

December 14, 2009

Light Up the Room



Volume 1, Issue 1



Merry Christmas

and a very

Happy New Year!



Light Up NYC Marathon

Our journey to run the 40th New York City Marathon began as a show of respect to honor Karen and her quest to complete this heralded race. On August 3rd when Karen passed away from the strangling effects of melanoma cancer running a marathon a mere 90 days away was the furthest thing from our minds and yet in retrospect we were destined to run it.

Sitting in Brandon's apartment on Halloween night you could hear the sounds of lower Manhattan on the most "out" night of the year for native New Yorkers. Meanwhile, we sat there thanking the calendar wizards for Daylight savings time and an extra hour of sleep. At 4:30 am the alarm goes off, at first you try to

ignore it, but, the excitement for the day pops you out of bed like a kid on Christmas morning. We raise quickly place a half a dozen eggs on the stove to boil while we rotate through the shower. Quickly downing orange juice, soft boiled eggs and banana, at the same time, we dress in our uniform for the day, shorts, "I run with an Angel" shirt and sneakers. How to stay warm is kind of an afterthought, we don old sweats and shirts anticipating that we will discard of them just before the race. Our bib numbers are attached to our shirts and electronic tracking tags wrapped around the laces of our sneakers so technology can track our progress this day. Our bag of after-the-race clothes are packed in a com-

mon bag marked with Brandon's race number, than, out the door we go.

You could feel the life of the city, not sure whether it was the remnants from the Halloween night or the energy of the race participants converging on the city. As we hopped our cab and were moving toward the central bus pickup location at 42nd and 6th street for our 5:30 am "late bus"; we started to see a few likeminded runners en-route to the same destination. As we were dropped off at 42nd the throngs of runners became evident here and the energy was definitely from the thousands of runners and seemingly equal number of volunteers directing the stream of runners. We were readily hoarded like cattle going for the

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The Verrazano Village

slaughter on to a line of waiting buses; luckily, ours was of the luxury style. The ride to Staten Island was filled with much bus chatter and anticipation of the day's event, the 40th running of the NYC Marathon. As we crossed from Manhattan to Brooklyn we started to realize that the half hour

drive would be part of the course we were about to cover. Crossing over the Verrazano Bridge you begin to realize that your first hurdle was a 30 degree pitch bridge for one mile straight up; a daunting start. The buses passed through the toll gates of the bridge and came to a stop. Ap-

proaching this area; you started to get a feel for the magnitude of the event. There is a village set-up for the runners on this day. Upon stepping off of the bus one of the first persons we notice is a courageous runner with a right leg prosthetic, almost simultaneously, Brandon and I look at

“no complaining”

one another and in harmony say, “no complaining”. The village is organized into three color villages of blue, green and orange. This is done to systematically put the racers out in waves by pre-race pace. This is done, so to avoid chaos on the bridge by over-zealous runners.

The reality of this stage of the day begins to set in as we look to the gray sky, feel the drizzle and chilling morning air of Staten Island. We now realize that we are underprepared for this stage. Brandon’s wave is

first and is scheduled to go off at 9:40 am than mine at 10:00 am. Arriving by 6:15 am, this means that we have over three hours to kill; what to do. As we make our way into the village, we start looking for a place to sit, realizing the ground is wet and we have nothing dry to sit on I start eying the garbage bins for unused plastic...Brandon quickly discourages me from dumping the garbage, rightfully so, in hunt for a large plastic bag. I then make a bee line for the garbage dumpster

and start to forage through the boxes in the dump. Finding a respectfully discarded box, I take it and we locate a suitable location backed up to a fire plug to rest on. We open this beautiful box and promptly curl up on the cardboard bed covering ourselves with the after-the-race clothes and snuggling for body warmth. We sleep for an hour. We now realize that the other experience for the runners is to experience in-brief the life of the NY homeless...a new found sensitivity on both our

**think cows on the way to a slaughter**

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parts. Thankfully, the village is graced by Dunkin Donuts, ING and other vendor tents for hot coffee and tea. The prized possession of the morning is a Dunkin Donuts ski cap in bright orange and pink. We were able to grab a pink one that Brandon wore proudly. In large part the balance of the time seems to move along at a snail’s pace but then something begins to change as the air of anticipation begins to energize as the runners start

mulling around for warmth and port of potties. Panic sets in as we realize that we need to dump our after the race clothing and get Brandon to his starting coral. When I say coral I mean it, think cows on the way to a slaughter. The village is filled with 43,217 runners and hundreds of volunteers organized around the paths of the three corals that lead to the starting line. We finally figure it out, dump our bag in the UPS truck, then

