

Waco Texas Marathon Trip Notes January 29-February 1, 2010



When one thinks of Waco, immediately comes to mind the 1993 federal siege of the Branch Davidian complex (which isn't even in Waco.) What should come to the marathon-mind is "The Toughest Little Marathon in Texas." Not much advertised, it does without doubt live up to its name of "little" and "tough" but it's much more from being very well organized and over a gorgeous course. If that's not enough, its main focus is supporting the organization matching bone-marrow donors and recipients.

Why come to Waco's "Toughest Little Marathon in Texas"?

- Amazing hospitality by race directors Nancy and Debbie. It would be tough to find better except maybe in Little Rock which is also famous for two women race directors and their hospitality. Just meeting the famous Nancy Goodnight who's a world class runner in her own right might be worth the trip.
- You're not only doing something for your health, you help raise funds for the Miracle Match, a National Marrow Donor Program.
- Weekend includes a 5K and kids run on Saturday. *These pictures are of Susan, honorary race chairman and mother of three, pending her own Miracle Match transplant.*
- Sweet little expo with give-away products that's not little and includes loads of free Snickers Bars, ClifBlocs and other goodies.
- T-shirt (cotton), a logo hat, and a reusable bag.
- Pasta dinner that's generous for \$10 if pre-sign up and still a bargain at the \$14 door price.
- Dinner featured speaker Barefoot Rick Roeber. See www.barefootrunner.org. There's a barefoot division too.
- Starts and finishes directly across from the Hilton Hotel with at least 3 other hotels close nearby and another one being built.
- Course that's varied and as scenic as it gets through estates, parks, along the river and over a famous and historical suspension bridge for the finish.
- Course markings were perfect long-and-continuous chalk marks complementing cones all along the course and one couldn't go astray (like I did in Tucson).
- Fluid stations that not only are well stocked and well manned but with more food than I can remember (other than maybe at Lake Placid due to their Ironmen training.) We had choices of oranges, bananas, candies, Snickers, ClifBlocs, pretzels, chips, etc. at most every fluid station.
- Finisher's jacket of nice quality, with zippered pockets, periwinkle color and Miracle Match logo for marathoners. (The half marathoners received a long-sleeved tech shirt.)



- Food by award winning Waco Cookin' Cowboys at the finish line – a big fajita bar with chicken, beef and grilled onions.
- Jamba Juice smoothies, many types of beers, and Barefoot wines. (Funny, but I think it's NO relationship to the barefoot runner.)

So marathoners, listen up. If you want treated well, go to Waco. If you want to know how a marathon should be organized, watch Nancy Goodnight who is literally everywhere and answers every email and is at the finish line to congratulate every marathoner who crosses. If you want loads of goodies to take home, go to Waco. If you want a full meal of fajitas after the marathon, go to Waco. If you want a very nice jacket, go to Waco.



Here's Nancy! Pretty, talented, dedicated, answers emails, never without a smile and I'm told this is only one of many volunteer projects she handles. Is this cute little young one next to George Bush (George came to dinner!) related to Nancy? Her daughter? Certainly trained by Nancy as they were all very kind, hospitable and helpful.



Was everything perfect? Nope – the weather was tough

It wasn't as cold as the 2 degrees (wind chill) at Jackson two weeks before, but at an unanticipated 23 degrees, we were mostly all in tights and jackets and many of us kept our trash bags for a few miles and still shivered. There was snow in the air for part of the start.

Despite the cold, these residents came out and supported us to the bitter end. It must be the southern hospitality as we saw that in Jackson too. I've heard there are generally more but this was plenty and the fluid stations were fully supported.

The organizers set up a big tent with restaurant-type heaters so we huddled there with our fajitas, wine and beer and the end.

