

Little Rock Marathon and Tourist Trip Notes

March 12-17, 2009

“Hello, my name is Diana and I am a marathon maniac” Not an official Marathon Maniac since I stopped myself as soon as I realized I’d reached the fifth level ranking and found myself checking what it would take to get to the sixth level. I will investigate the Alcoholic Anonymous (AA) ten-step program and see if that can help. We are in need of someone forming a MM ten-step program. I have seen the light and there are a lot of needy marathon maniacs. Yet I can’t stop myself and over the weekend I have committed to two more marathons in '09.

Everything was good about the Little Rock Marathon and there were precious few items to improve upon. We were blessed with next-to-perfect weather. The race director and two executive directors (Gina and Geneva) had done a wonderful job despite this only being the 7th or so annual event.

Why was it good?

- Biggest medal in the world at 1 ½ pounds and large enough to cover one’s face like a Japanese Noh mask.
- Timely start with chips and mats along the course and results up immediately to include videos of our finish.
- Interesting and touristy course complete with the Clinton Presidential Library, Quapaw historical houses, McArthur Park, the Governor’s Mansion, Central High School, a golf course, the river trail and downtown Little Rock.
- The start and finish are within walking distance of many hotels, most famously the Peabody Hotel with their famous marching ducks.
- Finishers’ shirt was well-designed, high tech, and made up for the cheesy cotton one in the race package.
- Southern hospitality by the Little Rockers.
- Pasta party was pretty okay despite the cockroaches running around the cement floor of the convention center.
- VIP tent aka Perks tent for an added small fee was a good idea and only needs extended so the food doesn’t run out for us 5:24 marathoners. Massage was available and we’ll suggest that marathoners get priority over the 5K folks.
- Post-race party at the Clinton Library and supplemental \$3 tour was excellent despite the hour long wait to get food and their running out of most selections near the end.

We will write to Geneva and Gina about our little tiny glitches and feel sure that solutions will be addressed immediately. They are that well organized (and they’re beautiful too!).

Family reunion

This was a special occasion as the event was like a family reunion. I had my sister Beverly and brother-in-law Carl, a new runner, from Columbia MO joining us, along with their friend Krista. Carl and Krista ran the half. The picture is Krista and Carl on the left, Loudean and Parker in the back, and sister Bev in the middle. I hope you know the



Liberty Ladies even though we're missing our crowns!

- Long time friend David Parker, aka Parker, from Palm Beach and now from Alabama, drove in with friend Chris as a big time surprise, and surprise it was as we hadn't expected to see Parker until Olathe, having just been with him in Miami late January. He was a non-runner when I met him and finally, after lots of effort, browbeat him into his first half and now he might do 9 full marathons in '09 and he's fast! His lovely sister from Olathe Kansas has joined our running family since we met her at her first half marathon in Atlanta, then in Charlotte, and she brought her husband. We'll see Loudean again in two weeks and her sweetheart little Marie who she appears to have "adopted" and who we'd all like to adopt and I felt such an affinity for when we met her in Charlotte.
- Peggy is from our own New Jersey running club and while we've been at many events together it was good this time to spend more time with her plus her roommate Diane from Nashville. Peggy is a new but serious MM too.
- New found friends Marv and Maryanne Winters who we met in Mobile and feel a family kinship to were in from Tulsa with a car full of lovely, smart and good looking runners. They all looked like real runners. We almost missed them we were so slow coming in and they were hurrying out to drive home. Here's a picture of the Peabody Mad Hatter and the "Marv Family."
- And again we were blessed with the company of Monica the gorgeous Cambodian Marathon Maniac who has hundreds of marathons to her credit, including many 100-milers. She keeps us on our toes and with her around we are prone to make sure we are fixed up for dinner. She even runs in full make up and always hot pink. She was with the national winner of Maniac of the Year, Yolanda, who we met in Seattle and some marathons in between. To become Maniac of the Year she had to run 65 marathons in a year. (I heard Larry who ran 120 last year was there and I ran with Chester for awhile, and he's a Maniac 10th level.)
- Not to be missed, Marie Bartoletti who everyone seems to know but who we are grateful to call a friend was there as pacer. Marie was our pacer in Shamrock's Virginia Beach a year ago and we haven't let go of her since. She's famous for running the Western States 100, Badwater's 137 miles in 120 degree Death Valley weather, as well as hundreds of pacing jobs. She's also a character that we dearly love and feel a need to protect at times. She varies from superwoman to needing us and don't we all feel that way a lot of times? She's a teacher from Pittsburg but I can't see how she spends much time in her city with all the traveling she does for marathoning.
- Dennis has been our friend since about 2004 when we met him at the George Sheehan race in Red Bank and he seeded the idea of running the Goofy at Disney which we finally did in January 2007. He and his fast runner friend Gordon joined us at the pasta dinner and Dennis came to the aid of Marie in distress the night before the marathon when she all but got hit by a 3-car pile-up. MMs are good to each other. They'd just been to Mass and it's probably a good thing as it was a really close call for Marie. This is Dennis and Gordon along with Marie at the pasta party.
- Some newcomers were met that I sure hope to meet again – Marta an attorney from NYC and her newfound childhood sweetheart (newly found through marathoning). He's a professional musician and I ran with him awhile and talked about last year's Olathe



marathon since he was wearing that shirt. Beth is a most accomplished exercise physiologist from Philadelphia area and we had dinner together on Friday night and will be meeting up again at the Illinois Marathon in April, and Lisa from NYC who shared a taxi with me, etc. It was one big social gathering.