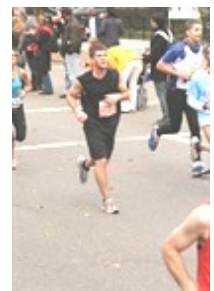
head to Brandon’s coral. A very long and emotional hug as we realize that we are now parting to complete our journey. We came together on a mission to honor a Mother and wife and we run for her, yet, we bring our own personal perspective to the event. You can feel this emotion in our embrace...it lasts longer than most. Tears fill my eyes as we embrace and I cry walking away.

Tiffany’s view.

I love running. When I found out that my dad and brother were preparing to run the 2009 NYC Marathon; to say that I was excited would be an understatement. Although I couldn’t attend the event in person this year it did not change my enthusiasm or anxiety for the big day. On the morning of the marathon I woke up at 3:30 am, said a prayer for both my dad

and brother, and sent them a text message of good luck, love, and words of encouragement. I tried to sleep the rest of the night but my nervous energy kept me awake. I went to the computer and read about the pre-race excitement and got ready to watch the race online. I was able to track both my Dad and Brother throughout the race. At 7:30 am (MWT) I received a call from Janet Watson in

New Jersey. She too was full of nervous energy. We both anxiously waited for my dad and brother to pass the first mile marker showing us that they were on their way. Their quest to finish the marathon in memory of my mom had begun. In the months and weeks leading up to the marathon I did not experience any signs of nervousness, or feeling

Brandon Looking Strong in Brooklyn



Brandon's Race.

overwhelmed by the moment. In fact, I was excited for a number of reasons: 1) to run in my first competitive race 2) to see how fast I could run over the 26 miles 3) and most importantly, to not have to worry about training any longer.

What I did not consider, and what I found to be the most enjoyable aspect of the run, was the way the NYC crowd completely embrace the competitors and just the overall atmosphere of the run.

Waking up at 4:30 AM on the morning after Halloween was not exactly how I planned on spending my November 1st—months ago I would have probably thought this was about the time I would be winding down my night. Yet, surprisingly, I hopped right out of bed, dressed, ate my pre race breakfast of eggs and a banana and was out the door...my excitement had not waned in the slightest. Arriving at the starting “camp” was an event in itself.

The starting area was a city of runners, volunteers, food and drink stands, and anticipation. It was here where my dad and I had our “Forrest Gump” moment. Since we had three hours to kill before the race and my dad and I were still trying to get rid of the morning sluggishness, we were looking for any way to try and rest a bit before the race. My dad found a glorious cardboard box that we were able to lean on one another for an hour or so (like Bubba and

Energy abounds thru Brooklyn

“New York, New York”

Forrest) and get a little bit more of much needed shut eye.

The events at the starting line were definitely one of the more memorable parts of the day. The National Anthem, followed by a speech by Mayor Bloomberg definitely got the crowd of runners excited for the pain; however, nothing got the blood flowing more than listening to Sinatra’s “New York, New York” blare from the starting line speakers. The excitement was

electric and I almost felt like sprinting through the starting line—almost.

The Verrazano was definitely one of the toughest parts of the course; not just because of the terrain, but also because you were trying to navigate thousands of runners to try to get to your own comfortable pace. The view of Manhattan in the distance was a beautiful sight, but also a sore reminder of just how far you had to run to get there. By the end of the Verrazano I had created my own

space and Brooklyn greeted the runners with large crowds and enthusiasm.

Brooklyn was by far the most cultural and eclectic part of the course. Rock bands, Jamaican reggae groups, hip hop; virtually every genre of music was heard in the streets of Brooklyn. The music definitely mirrored the spectators who came out to support the runners—every race and nationality conceivable. I could not help but think of my mom when I passed by a church in Brook-

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for the runners**

“this sucks”

lyn that had their full choir out singing for the runners—I know how happy that would have made her.

Brooklyn was followed by another bridge for a short trip into Queens which led to the daunting Queens-Triboro Bridge into Manhattan. The Queens-Triboro Bridge marked the 14 mile mark of the race, and also offered a

one mile gradual incline into the city. This was the first part of the race where I just felt like “this sucks”. It was here where I start to see various runners start to walk or pull off to the side of the road in pain. I was not the only one starting to feel it—I could not wait for the incline to end. Fortunately, the moment could not have turned any more

positively after you reached the peak of the climb. As you started to make your way down the end of the bridge you were hit by a rush of noise at the end of the Bridge—Manhattan (Home!) was just around the corner. My pace definitely picked up. Every mile seemed like 100 miles and I could not wait for the race to end. The pain in

a new found respect for women runners



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I RUN WITH AN ANGEL



Facial expressions say it all!



