



## **Jacksonville Trip Notes**

### **February 6-13, 2012**

This report is about the “26.2 for Donna” which is a marathon in support of breast cancer; I understand Jacksonville has another and different marathon also. I hope it’s more convenient than this one which requires a bus to the start and a bus from the finish – out of nearly 100 marathons I can only remember this happening for Tucson and NYC.

#### ***Why Jacksonville?***

Initially this marathon was to be a girl’s reunion and a celebration of Diane’s 100<sup>th</sup> marathon but she ratcheted up her schedule and finished her 100<sup>th</sup> last November at “Flying Monkey” marathon in Nashville – her home grounds and a fitting place to celebrate. The logistics were such that we might not have come to Jacksonville had we known but I’m glad I did.

#### ***Positives***

- All funds go to the “26.2 for Donna” breast cancer foundation.
- Nice cinch backpack and well-designed long sleeve tech shirt. At the expo we were given still another pink backpack, I believe by a pharmaceutical company.
- Warm climate for winter running – except for the unexpected low 31 degree temperature that the usual Mother Nature surprised us with and with wind-chill that meant it felt like 22 degrees with strong winds.
- Big time fun and entertainment on the varied and lovely course which included some sandy beach routing.
- Elite runners likely participate due to the \$70,000 purse – which subject I’m not sure I understand if all the proceeds are said to go to charity.
- Cancer survivors get a nice pink tech shirt. Unexpected.
- Part of the course is on the beach and hard packed sand. That is unless you are at the back then the sand is a bit ruffled up.
- Galloway pace groups all the way up to a 7 hour pacer! I would catch up to him and then join the 6:30 pacers through most of the marathon.
- Flat, flat, flat – except for the humongous bridge at mile 1 and mile 25.
- Some out and back to the course which I enjoy so as to see other runners and double the number of spectators.
- Lots of fluid stations and GU offered from the get-go (which I don’t use) and spectators had set up numerous tables of food with candies, pretzels and gummies offered quite often.
- Some tourist sites in Jacksonville area – some of which I’d already seen and some new ones too.
- Lots of friends here.
- Results were listed with the Age Graded Results and my 4:18 age graded sure looks better than 6:27.

## **Negatives**

- Jacksonville is very spread out and to go from downtown's host hotel (Omni) where the expo is to the start/finish line is about 30-40 minutes and 20-some miles.
- There is no parking at the start/finish line at Mayo Clinic requiring a bus to the start and a bus from the finish.
- The last bus to the start is 5:30am! Worse – we showed up around 5:05 and the bus had had an accident and thus was parked. Folks had been in line waiting since 4:30am and we waited so long that we missed the start by a few minutes. Even the host hotel had a similar no show bus and many gave up at 5:30 and got taxis for a very hefty charge. I heard that two buses finally came and got them to the start line only ten minutes ahead of the gun. Another bus broke down.
- The promised ultra big goody bag was next to non-existent unless you count a lot of paper, a pen, an airport advertising luggage tag, and one small energy bar. They way overpromised or we'd have been happy enough as it were.
- The early start of 6:30am would be good if the weather were warm but the long time waiting at the start line in 31 degree weather is not. Apparently they have to go by the tides since we run on the beach. The first year it was 85 degrees at the start.
- The 7-hour cut off is no joke. They tried to pick up a friend who refused getting into the Sag Wagon thinking she'd not get credit if she got a ride, but it turned out they picked up folks and dropped them near the finish line for a supposedly real finish. When I was at the pier turn around (mile 7 or so?) they were picking up cones already. Many of the bands had gone home by the time my slow 6:30-finish body got there. So don't count on much support if you're over a 6:15 finisher.
- The promised great food at the finish line was non-existent for a 6:30 marathoner and a 4:45 friend said there wasn't any for her either. Panera's big deal soup had been hawked as a real special offer but they totally ran out. There was beer and music but most tents were packed up when I got there.
- Age group awards are tiny patches that say "Top Finisher." The Awards Tent thought I had earned one but I later learned I was only 5<sup>th</sup> in Age Group -- but the patch wasn't enough to feel a need to return it.

