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Rushmore Marine Runs Marine Corps Marathon at Sea

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JAVA SEA – While underway aboard USS Rushmore (LSD 47), a Marine from the embarked 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit ran 26.2 miles, Oct. 25, in honor of the “The People’s Marathon” – the largest marathon in the U.S. that does not offer financial reward.

1st Lt. Kirby Mills, a native of Lynchburg, Va., ran on the same day the 34th annual Marine Corps Marathon (MCM) took place in Washington, D.C., an event he hasn’t missed in the past eight years.

“I have run the Marine Corps Marathon every year since 2003,” said Mills. “This was the first time that I couldn’t actually be there in person. I wanted to continue the tradition any way that I could.”

Training for the marathon on board Rushmore presented unique challenges during the transit across the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations.

“There were no real hills. But the moving of the ship made it seem like I was doing hills. It was easy to find time to train; the problem was the treadmills were popular, so sometimes I had to run at odd hours,” said Mills. “I ran as much as I could. I ran 40 to 50 miles a week for the first four weeks at sea.”

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Mills never ran more than 10 miles at a time on the treadmill, but he felt confident that when the time came he would complete the full run. Preparing mentally required just as much focus and attention as the physical element of training.

“Mental preparation is always a part of marathon training. Running this distance on a treadmill may have required a little more,” said Mills.

The first Marine Corps Marathon was held Nov. 7, 1976. Runners began and ended the inaugural race at the Arlington, Va., Marine Corps War Memorial, commonly referred to as the Iwo Jima monument – a fitting location for a Marine Corps event.

“This is my 11th marathon in 366 days,” said Mills. “I love running. When I am running I know longer feel like I am on a ship. It’s great.”

Mills finished with a time of 4:11:50. He plans to continue running marathons in the future, but never again at sea.

Rushmore is part of the Bonhomme Richard Amphibious Ready Group, which reports to the Commander, Amphibious Force Seventh Fleet, Rear Adm. Richard Landolt, who is headquartered in Okinawa, Japan.

For more news on Bonhomme Richard ARG visit www.navy.mil and www.cpr7.navy.mil.