Rain and flooding caused adjustment to the course

It's true – I'm famous for bringing the bad weather with me and this time was no exception. I was at New Jersey's 2002 Northeaster, a string of record hot temperatures in late 2006 and 2007, Boston's 2007 Northeaster, Chicago's 2007 record heat and cancellation, Capon Valley's 2008 swollen creeks, Lewis & Clarks' 2008 Hurricane Ike and cancellation, Louisville's record heat in 2009, Olathe's 2009 snow and cancellation, Jackson's 2010 record cold and state-of-emergency water loss, and surely there were more. Now the Waco newspaper headline "Record Rainfall" with Thursday bringing 5.3" of rain. The rain had just ceased as I arrived but Lake Waco (see picture) had overflowed and some modifications had to be made to the course at the last minute. It's so unbelievable that the weather was so tough that I have attached the press at the end.



Was the course longer than 26.2 miles? If it was, it sure can't be blamed on the race director who had to change the course at the very last minute due to the flooding. Though some marathoners were saying their GSP showed a longer distance, who cares. Well, unless they were in the money.

There are many pictures and descriptions of the course at the bottom of this report.

Was the course hilly? Here - judge for yourself. If you know our NJ training course, then relate the real hills to Beacon Hill Golf Course all of which gave me an edge since I run down just fine and always walk up anyway. If I weren't strong on the downhill however I'd still be out there.



Results

This marathon was reasonably consistent for me and in fact coincidentally consistent with the super cold MS Blues Marathon two weeks ago at 5:49. Better yet -- I never mind receiving a first prize in my age group even if it's due to there being no one else older than me. The advantages of a small marathon are multi and the awards are just a start. Hospitality, goodies and TLC never hurt anybody. Even better – I remain grateful for any run and blessed that the legs held up for 18 last year plus a number of major hikes.

That doesn't mean there isn't any discomfort. I'm heading to Adrienne my best massage friend. I presume it was the significant downhill running that caused my hips plus mid-section to be unusually sore the couple days after the marathon.

Yet the body felt sufficiently healthy to have a bit more confidence about the year ahead of me with 20-plus marathons either paid for or in commitment stage. There's Austin in two weeks, followed by Tampa's Gasparilla the last day of February, followed on by three in March: B&A for David Williams 50th, D.C. National and Cape May in honor of Marv Winters soon-to-be/upcoming 50th. Can that really be 4 marathons in 5 weeks? April is a rest with only Salt Lake City but May brings the NJ half where David gets his 50-states plaque, Capon Valley WV's rough and tumble 50K and Boise Idaho before finishing out May with a 6-day Grand Canyon Rim-to-River-to-Rim hike. June is a 6-day Columbia River Gorge hike, and later the Pacific Crest Trail marathon, followed by an early July rest before heading to Rio de Janeiro for a mid-July marathon. I'll save details of the second half of the year until confidence in the legs grows stronger.

Accommodations at Waco were easy

Probably staying at the host hotel is the best idea as the start and finish are immediately in front of the hotel. The hotel has a shuttle and a restaurant. Other ideas include the next door Courtyard by Marriott and the Residence Inn by Marriott 4-5 blocks away. If you know that I am gifted with a Marriott friends and family deal, you won't be surprised to know that I walked the 4-5 blocks. I had a full hot breakfast and internet but I didn't have a shuttle though I hitched a ride on the incoming portion. Behind the Residence Inn is the shell of a building said to be a planned luxury 5-star hotel.

It's a wee bit of a stretch to imagine a 5-star getting filled but maybe such a luxury facility will help clean up some of the blight.

Waco seems to have the makings of a tourist destination with a zoo, river trail, lots of bike paths, many pedestrian bridges and open areas for build up. When quizzing some residents as to what was going wrong downtown, there was some grumbling that adjacent Baylor University bought up the land(s) and let it sit dormant. If so, they'll one day want to see their investments pay off and do something with the land.

