

Brecksville senior overcomes heat and pressure to finish Boston Marathon

BY JOHN BENSON

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Traditionally when one enters their '40s, hobbies or interests are more in the line of scrapbooking or model making.

For Brecksville resident Shirley Calvey, her mid-life calling at the age of 44 was to run. And not just run on a treadmill but be a "running fool" like Forrest Gump. Now age 61, the Parma native recently completed her fifth marathon, which is 26.2 mile. Oh, and by the way this was a few weeks ago at the iconic Boston Marathon.

"It's the oldest marathon at 116 years and there's so much talk about Heartbreak Hill," said Calvey, a 1968 Nazareth Academy graduate. "We got there on the Saturday before the race and I usually that night eat seafood. Then the day before they have a pasta dinner for the runners, so we went to that to get our carbs. We were hydrating starting the day before because of the heat. We were getting nervous about that."

As one of the hottest Boston Marathons to date, Calvey wasn't used to the heat. She only began running marathons two years ago, her first of which was a cool and windy affair in Chicago. She admits she was nervous but optimistic as the bus took her on a 45-minute drive outside of Boston to the starting line. Her women's division (ages 60 to 64) took off at 10:40 a.m.

"The hardest part was the heat," Calvey said. "The crowds were fabulous and had lots of water. The first two miles for me was hard because it was so hot. I got a little nervous that I wasn't go-

ing to be able to finish but then I started pouring water on my head and then there were people with hoses sprinkling people down. So I made sure I could get as much water to cool me off. I took it a little slower."

That's when she came up to the famed Heartbreak Hill, which has been known to end even the most seasoned runner's Boston Marathon.

"There are three hills before you get to it," Calvey said. "Someone had told me there were two hills so I got through the two hills and thought it wasn't too bad. That was OK. Then I looked up and thought, 'Oh, no, there it is.' I just took it slower. The hardest part, I think, was the last mile of the marathon because I was whipped by then."

Calvey said because of the heat, race officials warned runners to add 20 to 40 minutes to their normal pace. While her qualifying time of the Marine Corps Marathon in Oct. 2010 was 4 minutes and 16 seconds, she ended up being 20 minutes longer for her Boston Marathon debut.

"I got a beautiful medal," said Calvey, who came in 37th out of her division's 165 runners. As for her husband, Timothy, he also ran the Boston Marathon but did so off-the grid after not officially qualifying.

"Everything worked out good for me," said Timothy, a 1968 Padua High School graduate. "It was my first time running the Boston Marathon but I ran all of the other races with her. It was the best race I had ever been in. I'm a heavy guy and normally at the other marathons there

are other people like me but it seemed to me because they were all qualified runners they were all thin people. So I kind of stuck out like a sore thumb."

Still, these are quite the bucket list achievements, nonetheless. This brings up the idea of what spurred Calvey to begin long-distance running while in her 40s?

"I didn't start running until I got together with my husband, who was a runner," Calvey said. "It was something we could do together. That's when we got together. In the beginning, running was hard but once I got a mile it was like a challenge to do more and then it got to be fun."

Shin splints and pulled muscles aside, Calvey kept adding more distance to her runs. Then at age 51 she attempted her first half marathon. The 13.1-mile affair didn't go well.

"I didn't feel good after that so I took some time off from long running and didn't do another one until probably eight years later," Calvey said. "That was the [Metroparks] Towpath half marathon and that went great. So I did a couple of more after that and that's when we decided to do longer ones."

Today Calvey can be seen running on the towpath, in her Settlers Passage development or even at the Brecksville Rec Center. She also does cross-country in the winter to stay in shape.

Up next for Calvey and her husband is the New York City Marathon. The couple expects to run that this year or next. So is she confident of completing the Big Apple's annual fall marathon?



The running couple from Brecksville. Shirley Calvey, 61, just finished running in the Boston Marathon placing 37th out of 165 runners. Husband, Timothy, is her biggest supporter, running off the grid.

"After doing Boston, sure," Calvey laughed. "I hope so. I kind of always lose my confidence right before because I get nervous but right after I finish one I feel like I can accomplish anything."

Finally, how long does the Golden Buckeye Card-carrying Calvey plan to keep running mile after mile?

"I think as long as God lets me run and my knees hold out," Calvey said. "I like doing it."