

Legacy Runner Richard “Sarge” Chavez



The first L.A. Marathon was something! Everybody dressed in something unique to express themselves -- Elvis, Nuns on the Run, Helen of Troy, etc. I carried a backpack that contained 32 small oranges and medical supplies so I could help people along the way, which I did, and still do from time to time. As the years went by, more runners began carrying

their own backpack, not as big or heavy as mine, but they carried just enough to resupply themselves.

Twenty-five years later, my backpack has become smaller and lighter. I now carry a Big Blue Banner that says, "Mighty Mighty 14s" (for the L.A. Leggers "14" pace group) that usually inspires people to go on. I know I'll finish no matter what. I just want to make sure other people do, too. It's great to give something to people that helps them finish what they started.

A year ago, a week after running the Pasadena Marathon, I had an accident at work, hurting my left knee. The ER doctor said it was just a bad bruise. I had weeks and weeks of physical therapy with no improvement. That's when the occupational medicine doctor decided an MRI would be a good idea. The MRI showed that my left quadriceps tendon was 80% torn and I would need to have surgery to repair it. Unfortunately, the surgery was scheduled for AFTER the L.A. Marathon. So, I walked the 2009 L.A. Marathon with the aid of

a cane and the help of four friends and my wife. Two friends walked the first 14 miles, one walked the entire 26, and another walked the last four. My wife also met us at mile 22 and walked to the finish line with us.

I was so happy that there was someone to greet me at the end when I got there after walking for 11 hours.

A few weeks after that, I underwent surgery to repair the torn tendon. Because it was such a severe injury, recovery has been slow. My orthopedic doctor cleared me to start running only a few weeks ago. So, I will be walking the 2010 L.A. Marathon again. In preparation, I walked the Pasadena Marathon on February 21st with the help of my wife, who walked the last 10 miles. I completed it in 9 hours and 40 minutes, 1 hour and 20 minutes faster than I walked the L.A. Marathon in 2009.

Some final thoughts:

I don't recommend putting one's health at risk for a dream like I did. Every one of us has to make a choice of what we are willing to risk. I know maybe it was poor judgment risking my left knee and not being able to walk correctly to keep up the Legacy; however, I was willing to take that risk, and if at worst, pay the consequences. I just hope that I gave some inspiration to others. It is true that whatever goes around comes around. Call it karma, but I got help myself. Whatever I do for others, it comes from my heart. I don't expect anything in return. But, I know that anyone who sincerely comes from that place, gets a lot back.

Born: Fort Worth, Texas in May 1955 (The Age of Rock 'n' Roll)
Ten years and three months in the U.S. Army (82nd Airborne)
Two wars and 52 parachute jumps, day and night
Airborne! All the way!