Traveling to Waco

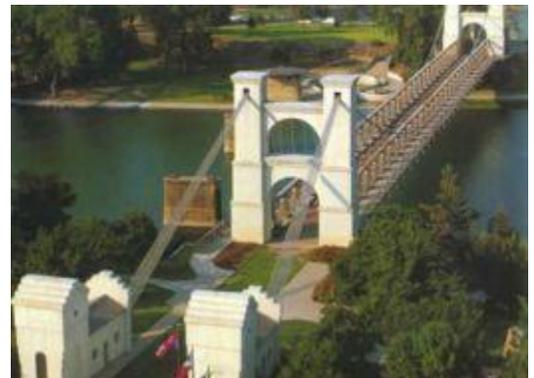
I flew through Houston and then had a Colgan Air connection. It was not very nice; it requires getting to Terminal A via old fashioned bus. Once there it's stark and boarding is not from a ramp but from the old fashioned bus and then stairs out on the tarmac. Even worse than the delays (weather related) are the ugly and uncomfortable Colgan Airplane – it's a turboprop. And remember the Buffalo disaster? It was Colgan Air! One might do better going into Dallas or Austin and renting a car. Dallas is about 1 ½ hour's drive. While you don't need a car once in Waco, if you're staying a couple days it could be nice to drive through the university campus to visit the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and the Sports Hall of Fame.

The airport is quaint with only one tiny terminal, workers who do some of everything, and a TSA section that doesn't open until a half hour before a flight.

(On the security subject: for those brave enough to read this far, I'll give you an important travel tip: Be warned that some flights have been closing their doors 20 minutes before scheduled time which is their right. I met others (remember my Jackson experience?) who got caught in the security line and related searches and missed their flights -- to great expense.)

Waco's Suspension Bridge is the mainstay of the park. It's also the start and finish line of the weekend's events. It spans the Brazos River that we ran along and could see ice flows and hear the river's fast movement.

Some history: Prior to the bridge being built, it was difficult to cross the Brazos River, the only way being a ferry. As Waco began to grow with the Chisholm Trail, local businessmen decided a bridge would assist the city's growth. Waco had become a stopping place for cattlemen as they drove their herds to market. Waco business leaders received a charter from the state in 1866 to build a permanent toll bridge over the Brazos.



The bridge was built by THE John Roebling who built the Brooklyn Bridge with the same technology and style in 1883. This bridge cost about \$140,000 to build. The Waco Suspension Bridge has twin double-towers that anchored the span and was considered quite a marvel of engineering for its time. These towers contain nearly 3 million locally-made bricks. The bridge was a toll bridge and collected its first toll on January 1, 1870. With cattle being charged at 5 cents a head to cross in addition to the pedestrian traffic, it didn't take long for the bridge to become profitable since it was the only bridge to cross the Brazos. By 1971, the bridge had seen over 100 years of traffic and it was decided that it was time to retire the bridge from vehicular traffic. The bridge is now open to foot traffic only and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. During the spring and summer months it's not uncommon to see teens in prom attire or future brides in wedding gowns posing for pictures on the bridge. Quite a few people have even held their wedding ceremony on the bridge. This is the site of a yearly 4th of July celebration with fireworks display.

The Bridge, park area with host hotel in background, and the river.



Dr. Pepper Museum



Right downtown, in an unfortunately blighted neighborhood, stands this Museum housed in the 1906 Artesian Manufacturing and Bottling Company building. The 100 year-old building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the "Home of Dr Pepper" and receives the support of Cadbury Schweppes Americas Beverages, the parent company of Dr Pepper. This turn of the century manufacturing district and the vacant bottling plant was in a sad state of repair in a neighborhood comprised mostly of abandoned warehouses that was officially declared as "blighted" by the City. It was the hope of the City and the Chamber that the museum would be a catalyst for renewed energy and growth in the area, with the potential for restaurants and shops in the old warehouses down the street similar to the "West End" district in Dallas. Dr Pepper Company donated the historic building to a non-profit organization in 1988 and renovation began in 1990 and partially opened in 1991. All three floors were finally opened in 1997.