## **The Goodies – some amazing and some non-existent**

Peterbrooke Chocolatier gave out "26.2 with Donna" 5th Anniversary Chocolate Coins for all registered runners at Packet Pickup. Somehow I missed them as did most of us.



### **2012 Race Shirt**

The 5 year anniversary race shirt captures the spirit of the beach while sporting a design that coincides with the race medal. The design for the 2012 race shirt merges the '26.2 with Donna' 5 year running-ribbon logo with the decorative design elements currently seen in the surf industry apparel. (Our shirts were v-neck.)

## **2012 Goodie Bag**

The 5 year anniversary goodie bag features multiple ribbon colors layered and merged to shape the main running ribbon and anniversary logo. There was a lot said about the goodie bag including much more than paper but I didn't find it in mine, nor did my friends. Tallahassee had more. They claimed we'd want to open our bag like a gift:

"Our gift to you for helping us finish breast cancer!" The bottom line is that they overpromised and we'd all have been happier without the hype.

Note that the cinch type backpack is always well received. A bit of bragging here: It was Palm Beach Marathon who had the first cinch pack, in bright gold, and printed with Jacuzzi Brands and it

was originally the idea of our chairman since we were the primary sponsor. It was Palm Beach Marathon that had one of the very first technical shirts too – a high quality Brooks white shirt that my husband Tom still wears. That was the idea of Iva and her husband Dennis who is the president of the owner of the marathon at the time, the Chamber of Commerce, had to have a lot of convincing to fork over that much money for a shirt. It paid off.



## **2012 Medal**

The commemorative "26.2 with Donna" 5 year medal has several very distinctive features that make it a special keepsake for every runner who completes the event. "A primary design feature of the medal is established with twin dolphins. The dolphins appear to leap from the boundaries of the circular medal, symbolizing a spirit of accomplishment framing the interior of the medal, which has a special translucent sun-catcher quality. Here, our signature 'celebrating 5 years' running-ribbon symbol is set in reflective colors. The combined result of these design features is a medal that utilizes sunlight and symbols to capture the warmth and purpose of this event, which both supplies and requires support and giving." A week later we would receive what they called a "Virtual Medal" but it was fetchable only for those on Facebook or Twitter.



## **Pink backpack**

A drug company gave away pink backpacks as well as little pink (or black if you wished) key holders to attach to shoes. They went over very well and were probably the best give away of the event. Mayo Clinic gave out pink recycle shopping bags and a cancer group gave away red ones.

## **Bib numbers**

Lessons learned: The registration form asked a few questions and one was if you'd had cancer and I thought it was as much like asking if you stayed in a local hotel and if so how many nights or if you owned your own home so I answered it and to my regret my bib number indicated "survivor" which I

didn't like at all. Just not that big of a deal to advertise and nothing I wanted or needed to be identified with. At least my bib number wasn't '69' like Diane keeps getting!

***The expo and downtown for the evening before the marathon***



This marathon had a fairly large Expo with PINK everywhere. These pictures are from Diane.



Many of you know the old guy here with Laura and Diane, but not the spaceman who is hawking Space Coast Marathon, but you do know Jeff and Barbara Galloway who we saw in Disney, Baton Rouge and now again. I'd run with Jeff Galloway pacing a few times before but most recently in Athens Greece.



Diane and Laura had collected some free drinks coupons from the “26.2 with Donna” welcome station at the airport which coupons gave us all free drinks at two different places so is it any wonder we look so happy? Here we are with Judy. From our drinking table we could see five bridges which turned into a fairyland when the night lights came on. It was misty giving downtown a more mystical look. Along the water walkways were two statues of runners which got dressed in Diane’s Maniac jacket.



The new owner “Shad Somebody-or-Other” of the Jacksonville Jaguars has parked his 220 foot \$114 million dollar yacht within view of our watering holes and we remained a happy crowd despite his not inviting us on board. Here we are with Kathy who used to live and run in NJ and now moved to Jacksonville and recently purchased a home in St Augustine.

