

**Carmen Flores started running relatively late,
but she has become a road warrior**



Carmen Flores, 63, didn't begin running in road races until the mid 1990s after attending a Fort Worth Runners Club meeting on a Tuesday and then going out the next Saturday to run a 5K. She has been like the Energizer bunny ever since....she keeps going, going and going.

"I've raced pretty much every Saturday since," she said after completing one of the Trinity 5000 Summer Series events on a Thursday evening at the Trinity Trails. She trains by running four miles four times a week and then racing on either Saturday or Sunday (and Thursday, too, during the summer).

She attended the FWRC meeting after marrying Wesley Collins in July of '94. She was introduced to road racing when they went downtown to watch the Susan G. Komen Race For The Cure. Carmen met several women who were members of the FWRC, including Judy Barton and Barbara Durham. They invited her to attend a club meeting, she did and has been hooked ever since.

Carmen has spread her running wings, too, as she has participated in events all over the area, state and out of state. She has run one marathon, though it also was her last. "The training is rough," she said. Besides running, Carmen also is an avid skier and loves the Colorado slopes. She has tackled a few black (one of the most difficult) slopes, but "I don't care to do another one again," and now enjoys mostly the blue (intermediate) slopes.

Fortunately, Carmen always led a fairly active lifestyle and grew up in Harlingen as a tomboy, which is understandable since she has two older brothers and two younger brothers. "I was always active," she said. She played volleyball, softball and, while at Tarrant County Junior College, intramural tennis. "I've always run, but I didn't race until I joined the runners club."

She, as most runners, discovered new friends and believes she and other "older" runners serve as role models for the younger ones. "It's a good feeling when someone younger tells me I'm a role model," she said. One of her best friends is Margaret Thrash. "She's 10 years older than I am and she beats me," Carmen said. "She's a good role model."

Carmen also is competitive. She doesn't go out for a 3.1-mile stroll when she finishes a 5K in the lower 30-minute range, more than five minutes slower than her fastest time. One of her goals is to beat fellow co-worker James Bircher, but she said he's always "just" in front of her.

Most of her best finishing times came in the late '90s and in early 2000. She set a 53-minute 10K PR during that time, after "training and training and training" in an effort to beat 55 minutes. She also did her first and last marathon in that span of years.

So, expect Carmen to keep lacing 'em up and racing for as long as she can. Running, she said, helps her stay fit, feel younger and be healthier.