



*Cheri Pompeo of Woodinville competing in a marathon held on the Great Wall of China.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERI POMPEO

# Marathon men and women

By Katherine Luck

## Local marathoners are running around the world

It starts innocently enough. Shannon Bennett was just curious. “I was thinking about running a marathon and my friend said ‘What are you waiting for?’” she recalled.

For Pete Spear of Seattle, it was peer pressure that hooked him.

“A friend of mine got me into marathoning about 10 years ago,” he explained. “It was a competitive thing.”

Cheri Pompeo of Woodinville figured it would improve her health.

“I got out of high school and started putting on a little weight, so I started running. ... I did a 10K and was really struck by all the support and how much fun it was,” she recalled. Then she made the fateful decision to run a marathon. Just one, so she could say she did it. “That was 251 marathons ago,” Pompeo admitted.

The next thing all three of these Seattle-area runners knew, they were competing in a marathon in Antarctica.

### That’s right: Antarctica

The marathon, a grueling 26.22-mile

race that, according to legend, commemorates the fatal sprint made by a messenger from the battlefield at Marathon to Athens, is poised to turn 2,500 years old next year. The ancient Greeks could never have dreamed that one day, this classic Olympic event would be held in one of the harshest climates in the world.

The Antarctica Marathon, now in its 12th year, is held on King George Island, located off the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula. The remote island is home to a few penguins, some seals and a handful of lonely international scientific research stations.

Remarkably, each of the Pacific Northwest runners found that the Antarctica Marathon was neither as cold nor as harrowing as they expected.

“There’s an improvised road that runs be-

tween the [research] bases in a figure eight. You run it twice and that equals a marathon,” explained Spear, who participated in the marathon in 2007.

The race, organized by the Boston-based travel agency for runners, Marathon Tours & Travel, is held each year in late February or early March — a relatively warm time of year for the inhospitable continent.

“It was right around freezing. It was March, so it was summer there. It was colder here that year than there!” said Pompeo, who ran in the 2009 marathon. “We had some snow and some rain. There was a lot of mud.”

“Sleet and sideways rain — pretty miserable conditions,” Spear added. “I didn’t get too cold, but I got wet. You’re running through puddles and slush. ... Everyone’s time was about an hour to an hour and a half more than usual. You can’t run a seven minute mile [in] slush and snow.”

The journey to Antarctica was difficult, involving first a long flight to Buenos Aires, then another to the world’s southernmost

city, Ushuaia in Argentina. Finally it was time to board ships that Spear described as former Russian submarine hunting vessels with ice breaking capabilities.

When they arrived, it was all worth it.

“The wildlife down there is incredible. There are humpback whales right next to you, and hundreds and hundreds of seals,” said Spear.

“We saw lots of seals and whales and penguins. A penguin jumped into the boat to get away from a seal that was chasing it,” Pompeo recalled.

If you’re going to run a marathon, it might as well be a once in a lifetime experience.

### More challenging than Antarctica?

The Antarctica Marathon is just one race run by members of the Seven Continents Club: an ultra-exclusive group of men and women who have run a marathon on each of the seven continents.

“For a lot of people, this was their last

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >

&lt; CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

continent," said Spear, who, like Pompeo, has embarked upon this daunting quest for racing glory.

One local runner who belongs to the club is Bennett.

She had run only two marathons — both in the Pacific Northwest — when she saw an ad in a running magazine that changed her life.

"I wasn't sure I would do any more, but then I read about the Antarctica Marathon," Bennett said.

On the boat to King George Island in 2005, she heard about the Seven Continents Club.

"You got to talk to these people who have done crazy things, like [run a marathon in all] 50 states, or [run] two marathons back-to-back. Suddenly, this didn't seem so strange," Bennett said.

She discussed the idea of running all seven marathons with her non-marathoner husband. "We decided that was a great way to travel around the world," she said.

Bennett didn't waste any time. She ran in the Fin del Mundo Marathon in Argentina just eight days after completing the Antarctica Marathon. Next came the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia, which she convinced her husband to run with her. It was his first marathon — and his last. "He's not a runner, but kind of got the bug

from me. Afterward, he said he'd never do another," Bennett laughed.

Thailand's Laguna Phuket International Marathon was the hardest of the seven continents, she said, due to the weather. It was already 85 degrees at 5 a.m. "About an hour in, you're praying for rain. And it did — a torrential downpour," she said.

The Big 5 Marathon in South Africa was her favorite. "Along with Antarctica, it was probably the most memorable. You're on a game reserve. The safari guides had to track where the lions were the night before, to make sure they weren't on the course," she said. "It was just incredible, running with the animals."