### ***Hotels***

We later found that some of our maniac friends knew to get one of the two hotels on Mayo Clinic premises within walking distance to the start. When I booked my hotel nothing was listed as being available closer to the start than we were so they were apparently booked up quite early. Also it seems to be possible to taxi to the start and get dropped off closer than the official buses do. We did fine at the great priced Hampton Inn on Beach Boulevard in the Mayo Clinic area. It was about 3 miles to the Wingate for the bus and then another 3 miles to the start.

### ***Weather and clothing***

Any tourists were definitely challenged by the change of weather. The prior weekend in Tallahassee had been their record warm weather with high humidity and up to 78 degrees and I boiled in the sun. This weekend a cold snap came through and we saw freeze warnings and plants covered up and wow but we saw some crazy clothing on the marathon course. Not any as silly looking as mine. Whereas some of our group went out shopping for warmer clothing, I figured I’d be okay. But I didn’t count on the cold wind coming off the ocean so despite my three shirts and light jacket, two BUFFS and one headband as well as a hat, plus gloves and 2 sets of hand warmers, even my compression socks usually reserved for the flight home -- with all that topped with a black garbage bag (I’m a size 30-gallon gal) on top and a space blanket wrapped around twice like a skirt over my shorts, I remained shivering.

At the bus I’d convinced some of those in line that they were wasting energy shivering so we huddled and bunched together; we should have had more warm bodies and played a Rotating Penguin Game. At the start line it was nothing but running to the already started marathon but still I didn’t warm up so the first chance I had to find clothing along the side of the road it was a huge XL black hooded sweat shirt that I wore until the half way point, as well as keeping all my layers on and even my space

blanket 'skirt.' I wish I had a picture but my bib view was obstructed so there are very few on the official photo site. When I returned to the hotel I sat in the hotel's hot whirlpool for a long time trying to warm up. Fortunately the threat of pneumonia didn't happen.

### ***Health situation?***

I'd left New Jersey with antibiotics and cough syrup and a warning that my lower lungs did NOT sound good and I knew I was rasping but apparently the body prevailed since I did Tallahassee in 5:57 in the heat and Jacksonville in 6:27 in the cold and when I returned to New Jersey, somewhat worried since I was still coughing uncontrollably, the doctor declared the lungs sounded fine.

### ***Results***

I was not unhappy at going over my desired 6 hours. I'd managed to stay under 6 hours the weekend before and I took a lot of time finding and wrapping clothing, stopping to warm myself by the spectator's fire pits, and begging food. I walked from about the 10 mile point.

1:06:21 at 5 miles

2:26:32 at 10 miles

3:13:22 at half

3:40:36 at 15 mile

4:56:01 t 20 mile

6:27:22 finish with an overall 14:47 pace; or a 4:18 age graded finish is my favorite number!

### ***Random course views***



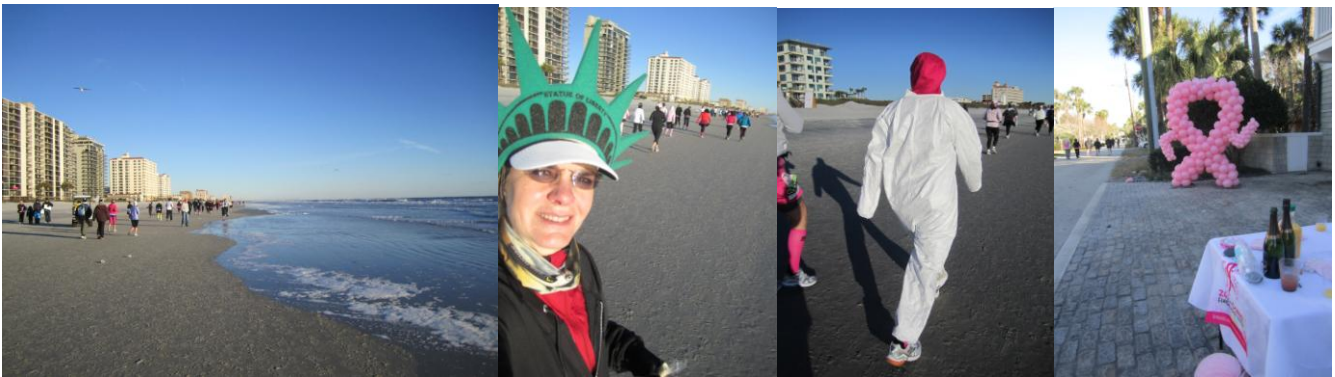
We were most willing to sit three per seat on the bus and cram everyone on so they'd finally make it to the start line; the start line had already started. There were costumes and a big screen TV. Here's Eric the 7-hour pacer.



