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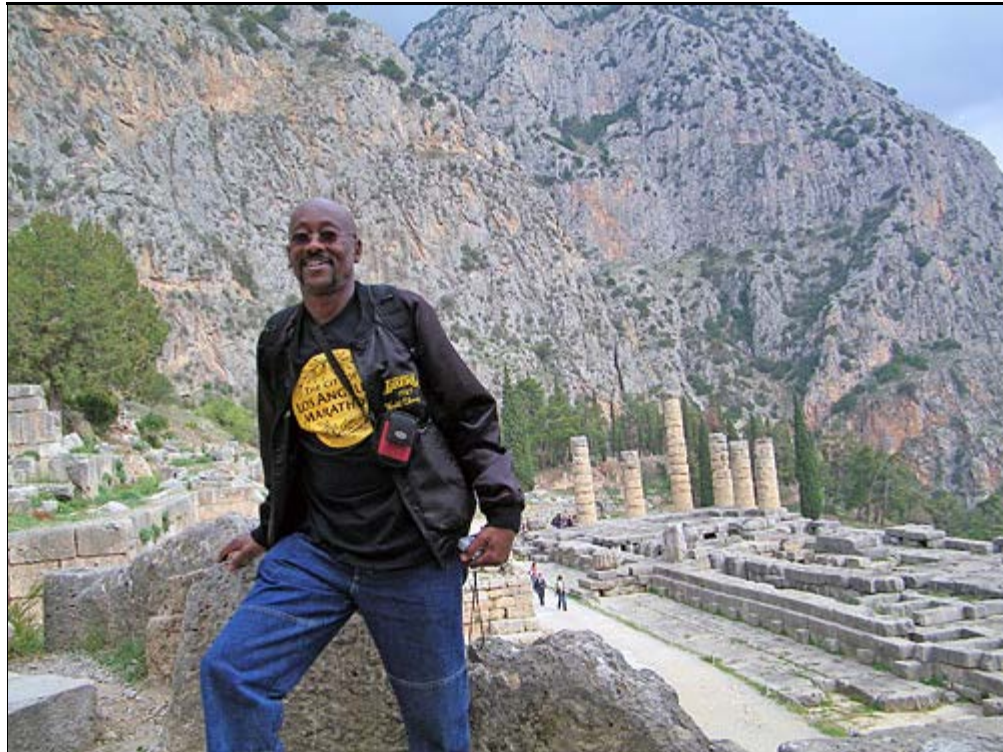
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MILESTONES: From L.A. to Athens and back again, marathon runner Everett Wilson adds the 2008 Athens Classic Marathon medal to his collection of completing 77 marathons. The marathon on the legendary fields of Greece was a dream come true for the Los Angeles Marathon Legacy Runner.

Metro's Marathon Man Aims to Collect 78th Medal in Sunday Race

- Running the legendary field of ancient Greece, Legacy Runner Everett Wilson reached a milestone at the Athens Marathon last November. He's set to collect his 78th medal at the first-ever Pasadena Marathon this Sunday.

By Michael D. White
Web Content Editor

(March 19, 2009) It's fairly safe to say that grass doesn't grow under Everett Wilson's feet. The fact is that he'd never stand still long enough for anything like that to happen.

Wilson, an assistant auditor in Metro's Revenue Compliance Department, is

a member of the ultra-exclusive Marathon Legacy Club – an elite group of about 250 dedicated, long-distance runners who have the distinction of starting – and finishing – every Los Angeles Marathon since the gun was fired to start the very first race back in 1986.

His inspiration to become a marathoner came when the Olympic games came to Los Angeles in 1984 and he had the opportunity to see some of the greatest runners in the world compete.



Superhero: Wrapped in a gold thermal blanket that lowers body temperature after a heated 26-mile run, Everett Wilson cools his heels after finishing the Athens Classic.

"It seems like I've always been on the move," says Wilson. "I'd run track in high school in Newark and I'd done a lot of running to stay in shape when I was playing basketball at East Los Angeles College. But it was the Olympics that really got me interested. Soon after the Games, I competed in a 10K run in Altadena and took second place," he recalls. "After that, I was hooked. I've come to love it."

The 62-year old, U.S. Marine Corps veteran has competed in marathons in Canada, Alaska, Oregon, Washington State, New Mexico, and, of course, California with events in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Long Beach and Palos Verdes. His best time for a 26.2-mile marathon was three hours and 15 minutes when he was in his early 40s.

He is credited with inspiring numerous fellow Metro employees to start running and is now in training for the Pasadena Marathon on March 22.

With 77 marathons and thousands of competitive and practice miles under his

belt, Wilson participated last November in the Athens Marathon in Greece, which was run where the legendary ancient precursor to the modern marathon was run more than 2,400 years ago.

Tradition says that a Greek soldier named Pheidippides was sent to Sparta request help when the Persians landed at Marathon, Greece. He covered the 150 miles in two days only to be rebuffed by the Spartans. Retracing his route, Pheidippides – without rest, it's said – then ran the 26 miles from the battlefield near Marathon to Athens to announce the Greek victory over the invading Persians. Arriving in Athens, it's said he shouted "We have won" before dying on the spot of exhaustion.

History hasn't recorded the regimen that gave the Greek hero the wherewithal to accomplish his epic feat, but Wilson, who now averages about three or four marathons a year, is the first to say that runners "win the race in practice. You learn with experience that you're not going to run too much faster than you did in practice. I've never participated in a race that was more difficult than the practice before the event."

Did Wilson ever feel as if he was going to "die on the spot" after finishing one of his grueling competitions? No, he says chuckling, but his car almost did, before a race even started. "I got to the start of the San Francisco

Marathon 30 minutes late because of some serious car trouble," he recalls, shaking his head. "That was a tough one."

And then there was the day that a spectator ran across the street in front of the pack just as the marathon was starting. Wilson and several other runners collided and fell to the pavement. "I got to my feet and ran the rest of the race with my legs bleeding pretty badly. Nothing really worse than that."

On the other side of the coin, Wilson's performance in the Lompoc Marathon is one that he remembers as one of his best. "I'd trained fairly intensely for that race," he said. "I remember I crossed the finish line with so much left that I wanted to turn around and run it all over again." This, despite a case of shin splints that, he says, didn't flare-up until mile 23 or 24. "I just said to myself, 'Hey, I can do this' and I did."

A marathoner, Wilson says, "competes with himself both mentally and physically, but the most difficult thing he has to accept is the fact that his body is changing and that he has to adapt to his limitations. It's simple: you last longer if you tweak your training to adjust. If you don't, all the practice in the world won't help."

Will the day ever come when he hangs up his well-worn running shoes and call it a day?

"No, there'll never be a time when I say enough is enough. On my last day, I hope to be able to say that I've had a fairly decent run."

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