



A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN  
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



## August 2025 Her Story ENewsletter Marathon Runners



**Nina Kuscsik** (1939-2025) was the first woman to officially win the Boston Marathon – that was in 1972 – five years after Kathrine Switzer ran in the same marathon as a “bandit” because women weren’t allowed to compete in marathons – ‘it might make a woman’s uterus fall out!’ Kuscsik joined the official groups that barred women from competing in order to facilitate change to that stance – and she was successful. In 1971 she convinced the Amateur Athletic Association that women could compete in ten-mile races; in 1972 she was allowed to enter the Boston Marathon. Kuscsik used to run around her yard or the nearby schoolyard to keep in shape when her kids were little. Since it was so unusual at the time for women to be running, she did get stopped by the police who asked her what she was running from. Kuscsik said that

running “transcends from the physical into the mind and spirit and we should incorporate it into our entire life.” Let’s also learn more about Kathrine Switzer and the 1984 Olympics marathon winner Joan Benoit.



When K.V. Switzer filled out her application to run the Boston Marathon, she wasn’t being secretive. “K.V.” was the way that **Kathrine Switzer** signed her name. Switzer was the first woman to run the Boston Marathon. She ran with several members of her running club; consequently she had help in fending off the race official who tried to remove her from the race because she was a woman (and therefore was running illegally – even though she did have a bib number) when she ran in front of the press stands.

Switzer completed the event. As a result of her experience at the Boston Marathon, she became determined to change conditions for women. She is a huge advocate for women, particularly in athletics and fitness. She encourages women everywhere in the world to take up running; over the years she has run many additional marathons. Switzer has been inducted into the National Women’s Hall of Fame.



U.S. Olympic team member **Joan Benoit** won the first woman’s marathon (1984) by more than a minute over the nearest competitor. Benoit began running track when she was in high school while recovering from a broken leg. She received All-American honors in cross country and track during college. She won the 1979 Boston Marathon, setting a course and American record. She won again in 1983, setting a new world record. After the Olympics, she won the Chicago Marathon in

1985 where she set an American record. In 2008, she participated in the Olympic marathon trials and, in 2009, completed the New York Marathon. She was in her fifties and still finished both in under 2 hours and 50 minutes.

Kathrine Switzer and Joan Benoit are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women’s accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women’s stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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