Here's Judy who usually runs in shorts and tank no matter the weather. There were huge amounts of pink costumes. Can you call my black sweatshirt and wrapped space blanket skirt a costume? Here's a self-portrait.



Since we started at 6:30am it was a sunrise view for us. Plus a view of runners from the overpass since we had to negotiate a bridge at the first and at the end. Spectators were creative and in costumes.



We had a few miles of beach sand for running which I presume was hard packed for the earlier runners. There were numerous one piece Tyvek outfits which looked pretty warm and smart. See the champagne and balloon display?



You might think this is a jellyfish. I was certain it was a silicone breast – smile. We were still on the beach for sunup. It takes a real man to wear pink let alone pink bras. The best I saw was a picture I missed: a guy's hat with two pink ears that were a pink bra. These gals kept warm in housecoats.



This is a house on the beach. Creative or odd? There were lots of animals but not one as big as this one. Many wee dogs that were dressed in pink coats. One pug in a Harley Davidson leather jacket.



Yes, this is frozen sprinkler water formed into ice. I asked some guys about the pink bra costumes and most wanted to tell me about a mother, or a sweetheart, and most were cured cases and not a loss that they were celebrating.



The streets were marked with this pink ribbon runner and everything pink was brought out for the day. This was along Neptune Beach's cobblestone downtown.



This was only one of many 'free mammograms' offered on the course. It says: Insert Mammos Here The finish line included a big screen TV as did the start line. Here's some of the Runners' Village decoration.





A colorful finish with Pink Birdman meeting us as we crossed the finish line.

### ***Tourist notes***

Somebody with the Maniacs group arranged for a party at Culhane's Pub. It could hardly qualify as a pasta party but it went over very well. I went there three times at it turned out – on my own before most of the marathoners came to town, with the maniacs and then with Diane and Laura after the marathon.

I found \$4 a dozen oysters at Sliders on the Atlantic Beach waterfront for Thursday but passed. I covered the little beach towns and parks one day and it was good that I was alone since I was hacking away all the way. My idea of packing a lunch for the beach and sitting in the sun to get some healthy rays was nixed by the cool breezes. I did sit in one of the little series of gazebos along one of the beaches – probably Neptune Beach

Going north from Ponte Verde Beach, into Jacksonville Beach, next was Neptune Beach, and then Atlantic Beach I found so much like old rural Miami or like our lesser NJ beach areas: Some 50s stuff but very little that was elegant. I continued on up north and out at the end of the naval base to see Historic Maymont fishing village. But one could save their time – a cheap little casino and a few rough looking fishing boats and a lot of helicopters floating about in the sky apparently for security. Interestingly, you take AIA to get there but then are required to take a ferry to get to the next portion of the AIA highway. I would drive around the other side the next day.

While book hunting I found the most remarkable shopping area with just everything and every store known to man set in European style but full of red necks and fatties. Nothing wrong with the economy in Jacksonville. Name brand stores and junk stores both. Yet it is all so very artificial in its newness. Maybe some of the waterfront's old 50s dives and diners might someday be of interest like they were revived in Miami but they are pretty iffy looking now. Clearly there are nice areas tucked in here and there – they are mostly gated.

I drove most of the course that was available though some of it will be beachside and on hard packed sand. The course was lined with pink posters commemorating the run.

