

English instructor completes first marathon

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English Instructor

I ran the Portland Marathon Sept. 29, my first. In doing so, I learned this: there is nothing more valuable than the support of others when you're using every ounce of energy you have to make it to that finish line.

When it came to actually starting the race with the 10,000 other participants, I felt as ready as I could be: 7 a.m., S.W. 4th by City Hall, behind the 10-minute mile marker. There were so many of us that it took two minutes before I passed beneath the actual starting line.

The great mob of us passed through downtown city streets as friends and family cheered, waved signs and banners, snapped pictures.

Aid stations occurred every two miles or so. They offered great jars of Vaseline for raw spots from chaffing clothes, cups of yellow and red Gatorade, then more cups of water, occasionally a box of bananas, oranges and, later, wet towels. At every station medical personnel were also available.

Volunteers and fans were incredibly supportive. Some people

dressed in tuxedos to hand out water. Some people put on costumes: one woman had a gecko painted on her face. People brought portable radios and blared them. Four or five bands played. About as many belly dancers gyrated around mile 19. It was wild.

No matter how quickly or slowly a person ran, people cheered. Volunteers who blocked off streets clapped, and spoke as if they knew you. "You're looking great. Keep going." And they looked into your eyes, fed you their energy.

From the very beginning I had a strategy: to run with friends at a steady 10-minute mile pace. A friend of mine started the race with me and held me to my pace; it would have been easy in the excitement of the beginning to get sucked into going faster.

Along Front Avenue, at mile six, another friend joined us; the three of us passed a woman I later found out was an 89-year-old named Mavis Lindgren. She started running marathons when she was 70 years old, and this was her 75th. She smiled as we passed.

At mile 13, around Montgomery Park, my friend Lyle traded his number off to his wife, my friend Bethanne, so she could run the last 13 with me.

For about 19 miles, I was right on my pace. Although I was cold from sweating so much and my stomach was upset from drinking water, I felt pretty good. It was foggy and the temperature

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was in the 50s. We ran out St. Helen's road, up the hill to the St. Johns Bridge. I had anticipated the hill would hurt. At the top another friend surprised me and ran with us over the fog-encased bridge. My clothes were drenched.

Then, after mile 20 or so, near University of Portland, I really started to weaken. My legs felt like

wooden paddles. I had lost feeling in my hands long ago. We ran a steep and long downhill, and then around mile 24, we went up slowly. That killed me.

Other runners were passing me, and even though I was fading, fans were not. Two women had set up a boom box and did the Macarena on the side of the course. Their dancing and shouting helped tremendously.

My friend Marcie joined Bethanne and me at that marker, and I couldn't run very far. I walked most of the next two miles. I was fairly delirious. I was really cold, and Marcie gave me one of her shirts. That helped.

I later determined I was hypoglycemic; my blood sugar bottomed out even though I had drunk some Gatorade along the way. I was dizzy and nauseated. I wobbled. I was disappointed because I knew I wouldn't make my goal time-wise. But only once did I think about stopping, and that was when Bethanne and I started talking about taking a coffee break. Bad idea.

I ran the last 2/10s of the mile to the finish line and thanked the organizers profusely for the space blanket they wrapped around each person. They whisked me through the

finish line, wrapped me, put a medal around me, asked if I was OK and funneled me into a feeding lot. There was a ton of food: bagels, fruit, pasta, yogurt. I ate everything in sight, and still I did not come out of the delirium.

Nevertheless, we went to get the finishers' T-shirts, the rose and the free baby fir tree, and struggled home. I was still out of it. It took a shower and even more food until I regained energy enough to smile.

When I think about the race, I can't get over how supportive people were, friends and strangers. A group of my friends met me just about every three miles.

Their cheers and camera flashes were heartwarming and sustaining. People on the sidelines lied, and I loved it: "You look strong," they said. "You look fresh. You're almost there."

The race director had warned me: a marathon has two halves, the first 20 miles and the last 6.2. He was right. But what got me through was his work, his effort in setting up an efficient, motivated team of people. And it was also Portland, all the people who are friendly and forgiving. And best of all we're incredible friends.

(Editor's note: English instructor Kate Gray is on leave this fall term.)

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cramped dorms, and that annoying person down the hall, you'll be ready for this. Really ready.

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Fire safety promoted

Mairin-Anne Moore
Staff Writer

Oct. 6-12 is the annual Fire Safety Awareness campaign which is sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association.

In 1994, over three thousand people were killed in house fires; three out of five of those fires were caused because there were no warnings from smoke detectors.

Public awareness of fire safety was sparked by the great Chicago fire of Oct. 9, 1871, which claimed 250 lives and destroyed 17,430 buildings. In 1911, on the 40th anniversary of Chicago's fire, the Fire Marshals' Association of North America announced the nation's first fire-prevention week. It focused on educating the public in the installation and maintenance of smoke detectors.

"The primary reason for detector failure is dead, disconnected or missing batteries," according to the National Fire Association's 1995 study. To prevent this problem, it is recommended you check the detectors

in your homes, once a month following the manufacturers' instructions.

The NFPA suggests that with daylight savings time ending on October 27, you should start an annual routine to change the batteries. Also heed the detectors' alarm sound. This is alerting you of the batteries' low power.

Smoke detectors can mean the difference between life and death in a fire. The sound of an early warning could mean another couple of minutes to escape, but only if your detector is maintained and is in working order.

It is a common, but dangerous, habit for many to "borrow" batteries for other purposes or disable the detectors themselves when stopping nuisance alarms. Be aware of your detectors. Don't just disconnect them; replace the batteries.

They will also fail due to age or excessive dirt so clean them regularly. Smoke detectors should be replaced if they are more than ten years of age.

"Let's hear it for Fire Safety-Test Your Detectors!" says the NFPA.

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