It took Bennett four years to reach her goal.

"Last March, I did my last one in Rome. The course was pretty [standard] but the scenery you can't beat. You start and end at the Coliseum. Both my parents and my husband's parents came to cheer for me," she said.

In that moment, Bennett became the 68th woman in the world to officially run a marathon on every continent. "I didn't think it was ever going to actually happen for real," she said.

#### Now for the really crazy stuff

For marathoners who don't have the time or money to travel the world, there are challenges closer to home. Some try to run

a marathon in each of the 50 states. Others, like Pompeo's husband, run in each of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories.

Then there's the ultramarathon. For those who feel the standard marathon isn't arduous enough, these astonishingly long and physically punishing races typically involve a 100-mile run that lasts for some 23 hours straight. It's one race Spear, a veteran Ironman competitor, won't even consider.

"That to me is insane," he said.

Pompeo, who lists her marathon stats on marathonmanics.com and proudly proclaims, "I'm maniac number 12 out of over 2,000," has run seven ultramarathons.

"You're up all night and all day. It's really a challenge," she said.

*Challenge ... that's one word for it.*

#### You can run a marathon — really!

If you're feeling daunted by these tales of marathons with lions and 100-mile dashes, don't be. These local runners may seem abnormally athletic, but they're actually perfectly normal people.

Pompeo, a 58-year-old writer, was not at all athletic as a child. "We did square dancing in gym," she said. "I was a bookworm." She didn't start running until she was in her mid-20s. "I kept adding distance. It seemed unbounded — a nice thing to take on later in life."

Spear is in his 30s and works for an IT

consulting firm. He's 6 feet 3 inches and weighs 230 pounds. "I don't have a runner's frame," he said. "I run slow and steady."

No adrenaline addict, Cedar Heights Middle School P.E. teacher Bennett is currently taking a break from running to await the birth of her baby later this summer.

So, why do they run marathons? "It's a goal you set. You've got a fixed period of time [to train] for the marathon, so it creates a timeline and discipline in people's lives. It helps with fitness and time management," said Spear. "It helps [runners] disseminate that structure throughout their lives."

"I don't like not to run," said Pompeo. "And I have the joy of running marathons and ultras with my 27-year-old daughter almost every weekend."

Bennett uses her marathon running to motivate her students.

"You don't have to be the fastest or the best at something, but you can set some goals. ... I've had a couple kids come back and say, 'You've inspired me to run a marathon.'" she said. "Anyone can do it, for sure. They might think it's impossible, but you can do it if you want to. You have to commit to training and have a goal. It's worth it as this huge [accomplishment], especially if you're not a runner to begin with."

Convinced? The Seattle Marathon is Nov. 28. Start running. ■

*We invite our neighbors to enjoy a ...*



## TWO WEEK VIP Guest Pass



► COME SEE WHAT MAKES US SPECIAL

Offer Expires: **July 31, 2010** - First Time Guests Only

**5301 LEARY AVENUE N.W. • BALLARD • 206-789-5010**

#### MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

- **50+ CLASSES PER WEEK**  
(including Yoga, Pilates, Kickboxing Bootcamp, Cycling, Tai Chi, & more)
- **PERSONAL VIEWING SCREENS**
- **PRIVATE WOMEN'S ONLY WORKOUT ROOM**
- **LUXURY WOMEN'S ONLY STEAM, SAUNA, AND WHIRLPOOL**
- **DIET CENTER**
- **TANNING**
- **CHILDCARE**
- **TOWEL SERVICE**
- **PARKING**
- **24 HOUR ACCESS**

**Memberships as low as \$40 Per Month**

&lt; CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

continent,” said Spear, who, like Pompeo, has embarked upon this daunting quest for racing glory.

One local runner who belongs to the club is Bennett.

She had run only two marathons — both in the Pacific Northwest — when she saw an ad in a running magazine that changed her life.

“I wasn’t sure I would do any more, but then I read about the Antarctica Marathon,” Bennett said.

On the boat to King George Island in 2005, she heard about the Seven Continents Club.

“You got to talk to these people who have done crazy things, like [run a marathon in all] 50 states, or [run] two marathons back-to-back. Suddenly, this didn’t seem so strange,” Bennett said.

She discussed the idea of running all seven marathons with her non-marathoner husband. “We decided that was a great way to travel around the world,” she said.

Bennett didn’t waste any time. She ran in the Fin del Mundo Marathon in Argentina just eight days after completing the Antarctica Marathon. Next came the Gold Coast Marathon in Australia, which she convinced her husband to run with her. It was his first marathon — and his last. “He’s not a runner, but kind of got the bug

from me. Afterward, he said he’d never do another,” Bennett laughed.

