

LIBBY JAMES
THE RUNNING LIFE

Fort Collins runner's long-distance journey



Two years ago, Fort Collins' Felix Wong ran the Davy Crockett Marathon in Crockett, Texas, on a Saturday. His time of 3 hours and 12 minutes was good enough for first place.

The next day, he ran another 26.2 miles in the Big D Marathon in Dallas in 4:40. He had such a good time that in September he decided to do another back-to-back marathon weekend.

"I hadn't done a marathon in 18 months and I hadn't averaged more than 30 miles of training a week, but here was an opportunity too good to pass up," Wong said.

He's working on running a marathon in all 50 states and here were two, in two different states, on two consecutive days. He finished 18th overall in Bismarck, N.D., then jumped into his car and drove to Billings, Mont., to compete in the Montana Marathon the following day.

He drove alone, immersing himself in the study of Pimsleur Mandarin and enjoying great scenery. "No distractions," he said. "I'm brushing up on my French so I spent some time on it as well." He'd planned to camp out on his trip but work deadlines forced him into more traditional lodging.

Who is this guy, and what makes him tick?

Born of parents who grew up in China and immigrated to Canada before moving to the U.S., Felix grew up the second of three brothers in rural southern California. His world opened up when he

bought a bike for \$5 at a garage sale and discovered the freedom to go. He borrowed a "better bike" to do his first century ride as a senior in high school, an experience that made him more than a little saddle sore and cemented a lifetime commitment to long-distance exercise.

A degree in mechanical engineering from Stanford led to a stint in the semiconductor industry and seven years ago to relocation to Fort Collins, where he consults and has time to indulge his love of outdoor sports and travel. He chose his new home carefully, researching scores of towns in 19 states and Canada until he found the one that matched up with his list of qualifications.

The hardest thing he's ever done? The Tour Divide bicycle ride from Canada to Mexico, 2,700 miles in 27 days including encounters with wipeouts, wrong turns and starvation. At one point, he found himself so desperate for food that he flagged down a car. The Pepsi and half a hamburger he was given lasted him until another

ONLINE FOLLOW HIS JOURNEY

To enjoy Wong's delightful descriptions of his adventures, visit Felixwong.com.

traveler took him home for dinner. The following day, he subsisted on tortillas, soup and peanuts before he found a town with a grocery store. "I learned to be better prepared," he said.

Wong has completed three dozen marathons, two hundred-mile runs and countless shorter runs and long distance bike rides. He returns to California several times a year to visit family and touch base with a major client. He never regrets the time and effort he invested in escaping the California rat race and choosing Fort Collins as his home.

Over the past 40 years, Libby James has raced everything from a mile to marathons and has become old enough to hold some records as well as earn entry into the Colorado Running Hall of Fame.



Felix Wong is shown winning a marathon in Bismarck, N.D., before turning around the next day and running another marathon, this time in Billings, Mont.

COURTESY OF FELIX WONG