It's not ALL marathoning

I'm trying to find a balance. Really. Most of these MMs have a job or a family or both, whereas I'm unemployed and relying on marathoning for my social life far too much to be healthy. I *think* I'd be okay without it But it's sort of like alcohol in that I'd rather not find out. I came into Little Rock early and I left late and I toured. I hope that helps the MM disease but in fact Little Rock has plenty to offer and the next day I put on many miles being a tourist.

- Peabody Hotel – The original is in Memphis and I'd seen the ducks parade there. There is also one in Orlando that I've encountered. It's a silly circus event that you first wonder why you're watching and then you find yourself coming back to hear the ringleader, see who's going to be indoctrinated as assistant ringleader, (Geneva and Gina once and Bart Yasso another time) and if the ducks will really come up the steps out of the lobby fountain, down the steps and onto the red carpet and walk the line to the elevator. It's as cute as can be to see their little duck bills looking down through the glass elevators as they move upstairs to 'home' and of course I had to go to the rooftop to see their nighttime roost, just like I did in Memphis. Yes, they're so cute I had to watch them waddle home three separate times. The Peabody is attached to the Statehouse Convention Center where the Expo was held as well as the pasta party.
- Old Statehouse – Right next door to the Peabody is the oldest statehouse west of the Mississippi and I almost missed going through it. From our hotel room we could overlook the statehouse and the river. There are period rooms, a collection of all the first ladies of Arkansas's inaugural gowns, displays of each governor (like Clinton's saxophone and his New Balance running shoes), ancient and lovely dark wood spiral staircases, and the exact late 1800s assembly rooms. Best of all, there are ghosts. Real ghosts. I'd like to meet them. There had been battles, deaths, and historical markers right at this statehouse and even Clinton's acceptance speech was held at the outdoor fountain.
- River Trail – Situated at the back of the Peabody, it goes 17 miles and runs the length of the marathon course and over the river onto the longest pedestrian bridge in the country, over to the other side to North Little Rock, by the Razorback's Stadium, the Razorback WWII submarine, a Riverboat, and across another bridge into the Farmers Market where I took one dinner with Monica. Soon there will be two more pedestrian bridges. (It's hard to figure out if Little Rock is still being built or if it's in decay but I hope it's the first scenario.) Along River Trail are numerous statues and sculpture, a medical mile of climbing rocks and slides, and many historical markers as well as gazebos and vine covered trellises.
- Clinton Presidential Library – On the end of the River Trail, jutting out over the river is the largest collection of presidential memorabilia in the country. Maybe the building would grow on you and it is impressive but I might need more understanding of its architecture to be very excited. Its big expansive panes of glass looked better at night. The complex contains a university for PR that's



in a converted railroad station and a pedestrian bridge to be linked but not yet open. There was a huge Bar BQ cook-off of dozens of tents and trailers going on to the music of a live band but unfortunately the weather was pretty chilly for full enjoyment. I walked the 15-20 minutes to the library four separate times and enjoyed the trail even more each time.

