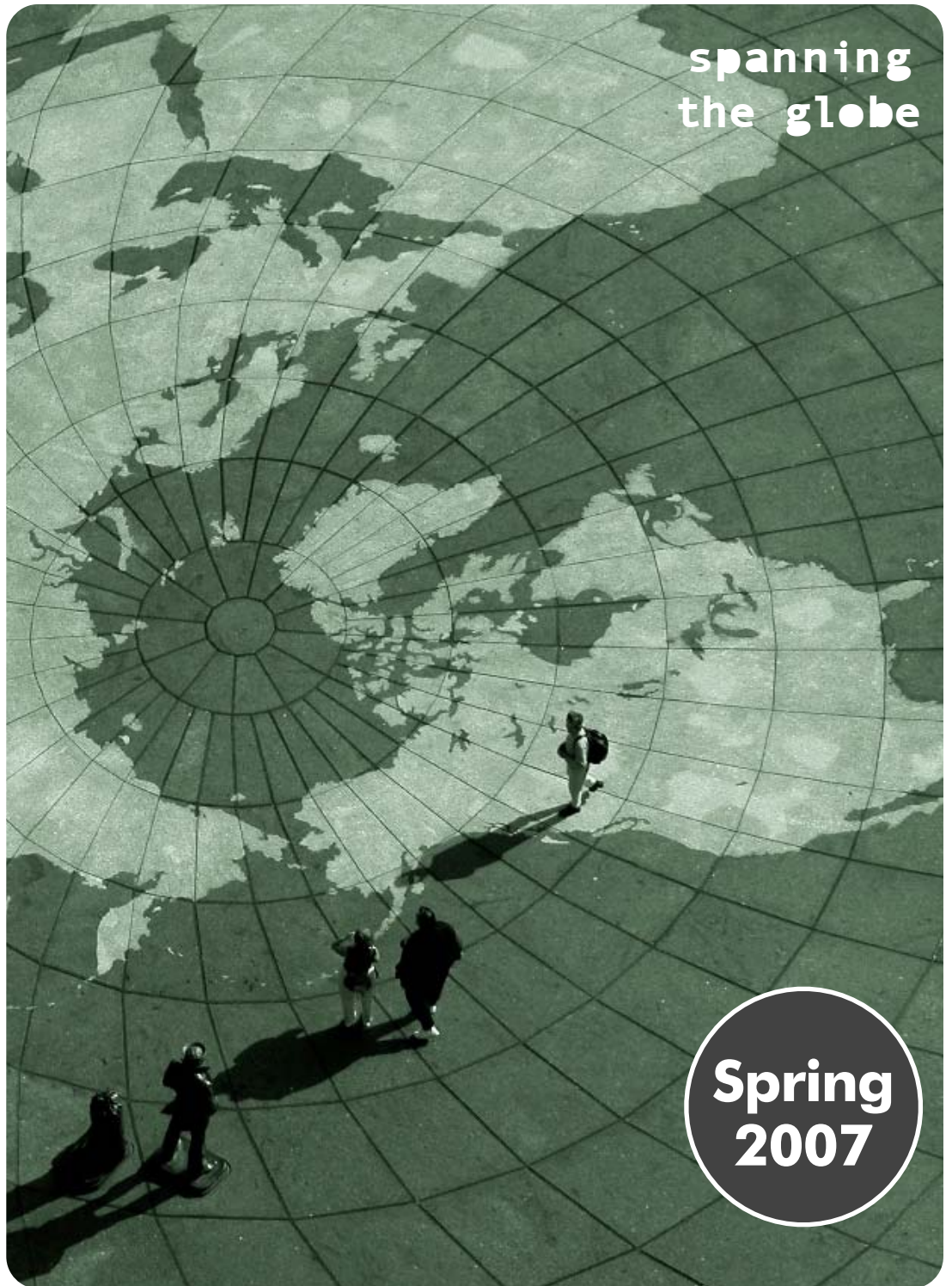




FRONT PAGES



spanning
the globe

Spring
2007

AROUND THE WORLD

Front Runner Jerry Langan completed his ambitious goal to run a marathon on every continent. What will Jerry do with all of those Frequent Flier miles?

Story on page 2 ▼

RUN ROCK CREEK

Can't find a water fountain on a hot August day? Need to figure out the distance for your next Rock Creek Park training run? Check out our special Rock Creek guide.

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SPRING FLING NEARS

It's been a tough winter, but relief is on the way. And what better way to celebrate the new season than DC Front Runners' annual Spring Fling weekend?

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FRONT PAGES



My Quest to Run the Globe

by Jerry Langan



April 18, 2001 | I remember well the night I registered to run my first marathon. It was the night of my 40th birthday. In retrospect that birthday was somewhat of a watershed moment—one of those life-changing events we don't realize until years later. While normally I would have done something more fitting to celebrate, this particular night I was focused on one specific objective: securing a highly coveted spot in the Marine Corps Marathon. There could be no finer birthday gift.

