

2006 BOSTON MARATHON®



JIMMY FUND WALK

Brian M Richards
Hopkinton to Copley Square
September 17, 2006

Having done ten Pan Massachusetts Challenges (PMC), the two day 192-mile bicycle ride, and now nine Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walks (BMJFW), one gets to compare how the two events are run. In fact, I was one of the main photographers for the 2006 PMC, with the pictures I took are available for viewing on my web site. The PMC is a high keyed high energy event, where as



realized as I got on the highway I forgot my meds, but decided not to go back, because my brother's dog was barking at me as I left, and I didn't want to wake him up. There was no coffee, donuts, or bagels for those who started early. One volunteer said they didn't expect this many walkers this early (5:30 AM). I scoffed at that notion, telling the volunteer that this was year 18 for the walk and they should know better. I made a mental note to myself to grab something to eat before next year's walk. I had no training at all for the walk, due to working 60 to 70 hours a week since March. The three weekends that I did have off didn't help, as

the BMJFW is a rather sedate event. The pasta dinner held in Wellesley is down right boring. I did manage to trade some notes with one of the photographers for the walk, as I planned on taking my Canon 20D, 17-55/2.8 IS lens and 580 EX flash with me on the walk. It appeared the event was not well organized, as the cake for the pasta dinner did not arrive in time for the early arrivals.

I got up at 3:15 Am Sunday morning to get ready for the walk. I made sure when leaving my brother's house to take my GPS watch with me, something I left behind in the 2005 Walk. I





stops, with the exception of the Cape Cod Potato Chip stop some 19 miles away. The organizers literally rolled out the red carpet at the first water stop. I had my picture taken a lot by the walk photographers. It was helpful that I knew them, and one of them I worked with at the 2006 PMC. I know it takes a lot to set up a water stop, and the efforts of the volunteers are much appreciated by the walkers. This was the best setup I have seen for water stop one in my seven attempts starting off from Hopkinton.

it was rainy all three weekends. To add insult to injury, I managed to put on 20 additional pounds over last year, due to lack of physical activity. I left at 6 AM in the morning, even though the official start time is 7 AM. In fact, the organizers encouraged a rolling start, so people do not bunch up when starting off. Weather forecast was for a sunny day, but with temperatures expecting to get up to 80 degrees, this was not exactly the type of weather I wanted to see. Ideal weather for a marathon walk is temperature in the 50ies to mid 60ies. Ten minutes into the walk I discovered the batteries on my GPS watch were exhausted. Somehow the watch got turned on my trip to New England. It wasn't a big deal, as the route has markers featuring the pictures of the patients at Dana Farber every mile along the route.

The best part of the Jimmy Fund Walk is the first 13.1 miles, as the best decorative water

Somewhere between water stop one and two a woman who has been trying to find me for the last two walks finally caught up with me. She overheard me talking to another walker. She said "are you from New Jersey?" When I said yes, she asked if my name was Brian Richards. She told



me a fellow co-worker of mine told her to look me up. She works part time at the Jimmy Fund and she told me how the walk hands out the bib numbers. It was based on the position the person was in relationship to all the other walkers in their fund raising efforts. My bib was number 174. Not bad considering there were over 6,500 walkers last year. The goal for this year's walk is \$5 million.

My favorite water stop is stop number two. The stop is maintained as a community project by the students of the Blackstone Valley Tech School. They always dress up in some theme costume for the walkers to enjoy. I went up to one nice young lady and said "weren't you Wonder Woman last year?" She was surprised I remembered her.



I told her that her picture was in my newsletter last year and I gave her a card with my name, web and email address on it.

There is one team of walkers that have their own cheerleading section. Part of their team starts off at Hopkinton. The cheerleaders are moved from stop to stop to cheer the members of the team who are walking. At the halfway point the cheerleaders then join the team and walk in together to Boston. They wear pink shirts with the word S.O.C.S. on their shirts and signs, which stood for "Seeking Out a Cure with Sneakers". I gave a business card to one of the fathers, as I had taken several pictures of the cheerleaders. Another favorite of mine is this gentlemen who makes stops along the way to play inspirational music, one being by my favorite group, "Walk Like a Man" by Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons.

I saw a group of walkers at mile marker nine taking some pictures.

I said "let a guy with a professional camera take your pictures", which I did, and gave them a card to reach me after the walk. I noticed that the balls of my feet were starting to blister up, but decided to wait until I got to the Wellesley stop to have my feet looked at. For the first time in my seven attempts from Hopkinton, there were two young ladies from Wellesley College cheering the walkers on. Wellesley College is actually the half way point on the official Boston Marathon course. Each April hundreds of coeds are out there screaming and cheering the runners. I told the two young ladies nice touch.

My favorite group of volunteers is from the Inline Club of Boston. They consist of concerned, dedicated skaters who have a wide variety of professions, skating abilities, and skating goals. In addition to providing help for walkers in distress, each member who participates in the walk has to raise the minimum of two hundred dollars required from each walker. They hammed it up this year for my pictures.

Lunch stop is at Wellesley High School. Going to the school adds an extra 0.5 mile to the walk, as it is not part of the official Boston Marathon route. I had my feet examined, and had mole skin added to the balls of my feet. I grabbed three sandwiches and a bottle of water before I left. I was interviewed by the announcer at the high school and gave my reasons why I walked. I left to head out on the last 12 miles of the walk.





Boston Radio Station 99.5 had a booth along the way. I told them I could even listen to country and western for a day. Even my favorite group did a country and western album in 1964 called "Born to Wander", and yes, I have the album.

My feet were blistering up and my left knee, the one that needs replacement, was acting up by the time I got to mile 16. It is in Newton where one faces the steepest hill of the walk. One of the members of the Inline Club of Boston, who by the way was skating backwards up the hill, asked if I need any help. I said no, but told him I stopped to say a prayer to my parents. By mile 17 one of the father's from Team S.O.C.S. asked if I wanted to call it quits. I was in a lot of pain with what appeared to be bone on bone rubbing on the left knee. I said I would decide after I got to the next stop if I was going to continue. I got to the Cape Cod Potato Chip water stop at mile 19 and decided to call it quits. In addition to my other problems I was dehydrating. I remembered the 1997 PMC where I was taken out by ambulance due to dehydration and almost wound up in the hospital for an I.V., and said this is it. It was 80 degrees and I could not quench my thirst. I took the roving bus into the 25.5 mile point, where I got off to walk the last 0.7 miles. I wanted to think about my parents, and whether I should continue to do this walk anymore since I failed to complete it.

Some people will say I should drop back to the 13.1 or even the three mile walk, due to my physical condition. But that would not be giving my best. I

knew I could do 13.1 miles, but I would rather fail trying the 26.1 miles then going for the sure thing. I apologize for the weight gain but not the lack of training, as I have no control over that. I made a promise after my first PMC back in 1988, as they were getting ready to lower my father into the ground, a man who I considered growing up to be the strongest man in the world, that I would do an event each year in memory of my parents. I helped raised over \$60,000 since 1988 for the Jimmy Fund in my parent's memory. I hope you were not disappointed in me today as I did give it my best. I have every intention of starting off at Hopkinton next year. My 2006 Jimmy Fund Walk is dedicated in memory of my parents, Joseph Albert and Kathleen Marie Richards.

Until next year, thank you and may God Bless.

Brian M. Richards




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Walking for our loved ones, Both Past and Present

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Linda, Sam, Vince

Mom & Dad would be proud. Until next year.

Thank you and may God Bless.

Brian M. Richards