- History Museum – Right downtown and it contains historical homes restored and functioning as they were in the 1800s. Also an old rough replica homestead plus numerous separate homes complete with costumed inhabitants.
- Central High School -- We ran past this school where 9 children had tried to desegregate it in 1957 only to be turned away by the governor's order and the reserve guard. President Eisenhower had to send in the National Guard and schools were closed the entire 1957-58 year. I knew I needed to see more so I walked the 2 ½ miles to it despite the doorman telling me not to, that it was through and in the 'ghetto' – a comment that I take to mean that 1957 still partly exists. Fortunately a nice woman at the statehouse museum suggested it was fine to walk there, so I did. My introduction and warning was to make the segregation problem more real in my mind. The school building is huge has been totally kept up since it's on the national historical register and the area is a national park. A corner old fashioned Mobil filling station is perfectly preserved and will soon be added as part of the park, plus an adjoining series of arches and parklands which complete the picture. I had a picnic on the front lawn and contemplated what a momentous occasion that integration was. It's hard to imagine the schools being closed for a full school year. They recently had all 9 of the students at a 50th anniversary celebration. If you want to know the full story of the Little Rock 9, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iH4Zx96xbY>.
- State Capital – On the grounds of the state capital you'd find huge statues of those Little Rock Nine students. Along with a Vietnam Memorial, a collection of old and special trees, and other memorials. It's a huge structure, white marble and gold cupola. I took a tour of the inside and remembered my surprise in Seattle at being able to walk up to the governor's office or the secretary of state's, and here too, I climbed any stairs I could and investigated all corners of their capital. I also found their cafeteria, just like we did in Seattle.
- Governor's Mansion – Again, we'd run by it but I was hell bent on getting myself there again and on my own feet as I wanted a picture of the bust of Clinton as well as a picture of the mansion. The surrounding houses were pretty super too. I couldn't re-create the scene of the woman next door to the Governor's Mansion who cheered us on all the while seeming to wear a giant fur boa, only to find it was a giant long-haired cat wrapped around her neck. Many of us stopped to admire and/or to photograph the cat. The Governor's Mansion was another couple miles farther walk from the Central High School All in all that day I walked for about 4 ½ hours and after sitting for dinner found my first stiffness.
- Mount Holly Cemetery – The old bone yard, or bury yard as my daughter used to call them, is next to the historical Quapaw section of old historical Victorian houses. These houses include one that was used in the TV program "Designing Women" and I criss-crossed many of the streets to find the cemetery and take pictures of the houses. The cemetery contains many famous Arkansans including 6 senators, 10 governors, 14 State Supreme Court Justices, 21 Mayors and even an Indian Princess with some dating back to 1750. Again, there are a lot of ghosts here. I read a book about the ghosts of Little Rock and I believe. With more time I would have tried to cover more of the grounds but it is 20 acres after all.
- Tourist Trolley – Maricar and I had gotten onto the \$1 trolley and rode the town and across the bridge to North Little Rock and been pleasantly surprised and pleased to be given commentary.

We'd hunted a tour but they don't start until May. These trolleys are reproductions and they are electrified and soon to cover more territory. A super idea.

Calories are important

A MM has to eat a lot, yes? "We compete to eat!" says the t-shirt. Well, we found the bar a few too many times too and the Peabody bar was really handy in that it was near to the ducks' fountain, had either a jazz band or a player piano, and was a good meeting location. My eating included a real dinner at Boscos Brewery, another good selection at the local's favorite dive called Flying Fish, the pasta party which was just okay but sent me to the room for some nuts and a granola bar thereafter, the post race party with BBQ and lots of pretzels while waiting, the Farmers Market, and Subway for the trip home. And as always my own breakfast of oatmeal, nuts and fruit while in the room.

Results?

I'd like to tell you that they don't matter, that finishing with a smile and injury free is the most important thing, but I have a bit of the same MM disease and we all talk about our finish time more than we talk about our time finishing. Too bad. We're working on it. My theory is that only the winner isn't saying "I could have gone a hair faster" but maybe he/she is saying that too. It's a MM disease. It's an effort in motion.

But since I brought it up, Maricar did terrifically well at 5:05. We went out a bit fast trying to race down Marie and Parker who were the 4:30 pace group. I like to keep Maricar in sight until about the half way point and then ease off, but I lost sight of her at about mile 11 this time. I think she crossed the half way point 4-5 minutes sooner than I did at 2:31. I walked most of the second half, as usual suffering hip joint distress, and finished in 5:24. Yep, I was thinking I could have done better, but then remembering that I'm very happy to be 63 and finishing at all, let alone starting down 9 full marathons in '09 before May is through. I was 5th in age group out of 11.

Our results were made more possible by the most fortunate weather. It had rained the days before and it heated up to about 77 degrees and full sun the days after. Our mid-40s for the start and close to 60 at the end was near ideal.

The end

A nice way to end the trip was getting a surprise upgrade to first class for the flight home. I haven't been in first class for a very long time, choosing to save money in coach, and not having the Platinum Elite status that I held for about 7 years while commuting from NJ to Palm Beach. I took full advantage of the free flowing wine and the legs never once got jumpy. Then was picked up at the airport in Tom's new ritzy Lexus – first class all the way.

