

Bloomsday 2018
by Shari Klarich

It started in 1982 when I watched that year's Bloomsday race on TV when we were living remotely on 20 acres of land in a rustic cabin we had built ourselves. "We" was my husband and I and our two sons ages 7 and 10. I was so inspired that I right then and there declared I was going to run in that race the next year, even though up to that point I wasn't a runner. I was a stay-at-home mom, and we had very little money, but I managed to buy a jog bra and a pair of inexpensive running shoes. I started training on March 1 of 1983 by running for one minute. It was so difficult that I was ready to quit...but I didn't. I continued to add a few minutes each day to my run, and the boys began to do a little training. My husband was already a runner. I and the boys worked up to running 4 miles without stopping. I figured if I could run that far, I could manage to run 7.5 miles.

I saved and saved to be able to afford two nights in a run down and "seedy" motel in downtown Spokane within walking distance to the start of the race. In fact, we were awakened in the night to police cars. Evidently there had been a shooting!

I had brought our own food to save money, but I had saved up enough to eat out at Klinkerdagger's Restaurant on Saturday evening.

Sunday morning was absolutely amazing! Walking out of our hotel room with thousands of other runners coming from all directions, like ants converging on a piece of meat, was almost more excitement than I could handle. I had never seen so many people in one place in my life.

Our family chose the clock tower for a meeting spot, and we showed our boys where it was and what it looked like. After all, none of us were familiar with Spokane. Our youngest son, then 8 years old, ran with me. I knew I would be running the whole route, but I had told him he could walk whenever he needed to, and we would meet up afterwards. That was the plan. However, this second grader kept running, never stopping, never leaving my side, and we finished

together. Our other son, age 11, ran the whole way, too, and we all met at the clock tower.

That was the first of 20 Bloomsdays in a row. We carried on with our traditions, staying two nights, eating at Klinkerdagger's every year, arriving early to get a good starting spot, and throwing our outer layers in the trees. We had special food and drinks after the race, and once we got home, we watched the elite runners on TV. One thing that changed was that I became a 4th grade teacher, which meant we had enough money to stay at much nicer hotels along the river.

I also started a jogging program at my school, and each year I invited two students to come with us to be in the race.

When my husband got transferred with the forest service to Utah, we couldn't just get there by driving for 2 1/2 hours. We had to fly! Our boys were in college and couldn't continue to be in this event. After our 20th Bloomsday, we decided we had to discontinue our tradition.

All the years we ran, I loved reading inspirational stories in the Spokane newspaper. I read about people who had three or four generations in the race, and that's what I always wanted. The only problem was that my dad was too old, and our sons were too young to have children. We only had two generations!!!

Meanwhile our sons moved to other states, married, and had children, giving us four athletic grandchildren.

So what a surprise when this past Christmas I received the announcement that our family was flying us to Spokane to be in the 2018 Bloomsday race for my **70th birthday!!!** All 10 of us will be there and entered in the event. We will teach our grandchildren about meeting at the clock tower and throwing their outer layers in the trees. Of course, I'm so excited! I have even started training again!