

An unlikely runner

Writer runs Marine Corps Marathon to honor fallen Fort Hood Soldiers

By Ali McKee

Sentinel Sports Editor

I'm not a runner. In fact, I hate running.

Aside from that and the fact that I'm "too bulky to run a marathon," as the airport security so politely remarked as I proceeded to board my flight to Washington, D.C., I ran the 31st Marine Corps Marathon Oct. 29.

When I arrived at the start, I noticed there were a number of people who didn't exactly fit the stereotype of a runner. The Marine Corps Marathon, also known as the people's marathon, was filled with competitors of all ages, shapes and sizes and yes, even the bulky. There were those who had run countless marathons, and many such as myself, who were attempting their first.

No matter what the age or degree of athleticism each competitor possessed, we all had something in common. Passion. Whether it was a passion for their own cause, like Dean Karnazes, or for another, everyone had a reason to finish the race.

Capt. Holly Harris, rear detachment commander, 4th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, my dad and I ran for our heroes, my brother-in-law, Capt. Tim Moshier, and CWO 3 Mike Hartwick, Fort Hood Soldiers who were killed in action April 1.

We raced through the nation's capital wearing T-shirts that read, "In Loving Memory of



Courtesy photos

ABOVE, (left to right) Sentinel Sports Editor Ali McKee and her father Peter McKee run past the 10-mile mark during the 31st Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. There were 34,000 runners who participated in the event and an estimated 120,000 spectators attended. RIGHT, (left to right) Lynne McKee, Ali McKee, Jim Moshier, Katie Moshier, Peter McKee, Mary Ellen Moshier and Natalie Moshier pose for a photograph taken near the finish line of the 31st Marine Corps Marathon.

Capt. Tim Moshier and CWO 3 Mike Hartwick. Marine Corps Marathon 2006," with an image of an Apache. Spectators shouted, go helicopter guys as we raced passed them, and although the meaning of the shirts went deeper than that, it was reassuring to hear the crowd cheering for us.

My father and I decided to jump on the marathon bandwagon mid-summer, after regular registration was closed. However, we were able partici-

pate by registering with a team for charity. The Fisher House was the only team we wanted to run with.

After Tim died, we stayed at the Fisher House at Fort Hood while attending the memorial service. The Fisher House is a home that enables family members to be close to their Soldier while they endure hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease, or injury. We were the first family to stay at the Fisher House because of a death. They

opened up their doors to us and made us feel comfortable when our lives were turned upside down.

Each member of the Fisher House team was responsible for raising a minimum of \$500 towards the charity organization. With the help of family and friends, \$560 was donated in my name, and we were part of the more than \$80,000 donated to the Fisher House.

Running a marathon was incredible. It's difficult to say I



had fun doing it, but I did. My father, who trained religiously, could have beaten me to the finish line by more than a half an hour. Instead, he chose to stay by my side and make sure I actually made it there.

At mile 17, I told my dad, "Timmy would have been proud of us," especially because he disliked running almost as much as I do. At mile 18, the stopwatch my Dad was wearing went blank, erasing our progress and displaying only an empty screen. I determined Tim was laughing at us then, especially when the watch started working again after the race.

Throughout the six hours, one minute and 55 seconds it took me to complete the race, I witnessed amazing things. I saw Marines running it in combat boots, shirts with funny sayings like "I paid for this?" and "I've

been carb-loading for 25 years," and runners in Halloween costumes (Kermit and Miss Piggy beat us to the finish). A woman I referred to as my pace setter, who ran in front of me for about 10 miles, must have been at least 40 years older than me.

There were times I was passed by walkers when I was running, and at one point, there was a man on crutches in front of me, but not for long.

The most difficult portion of the race was mile 25.5, when I saw my friends waiting to cheer me on as I approached. I was walking at that point, so I had to start running again. Whoever decided to put a hill in the last .2 miles of a race has a very cruel sense of humor. But I made it up the hill and across the finish line with my dad cheering me on, my friends running along the fence and Timmy looking down.