The Itinerary

Thu Mar 12 - Diana

8:00pm Depart EWR via CO#2753
10:32pm Arrive Little Rock

Shuttle Book with hotel 24 hours ahead for complimentary shuttle

Hotel Peabody Hotel
Three Statehouse Plaza, Little Rock, AR 72201
800 732 2639 or 501 906 4000 www.PeabodyLittleRock.com

Fri Mar 13

12:00noon Expo at #3 Statehouse Convention Center (Markham & Main Streets) to 7pm
#1 Statehouse Plaza or 100 Main Street, Little Rock AR 72201

Bev, Carl and Krista

Arrive via auto and stay 2 nights at Peabody Hotel

5:00pm .38 Special Concert – Free – to 11pm.
Smoke on the Water USA BBQ Championship at Clinton Presidential Center

Maricar

10:32pm Maricar arrives via CO from EWR

Sat Mar 14

10:00am Expo at Statehouse Convention Center (Markham & Main Streets) to 6pm
With Packet Pick Up to 8pm (2 hours later than expo)

11:00am Little Rockers Kids Marathon Final Mile Start at Woodlane and Capitol Streets

12:00noon Smoke on the Water USA BBQ Championship – free – to 11pm at Clinton Center

5pm Pasta dinner -- to 8pm
#3 Statehouse Convention Center next to the Expo and connected to the Peabody
“The Peabody Little Rock, our host hotel, will be serving a delicious pasta meal

Sun Mar 15

7:15am 5K Start at President Clinton Avenue and Sherman Street (with a 6am early start avail)
8:00am 7th Annual Marathon, half marathon, relay marathon start at same streets
Start corrals; Gatorade every 2nd mile then one every mile after 20.
Temps: Low of 28 to 55 and high of 55 to 75 degrees. See start and finish area maps.
www.littlerockmarathon.com See course map in book.
Collect a technical finishers t-shirt at end

5:30am Hatcher Perks Pavilion at River Market - booked – to 2pm
Includes gear check, private toilets, extra food, cheerleaders and much more

4:00pm Big and Bodacious Post Race Barbeque Party by Whole Hog Café
at Clinton Presidential Center to 8:00pm
1200 President Clinton Avenue Tele 501 374 4242 www.clintonpresidentialcenter.org
Tours offered for \$3 and pay at the Clinton Center at the front door
Party includes live music, food, drinks.

Mon Mar 16 -Maricar

7:15am Maricar departs via CO to EWR arriving at 10:57am

Tue Mar 17- Diana

3:10pm Depart Little Rock via CO#5631 through Houston arriving Newark at 10:23pm

Maricar's trip notes to the race director and marathonguide.com

Hi Geneva,

Excellent job! Thanks for a great memory of the Little Rock marathon. My friend Diana and I met you at New Orleans. We are the Liberty Ladies. We wear statue of liberty crowns on our heads at every marathon. We just want to say you are wonderful, organized and we felt all the little touches you added. Thank Gina too!

The following is what I posted on marathonguide.com. Keep up the good work. Job well done!

Hugs,

Maricar and Diana

I have run 36 marathons. Little Rock is one of my top 5 faves. Why?

1. Geneva and Gina's attention to detail. No race is perfect, but this one sure was close. Loved the emails sent before the race.
2. Expo was just right for the marathon size. Great variety. Easy packet pick up. Nice touch with shirt before and a tech shirt after.
3. Loved walking out of the hotel and being within walking distance to the start. Stay at the Peabody. Nothing compares. Pasta dinner was great.
4. Corral start was organized. Thanks for letting the walkers start early. Loved how relay, half and walkers HAD to wear the sign identifying them as that. There was no waiting at the start. They started right on time.
5. Weather was perfect for us in 09. You can't get any better. Course was challenging. Lots of hills, but it made it better. Spectators were sooooo great. They were just as cheery as fans from Boston or NYC. Loved the church choirs.

6. Volunteers were super helpful and nice. Southern hospitality at its' best.
7. Thanks for making water on left, gatorade on right. People need to read their pre race info booklet or listen to volunteers yelling it. It was fine the way it was organized. Water stations were heavily manned. Loved how you gave out so much food and so early in the race. They were also always prepared with Vaseline. Thanks!
8. Loved the signs with historical facts. This course was great. You get a piece of LR's history and landmarks.
9. Finish was wonderful. Volunteers willing to assist you. Thank you chip removers. I was given a tech shirt right away and a bag of food.
10. Sign up for the perks tent. Worth it. Food and massage.
11. Most of all, DO NOT EVER CHANGE the medal. I love how it is big and gaudy. It's unique and it's a collector's item. You don't see a medal like that every marathon. So for someone to throw it out, well shame on you. The least you could have done is give it as an inspirational gift to someone. Spoiled brat.
12. Post race party at Clinton library was generous. Free booze and dinner. What more can you ask for?

Suggested Improvements:

1. Geneva and Gina: You pay such close attention to details. How about being the first marathon that gives priority to marathoners at massage tents? It burns me to see someone who just run a half, 5 miles from a relay, or a smaller distance than 26.2 miles receive a massage before me. We marathoners just ran 26.2 miles. Don't we deserve a massage first over someone who just ran 5 miles? Maybe have a separate line for priority to marathoners first?
2. Buffet line at post race party could be more organized. We waited an hour to eat. Maybe at a bigger place? Maybe 2 lines?

These are minor. Your race was amazing. Do not let anyone tell you different. Thanks for the small touches. :-) Mmmmwah! from the lipstick station!

