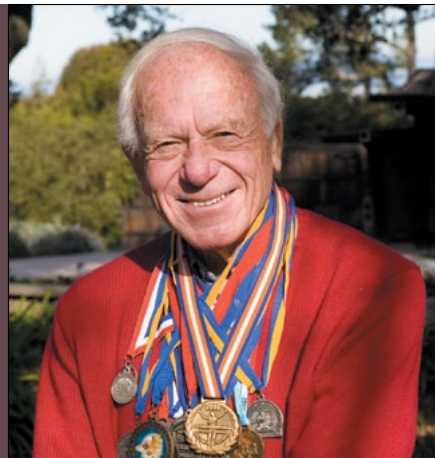


Boston Bombing

My 43rd Marathon

April 15, 2013, Patriots' Day in Boston. Ruth Anne and I were at the starting line in Hopkinton, a charming village 26.2 miles from downtown Boston. The day was perfect, cool, sunny, following wind. Generally marathon runners seek for some excuse for not doing as well as hoped, but today everything was perfect.



By Dr. Walter M. Bortz, II, M.D.

Bang! 10:30 am. Great yelps and cheers, helicopters overhead, TV, world watching, 20,000 others all headed for downtown Boston.

Quickly crowds thinned; there was room to run. Spirits soared. I had run Boston 10 + times before so the storefronts and scenery were familiar. RA somewhere back there. Through Framingham, Natick, and then Wellesley, halfway. Somewhere along the way a police car pulled by and yelled something about the race being canceled. I thought it was a joke. "I still have a long way to go."

But in Newton, near the top of Heartbreak Hill, at almost 21 miles, plastic police tape blocked our way. Bomb. Killed. Wounded. Boston is shut. No one in. No one out. "But I'm a doctor. I might be needed." "We already have enough."

Around 300 of us, still strong, sweating runners were herded by the police to the Newton City Hall where all was chaos, no one knew anything. It was psychedelic.

We were dazed and everyone was searching for any reality. No one had any information and here we were still 5 miles from the finish, 4 pm on this lovely April afternoon.

Pizzas and Oreos arrived. Wonderful Newton mayor gave good cheer. But still no information.

Luckily I had the good judgment to carry my cell phone, and we called Ruth Anne's sister who lives just down the road. She came and picked us up and took us to her house where we kicked back and scanned the TV. Three killed and many wounded but little else. We expunged off several layers of sweat and went to bed anticipating a 3 am taxi call to downtown which was an uncertain prospect. We took the back roads and soon we were at our hotel just one block from the bomb site at the very edge of the cordoned off area. Armored cars, machine guns, SWAT teams, a marathon or a war zone?

Quickly we retrieved our bags at the hotel. Ruth Anne made her 8 am flight out of Logan. I hopped on a train for New York to check on a grandchild and other errands.

The whole experience was fantasy. In my subsequent recording of that fateful Patriot's Day, I said that every now and then being a tortoise comes out first. The hares were singed but our hides were still intact.

We were part of a historic event. Hopefully, no bombs for my 44th next year.

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