One day I drove north of the airport and out to Amelia Island where there were quaint historical tiny towns and buildings. So much seashore that one had to divert to drive around. There was a self-guided walking tour and a trolley tour (that I missed) showing some of the Victorian homes set among some others that would have been condemned were they in NJ.

On Friday with other runners I joined the Expo crowd downtown which then moved out to the waterfront and entertainment area. Residents reminded us to not walk there at night but when the lights came on the bridges and buildings were outlined in reflective lighting making it especially lovely in the river's reflection. Well, there were some good things about our hotel being in suburbia.

**Random tourist pictures**



From quaint and old Amelia Island to the crazy Hippy Haven of Historical American Beach couldn't be more extreme. Then on the edge were ritzy resorts like the Ritz Carlton and Omni.



Next to the crazies of American Beach you'll find Nana Dunes said to be the largest or highest on the eastern seaboard.



Downtown Jacksonville at dusk. From this vantage point there were five or six bridges within sight.

**The Irish pub called Culhane's** was singing and entertaining. Food portions were about double to triple what one should/could eat. I chose the award winning Guinness stew one time -- and only

coincidentally happened to have been wearing my Dublin marathon race shirt which of course no one noticed but me. Also had the salmon dish and a third trip there (yeah!) got the Sheppard's Pie. Here is the link to the Pub's video of food and history. [http://youtu.be/dOgljKx\\_n\\_c](http://youtu.be/dOgljKx_n_c)



Culhane's Irish Pub is just in a junk strip mall but inside it looks authentic (and remember I was just in Ireland a couple months ago). Here are some of the Maniacs who kindly included me in their dinner plans.

### ***What's next?***

I'm off to Hawaii to see a couple more islands close up. In 2004 we had a 15-day Hawaiian cruise, in 2010 we spent time in Honolulu for the marathon, and early 2011 took me hiking in Maui. Now it's a two week trip with a 10-day hiking trip in Kauai and The Big Island again with [www.Timbertours.com](http://www.Timbertours.com).

Marathons? I'd planned to do less this year but you wouldn't know it by the one's I have registered. Done this year is the Disney race and a half, Baton Rouge, Tallahassee and then this Jacksonville. Red Rock Canyon outside of Vegas and Yakima River Canyon in March, Paris is April, Capon Valley 50K and Lenox in May, Stockholm and Ayres Rock in July and Buenos Aires in October.

### ***2012 is the year of 10s and 100s***

Stockholm is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Olympics. It could be my 10<sup>th</sup> of the year, my 10<sup>th</sup> international marathon and my 100<sup>th</sup> marathon. 2012 is my 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of running and I'll hope to run the E. Murray Todd half marathon this next month in honor of Bosco who paced me for my very first run. (These numbers actually happened quite by accident; there was no conscious numbering plan -- I was surprised at the coincidences when I was counting up my marathon charm collection.)

If I can't finish Stockholm in the short cut off time, I'll have tried and then I'll try again at Ayres Rock in Australia. They happen in my birthday week. Wonder if they are 10,000 miles apart?

## ***Itinerary for Tallahassee and Jacksonville Marathons***

### **Fri Feb 3**

9:30am Depart home  
11:40am Depart Newark EWR via CO#4369  
2:19pm Arrive Jacksonville

Rental car Thrifty - Drive 3 hours / 175 miles to Tallahassee

Hotel DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Tallahassee  
101 South Adams Street, Tallahassee, FL 32301 Tele 850 224 5000

Located in the heart of downtown; Just minutes away from Florida State University, Florida A&M University and Doak Campbell Stadium and walking distance to the State Capitol, Florida Supreme Court, Leon County Courthouse, Tallahassee-Leon County Civic Center, and many government offices and museums.

Directions to hotel: CR110 West out of airport for .5 miles; I-295 South for 12.5 miles; Exit 21B take ramp right for 1-10 West towards Lake City for 148 miles; Exit 209A take ramp right for US-90 West towards Tallahassee for 8 miles; Left onto US-27/SR-61/N.Monroe for .3 miles; Right onto E. College Avenue for .08 miles; Right onto S. Adams.

