

RUNNING SHORTS

Tiny sidewalks all the rage in Huntsville

By Darren Grant

You've heard of Tiny Houses and Tiny Cars, but have you heard about Tiny Sidewalks? They are all the rage these days.

The trick is to understand that tiny sidewalks aren't actually tiny. They're just short. Any sidewalk that is no more than 400 meters long, beginning to end, qualifies as a "tiny sidewalk." And there are many of these in Huntsville!

People are starting to notice. Realtor Dalene Zender manages a home shaped like a cowboy hat that sits right on 11th St. near the interstate. In front of it sits a tiny sidewalk. "When I mention the 'hat house' to people they get this confused look, like they don't know what I'm talking about. Finally, after we talk about it some more, they realize what it is and say, 'Oh, the Sidewalk House!'"

"I thought it was the hat that stuck out, but it was the sidewalk all along!"

Tiny sidewalks are also good for your feet. My friend Steve Bickford has suffered from plantar fasciitis for years. His solution? Tiny sidewalks. "When I come home and my wife asks how far I've run, I just say 'as far as the path would take me.' I never tell her that amounts to only 60 yards. My feet feel wonderful!"

Long-time runner Ken Johnson uses them for a different reason—turns. "People don't realize that turning is a very important part of running," he says. "Yet no one ever practices them. I do."

Johnson goes out to the sidewalk in front of Olive Garden, a mere 130 feet in length. He sprints from one end to the other, turns as quickly as possible, then sprints back in the other direction. "After 30 minutes of this I am ready for a bowl of Chicken Gnocchi soup," he says.

The Grande Dame of tiny sidewalks, however, sits a little to the south of Olive Garden, at the base of a long retaining wall underneath the car wash at the intersection of I-45 and Smither Dr. It is truly an elegant tiny sidewalk, with curves, a turn, and a tiny glade of trees for shade and scenery.

Sometimes, when I'm contemplative, I go out there and watch the cars buzz by on the interstate. It makes me thankful for the many wonderful things in life—like tiny sidewalks.

(Ken Johnson compiles the race results for column. Send him yours at 1941runner@sbcglobal.net. Emily Villines will do this column during August, which I am taking off writing. I will return in September.)

Recent race results:

Lunar Rendezvous 5K, Clear Lake, July 14

Ken Johnson, 77 42:51

Firecracker 10K, Brownfield, July 4

David Keithley, 36 1:10:00

Stu's Country Mile 5K, Centerville, July 4

Steve Allen, 46 23:07

Gretchen Dixon, 40 30:50
Cindy Pate, 57 39:53
Ken Johnson, 77 43:37

Upcoming races in Huntsville:

July 21 – Dog Days 5K & 1-Mile, Elkins Lake Sub-division
August 18 – Heat Wave 5K & 1-Mile, Waterwood Sub-division
September 3 – Labor Day 5K & 1-Mile, Spring Lake Sub-division
September 30 – Texas 10 Series, 10-Mile, 5-Mile, 5K, 1-Mile, SHSU campus
September 30 – Bearkat Bolt 5K, SHSU campus
October 20 – Huntsville Half & Quarter Marathon, 5K, Walker Co. Fairgrounds

For more information about these races and others in the area, visit the Seven Hills Running Club website at <http://www.7hills.us> and click on Race Schedule.