



what was I thinking?

Story by SMSgt Rodney Robinson, Langley AFB, Va.
Photos by TSgt Ben Bloker, Langley AFB, Va.



Well, my story ends with me missing 2 days of work because I was unable to walk. My clothes were stuck to my body and felt like sandpaper each time I moved. If you read on, you will see how poor planning on my part and my failure to take other more experienced people's advice led me to my predicament.

I remember when I received my orders for Hawaii. I thought, "This is going to be a great assignment!"

Since I'm an avid sportsman, what more could I want? I now could play softball, golf, and other outdoor sports year-round. I arrived in May and quickly got involved in the sports scene, but as summer came to a close, so did many of the sports activities I was involved in. Since I like to stay active, I was looking for something to do, when out of the blue I heard two chiefs in my office talking about the upcoming Honolulu Marathon. Since I'm not a runner, I should have just kept my head in my books, kept my mouth shut, and pressed on, but that wouldn't be me. No, I eagerly joined in the conversation and commented that anyone should be able to run a few miles. Boy was that a huge mistake!

My counterparts in the office were going to walk the marathon, but there was no way I was going to walk; in fact, I had bigger plans. I found

another coworker just as crazy as me that would be willing to run the marathon as my partner. Although we were not out of shape, we were certainly not in shape to run a marathon — 26.2 miles.

Well, since the marathon was in December, we had 5 whole months to prepare. You would think I would have started running a little to get ready, but I made no such preparation. The two chiefs in the office invited me several times to train with them, but since they were "just walking," I felt that it would be a waste of my time. So, I kept on training the way I had been by playing intramural flag football and racquetball at lunch.

The chiefs kept asking me and my coworker what we were doing to prepare, and we would reply, "Don't worry about us." My wife was even on me to prepare for this event, but I didn't let that influence me either.

The marathon was now only a day away, and I was ready, or so I thought. My coworker was TDY and was due in later that evening. We would have to get up around 3 a.m. so we could get a good parking spot by Hooters and walk to the starting line. Yeah, that's right. We parked the car by Hooters because we thought after the race we would meet for wings and a drink. After we parked the car, we walked to the

starting line a few miles away. I guess I should have figured something was wrong when one of the racers at the starting line approached me and asked if I was running in my T-shirt. I didn't think anything about it and just shrugged him off.

I must admit I felt a little out of place. Most runners were stretching, running in place, and putting Vaseline on their bodies — for what? I was just standing near the front of the starting area ready for the big event to begin.

Finally the fireworks were in the sky, and off we went. The race was packed with thousands of runners. The first 10 miles took what seemed to be days, although I did manage to pass a few of the walkers. At the 10-mile point, my coworker started having foot problems and had to stop. I pressed on, even though I already was questioning myself on what I was trying to accomplish. By this time, I was covered in sweat, and my T-shirt was rubbing on parts of my body that it shouldn't be. The shorts I was wearing also were not designed for running and were causing me substantial problems in key areas, if you get my drift. My shoes, although they were running shoes, were not as comfortable as I remembered. During the race, I did

After several hours, and many rest breaks later, I was close to completing the marathon

see numerous runners going by tables along the course and putting their hands in something. I later found out this was Vaseline, which could have solved many of my problems.

After 13 miles I could run no more; so I began to walk. Shortly after I stopped running, the two chiefs from my office caught up to me. They were very encouraging and wanted me to walk with them. However, by this time my entire body was in pain. My shirt and shorts were sticking to all major parts of my body, my feet were sore, and my hands were swelling. The two chiefs ended up walking ahead, and I struggled to keep going. After several hours, and many rest breaks later, I was close to completing the marathon.

As I neared the finish line, I remember one of the medical folks asking me if I was okay. Although I told him I was "good to go," my body was telling me something entirely different. Well, I finally crossed the finish line some 7 hours, 32 minutes, and 37 seconds after I started. My body was totally exhausted. If you remember how I began this story, I was supposed to go to Hooters for wings, but, as you can imagine, that never occurred.

My dilemma now was getting home, and since I was separated from my running partner, that was not going to be an easy task. I did have some money in the bottom of my shoe — \$13.00, but the taxi driver wanted more than I had just to take me back to the car. I ended up calling my wife from the Honolulu Zoo. However, due to the runners and traffic issues downtown, she would not be able to make it into the city for about an hour.

Since I failed to plan, I had no other choice but to wait for her to pick

me up. I was now in serious pain and unable to walk another step. I ended up lying down in the grass in front of the zoo and sleeping. When my wife arrived, I hobbled over to the car and got in. By this time, my body had started to stiffen, my clothes were sticking to very sensitive areas, my feet were sore, my toe nails were black and blue, and my hands were still swollen — not a very pretty picture.

The next day was Monday, but I was in no shape to go to work;

so I called in and asked for the day off. I actually ended up taking Tuesday off also. Well guess who answered the phone? You guessed it — one of the chiefs who walked the marathon. We all can joke about the experience now, but at the time it was not funny.

What was I thinking when I didn't prepare? Folks were reaching out to me, attempting to give me sound advice, but I just didn't pay them any mind. Since I'm not a runner and have little, if any experience

in this area, I should have listened. I know I should have done things differently, but my stubbornness got in the way of me making the right decisions, and I failed to properly assess the situation and take the appropriate actions that would have made the marathon a better (less painful) experience.

Throughout life we certainly encounter many situations where people offer help and advice. I sure hope the next time I take the advice of folks more experienced than me. ▶

