

# Kathrine Switzer Marathon Woman

## Complete Biographical Information

*President, Marathon Woman and AtAlanta Sports Promotions, Inc.*

### Iconic Athlete

Kathrine Switzer will always be best known as the woman who, in 1967, challenged the all-male tradition of the Boston Marathon and became the first woman to officially enter and run the event. Her entry created an uproar and worldwide notoriety when a race official tried to forcibly remove her from the competition. The photo of this confrontation flashed around the globe and became one of *Time-Life's* "100 Photos that Changed the World."

Switzer finished the race but was radicalized by [the incident](#) and was determined to create [change for women](#). Now, four decades later, the incident continues to capture the public imagination and is largely the reason Switzer has dedicated her multi-faceted career to creating opportunities on all fronts for women.

Switzer has run 42 marathons, won the 1974 New York City Marathon and in 1975, her two-hour and 51-minute marathon in Boston was ranked sixth in the world and third in the USA in women's marathon. She is still running marathons today.

After a successful athletic career, she turned her attention to a sports marketing career, [broadcasting](#), and [motivating others](#) in both fitness and business.

### Sports and Social Advocate

Having been denied many athletic opportunities herself, Switzer's goal of establishing opportunities in women's running first emerged in a major way when she created the [Avon International Running Circuit](#) for cosmetics giant Avon Products, Inc. over 30 years ago. This series of women's events reached over a million women in 27 countries and along with Switzer's tireless lobbying, was instrumental in making the women's marathon an official event in the Olympic Games, first staged in 1984 in Los Angeles. The Avon program also revolutionized global social and cultural thinking as it opened the door for public acceptance of women's sports in many countries where few, if any, existed before.

As the then-Director of Sports and Public Relations, Switzer also was responsible for all of Avon's sports sponsorships when they reached a new height in the 1980s with over \$9 million annual budget. At this time, the company was the title sponsor of Women's Championship Tennis, the

developmental Avon Futures Tennis circuit, the World Figure Skating Championship, the Women's International Bowling Congress Championship and miscellaneous equestrian and track and field events in addition to the Avon International Running Circuit. These programs were mostly discontinued in a company downturn in 1985 and Switzer left Avon to pursue TV broadcasting and other business options through her own company, **AtAlanta Sports Promotions, Inc.** which she had established in 1982.

Switzer worked for all major TV networks, but especially for ABC Wide World of Sports and covered over 200 events, including the Olympic, Commonwealth and Goodwill Games; World and National championships; Olympic Trials; every televised edition of the Boston Marathon (36), 27 New York City, 19 Pittsburgh, and 14 Los Angeles Marathons, as well as many local road races. In 1997 she won the first of several Emmy Awards for her commentary of the Los Angeles Marathon. [Complete TV list](#)

Also in 1997, in one of the more amazing "recaptures" in sports sponsorship, Avon decided to return to its sponsorship of women's running. With Switzer again at the helm as Program Director, the company rebuilt the program under the banner of Avon Running- Global Women's Circuit, with an aim of giving women around the world an accessible means of fitness and health through running and walking programs. The program was launched in 1997 in 15 countries with a starting budget of \$5 million.

However, in 2002, Avon again downsized its operations and sponsorships, including Avon Running. Today, Avon Running continues only in [Germany](#), Brazil, Chile and Mexico; Switzer occasionally advises these countries in a consulting or celebrity capacity.

In 2002, RYKA, the women's performance athletic footwear company, launched *Take Fitness to Heart*, its own series of women's running and walking events, and named Switzer as Director of Women's Health and Fitness, where she served as a spokesperson and advisor for the company through 2003.

### Author, Speaker & TV Personality

In 2004, Switzer decided to focus her considerable energies on writing, speaking and to a lesser extent, television broadcasting, all of which she had done for 25 years on a part-time basis. Her first book, *Running and Walking for Women Over 40* was first published in 1997. In 2005, [26.2 Marathon Stories](#), co-authored with husband Roger Robinson, was published, followed in 2007 by her memoir *Marathon Woman*. (Soft cover published in 2009).

Her articles have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Parade*, *Next*, *Women's Today*, *Runners World*, *Running Times* and other publications. She is the current 'On the Road' columnist for *Marathon & Beyond* magazine. [More about Kathrine's Writing](#)

Switzer developed also into a dynamic and effective [speaker](#). She is a woman who has pioneered an obscure activity into global movement, and has parlayed her success as an iconoclastic athlete also into successful corporate sports marketing and public relations careers with Avon ('77-'02), AMF Incorporated ('73-'77), and Bristol Myers ('68-'72). Whether business, sports or health, Switzer is sought after to speak to corporate, university, association and convention groups because she is an inspiring, fit, authentic success herself.

### [TO BOOK SWITZER AS A SPEAKER](#)

Kathrine Switzer is also in demand as a [personality](#), with compelling and inspirational stories to tell, and makes frequent speaking and celebrity appearances. She has been featured in publications around the world and on hundreds of radio and TV shows, including Oprah, Today,

Good Morning America, Tonight, Nightline, CBS Evening News, PBS, HBO, NPR, BBC and CBC, and is often sought out for a visionary opinion on the future of women's sports or controversial issues. In 2012 alone, she did over 60 interviews. [Sample of TV Appearances](#)

## Still Running

Fitness, of course, is a key component of Kathrine's life. She has run regularly for over 50 years and today is widely recognized as an innovator and leader in women's fitness, health and longevity as well as running. For many years, she has motivated hundreds of thousands of women around the world to the starting line of fitness, using running or walking as a cost-effective and time-efficient means for women to obtain health, optimum weight and self-esteem. "My run is still the most important hour of my day," she says. Her first marathon was run at age 20 and at 64 she ran the Berlin Marathon, showing that age is not always a barrier to physical accomplishment. [View Kathrine's Training Programs](#)

## Awards & Honors

Switzer has also received numerous citations and awards for her efforts in advancing sports opportunities for women. A few include a New York State Regents Medal of Excellence and the Billie Jean King Award from the Women's Sports Foundation for her contribution to sports. She was named "Runner of the Decade" and one of four "Visionaries of the Century" by Runner's World magazine, and an Honor Fellow from the National Association of Girls and Women in Sports. In 1998 she was one of the five inaugural inductees into the National Distance Running Hall of Fame, and in 2000, the Road Runners Club of America honored her with the Fred Lebow Award for contribution to women's running. In 2003, she was awarded the prestigious Abebe Bikila Award by the New York Road Runners for her worldwide contributions to running; was inducted into the International Scholar-Athlete Hall of Fame, and was awarded the Pioneer in Sport Management Award by the University of South Carolina's School of Sports and Entertainment Management for the creation of the innovative Avon Running program. In 2008, her book Marathon Woman won the "Billie Award" in journalism from the Women's Sports Foundation. She is also in the Halls of Fame at Syracuse University, Lynchburg College, and the Road Runners Club of America. In 2011, she was inducted into [National Women's Hall of Fame](#), in Seneca Falls, NY, and in 2012, Runners World named her a 'Hero of Running'.

Switzer received both her BA (dual degree in journalism and English) and her MS (in Public Relations) from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications. She is married to Dr. Roger Robinson, author, columnist, emeritus professor and former world-class runner. Kathrine and Roger divide their time living in the Hudson Valley of New York and Wellington, New Zealand.

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