Little Rock Running on Empty, Dec 29, 2008.

www.marathonguide.com

Every March, thousands of people hit the streets of Arkansas' capitol city to participate in the Little Rock Marathon, and every year, attendance grows by about 12%.

"In 7 short years, we've been able to take the world by storm as far as marathons go," said Executive Director, Geneva Hampton.

Now that storm is being downgraded some. This year's Little Rock Marathon theme is big. The irony is that because of fewer sponsors this year, the marathon will have to cut participation by at least 1,000 runners. The marathon usually has 80-100 sponsors. This year organizers anticipate about 50.

"They have to operate their business and as far as P.R., marketing, promoting an event -- it's not part of their critical operation for their business -- that's where we kind of take a hit there," said Hampton.

The Little Rock Marathon budget is about \$500,000 dollars. Unlike other marathons, Little Rock's is self-funded. It has no financial support from the Parks and Recreation Department, although most of its proceeds help support the Parks and Recreation Department. In addition, marathon registration fees are relatively minimal, so this year the marathon is short about \$40,000 dollars. That money goes towards advertising, t-shirts, security, and medals.

"People come to our race for the medal, because we are the world's largest finishers medal -- that's what makes a difference," said Executive Director, Gina Pharis. "I think we're going to have to streamline everything."

Little Rock Attractions

Aerospace Education Center

3301 East Roosevelt Road, Little Rock, AR 72206, Located at the Little Rock National Airport, 501-371-4232 or 501-376-IMAX, This museum offers a rare treat, a Sopwith Camel F-1 aircraft on display! A full size replica of an Apollo command module is also on display. A 250-seat IMAX theater is on-site.

Gator Park

11411 West Baseline Road, Little Rock, AR 72209, 501-455-3750, Open year round, Gator Park is the perfect place for the family to go for some good ole' fashioned fun. Go-karts, paintball, two 18-hole miniature golf courses, batting cages, bumper boats, and video games are all available here.

Villa Marre

(circa 1881) 1321 South Scott Street, Little Rock, AR 72216, 501-371-0075, This fine Victorian home served as the home of Sugarbakers Design Firm on the television show Designing Women.

Wonder Place, The

10301 North Rodney Parham, Suite E2, Little Rock, AR 72227, Breckenridge Village Shopping Center, 501-225-4050, The Wonder Place is a creative playspace for kids aged 8 and under. The facility is filled with unique and imaginative play stations such as a water table, sand table, art studio, River Market, drama stage with puppets and costumes, pretend vet clinic, infant/toddler area and more.

Arkansas Governor's Mansion

1800 Center Street, Little Rock, AR 72206, 501-376-6884, Home of Arkansas' Governors since 1950. Driving tour only.

Arkansas State Capitol

(circa 1899) Woodland and Capitol Avenue, 501-682-5080, The first Legislature meeting was held in this Neoclassical building in 1911.

Central High School National Historic Site

2125 Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive, Little Rock, AR 72202, 501-374-1957, The first true test of the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka court decision played out here on September 23, 1957 when nine African-American students, the Little Rock Nine, integrated the school. It is on the American Institute of Architects' list of the most beautiful buildings.

Daisy Bates Home

1207 West Twenty-Eighth Street, Little Rock, AR 72202, A National Historic Landmark, this ranch-style house was the home of the owners of the Arkansas State Press, the only African-American newspaper in the state. During the civil rights movement, they gave refuge to the Little Rock Nine. Driving tour only.

MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History

(circa 1840s) 503 East Ninth Street, Little Rock, AR 72202, Located in MacArthur Park, 501-376-4602, Formerly Little Rock Arsenal, the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History is housed in the historic Tower Building of the Little Rock Arsenal, which was the birthplace of General Douglas MacArthur. The museum interprets Arkansas' military history from the territorial period to the present. Exhibits include the Arsenal's contribution to the Civil War during both Confederate and Union occupation.

Old State House Museum

300 West Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201, 501-324-9685, This is Arkansas' first state capitol and the oldest state capitol building standing west of the Mississippi. Several exhibits can be seen within.

Pike-Fletcher-Terry House

(circa 1840) 411 East Seventh Street, Little Rock, AR 72201, 501-372-4000, Home of the Arkansas Arts Center's Decorative Arts Museum, in 1862 this was the home of Confederate general Albert Pike, who led a brigade of Cherokee troops at the Battle of Pea Ridge.

Quapaw Quarter Historic District

1206 South Main Street, Little Rock, AR 72202, 501-371-0075, One of Little Rock's historic areas, it is filled with several antebellum and Victorian structures and includes such properties as McArthur Park, the Governor's Mansion, the U.S. Arsenal Building, and Villa Marre.

Taborian Hall

(circa 1916) Ninth and State Streets, Little Rock, AR 72201, Served as headquarters for the state chapter of the Knights and Daughters of Tabor, a national fraternity.

