

## *A Bear of an event*



MaryLou VandeRiet of Weatherford went to where the scenery was, as she described it, breathtaking to tackle her first marathon. The Grizzly Marathon, near Choteau, Montana and about 60 miles south of Glacier National Park offered the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop and a possibility to see such animals as grizzlies (as if anyone would actually want to see one up close), elk, moose, deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep and black bears. MaryLou said there indeed was a grizzly sighting at mile 8, which helped the marathon live up to its name.

MaryLou, 67, said it was a tough 26.2 miles, but she was so excited about doing the marathon over the scenic route that's in the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone, that she's eager to do it again. The most difficult part of the trek was at mile 19, when the marathon reached its highest point at 4,930 feet. And as you can see from the picture, not everyone made it up the hill. The marathon start was at 4,830 feet. MaryLou said she hit the



wall at about mile 23, but she continued on and finished in 7:56:19, which was last among the small field. But considering how she got there in the first place, makes her story an inspiration for anyone contemplating a marathon. So, read her account of the Grizzly Marathon. If you're already a marathon veteran, this might even be one to put on the 'to-do' list. Read her report:

### *A bear of a marathon*

By MaryLou Vanderiet

Last August I ran my first half in the Grizzly Half Marathon. Well I made a New Year's Resolution to run/walk my first marathon in August 2006, returning to Choteau, Montana. And I accomplished that goal, on August 19th, 2006!



Years ago, I wanted to be so physically fit to be able to at least finish a marathon, and that dream/challenge came to past. A loss of 80 pounds and a lifestyle change helped me fulfill that dream. When I retired, I weighed in almost as much as a Sherman Tank. Thanks to the Dr. Phil Weight Loss Challenge, I was able to lose weight, start an exercise program, and enjoy lower blood pressure....not bad, for a young lady of 67 years.

I talked to my doctor about the marathon and she told me to GO FOR IT! She said she wants photos for her office, as a model for other Patients. Some runners told me not to do it...but I had a gut feeling. I was ready to take it on.

The weather in the morning was 45 degrees, with a 15 mph headwind. High was in the 80's...perfect weather.

It's hard to beat seeing the sunrise on the Rocky Mountains. The Montana prairie looked like it was spun out of gold, the scenery definitely took your mind off your aches and pains. No matter where you

looked, the scenery was breathtaking. Everybody, at least, once in their lifetime, needs to experience Montana...it will change your life forever. I did get to visit Glacier National Park, but that's a whole story within itself. The scenery is so drop-dead gorgeous, I actually broke down and cried.

The Grizzly Marathon is not a walk in the park. You really need a sense of adventure to run/walk this course. It also was an 1,800-mile drive, one way to Montana, and worth every mile. The course is ROUGH! The scenery is spectacular, and the volunteers were wonderful. The hills were wicked, repeat wicked. the last one, at mile 19, was the worse....I think it was reaching for the sky.

I was waiting for The Wall to hit me, and it happened at mile 23. I never knew I could be so tired. I really wanted to quit, (but when) someone offered me a ride to the finish line, I told him to GET LOST.

I was keeping well hydrated, eating Gummi Bears, PowerBars, and Sport Jelly Bellies.

They don't call this the Grizzly Marathon just for the fun of it; there was a grizzly sighted at mile 8. Gorgeous deer and a ton of chipmunks were also seen.

(No bad injuries, but)I had an upset stomach from the carb dinner the night before. I was making frequent pit stops. (I also had) two black-and-blue toes...plus I was one tried kid.

I really did not care about my time. I finished last, third in my class. (MaryLou is crossing the finish line in picture)

In spite of the grueling course, upset stomach, sore toes, I could not have been happier than a pig in mud. My goal had come true. The question is...will I do The Grizzly Marathon again? You bet! In a heartbeat. I can't wait to go back.

Seems once you have accomplished finishing a marathon, everything else seems immaterial.

I want to Thank "The Barefoot Runner" for his undying faith in me. My brother Raymond, who passed away from ALS, my son, Mark, were my partners in spirit. --

MaryLou



MaryLou stands at the mile 19 sign that signals the start of the uphill journey to the highest point of the marathon, 4,930 feet.