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These Legs Were Made for Walking



Holder walking her 50th marathon.

My name is Yolanda Holder, aka “Walking Diva.” I was the Marathon Maniac of the Year and Vasque Queen of the Mountain for 2008. But I wasn’t always such a big walker. Ten years ago at age 40, a neighbor friend asked me to do a walkathon with her. I didn’t know at the time that it was a 10k (6.2 miles); the most I’d walked was two to three miles. The next day I was so sore and couldn’t walk for what seemed like days. There was something magical about the feeling, though, because I actually liked the soreness and the natural high that came along with it.

Over the next year I started walking more 5k and 10k events. This one particular race I used a woman as my rabbit, but couldn’t catch her. A few months later I decided to attempt my first half marathon, the San Diego Marathon, now known as Carlsbad Marathon. As I was waiting for the start, a lady came up to me and asked, “Is this your first half marathon?” I said “Yes, and I’m very nervous and I have no one to walk with.” She looked at me and said, “I’m Brenda Bidaure and you have me and 5,000 people to walk with.” This was also Bidaure’s first half and as we were walking and getting to know each other, she turned out to be the rabbit that I was trying to catch in the earlier race. That October, I did my first full marathon with Bidaure at the Portland Marathon, which is known for being walker friendly. Brenda and I became walking and traveling buddies for the next five years.

In June of 2007 I saw a man wearing a 50 states shirt and I thought, “I want to do a marathon in every state, too.” In order to become a member of the 50 states you must complete 10 states. I had only completed four states. That July, I saw lots of people wearing these bright yellow singlets. I said, “I have to have

one.” I joined the Marathon Maniacs in September of 2007. The Seattle Marathon that November was my 10th state. In the morning, before my race, I saw my friend Todd Byers, the barefoot runner. Something had been bothering me — I was turning 50, and I wanted to do something different for my birthday. I told him that I wanted to do 50 marathons in 52 weeks. Rivers said, “Yolanda, I have no doubt that you can do this.” In January 2008, I started my journey — 50 marathons in 52 weeks. I must say if it wasn’t for the loving support of my husband Roger, my adventure would not have been possible.

As I started my journey, I was reading a book of poems by Jason Blume. The poem *Keep Believing in Yourself and Your Dreams* became my motto. I also used the *Secret* by Rhonda Byrne. I did my vision board, I visualized the end, I prayed, I stayed positive, and before I knew it I was on marathon 25. I was feeling great, excited, motivated, happy, and loving it! As the weeks were going by I realized that 50 marathons were doable. October 26, 2008 was my 50th marathon of the year. My highlight was finishing the JFK 50 miler in 13:03:48 and the next day finishing the Philadelphia marathon in 6:14:34. I thought, “Wow! I did it!” I set a goal and accomplished it but I still had two months left in the year. I set another goal, to win the Marathon Maniac title and trophy. I walked 65 marathons/ultras and won Marathon Maniac of the Year, 2008. This year I’m taking it easy. I have 51 marathons/ultra marathons planned.

It’s a wonderful feeling after finishing a marathon. I have inspired and motivated so many people on this wonderful journey. My 40s were fabulous and my 50s are amazing. With my faith in God and myself, anything is possible. **WA**