

## ***Vancouver Washington Marathon by Judy Altman***

Vancouver, Washington USA!

June 2012

Beautiful area...think small town version of Portland, OR or Seattle. I flew into Portland, Oregon, and from there it's about a 15 minute drive to Vancouver, WA.

A super-duper winning point about this marathon is the location of the START and FINISH LINE. It's right smack downstairs at the host hotel...well actually, you need to walk about 10 or 20 steps. The start (and finish) of the race is at lovely Esther Short Park across the street from the host hotel, the Hilton. The hotel offers a runner's pasta plate special for \$10. Also, we only needed to drag ourselves from our room to the hotel elevator to go downstairs to the Expo activities and talks. Bart Yasso was the special guest. At the Expo, I saw a couple of people from the Atlanta area...the first was a girl who was working at the expo and now resides in Vancouver. She saw my tie-dyed Phidipides shirt from Jeff Galloway's Atlanta running store, and she told me she used to work there. The 2nd Atlanta area resident was a very, very teeny tiny runner in an Atlanta Track Club t-shirt who had come to this marathon to beat the heat, I guess. She was that type who makes you wonder if she eats at all...and the type who makes you wonder if she could just crack or snap like a twig...ANYWAY, much, much later while yours truly was stuffing my face with excruciatingly yummy Starbucks pastries and reading the newspaper at the airport, before boarding my flight home, I READ THAT SHE WAS THE FEMALE MARATHON WINNER!

I loved the Farmers Market held both Sat and Sun at Esther Short Park. I'm not sure if there were 50, or maybe even 80 booths, but there were loads of happy people selling Washington apples, cherries, FUNNEL CAKES (yep, a personal favorite), strawberries, BREAD, fudge, ethnic foods, trinkets, jewelry, clothing items, plants, flowers, and more... and lots of friendly pets were there, in a pet friendly, people friendly atmosphere. Nice, nice, nice people living in Vancouver...maybe their minds are affected by the relaxed lifestyle and beautiful scenery.

FEAR (due to my performance at my last couple marathons) caused me to hunker down in my hotel room Sat afternoon. I knew I would be doing a lot of sightseeing Sunday morning at the marathon, so I chose to cower in fear in my room Sat afternoon. The marathon did not disappoint in its sightseeing aspects. I DID INDEED "VISIT" the places I had (briefly) considered visiting, before instead hunkering. Saw the "Mighty Columbia River," Fort Vancouver, the beautiful homes at Fort Vancouver called Officers Row, pretty sweet smelling flowers along picturesque back roads, Pearson Air Field, the Old Apple Tree Park where the first apple trees in Washington were planted at the Fort (and they say that one of the original ones still stands-it's roped off), the Land Bridge, which commemorates the Lewis & Clark Expedition and connects the Fort with the Columbia River Waterfront Trail, and more.

The actual marathon? You want to know about the actual marathon...OK...if you want. The full marathon starts at 7am, and although they officially have a 7 hour time limit, you are allowed to finish if you need more time. There were still a couple people behind me when I finished at 7 and 1/2 hours plus...surprisingly. The half marathon starts at 9 am and they officially have a five hour time limit. The first 13 miles of the full marathon course were just lovely and mostly flat...I was so happy, and foolishly confident, and relieved, after being so worried the night before...I chatted with 50 Stater Eugene DeFronzio, and stayed with him until MY 3RD BATHROOM STOP, somewhere around mile 15 or so...then the hills and warmth and humidity came in that last part...the bridge of my nose was burned despite my sunblock. SO GLAD TO MAKE IT IN...friendly people still there smiling at the finish line...they didn't seem to mind a bit that I came in so late...and that's just what a back of the backer needs at the finish line, too... a smile, not a grump. Went back to my hotel room, looking forward to the hotel's happy hour menu of great offerings. I showered, and sat down...AND BIG

SURPRISE...COULDN'T GET UP THE ENERGY TO LEAVE MY ROOM UNTIL THE NEXT MORNING WHEN IT WAS TIME TO GO TO THE AIRPORT!