

USAF HALF-MARATHON REPORT Sept. 15, 2007

It was a good day. It was a fun day. It was a successful day. It was an enlightening day. The United States Air Force marathon/half-marathon is well organized and usually offers good weather. I had completed this marathon 5 times previous. Those included my first marathon and my third, which is my PR and BQ . Since then, however, I've had to change to the half. I have this tendency to dehydrate in the 26.2 mile race (6 out of 8 times).

The ½ course is fun and varied to run, but challenging due to the significant hills on miles 10-12.

I felt good right from the start. The weather was cool & everyone was upbeat. Since I had forgotten to start my watch, again, I didn't really worry about my pace but thought it would be adequate to go under my goal (1:50). Since this distance is easier on the body I only took water 3 times to avoid any potential problems.

With all systems go I was beginning to waver at the 10 mile mark, but the camaraderie of runners helped me out. A man came up from behind and was encouraging me to hang in there.

Since he appeared to be in my age group (60-64) I took it as a challenge and got my rhythm back and was able to stay with him, at least for a while. It seems he had entered the race with his daughter and was determined that they finish together. So, twice he stopped for her to catch up. Each time he would catch up to me and encourage me again. By now we were approaching the finish and I was able to turn it on and finish in 1:47:27. A PR and 3rd place AG award.

I knew Mark could have beaten me, but, to him finishing with his daughter was the main thing.

The motto for life and for racing should be "always keep the main thing the main thing." He found me after the race and congratulated me on my finish. How about that?

There were lots of good people in this road racing community and I found out later what marathoning is really all about.

Since I was done early I had the opportunity to wait at the finish straightaway, about 50 yards from the finish line.

Next to me was a young lady dressed in black with pitch black hair with red tips. She told me she had just done her first marathon and came here to cheer for her best friend who was doing her first. On the other side of me was a middle aged woman cheering for her husband. This woman was in the middle of chemo-therapy. Across the road was an Asian woman cheering for everyone as if they were her best friend. The other women also loved cheering and encouraging every runner. What a great atmosphere. Then there was the little 5 year old boy who asked me a million questions while waiting for his mom to finish the race. But the greatest moment was when a young man ran by and grabbed the hand of his daughter. The girl obviously had cerebral-palsy, and could not run or even walk very well. This young man ran with her to the finish as best she could go. She pulled her hand away at one point but her father went back for her and they "finished" together. It reminds me of the song "Put your hand in the hand of The Man from Galilee". That sounds more like a life lesson than a song.

All kinds of people, all kinds of life stories. I'm so thankful I had the opportunity to stand at that line on that day. I only wish that some of those that think marathon events are wasted on the mid and rear pack runners could have been there. Then they would learn what the marathon community and real life is all about.