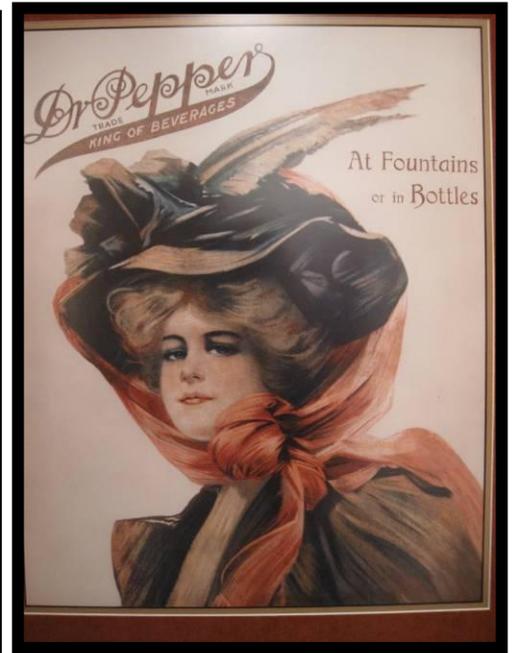


The Museum is home to the W. W. Clements Free

Enterprise Institute created to educate Texas school children and adults about the economic system that underlies American life. The program uses the soft drink industry as a model to teach about developing, producing, and marketing products.



I'm a Pepper! I loved the old posters as well as the store creations and old drug store counters.



Shopping and restaurants are in an old factory building within a block of the Hilton practically on river's frontage. There might be four different restaurants plus bits of art shops. Otherwise downtown is about six blocks in and through this blighted neighborhood scene before coming to the remnants of an old Western looking town.

County Capitol building next to Heritage Square was about a block from the convention center and the Hilton host hotel.



Baylor University is the oldest university in the state and the largest Baptist University in the world. Much of the first portion of the course ran through the university to include up and down steps.



No, I didn't take these pictures. I never saw the sun but I did see the buildings plus much more campus.

More?

There's a zoo, a couple sports museums, a sculpture yard, the county capitol building, a river walk trail, some cute little restaurants and shops downtown and plenty of bicycle trails and parks to see. I didn't need more days but had the weather been more forgiving, I would have been sorry to leave Waco so soon.

Would I recommend this marathon?

You bet! If you like little marathons with a big feel, this is it. Tell your marathon friends because Nancy Goodnight has no advertising budget but she deserves the publicity.

Itinerary

Fri Jan 29

10:45am Depart Newark (EWR) through Houston
4:39pm Arrive Waco Texas (ACT)

Taxi best mode for \$20-\$23 – call 254 756 1861 when landed

Hotel Residence Inn by Marriott
501 University Parks Drive, Waco, Texas 76706 (.3 miles or 4-5 blocks from host hotel)
Tele 254 714 1386

Host Hotel Waco Hilton, 113 S University Parks Dr, Waco, Texas 76701 Tele: (254) 754-8484
The Hilton is located across the street from the start/finish line. The Hilton is also the location for the Expo, Packet Pickup and the Pasta Dinner. Hilton has a shuttle.

Sat Jan 30

8:30am One Mile and Kids Marathon
9:00am 5K event
10:00am Expo until 5:30pm at host hotel Hilton

5:30pm Pasta Dinner to 8 pm with presentation at 6:30. Our keynote speaker for the evening will be Rick Roeber who is one of the nation's foremost "Barefoot Runners". The price of the Pasta Dinner ticket is \$12 in advance or \$14 at the door. (Paid \$10 with pre-registration.)

Announcing a new marathon division - BAREFOOT! That's right - barefoot running is coming to central Texas! We will have noted barefoot marathoner Rick Roeber with us race day as we open our newest division. Rick will also be our keynote speaker at the pasta dinner Saturday evening. See Rick's website www.barefootrunner.org – "Glorifying Jesus one sole at a time." That's a quote – you can't make this stuff up! "Barefoot Rick" Roeber is an avid barefoot runner that has been running exclusively barefoot for more than six years. His passion for barefoot running has allowed him to run more than 15,000 miles barefoot since the fall of 2003. Seldom has he missed a day not running and has currently runs daily barefoot since July 28 2007. He has completed 49 barefoot marathons and two ultra marathons of 40+ miles. Barefoot Rick uses his notability to raise awareness and donations for various charities through his Souls For Soles organization. In addition, he is a speaker at various running venues, schools, churches and outreaches where he shares words of inspiration to both runners and non-runners alike.