David O. Dodd Grave

1200 South Broadway, Little Rock, AR 72201, Located at Mount Holly Cemetery, This is the final resting place of 17-year-old Confederate spy David O. Dodd. Dodd was executed on January 8, 1864 at St. John's College by Union occupation forces after being arrested at the Ten Mile House.

Little Rock National Cemetery

2523 Confederate Boulevard, Little Rock, AR 72206, 501-324-6401, This is the final resting place of over 22,000 veterans from the Civil War to Desert Storm. The Minnesota Monument and the Little Rock Confederate Memorial are on-site.

Mount Holly Cemetery

Located at 12th Street and Broadway, Little Rock, AR 72201, What has been called The Westminster of Arkansas, this historic cemetery is the final resting place of many prominent Arkansas natives including David O. Dodd and five Confederate generals.

Old Mill

Lakeshore Drive and Fairway Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72116, Located in North Little Rock, 501-791-8537 or 501-758-1424, Seen in the opening credits of *Gone with the Wind*, this is a reproduction of an old-water-powered grist mill and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Vietnam Memorial

Located at the State Capitol, 501-682-5080, This memorial is dedicated to Arkansans who served in Vietnam. It is inscribed with the names of those who lost their lives.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

It Is the 7th Wonder of the Marathon World Little Rock Marathon Unveils Unique 2009 Marathon Finisher's Medal

(Little Rock, February 12, 2009) – Little Rock Marathon race officials unveiled the 2009 version of the world's largest marathon finisher's medal during a press conference today.

The Little Rock Marathon is presented by the Arkansas Democrat Gazette and will be held March 13 – 15 in downtown Little Rock.

"For five year running we have been recognized as having the world's largest marathon finisher's medal and for our seventh year, we decided step outside the box again with something completely different," Gina Marchese Pharis, Co-Executive Director of the Little Rock Marathon.

"Anyone can give a big medal, that is the easy part," she said, "but we wanted to add drama to this year's awards."

"We make so much fuss over our finisher's medal because most of us (marathoner finishers) are not doing the race to win it," Pharis said. "We are doing the race to finish. It is a big accomplishment and we think you should get a medal that represents what you just accomplished."

"Our race is known for coming up with something fun and different each year," Pharis said. "Athletes come from around the world to take our medal home. Only a few take home money and when it is all said and done the one thing so many cherish is that medal. They run for the hardware and every finisher takes home hardware."

The 2009 Little Rock Marathon finisher's medal is black zinc alloy and is 7 1/4 inches long and 6 1/4 inches wide. The medal features the 2009 circus theme and weighs in at a pound and a half. The medal features the race's signature globe, race director's kiss and the "race for every pace" motto.

According to Jon Scott of Maxwell Medals & Awards of Traverse City, MI, the average finisher's medal is 2.5 inches and weighs approximately 3 ounces. Maxwell Medals & Awards produces the Little Rock Marathon finisher medals, as well as medals for major races including the Bank of America Chicago Marathon and Race for the Cure.

The half marathon finisher's medal also features the 2009 race theme and is half the length of the marathon medal. According to Pharis, it is "half the distance (13.1 miles), so it is half the size" of the marathon medal. It is 3 5/8 long by 3 inches wide.

Race day is Sunday, March 15. In addition to the marathon (26.2 miles), there is a half marathon (13.1 miles) race, presented by Baptist Health; a 4 person relay marathon (26.2 miles divided into

four segments) race, presented by Alltel Wireless; a 5K (3.1 miles) un run/walk, presented by Windstream Communications and the Classic Rockers Marathon (for individuals 55+ who complete 26.2 miles over an extended time frame).

The Little Rockers Kids Marathon (26.2 miles completed over an extended time frame), presented by Arkansas Children's Hospital and Today's THV, for children 7 to 12 is Saturday, March 14 at 11 am.

Participants in all events can run, walk or do a combination of running and walking in any of the events.

Prior to race day, there is a free two-day health and fitness expo, presented by Arvest Bank, on March 13 and 14 at the Statehouse Convention Center in downtown Little Rock.

Race officials also announced highlights of the 2009 event, which include a new start time for the 5K Fun Run and start corrals for the general field. The 5K fun run will begin at 7:15 am.

Online registration and mail in registration for the Little Rock Marathon and companion races will close March 2 at midnight CST and will re-open March 13-14 if maximum registration limits have not been reached.

