

What's a few blisters?

As we age, we all have the odd ache or pain reminding us of our age. But this past weekend, The Sidekick learned about aches and pains that were a bit more severe.

When she turned 50 earlier this year, she decided to take on a challenge to celebrate her milestone birthday.

As a result, she signed up for the Weekend to End Women's Cancers 60 km walk.

I'll be honest, when she signed up, I never gave it much thought. Walk 60 km over two days? Hey, that's a piece of cake.

I know one might be tired after doing it, and probably have some aching muscles for a few days, but it's still doable, right?

I think The Sidekick was of a similar mind—at first. As a former commanding officer of the local air cadets squadron, she'd been on marches that involved walking significant distances, and many years ago, she endured a week-long wilderness training course, living off the land.

So she wasn't too intimidated with the thought of walking 60 kms. That is until she took her first walk, about nine kms, once around the concession.

It damn near killed her!

Her joints ached, her feet were sore and she was surprised how hard it was to climb some of the hills. In short, she felt 'old.'

After attending one of the information meetings, she was given the name of a local walker who had done the 60K seven times and organized Georgetown training walks. Hooking up with that group was her salvation, not only for the social nature of the walk training, but for the great advice some of the veteran walkers had to offer.

So they trained every week (sometimes more often) as the summer wore on.

Saturday, I drove her to Exhibition Park in Toronto for the 8 a.m. start. I came home and received a steady flow of text messages keeping me posted on her progress. By 5 p.m., her group had logged 33 kms, and had arrived at Downsview, the end of the first leg of the walk.

Originally, she had intended to spend the night in one of the tents available—but

Ted Brown



I nixed that one.

"Are you nuts?!!" I said, "You're 50 years old—and thinking of sleeping in a damp tent after walking 30K?"

She relented and booked a hotel room. Day Two (Sunday) she texted me to say they had set out at 8 a.m., as before.

I headed back to Toronto as she crossed the finish line with her adopted team at 4 p.m. after having logged in 27 kms for a total of 60 kms for the two days. The team members were in high spirits and in spite of the fact their feet and legs were sore, they virtually skipped across the finish line.

I was so damn proud of her—I knew her feet were on fire.

Back in the SUV, I helped her remove her shoes, and she wriggled her toes, her battered feet sporting two huge heel blisters the size of toonies.

But she was still smiling. "I did it," she grinned, "I finished it!"


Once home, after a hot bath and some supper, she planted herself in front of the TV and struggled to stay awake. By 8:30 p.m., she gave in and headed to bed, out cold in seconds.

So she's done it, she's celebrated that 50-year milestone.

But it's all changed now. The original inspiration was all about her turning 50.

After training all summer and walking two days with thousands of people, many who were either a cancer survivor or had lost someone to the disease, it was different.

After walking a mile (or 60 K) in someone else's shoes—well, those blisters seem like a mighty small price to pay to help fight cancer.



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