

Edwina Keats

I have been running for 43 years. In 1978 I wanted to get in shape and be fit. I built my fitness up to running 10k most days a week. Living in a small town (Happy Valley, Labrador) with few official events other than the annual Half Marathon and The Terry Fox Run, which I would run with my daughter; those were the highlights of running.

In 2008, I ran my first marathon at age 50. I trained in Winnipeg and my daughter trained in Moncton and we ran the Ottawa marathon together. Since then, I have coached, volunteered at running events and became involved with the Manitoba Runners Association board and was a faithful cheerleader at races. I did this because I enjoyed running and wanted to share my passion with others in any way I could.

I remember how I got started: it was when my Phys Ed teacher in school handed me my Bronze Participation Badge, which we both knew I never deserved. He took pity on me, and at that point I remember thinking, I want to be deservedly "fit". At my first job in 1978, every lunch hour I would see a coworker stretching and preparing for his daily run and would say to myself, "I want to do that". He turned out to be a great mentor in my early running years.

At that point, my neighbour and his buddy started running. He would tell me in great detail about their daily runs; pace, distance, weather, new shoes, and friendly racing between them. His girlfriend and I received our new Puma's and Nikes in the mail, and that began a lifelong love of running.

My most satisfying achievement was running the Boston Marathon with my best friend, Cheryl Hill. Although we ran in the cold, pouring rain on the difficult Boston course, Cheryl pushed herself and we hit the same times as the experienced and seasoned Winnipeg Boston marathoners. We were both ecstatic.

Another achievement was running the Comrades Ultra Marathon (87k) in South Africa in 2019 with my husband, Drew. This was an Uphill Year. We left Durban in the early hours of the morning with 25,000 other runners and began our trek to Pietermaritzburg, with the goal of completing the run within the mandatory 12 hours. With 10k to completion, a fellow comrade came upon us and indicated we were running strong and said we could complete the race within 11 hours to get the bronze medal. We both looked at each other and said, "Let's give it a try!" We pushed ourselves and were astounded that we crept under the 11 hour mark by minutes. We were so pleased and happy!

I have many memories of my running history; such as when Cheryl Hill, Kim Chase, Jim Nixon, David Ranta and others would attend the local races and cheer on everyone. To see the look on our friends' faces as we called their name and cheered them on was so satisfying and so much fun.

Overseas, we had some moments of alarm and great trepidation. At a Nigerian Marathon finishers' medal handouts, the organization ran out of marathon medals. The runners were displeased, voices got loud, pushing and shoving occurred as they demanded their medals. Medals were short due to runners who took the bus to the finish line and received a medal. We recognized a bad situation was brewing and left the mayhem.

Also, after completing the marathon in South Africa, we went for a run outside the Safari Game Reserve. We were warned that wild animals could still be in our surroundings; however, we ran anyway and only encountered a group of baboons. It was then we realized how fortunate we are in Canada to be able to run freely.

While I enjoyed running in many events, I never really paid attention to my times, except for marathons, my best time was 3:31 at my last Manitoba Marathon.

I enjoyed running the worlds 6 Major Marathons. They were great, but it was the time with friends; training, touring, adventures we encountered, different cultures, and most of all the memories of lifelong friends. Also, at the London Marathon I met Drew, who would become my future husband.

My most unfavourable experience was running the Ottawa Marathon with my daughter, when we got separated at 25k. It was an awful feeling not being able to see her. However, miraculously at the last 4 km or so, we connected and were able to pass through the finish line together. It was a happy ending to a stressful period during our first marathon together.

I always enjoyed giving back to the running community and helping others achieve their goals. A friend and I coached Learn to Run Clinics and seeing the excitement in the eyes of the new runners when they would run further than they ever run before, and the joy of completing their first official event and getting a medal was the best.

I enjoyed working at the Ice cream Runs-the little kiddies were so cute. I loved how they would take off like a bat, so much energy! Plus the perks were great! I enjoyed working on the MRA board with Leni, Dreena, John M, John W, John G, and James. I learned so much and appreciated the hard work it takes to bring running to a community.

I have come to believe the secret to my longevity is running with friends; our Wednesday running room group, our Saturday morning Forks marathon group and now my best friend Drew, who has given me the connection and motivation over the years.