

Bill Berenson

For those people trying to qualify for the Boston Marathon – or just to run a little faster - you might want to consider the unorthodox but effective training schedule Bill Berenson, a 57-year-old injury attorney in Fort Worth, employs.

Bill ran seven Boston Qualifying marathons in seven states in 10 months in 2011, averaging 3:32. He ended the year on a high note by PR'ing at the Rocket City Marathon in Alabama in a 3:25:36 (an age adjusted 2:52:37) to end the year with 23 consecutive BQs over the past three years.

What makes this story more compelling, and why Bill was considered as the Male Masters Runner of the Year, is that he has accomplished this feat by only running three times a week, totaling 25 to 30 miles.

Bill only ran occasionally in high school and college and only recently started running marathons seriously. His first was at Cowtown when he was 39 -- and he only intended to run the half because he had trained for that distance and lived at that point on the course. But when he got to his house, he felt OK and decided to keep running, which proved to be a big mistake as he died in the second half, but still finished in 4:15. He says he couldn't walk for days and swore he would never run a long race again.

But flash forward 10 years to when Bill was 49 and wanted to celebrate his wife's "special" birthday in a memorable location and try another one as a midlife crisis reliever, so he signed up for the San Diego Rock 'N Roll Marathon. He remembers having trouble in late February just running eight miles in the Cowtown's three-person relay, but he kept training through the spring and finished San Diego in early June in 3:38:53.

Bill didn't intend to run again, but his last-second entry into that fall's New York City Marathon was somehow accepted on his first try. He ran his first of two Bostons the following spring. This made three races in three states and Bill thought he would maybe run one or two a year and keep trying to find new races in different states. The infamous hot one in Chicago in 2007, when he limped in then lost consciousness, again had him hating marathons.

But he loved running on the Big Island of Hawaii the following March and around the District of Columbia in the Marine Corps in October, so he decided to push himself to see if he could gain admittance into the notorious Marathon Maniacs by running three in 11 weeks. He did this in early 2009 and got his fourth star in the club in 2011.

Bill said that it has been hard to work in as many other races as he'd like, but he was pleased to finish first in the Grand Master division of the H.A.N.K. 10 Miler (1:14:12) in 2011. He also finished second among the 108 in his age group the Cowtown 5K (21:49) and eight out of 100 the next day in the half (1:40:02) as well as running these races:

He ended up with 1,520 miles for the year, which was a big jump over last year, and a huge increase over the 535 he logged six years ago. Having his ankle hampered by tendinitis and recovering from a nasty fall in Hartford, Conn., where he fractured a rib the day before that marathon last October didn't seem to hold him back.

Bill also does upper body weight lifting three times a week and occasionally takes a spin or yoga class to cross train.

Bill also tries to help the running community by volunteering at races, serving on the Cowtown Marathon's C.A.L.F. Council (which has given away thousands of running shoes, paid thousands of race registrations, and mentored FWISD students), adopting the Rufino Mendoza Elementary School specifically sponsoring its after-school running program, and organizing and sponsoring the first ever Tarrant County Bar 5K Teams.

Bill's goal is to finish all 50 states by his 60th birthday in 2014. He realizes that this is a long shot. Bill's other goal is to inspire other "seniors" – actually everyone - to exercise and stay healthy.