Race weekend is also sponsored in part by AARP Arkansas, Abbott Point of Care, Arkansas Department of Health - Tobacco Prevention & Cessation, Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield, Arkansas Lamination Products & Services Inc., Arkansas Specialty Orthopaedics, Ben E. Keith Foods, Chick-fil-A, Clear Mountain Beverages/Premium Refreshment Services, Coleman Dairy, Conway Chamber of Commerce, Crowne Plaza Little Rock, Datamax of Arkansas, Diamond Bear Brewery, Easy Runner, EMS Innovations, Inc, Fence World, First United Methodist Church, Fox 16 News, Gatorade Sports Marketing, Grace Communications, Hammer Nutrition, Hatcher Agency (presenting sponsor of the Perks Pavilion), Heart Clinic Arkansas (presenting sponsor of the 2009 training program and provider of race day medical services), Heart of Arkansas, Image One, KKPT The Point, Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau, Magna 4 Printing, North Little Rock Visitors Bureau, Peabody Little Rock (presenting sponsor of the Pasta Party), Pepsi Americas, Philips Medical Systems, Road Safe Traffic, Roller Funeral Home, Stellar Sun, Fiser Truck & Tractor/Twin City Tractor & Equipment, University of Phoenix (presenting sponsor of Athlete's Village), UPS, Verizon Wireless, and Whole Hog Café (presenting sponsor of the Post Race Party).

For information, visit www.littlerockmarathon.com or call 501-371-4770.

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Little Rock Parks and Recreation (LRPR) oversees 53 parks, four community centers, the Adult Leisure Center, War Memorial Fitness Center, four swimming pools, two tennis centers, the River Market, the Riverfest Amphitheatre, three golf courses, and the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History. The LRPR system includes more than 5,000 acres of designated parks and open space. In addition, the organization offers a wide-range of youth and adult recreational and sports leagues, after-school and summer playground programs for children ages 6-15, outdoor recreation, therapeutic recreation and programs for seniors. Funds raised will continue to support parks and recreational programs for all ages. For more information about Little Rock Parks & Recreation please visit www.lrpr.org.

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Average Ratings: Course - ★★★★★ Organization - ★★★★★ Fans - ★★★★★

★★★★★ **Fabulous!** (about: 2007)

Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 5

A. C. from Puerto Rico (9/3/08)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Little Rock Marathon

Of the 12+ marathons I've run (big city and small town), Little Rock is definitely the best. The weather was chilly when I ran, but all the better to run in, my dear. The organization, the spectators, the aid stations/snacks during the race and the post-race party were all top-rate. I enjoyed the course, too, and thought it gave an out-of-towner a nice sense of the city. Loved it and recommend it to everyone who wants to run or walk a half or full.

★★★★★ **What a great experience for a first marathon!** (about: 2008)

Course: 4 Organization: 5 Fans: 5

B. L. from Jacksonville, FL (7/20/08)

1 previous marathon | 1 Little Rock Marathon

This was my first marathon and what an experience it was! The spectators were never ending and really kept you motivated... especially through the Hillcrest neighborhood, around miles 14-17. Beautiful course through downtown, taking you past several Little Rock points of interest including the Arkansas Arts Center, River Market district, Central High School, Governor's Mansion, Quawpaw and Hillcrest historical districts, Clinton Presidential Library. Aid stations were very well stocked and manned, and the volunteers were very helpful. Awesome medal and finisher's tech shirt! The only critique for next year would be to organize the start with the walkers at the back of the starting area. Thank you, Little Rock, for such a GREAT experience!! I highly recommend this race!!!

★★★★★ **I love hills** (about: 2008)

Course: 4 Organization: 5 Fans: 4

M. B. from Shreveport, Louisiana (5/20/08)

1 previous marathon | 1 Little Rock Marathon

This is a great, small marathon, spectators were good, and the churches along the route did a great job. I thought the course was great - the out-and-back didn't bother me because I was just happy that it was flat. Even from a Louisiana perspective, the hills are not bad. The long one from 13-16 is not steep and flattens out occasionally. The short, steep one at about 23 did hurt mentally and physically. The aid stations were well stocked and had plenty of volunteers. The shirts and medal were nice. I would have liked a little more food afterwards, but I didn't opt for the extra to be in the tent.

★★★★★ **The race was a wonderful experience for me and my** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 4 Fans: 5

A. S. from Whittier, Ca (4/25/08)

6-10 previous marathons | 1 Little Rock Marathon

I totally enjoyed everything about the marathon and Little Rock. For those who wished for a better hotel, the Peabody WAS the best, and those who think that a big medal is embarrassing, please think twice about accepting a GIFT that is well deserved. We run because we love to run, and everything else is gravy. I can't end this without saying my husband, six other people, and I went to Little Rock without really knowing what to expect, but I have say we were not disappointed.

My husband and I stayed an extra two days just to eat the food at the Flying Fish and to visit all the historical sites in the immediate area. We are still looking for a restaurant that can serve the dishes (and totally enjoyed) at the Flying Fish. A note to all newcomers: please save yourselves some misery and disappointment - don't stop at the Flying Burrito. (YUCK!) Keep walking; there are many places to eat. We hope to return to Little Rock someday; if not, I hope that those who come after us will truly enjoy the love of the race and the exceptional kindness that we experienced in the town of Little Rock, Arkansas.