Thailand’s Laguna Phuket International Marathon was the hardest of the seven continents, she said, due to the weather. It was already 85 degrees at 5 a.m. “About an hour in, you’re praying for rain. And it did — a torrential downpour,” she said.

The Big 5 Marathon in South Africa was her favorite. “Along with Antarctica, it was probably the most memorable. You’re on a game reserve. The safari guides had to track where the lions were the night before, to make sure they weren’t on the course,” she said. “It was just incredible, running with the animals.”

It took Bennett four years to reach her goal.

“Last March, I did my last one in Rome. The course was pretty [standard] but the scenery you can’t beat. You start and end at the Coliseum. Both my parents and my husband’s parents came to cheer for me,” she said.

In that moment, Bennett became the 68th woman in the world to officially run a marathon on every continent. “I didn’t think it was ever going to actually happen for real,” she said.

### Now for the really crazy stuff

For marathoners who don’t have the time or money to travel the world, there are challenges closer to home. Some try to run

a marathon in each of the 50 states. Others, like Pompeo’s husband, run in each of Canada’s 10 provinces and three territories.

Then there’s the ultramarathon. For those who feel the standard marathon isn’t arduous enough, these astonishingly long and physically punishing races typically involve a 100-mile run that lasts for some 23 hours straight. It’s one race Spear, a veteran Ironman competitor, won’t even consider.

“That to me is insane,” he said.

Pompeo, who lists her marathon stats on marathonmanics.com and proudly proclaims, “I’m maniac number 12 out of over 2,000,” has run seven ultramarathons.

“You’re up all night and all day. It’s really a challenge,” she said.

*Challenge ... that’s one word for it.*

### You can run a marathon — really!

If you’re feeling daunted by these tales of marathons with lions and 100-mile dashes, don’t be. These local runners may seem abnormally athletic, but they’re actually perfectly normal people.

Pompeo, a 58-year-old writer, was not at all athletic as a child. “We did square dancing in gym,” she said. “I was a bookworm.” She didn’t start running until she was in her mid-20s. “I kept adding distance. It seemed unbounded — a nice thing to take on later in life.”

Spear is in his 30s and works for an IT

consulting firm. He’s 6 feet 3 inches and weighs 230 pounds. “I don’t have a runner’s frame,” he said. “I run slow and steady.”

No adrenaline addict, Cedar Heights Middle School P.E. teacher Bennett is currently taking a break from running to await the birth of her baby later this summer.

So, why do they run marathons?

“It’s a goal you set. You’ve got a fixed period of time [to train] for the marathon, so it creates a timeline and discipline in people’s lives. It helps with fitness and time management,” said Spear. “It helps [runners] disseminate that structure throughout their lives.”

“I don’t like not to run,” said Pompeo. “And I have the joy of running marathons and ultras with my 27-year-old daughter almost every weekend.”

Bennett uses her marathon running to motivate her students.

“You don’t have to be the fastest or the best at something, but you can set some goals. ... I’ve had a couple kids come back and say, ‘You’ve inspired me to run a marathon.’” she said. “Anyone can do it, for sure. They might think it’s impossible, but you can do it if you want to. You have to commit to training and have a goal. It’s worth it as this huge [accomplishment], especially if you’re not a runner to begin with.”

Convinced? The Seattle Marathon is Nov. 28. Start running. ■

## Summer Sunday Brunch at Ivar's

### What An Eggs-cellent Start!

It's no secret — the North end's best brunch is at

Ivar's Mukilteo Landing seafood restaurant.

Dive into classics with a twist, such as Eggs

Benedict with Smoked Wild Alaska

Salmon, Grand Marnier French

Toast, or splurge with our famous

Mukilteo Seafood Sauri,

featuring a bounty of fresh flavors.

Enjoy it all with spectacular waterfront

views. For the ultimate

experience, secure your

spot on our outdoor

open deck (seating

is limited).

Every  
Sunday  
10am to  
2pm

Receive  
**\$5 OFF**  
With the  
purchase of two  
brunch entrées

To redeem, present coupon at time of purchase. Valid at Ivar's Mukilteo Landing full service restaurant (10am to 2pm). Not valid with any other offers, promotions or discounts. One per table, per visit. No cash value. Expires 8/31/10.



710 Front St • Mukilteo  
Next to Mukilteo Ferry Dock

425-742-6180

For details or brunch menu,  
visit [www.Ivars.com](http://www.Ivars.com)

an offering