Sun Jan 31

7:30am Miracle Match Marathon also billed as "The Toughest Little Marathon in Texas"
<http://mmm.sw.org> -- see course description below and change to include the award winning zoo on the course. Massages available

Twenty Six point two miles of Central Texas hills make for a challenging course. Marathoners around the country consider ours to be one of the most scenic and challenging courses you can run. Highlighting Waco's most valuable assets, the race runs through the Baylor campus, up historic Austin Avenue, climbs up Lake Shore Drive, and tackles the hills of McLennan Community College. The last portion of the course requires the athletes to dig deep and conquer the gorgeous but relentless hills of Cameron Park. Running along the beautiful Brazos River, the final two miles are welcome as they are flat and fast. Victory is yours as you cross the historic suspension bridge, making for a fabulous one-of-a-kind finisher photo!

Mon Feb 1

12:47pm Depart Waco through Houston

8:40pm Arrive Newark

Participants:

732 804 7514

Diana cell

Angela Tortorice (sp?) friend of Larry Macon

Larry Macon

888 724 2811

Race Administrator

254 405 2518

Nancy Goodnight, Race Director, cell

Marathon, Half Marathon and Relay Race Date: Sunday, January 31, 2010
5K, 1-Mile and Miracle Match KIDS Race Date: Saturday, January 30, 2010

Our Course - The Miracle Match Marathon is a highly challenging marathon course. Please visit our [route page](#) for a complete description of the courses for the full marathon, half marathon, breakdown on the type of terrain for the relay, as well as the 5K and 1-Mile course. The marathon course has been issued a measurement certificate by USA Track and Field, certification number **TX08113ETM**



Wheelchair athletes are welcome to participate in the Miracle Match Marathon. Wheelchair participants must be trained athletes. No motorized wheelchairs are allowed. Only racing chairs or handcycles are permitted. Wheelchair athletes must use only their own physical ability to move their racing chair or handcycle. Wheelchair athletes must wear an ANSI approved helmet during the competition. Sorry - no baby strollers or pets are allowed on the marathon or 5K course. Strollers are allowed on the one-mile fun run.

Timing: We will be using chip timing for all races held Sunday, January 31st. Chip timers can be picked up at the Expo on Saturday starting at 10 am, or race day beginning at 6:30 a.m. Timing will be provided by the Waco Striders for the 5K or 1-mile events on Saturday.

Directions to the Start/Finish Line - The starting and finish line for all races are at Indian Springs Park by the suspension bridge. From IH-35, both northbound and southbound, exit at University Parks Drive, exit 335B. Turn west on University Parks and continue approximately four blocks to Indian Springs Park. The park is located at the 100 block of south University Parks, across the street from the Waco Hilton and one block east of the Courtyard Marriott. Parking is located on Franklin and Washington streets, one block from Indian Springs Park.

Showers Available - There will be showers available for runners to use at the Bledsoe Miller Recreational facility approximately ½ mile from the finish line. Please bring your own towel and soap!

Start Times

Saturday, January 30

7:00 a.m. - Day of event registration and packet pickup. Race day registration closes at 8:15.

8:30 a.m. - One Mile Fun Run/Walk

9:00 a.m. - 5K

Awards will be given as soon as possible as each race category finishers are identified.

10:00 a.m. - Expo Opens - packet and chip pickup for Sunday races available

5:30 p.m. - Expo closes. Pasta Dinner is open.

6:30 p.m. - Special Program presented at Pasta Dinner.

Sunday, January 31

6:00 a.m. - Day of event registration and packet pickup begins. Race day registration closes at 7:15.

7:30 a.m. - Marathon, Half-Marathon and Relays begin

Awards will be given as soon as possible as each race category top finishers are identified.

Miracle Match Marathon Expo and Pasta Dinner - The Miracle Match Expo will be held on Saturday, January 30 from 10 am until 5:30 pm, at the Waco Hilton. The expo will be followed by a wonderful

Pasta Dinner from 5:30 until 8 pm. The presentation will begin at 6:30. Our keynote speaker for the evening will be Rick Roeber who is one of the nation's foremost "Barefoot Runners". The price of the Pasta Dinner tickets is \$12 in advance or \$14 at the door.

