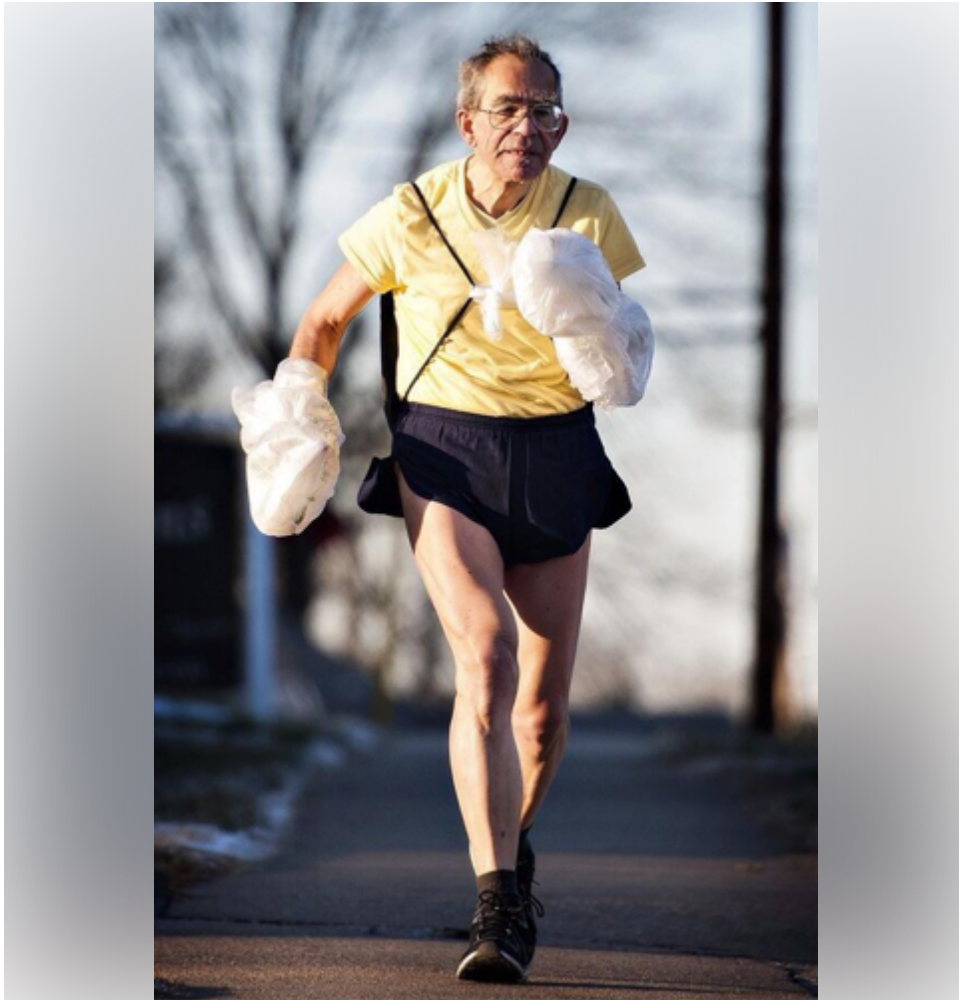


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## Bowling Green's 'Running Man' remembered

By AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com)

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Jean-Claude Evard is seen in 2014 on one of his regular runs through Bowling Green. Evard died in December.

Courtesy of Joshua Lindsey

To the people who spotted him jogging around town, dressed in his signature gym shorts to complete errands in every kind of weather – even in the snow – Jean-Claude Evard was the “Running Man of Bowling Green.”

But Evard's friends and colleagues at Western Kentucky University, where he taught math courses in a thick Swiss accent, knew him as the guy who didn't drive or even have a license. He refused to talk on the phone (they'd only misunderstand him), and he doted over his beloved Coleus plant, named Marvel.



Most of all, though, Evard will be remembered for his uncontainable enthusiasm for mathematics.

Evard, whom friends said was about 80 years old, died in December.

As a quiet man who mostly kept to himself, Evard was something of an enigma.

His friends and colleagues said Evard only really came out of his shell to explain his research or some complicated mathematical concept that almost certainly went over the head of the listener.

"I remember Jean-Claude well during his time at WKU," said Claus Ernst, a distinguished mathematics professor emeritus and former faculty regent at Western Kentucky University.

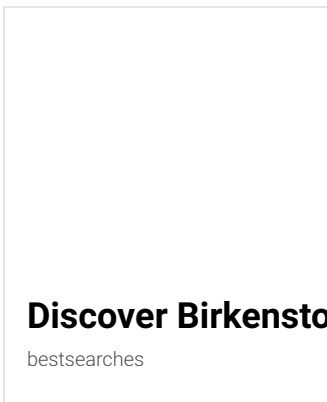
"He was a very kind man, totally committed to mathematics. He gave several talks in our seminar that I remember fondly. He always worked himself into a quite excited frame of mind when he was talking about his research, forgetting about any time constraints. It seemed like he could go on for hours until

we gently reminded him that time was up and he could continue next week,” Ernst wrote in an email to the Daily News.

Though Evard didn’t care much for dinner parties or other social to-do’s, he loved to talk about his field over a cup of coffee at Spencer’s, said neighbor and friend Cherylan Franke.

Evard often labored to elevate Franke’s and her husband’s mathematical know-how. Still, after attempting everything he could think of, he declared them hopeless cases and pivoted to discussing current events instead.

“He loved to talk about math,” Franke said.



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He was working on a book about his research, something like an encyclopedia of math, as Franke described it.

It's unclear if he ever finished the project, but it would certainly be in line with the academic mission he outlined for himself on the website ResearchGate, where much of his research is published.

There, he described a book project to introduce the “axiomatic logic” of mathematics. In other words, the basic premises and presuppositions of mathematics that serve as the foundation for the discipline itself.

“My goal is to save as much time as possible to all users and learners of mathematics,” a profile under Evard’s name reads. “There is a need for a rigorous and careful construction of books of mathematics starting from the axioms of mathematics, through a worldwide collaboration. I am currently working full time on the construction of a book on a rigorous, yet gentle, introduction to axiomatic logic with complete justifications of the usual methods of proof.”

Evard wasn't a religious man, as far as Franke could tell, but she said he had some spirituality, recalling how a jog through the neighborhood around St. Joseph Catholic Church and a stop into the chapel made an impression on him.

He also wasn't much for pets unless you count his beloved perennial Coleus plant that he named Marvel and tended carefully for years.

“He became attached to the plant,” Franke said, recalling how he loved to report about its different flowerings and leafings year after year. Franke isn't sure what became of Marvel after

Evard's death.

As for Evard himself, Ernst said he was buried in his native Switzerland, in Geneva, where a sister lives.

News of Evard's death recently prompted those who remembered him to share photos they'd snapped of him on one of his regular jogs to pay a bill or buy groceries.

"A BG Icon is gone," one Facebook user whose post of Evard got more than 1,000 shares. "Mr. Evard was more known than he knew."

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### Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.



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