★★★★★ **great experience for my first marathon!** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 4

H. C. from London, AR (4/20/08)

1 previous marathon | 1 Little Rock Marathon

This was my first full marathon, and it was a great experience. I loved all of the hills. I wasn't quite mentally ready for the out-and-back portion of the race, but I will be next year.

It took me longer than expected due to a pulled muscle a month before the race. However, when I finally crossed the finish line, I was treated like I had just won.

Once I received my medal, I threw up (due to the heat). And within seconds, there were 5 volunteers around me with a wheelchair. I was very surprised! And thankful.

In response to the finisher who did not receive the finisher's shirt size they had preregistered for: There were only larges when I crossed the finish line, and I needed a small. The week following the race I emailed Geneva, and she sent me the size I needed!

★★★★★ **Challenging course** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 4 Fans: 4

N. B. from Kansas City, Missouri (3/20/08)

6-10 previous marathons

I gave the course 5 stars: The course was a tactical challenge for me. If I had just hills I would have known what to do but they were combined with a series of rises that had a cumulative affect on me and wore me down. I knew past mile 17 would be the place to make up time; but, my legs gave me only 1 to 1 1/2 good miles after 17 and then started shutting down from the previous miles. I hit a wall and had to crawl. I want to come back to fine tune the results.

Organization: 4 stars because walkers were identified by their bibs and it would not have taken much effort to corral this group behind the runners.

Spectators: 4 stars - nice crowds and enthusiasm; couldn't ask for more. But, I've run Twin Cities and nothing compares so far.

Lodging Stay at the Peabody. I paid about \$100 a room and got the best service I've had in a long time. I felt like I got a deal for the quality service I received. There is NOTHING like having someone provide excellent service - making you feel like you are their only care in the world. I felt spoiled and it made my stay great regardless of my race results.

★★★★★ **GREAT ORGANIZATION, FRIENDLY FOLKS** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 5

J. B. from KEITHVILLE, LA (3/19/08)

6-10 previous marathons | 1 Little Rock Marathon

Quick, efficient packet pickup. The start area well organized, big enough for the number of runners. The first mile was slow and crowded due to inconsiderate walkers and joggers positioning themselves near the front. Got past them soon enough. The hills did not run as tough as I expected, but I did have to adjust pace to keep my heart rate out of the red. The out-and-back section was ok with me, only because I'd never run the course before. It is a marathon; it should not be too easy.

Well done by the staff and volunteers. My regrets to the family and friends of the runner who did not get home ok.

★★★★★ **Challenging but great marathon** (about: 2008)

Course: 4 Organization: 4 Fans: 5

L. H. from Kansas Ciity (3/17/08)

6-10 previous marathons | 1 Little Rock Marathon

We trained for the hills and were prepared. Great spectators and organization at the expo, and terrific aid stations! Couldn't ask for better support or stations along the course. The bands and great stations made even the out-and-back enjoyable.

Two improvement opportunities: 1. More water at the finish. I needed a drink before walking back to the hotel, but since I didn't pay for the VIP tent, there wasn't any available. 2. Walkers need to line up in the appropriately to start. There was a lot of dodging walkers who were directly in the middle. I read where the race directors had instructed them to start early or line up appropriately, so I'm not sure what else they could do, but it was frustrating all the same.

★★★★★ **Thank you** (about: 2008)

Course: 4 Organization: 5 Fans: 4

B. S. from Iceland (3/15/08)

50+ previous marathons | 1 Little Rock Marathon

First of all, I want to thank you for a great course. Usually I run, but because I got injured this winter, I had to walk this time. Yes, the hills were challenging, but thank God they also ran downwards. Your staff along the course and the service were very good. Thank you.

I'm just wondering now when they're going to add in the finishing times for the walkers.

★★★★★ **This Marine was challenged and loved it!** (about: 2008)

Course: 5 Organization: 5 Fans: 3

J. L. from Richardson, Texas (3/14/08)

11-50 previous marathons | 1 Little Rock Marathon

If you are looking for an exceptionally well organized race that will challenge your marathon skills, then this is the race for you. I loved the hills! The hill around miles 14-17 was a challenge, as I usually hit my wall at 16, but the scenery was great. I especially loved the wooded decline. Additionally, the out-and-back portion tests your mental toughness, as it can be windy and seems to go on forever. This is a great place to make up some time. Likewise the hill around mile 24 was a great final test. The finishers chute was well run and efficient, and was not confusing. If you were lucky enough to attend the VIP tent following the race, it did not disappoint, as the volunteers were great and the chow hit the spot. This is a superb race and I look forward to next year. A crisp salute to the Chicks in Charge (CIC) - race directors Geneva and Gina - for putting together a great marathon. I'll be back - and keep the medal big!