Registration Fees - There are four fee categories

- **Early Registration** - Those received by December 1st will receive a **discount!**
 - **Regular Registration** - December 2nd through January 23
 - **Late Registration** - Registrations received after January 24 through race day will have a late fee of \$10
 - **Race Day Registration** - Race day registrations will be accepted but will have an additional \$10 fee
- Specific fees for each race event are listed on the [Registration page](#).

Two Ways to Register -

By Mail: Registration forms are available in PDF format below. You can view and print the form for the event of your choice. Please complete your form and mail it in with the appropriate fees.

[General Registration form](#)  (Marathon, Half Marathon, 5K race and one mile fun run)

[Marathon Relay](#)  forms. See 50-state discount. **Online:** Register online through marathonguide.com.

Packet Pickup - Marathon, half-marathon and relay participants can pick up their race packets and chip timers beginning Saturday, January 30 from 10:00 until 5:30 at the Expo. Packets will also be available at the Pasta Dinner from 5:30 until 8 pm. Packet and chip pickup race day (Sunday, January 31) will begin at 6:00 a.m. at the starting line in Indian Springs Park.

5-K and 1-mile participants can pick up their race packets (participant bag, T-shirt, bibs) Saturday, January 30 at the starting line beginning at 7:00 a.m.

Accommodations - The official Marathon hotel is the **Waco Hilton**, 113 S University Parks Dr, Waco, Texas 76701, (254) 754-8484. The Hilton is located just across the street from the start/finish line. Reservations can be made by calling 254-754-8484. Be sure to tell them you are with the Miracle Match Marathon to be eligible for the room block discount. The Hilton is also the location for the Expo, Packet Pickup and the Pasta Dinner.

Waco also offers several other hotels in the downtown area as well. For additional information about Waco or other hotels in the area, contact the [Waco Convention and Visitors Bureau](#).

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The Full Marathon: ---([Marathon Map](#))

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Water will be available approximately each mile. Electrolyte drinks (Gatorade) will be available at every other mile the first half of the marathon, then every mile after the half. Fruit and other snacks will be available at some rest stops. Portable toilets will be available every few miles.

Course Photos beginning with **The Starting Line**



The sun coming up over our starting line - the beautiful Waco Suspension Bridge.



The first five miles of the course are through Baylor University.
The Baylor Loop:



Looping through Baylor.



Interesting sights in the University.



Running by the science building at Baylor.



The second part of the marathon course is a gradual climb on Austin Avenue.



Homes along Austin Avenue.

The Historic District:



Tree lines streets of Austin Avenue.



Historic homes on Austin Avenue.



After climbing a steady climb to the half, the marathon route turns to the hills of Ridgewood Country Club and the Lake.



Beautiful homes along Ridgewood Dr.

Ridgewood Area



The third leg follows Lake Waco. Beautiful! Lake Shore



Beautiful Lake Waco.



Runners go on the dam for a short distance before turning towards Cameron Park.



Runners enter the park through McLennan Community College (some say the entry hill is the toughest hill on the course)



Cameron Park overlooking the Brazos River.

The Hills of Cameron Park



Finishing the hills, the road comes to the Pecan Bottom.



Following along the Brazos River.



The last few miles along the Brazos River.



A spectacular finish across the suspension bridge!



WACO (January 29, 2010): The record-setting rainfall Thursday in Waco and the rain that continued to fall Friday morning produced runoff that caused extensive flooding at Lake Waco, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Friday.

Because of flooding, the Corps of Engineers has closed all boat ramps and marinas, Airport and Speegleville Park Campgrounds, Airport Beach Park, Koehne Park, Twin Bridges Park, Flat Rock and Lacy Point Access Areas.

Some Reynolds Creek campsites and the Reynolds Creek Bank Fishing Area are partially closed, the corps said.

The level of the lake Friday afternoon was four feet above the top of the 462-foot conservation pool and it is expected to rise to about 473 feet by Sunday, the corps said.

The impact of the rain on other area lakes so far has been minimal.

The McGregor Park boat ramp at Lake Belton and Sandy Point at Temple Lake Park were both flooded.