The Manhattan crowd was easily the most raucous and dense. It was extremely refreshing and infused new life into my legs. At this point in the race my legs felt good, my pace had not slowed through about 16 miles and I legitimately thought I would cruise through the finish line and have a shot at qualifying for Boston. I could not have been more wrong. The small Bridge into the Bronx is where my race fell apart. Through about 19 miles I had stayed at that same pace, but I reached this small bridge into the Bronx and as I completed the ascent I felt every muscle in my thigh tighten up. "Oh no" I remember thinking "the Marathon Wall" was hit. After that point my pace dropped considerably, actually that is not even giving it justice--it fell off a cliff. After remaining at about a 7:15 pace for the first 19 miles, my splits dropped considerably every ensuing mile...9, 10 mins, and eventually 11 minute miles to end the race. Every mile seemed like 100 miles and I

could not wait for the race to end. The pain in my leg was only exacerbated by the fact that the Bronx offered extremely limited spectator support that was compounded by a bunch of winding roads and hills. It was miserable. I could not have been happier to reach Central Park. I had a group of friends who saw me towards the end of the race in Central Park. My roommate and his girlfriend actually said they were 5 feet from me at one point. However, my headphones coupled with the amount of pain and cramps I was feeling up and down both legs did not allow me to focus on anything but reaching the finish line. I couldn't help but grimace with every stride. I couldn't help but laugh at how much pain I probably looked like I was in. Thankfully, much of Central Park was a downhill jaunt and I knew I was going to finish (I had some thoughts to the contrary in the Bronx). When I crossed the finish line I was extremely pleased to

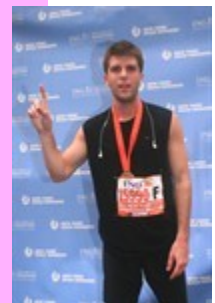
The pain was easily trumped by the overall feeling of satisfaction...

see I had beaten my goal of three hours and thirty minutes. A medal was placed around my neck and I was grabbed by a female medical aid to try and stretch out some of my cramps. The pain was easily trumped by the overall feeling of satisfaction...

I sat and watched four hours of online race coverage with my husband William next to me on our couch. We followed the live coverage, which included a Google map of my dad and brother as they passed each mile marker. At each mile we

were able to see their pace and their distance left to run. It was amazing. I found myself yelling at the screen for them and I even cried a few happy tears. I knew both of them were working so hard for our family. It was such a proud moment in my life and a memory I will cherish forever. In high school my mom, dad, and brother came to watch my cross-country races, cheering me on through every step. My mom's voice, usually so quiet in daily conversation, would boom with excitement as she shouted for me

to go faster and finish strong. In New York City on November 1st, 2009 my Mom's voice was heard again. My dad and brother ran strong, finished strong, and ran a great race for our Running Angel.



Funds Raised Exceed \$10K

Thanks to the many friends and supporters of Karen and the mission of the foundation since its inception we have been able to raise in excess of \$10,000 dollars for our cause.

The NYC Marathon gave us a near term focus to launch the foundation and as a result we have contributed 5 thousand dollars directly to Melanoma Cancer research.

Our mission is just beginning. Over the next few months we will delineate our fund raising goal for 2010 and identify the initiatives as well as the benefactors for the Light Up the Room Foundation. Once again, thanks to all for your support and encouragement!



Keeping the Spirit Alive our Running Angel

Memorial Bench

We are in communication with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Services, who oversee the placement of memorial benches on the D & R Canal. As a result, we expect the memorial bench in Karen's honor to be placed in the first quarter of 2010. We will keep you posted on the exact date/time and location for a brief memorial service held once the bench is placed. Keep in touch with our website for announcements.

Running Angel Pendant

As part of our goal to have a year round fund raising initiative we have designed a Running Angel pendant as a direct replica of the logo you see on the front page. The pendants will be available for sale on the Angel's Shop Too website commencing the first week of January 2010. The pendants will be available in bronze and silver. All funds raised after production costs will go directly to the foundation cause. We ask for your support and referral to running angels of all types. Thank you in advance for your support.