

## The Convention

Sherry and I attended our first American Volkssport Association (AVA: America's Walking Club) convention in 1983 in Norfolk, Virginia. Why did we go? Because we heard there were a bunch of walks taking place there. We were newbies. My son was three. We pulled him in a Red Flyer wagon. We did our first Guided Walk. We were part of the slow group, and completed 10K faster than we ever had before!

I found out years later there was actually business being done there. There was no publicity or advertising even then. But now when we went to the AVA Biennial Convention, we went to the meetings, watched the yelling, three microphones with 20 people standing in line trying to give their view of a particular topic. Sherry and I volunteered to help put on the 1991 convention in Baltimore. 18 events that year. Holy Cow! I put together the registration, she sold over 5,000 state bars for the AVA! MD, VA, DC, PA

Sherry and I have attended every AVA Biennial Convention since 1983. We have both been club officers of different clubs in different parts of the United States. Three years ago I began serving at the national level. Last year Sherry became the ChairPerson of the 20<sup>th</sup> AVA Biennial Convention being held in Billings, Montana.

And yet, we are still pikers. Newbies. We went to the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the first EVER sanctioned event in the United States in Fredericksburg, Texas. I was awed. The founders of the AVA were there. We got to see them, hear them. I am humbled.

But, things they are a changin'. The 20<sup>th</sup> AVA Biennial Convention will be held in Billings, Montana. There are no clubs there. As of this moment, there are no walks there. No bike event. No swim event. So we are going to build it. We will be smaller, leaner. We will be trying to get our message out to folks who do not know who we are, what we do. Not only get them walking, but get them walking with US!

It is a tall order, making changes. The Strategic Planning Committee did some excellent work, and we now have The Placemat. We will be using that, following the plan, starting now.

See you all in Billings, Montana, June 7-9, 2017. It is right around the corner.