

"Keep Running Anyway"



Something to Think About

Patti Wilson was a child when she learned she had epilepsy. One day when she was a teenager, she told her father, Jim, an avid jogger, that she wished she could jog with him but was frightened of having a seizure. Her father thought about it. His daughter's fear was reasonable, but he didn't like the idea of her being afraid. Finally he said, "Well, you might have a seizure, but if you do, I know how to handle it. You'll never be alone. Let's run."

That's what they did. Every day they ran. One day Patti said that she'd like to break the world's long-distance running record for women. The farthest any woman had run at that time was eighty miles. As a freshman in high school she determined she would run from Orange County to San Francisco, four hundred miles. As a sophomore she wanted to run fifteen hundred miles to Portland; as a junior she'd run to St. Louis, two thousand miles; and as a senior she'd run to the White House — some three thousand miles away from her Orange County home.

In her freshman year Patti completed her run to San Francisco wearing a T-shirt that read "I Love Epileptics." Her father ran every mile at her side; her mother followed in a motor home. In her sophomore year she set out for Portland. Her classmates built a huge sign that said "Run, Patti, Run" (the title of her book). But on her way to Portland she fractured a bone. The doctor said she'd have to stop running.

"You don't understand," she said. "This isn't a whim of mine, or my need to prove something. I'm doing it to break the chains on the brain that limit so many of us. Isn't there a way I can keep running?"

The doctor said he could wrap it instead of using a cast, but it would be extremely painful and would blister.

"Wrap it," she said.

She finished the Portland run, completing the last mile with Oregon's governor. After four months she completed her run to the White House where she told the President, "I wanted people to know that epileptics are normal people with normal lives." Patti admits that, above all, she needed to know she was a normal person with a normal life.

We don't have to
live "under"
circumstances. We
can wrestle with the
circumstance;
we can pin it under
us and make it yield
the hidden
good within it.