Published his autobiography, *Growing A Runner*, in October 2013.
- Inspirational Speaker

Honors

- 1982 Received a \$4,000.00 academic fellowship at New Mexico Highlands University
- 1986 Albuquerque Job Corps Teacher of the Month
- 2003 Nominated at Van Buren Middle School for "Teacher of the Year"
- 2003 Van Buren Middle School Excellence Award

- 2005 Emma R. Showman Endowed Teaching Scholarship
- 2005 Truman Middle School, PNM/APS Teacher of the month award
- 2013 Named to the Honor Roll of the top cross-country runners ever in the 50th Anniversary of the Southland Conference.
- 2016 Honored at the 41st Annual Gardenswartz Great Southwest Track & Field Classic

Community Involvement

- 1980 Food service volunteer, Thanksgiving Dinner at Good Shepherd
- 1990-1991 Workshop organizer, Truman Middle School Parent Advisory Council 2009 Volunteer award Wherry Elementary Spanish spelling Bee judge
- 2009 Volunteer coach, Athletics Track Club
- 2010 Volunteer coach Albuquerque youth track club
- 2017 La Mesa Elementary science fair judge
- 2018 Volunteer, Albuquerque Animal Welfare Department.
- 2019 Volunteer, Veterans Hospital, Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- 2023 Published, Growing A Runner—The Screenplay. All proceeds from the sale of his published books are donated to the El Rito Library Summer Reading Program.

Family

- Clarissa, age 24, a UNM graduate in computer science is employed with U.S. World News.