Registration that year was conducted online, with a limited number of entries which would become available at precisely 8:00 pm. The race would fill quickly, as thousands of would-be runners stood ready at their computers around the world, vying for one of the cherished admissions.

My dear friend Rodney Johnson joined me that evening in my office. My plan was to use several different computers at once, hoping to increase my chances. Rodney thought I was completely crazy and insisted that I should be out on the town celebrating my birthday like normal people. Instead, my celebration that night would come with my registration to run a marathon—how strange this seemed to him.

Having been completely shut out of the registration process the week before, this was my last and only chance. Like any long-distance runner, I was determined. At precisely 8:00 the "Register Now" icon appeared on the webpage, and the virtual race to register began.

The network was immediately deluged with thousands of people attempting to gain entry, and my efforts on each of the six different computers in my office led nowhere. We ran from office to office checking each computer for a

screen beyond the ceaseless hourglass, all of which seemed filled with endless sand.

After 45 minutes of failure, I began to worry. I had truly set my heart on this particular milestone, and wondered how sad it would be if I were unable to gain entry into the race. Then it happened. The screen popped up, I entered the data, and I was in.

I began training for my first marathon in earnest. I was dating an accomplished marathoner at the time, who had completed over 20 marathons in his plan to run the fifty states. I was impressed with his goal, his determination, and his obvious passion for running, and wondered if I too might one day be capable of similar resolution. It was too early to know that I would eventually branch out and run marathons around the globe on all seven continents.

I recall one day on a long run with Rob Bartolo. We ran long many times in my train-



spanning the globe



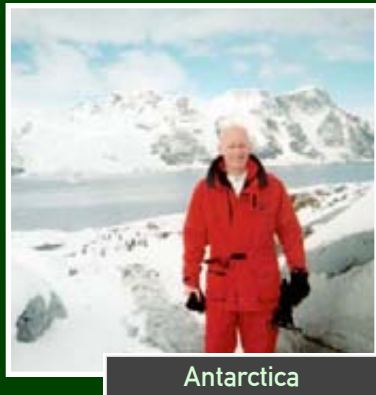
Beijing



Sydney



Kilimanjaro



Antarctica

ing for that first race, and he would one day—right there in the middle of Rock Creek Park—plant the seed that would result in my decision to run marathons on all the continents.

Since we ran at a similar pace and distance, I came to know Rob rather well during my training. Our long runs were filled with conversations about everything; you are somewhat captive on long runs. We talked obviously about our running goals and plans, and what race we would begin training for next. I had made a decision to run my next race in Europe, and Rob quizzed me on this choice, and how it fit in to the grand scheme of my “running career.”

It occurred to me that while normally I am very goal-oriented, this particular facet of my life—my running life—had no defined goals. Instead, my plans were sort of free-flowing, unstructured, go-with-the-flow kinds of plans...very atypical for me.

Marine Corps Marathon 2001—my first. They say that you always remember your first love. In some respects this is also so with one’s first marathon. Friends and family traveled to town to witness my inaugural marathon—it was amazing. I was trained, I was ready, I was excited, and I was nervous. My training had gone well, and my goal was to simply finish my first race in four hours. On an absolutely spectacular fall morning I finished that first marathon in 3:57:17. I knew there would be more to come. I just didn’t know how much.

Two weeks later I was back with Front Runners on the Sunday long run. Bartolo was training for his next race in Prague. I was undecided about where I wanted to run in Europe—or even why. Rob’s passion for travel and running, and his constant encouragement and enthusiasm for the sport, caused me to realize one day that I wanted to run marathons on all seven continents of the world.

I decided the next race would be Paris, and started thinking ahead to the other continents. This was a realistic goal, I figured. While it seemed a bit grandiose, I had already run North America, and was now committed to run Europe. That left only five races: South America, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Antarctica. I began searching for information and

dates, laying out the “big picture” plan. While I had always dreamed of traveling to some of these places, I had no idea that I would eventually make it to all of them.

Before setting this running goal, I simply lacked any reason to travel the entire globe. Now however, armed with my new running goals, I had not only reason but need to venture to these far-away places—to run. What a great master plan this was.

While training to run Paris in April 2002, I suffered a serious ankle sprain on a ski slope at Killington, Vermont. Discouraged, I still flew to Paris hoping for a miraculous healing that would permit me to run. The miracle did not occur, and I was relegated to walking the first ten kilometers until swept up by the bus. I would have to regroup and return to run Europe another time.

After several months of recovery, I decided to run Dublin in October of 2003. Fresh from my injury, I trained hard, and ran what would become my PR: 3:49:15. Somehow I believe, the two pints of Guinness the night before brought me the “luck of the Irish.”

