

MARATHON MANIACS FIFI DOUBLES DOWN

**Vasque Free State Trail Marathon, Lawrence, KS. April 26
Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon, OK. April 27
By Fiona Wright**

Below is a tale of yet another of FiFi's fabulous 50-states adventures. To avoid any confusion or, perhaps, to confuse you more, we must identify a couple of (real) characters. The infamous FiFi masquerades by night as Fiona Wright, a mild-mannered, loveable Brit with a characteristically wicked sense of humor. "Gary" is really Richard "Rick" Raley, the somewhat respectable boyfriend of Fifi, who was accidentally given the name "Gary" when a certain newsletter edette had a menopausal moment last month. We hope you find this explanation helpful. Now on with the story....

FiFi decided it was high time she did what every self-respecting Marathon Maniac does – run a back to back marathon. This is considered par for the course amongst those lunatics.

FiFi's companion of several months - "Gary" - decided he was ready to tackle the 26.2 mile challenge. After an eight-year hiatus, "Gary" started to run in December. He struggled to complete the SCR New Year's 5K in 29:41. Being something of an overachiever, he improved his speed and on April 19th he ran the YMCA 5K in 23:03. All the while he was training with FiFi doing "longish" runs on the weekend.

So the plan was thus: Fly to Kansas City on Friday; FiFi run the Vasque Free State Trail Marathon on Saturday morning; Saturday afternoon, "Gary" drives FiFi to Oklahoma City; Sunday morning FiFi and "Gary" run the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon; Sunday afternoon drive back to Kansas City, and Monday morning fly home.



Over hill, over dale, FiFi runs the Vasque Free State Trail in Lawrence, Kansas on April 26.

How exciting that the Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon was going to be "Gary's" first. Here's an excerpt from the web site:

"The Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon is unlike any other marathon. It combines the intensely personal challenges of running a marathon with the emotion of a shared national tragedy. The OKC Marathon is not about runners, it is about life."

Everything went according to plan until Saturday morning. "Gary" got jealous when he saw FiFi and 86 other runners get ready to start their 26.2 mile trail run. Why should she have all the fun in the mud? Furthermore, he was concerned she might get hurt tripping over a rock or a tree root so he decided to be her Trail Sherpa. He donned a small back pack, threw in a few items and ran along side. FiFi suggested he only run a few miles lest he be exhausted for tomorrow's big race. Apparently "Gary" had other ideas. After 10 or 12 miles FiFi realized her Sherpa wasn't going to leave her. I'm sure you've heard of bandit runners at Boston, NYC and other big races, but have you ever heard of a bandit at a small trail marathon in some remote location in Kansas?



Impressionable young child at right hollers at "Gary" and FiFi to 'get a room' after the finish of the first of the pair's back-to-back marathon adventure.

We lolly-gagged for most of the trail. There was lots of mud for us to tramp through, and several water crossings where we washed our dirty feet. We stopped by Clinton Lake and had a picnic of Gatorade and Zone bars. We frequently slowed down to say hello to other runners on the course and petted a couple of marathon dogs. I was hoping for a PW (personal worse) but it's very difficult to gauge time and distance on a trail when there are no mile markers. We finally crossed the finish line in 6:24, 12 minutes faster than my 2005 Wickham Park Marathon (current PW record). The RD gave "Gary" permission to register after the fact and so he got a t-shirt, medal and official time – his first so a PR. We socialized with the other runners for a while but had to hit the road for a five-hour drive to Oklahoma City. There was nowhere to clean up so we arrived at our destination very muddy, sweaty and tired, but happy. We arranged ahead of time for a friend to pick up our packets.

The next morning we were in down town Oklahoma City for a 6:30 AM marathon start. The marathon ran past the Oklahoma City National Memorial, through several nice looking neighborhoods, past the State Capitol and along Lake Hefner. My legs felt very heavy and I couldn't get in stride until the second half. I ended up running a negative split by six minutes. My finish time of 5:18 was quite slow for me running this type of course but understandable because of the prior day's activities. "Gary" was having a few problems of his own. As well as being very tired, he discovered the necessity of Vaseline at the 16.5 mile first aid station, and the next eight first aid stations to the finish line. He crossed in 4:41. Two days, two marathons, two states, two PR's ... damn overachiever!

We had nowhere to clean up after the race. We headed back to Kansas City – a five hour drive - dirty, sweaty and very tired, but happy as we sported our two new medals. "Gary" had experienced marathon running with a big bang. I had completed my first back-to-back. We were exhausted!

I'm not sure that I want to run another double. I feel that I missed out on exploring the area and the exhaustion was unbelievable.

However, I'm very glad to have had the experience. Now I feel like a true maniac. "Gary's" not quite sure what he feels as he rubs Vaseline into his sore bits.

Photo far left: "Gary" registers for the Vasque Free State Trail Marathon after he finishes the 26.2-mile event in Lawrence, Kansas.

Photo left: "Gary" shows proof that he finished his second marathon, the 8th Annual Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon. The race was his second marathon in as many days.

One could say that both he and Miss FiFi are members of the over-achievers' club.