### **Sat Feb 4**

Packet pick up at the DoubleTree Hotel at expo from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

11:15am to 2:45 : film footage in adjacent salon room, including "Unbreakable" and the marathon course film. Before the featured speakers, come chat / hang out with Benji Durden, 1980 Olympic Marathon team member & character in John Parker's 'Again to Carthage'

3:00pm Speaker Chuck Engle, "Marathon Recovery: Tricks From my First 270 Marathons"  
4:30pm Speaker Coach Ryan Warrenburg of ZAP Fitness: "Race Day Mental Strategies"  
5:30pm The DoubleTree has pasta bar open in its restaurant for \$13.95 and includes a non-alcoholic beverage.

5:30pm Dinner- reserved with 50-staters and maniacs at [www.LittleItalyTally.com](http://www.LittleItalyTally.com) – 1.6miles from Expo; Also dinner at Andrew's 228 at 6pm by [Shelpa.abbitt@dvn.com](mailto:Shelpa.abbitt@dvn.com) from Oklahoma

### **Sun Feb 5**

7:30am **38<sup>th</sup> Annual Tallahassee Marathon** Start on FSU with miles 3-24 on a bike path  
[www.Tallahasseemarathon.com](http://www.Tallahasseemarathon.com)

2011 Results: 234 marathoners with 86 females and they finished to 6:15 for women and 6:20 for men though they claim a 6 hour cut off. Discount to 50-states.

Description: Flat, fast, shaded & scenic St. Marks Trail. The start and finish are on the campus of Florida State University, with the finish line inside Mike Long Track. Conditions are usually dry and cool. Parking is right by the start area and plentiful; Aid stations every two miles have water, gatorade

and Gu. Electronic chip timing; Post Race finisher's medals for all finishers, food, and FREE massages courtesy of Core Institute of Massage

### **Mon or Tues Feb 6-7**

Check out, depending on tourist options, and drive to Jacksonville – advise hotels as double booked

Hotel Hampton Inn & Suites Jacksonville - Beach Boulevard/Mayo Clinic Area  
13733 Beach Boulevard, Jacksonville, FL 32224 Tele 904 223 0222  
18 miles from Expo and 5.6 miles from start/finish

Directions to hotel: From US-90/SR-a0, take ramp for I-10 towards Lake City for 152 miles; take ramp for 1-95 South towards Daytona Beach/JAX beaches for 8 miles; Exit 344 take ramp right for SR-202 towards JAX Beaches/Butler Blvd for .3 miles; Left onto S-202 East/Butler Blvd for 7.5 miles; Right ramp for .3 miles; Left onto Hodges Blvd for 2.5 miles; Right onto Fario Road for .13 miles.  
Total about 180 miles or 2:45 hours.

### **Fri Feb 10**

Noon Expo open at Prime Osborn Convention Center until 7pm  
1000 Water Street, Jacksonville FL 32204

Diane arrives into JAX via SW#124 at 10:30am and departs Sunday at 7:20pm via SW#1147 and staying at same Hampton Inn

Judy arrives noon and departs 10am Monday. Staying at host Omni Hotel downtown Jacksonville at Jacksonville Landing Riverfront Marketplace; .5 miles from Expo

Kathy D lives in area and signed up

### **Sat Feb 11**

9:00am Expo open until 6pm

6:00pm Pasta party at Convention Center

### **Sun Feb 12**

6:30am all? **5<sup>th</sup> Annual '26.2 with Donna' Marathon** including half and relay

Start at Mayo Clinic Campus, 4500 San Pablo Road, Jacksonville, FL

<http://www.breastcancermarathon.com/>

Transportation services available from designated shuttle locations

Shuttles from Wingate by Wyndham Jacksonville Mayo Clinic Area, 4791 Windsor Commons Court

2011 Results: Timed to 7:16 hours with 909 male finishers; 988 female finishers; 1897 total finishers

### **Mon Feb 13**

Turn in rental car

11:15am Depart Jacksonville JAX via CO#4368

1:30pm Arrive Newark EWRS