

BRENDA AVADIAN, MA
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ALZHEIMER'S AUTHOR BEGINS MARATHON TRAINING

Fifteen weeks into a 251-week training plan for the Los Angeles Marathon.

While many of us try to squeeze in our summer vacations, author, Brenda Avadian, MA is training for the Los Angeles Marathon in the hills above Pearblossom (a tiny community in north-eastern Los Angeles county).

Twelve years ago, a fifty-year old Lockheed colleague told Avadian, she was going to run in the marathon. In her early thirties, Avadian best described her reaction: "How can an old bag of bones like her run twenty-six miles?" Today, on the eve of her forty-sixth birthday, Avadian tempers her remarks with: "I was going through a tri-life crisis. I even bought a convertible!" The following year, after her colleague finished the marathon for a second time, Brenda set her sights on the same goal. "If she can do it, I can do it! Besides, I'm getting older and need to stay in shape. I'm going to run the Los Angeles Marathon when I turn fifty."

The first day, I began with more enthusiasm than Lance Armstrong at the Tour de France. I started jogging on the newly paved sidewalks near our home in Lancaster. Three quarters of a block later, I was panting so hard I couldn't get enough air. Darkness engulfed me. Bending over to rush blood to my brain, I decided to cut back.

During the next ten years, I visualized my goal and watched episodes of Eco-challenge and wondered why the competitors weren't trying harder.

Too busy to fit in regular exercise, I thought about my goal. Then two years ago, I began telling people about it and they held me accountable. "Are you training yet?" asked a fellow Toastmaster, David Price who rode his bicycle on Route 66 from California to Chicago after he turned sixty. I started training in my mind. I watched the Los Angeles Marathon from my living room couch.

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Two months later, in May, Avadian began training. She describes it as "spurts of running with lots of walking and panting." She trains at the 5,000 foot level in the Angeles National Forest, which she believes will make it easier to run the near sea-level marathon and adds, "providing a mountain lion doesn't eat me first!"

"It's slow, and at fifteen weeks into the training, I have lofty goals to run twenty-six miles, but it's going to take dedicated effort. As with many worthwhile endeavors, it won't come easy. I'm at risk for osteoporosis and also have a family history of Alzheimer's disease. My quality of life depends on it."

Today, she has developed enough muscle strength and control to easily jog down hills without knee supports, but she still walks uphill. "Some of those hills are so steep, they're like trying to run up a stepladder!" she quips.

Avadian is the author of eight books, including the second edition of the recently released and internationally sold *"Where's my shoes?" My Father's Walk Through Alzheimer's*. She is also the editor of *Finding the JOY in Alzheimer's* series featuring stories and photos from caregivers around the world.

Since her birthday is in August, and the marathon is the following March, she plans to run in 2010. She invites everyone who reads this to reserve the date and to come down to cheer her on. She's going to need it. Until then, she plans to keep training. "Anything worthy in life is worth pursuing, even if it takes four years!"