2004 would be a big year for me, as I planned to conquer two continents at once, making up for lost time. In June I ran Rio de Janeiro, perhaps the most stunning course I’ve run so far, along the great beaches of Rio. This race would turn out slower, 4:33:21, due largely to temperatures approaching 90 degrees at the finish. Nevertheless, this was a great race, which coincided with the Rio Gay Pride Parade, another experience altogether!

In October I ran Beijing. While I had heard about the poor air quality, I did not really understand what that meant until arriving in the densely populated capital. It was indeed bad—but manageable.

Perhaps my most vivid memory of the Beijing marathon was the crowd support; literally millions of people came out to watch the race, and they did almost nothing else. They did not cheer, they did not clap, they did not make noise of any sort—they just watched. Intensely interested, they expressed little emotion, with the exception of small children who



Beijing



would occasionally cry out “yah yo, yah yo,” (“go, go”) only to be silenced by their elders. It was almost an eerie feeling being watched by so many who said so little. It was clearly a unique race in that respect.

2005 would be another good year and would see me complete marathons on Africa and Australia. In February, I ran the Kilimanjaro marathon in Tanzania, a fascinating experience. The most difficult marathon to date, with grueling temperatures and a steep incline, it was nonetheless awesome to run in the shadow of the snows of Kilimanjaro. The ensuing safari on the Serengeti Plain was likewise spectacular.

In September, I headed down under to run the Sydney marathon. Days before leaving, I began experiencing some heel pain. The podiatrist injected me, and off I ran, joining four Sydney Front Runners who also ran. I returned with a serious case of plantar fasciitis, which would cause me to stop running for an entire year. How painful that was—not running, I mean.

As my last continent—Antarctica—was some 17 months away. I had time, and I managed to muster the patience to wait what seemed like an interminable recovery period. In November 2006 I returned to the running scene, just in time to begin training for the final intercontinental circuit race.

The Antarctica Marathon was the most difficult to plan for, as it sells out years in advance. It requires considerable planning, and I managed to secure a slot for the 2007 race. I was indeed excited, as this race promised to cap an incredible journey, with what would prove to be the most challenging marathon of them all. With great anticipation, I began training.

Ordinarily, the Washington winter would provide ideal training conditions. Winter ‘06,

however, was unseasonably warm, seeing cherry blossoms and temps in the 70s in January—how strange. A cold spell finally arrived in mid-February with snowfall, approximating the conditions I would encounter on the Antarctic ice-pack.

The journey to the literal South Pole is exciting enough. A flight to Buenos Aires, where we spent three nights awaiting the arrival of other runners from around the world. We then flew to Ushuaia, the world’s southern-most city, where we boarded two Russian cruise ships for the 40-hour journey across the Drake Passage. This trip is not for the faint-hearted! The seas are extremely rough on this part of the world, and only the most determined are willing to endure this kind of trip.

Anchored in Maxwell Bay, just off King George Island, we awoke on race day to find Antarctic conditions: four inches of fresh snow, temperatures in the mid-thirties, and 25 mph winds with windchill in the single digits. Nevertheless, the excitement overtook everything else, as we were ferried to the landing site by inflatable boats. The time had finally arrived to run the last continent.

The marathon began promptly at 8:30, and was unlike any race I have ever run. Through mud, and snow, ice, and glaciers, we shuffled our way past the various research bases, cheered along the way by the international researchers—not to mention several penguins who lined the course, and appeared to clap as we ran. The mere fact that I finished this incredible marathon, albeit in 6:46:45, brought tremendous satisfaction in knowing that I managed to accomplish a lifetime goal. I have now indeed run the entire globe!

I have completed my journey to run marathons on all the continents, I’ve had some time to reflect on what an experience this has been. It has taught me the importance of goals, and perseverance, and friends. These are indeed very important things, and my friends in Front Runners in particular have been great inspiration.

I would be remiss not to mention my dear friend Elliott Blake who has endured many a long run with me, training for the proverbial “next race.” He is the kind of friend I am proud to have, and I appreciate very much his friendship. One must not take their friends for granted.

Finally, my journey has most taught me about gratitude. Today, I am more grateful for the place I live, and the friends and family I have, and the means to travel and complete such an ambitious goal. It has been said that “gratitude unlocks the fullness of life, and makes what we have even more.” How true this is.

I’ve been asked by many what my next running goal will be, and I haven’t yet figured this out. In some respects it seems hard to top what I have just accomplished. So in the meantime I will remain grateful for what I have accomplished to date, and will look for that next big idea—perhaps inspired by another Front Runner while on a long run in Rock Creek Park—that will propel me to achieve newer heights. ▼

**1 world
7 marathons**

**Marine Corps '01
Dublin '03
Rio de Janeiro '04
Beijing '04
Kilimanjaro '05
Sydney '05
Antarctica '07**