

THE ROAD TO THE CHICAGO MARATHON

October 16, 2009 -- JOURNAL ENTRY #8 -- THE JOURNEY IS OVER

I spent 26.2 miles last weekend thinking about what I would say in this final journey entry so, bare with me, you might have a lot to read today!

Well, its over! Done, I did it. The finish line was a mix of relief, joy at being done, disbelief that I was still cold after all of those miles (and all of that time) and quite frankly a little disappointment that there wasn't better food in the finish area.

Over the course of my 26.2 miles, I thought about a million and one things -- why did I decide to do this again? I'm lucky that I am here and able to run a marathon! What do I want to eat when I finish? Why am I so hungry now? What are my boys doing without me at home? Should I switch all of my stuff into my new purse that I bought for the car ride home? Just normal everyday stuff, right?

I also thought about what a very long journey this particular trip has been. Sometime in late February or early January I made the commitment to run the Chicago Marathon. Soon after, I injured my shoulder and ultimately had surgery in May (not good for the training regimen). You all know about my well publicized fall (I shared this with all of you). Damage to the right knee, not much running before the marathon and crossing my fingers it would hold up. In between we've had to say good-bye unexpectedly to a few friends and a family member. And then of course there is the normal craziness of working, having kids and life itself.

I wasn't sure if I was going to make it to the finish line let alone the starting line. I guess none of us every really know this do we?

With all of this behind me, I think the relief at the finish line was realizing that this chapter was over. The injuries were behind me (my shoulder is still attached and the knee held up amazingly well thanks to Dr. Taylor). The past few months were behind me. And a new day was ahead!

Its amazing what you see if you take the time to look around you during the marathon. It was cold for an early October morning -- the amount of spectators (yes, I know its Chicago) was simply amazing. There times when the noise and cheering were almost deafening and there was no way that you couldn't help but pick up the pace a bit.

There are so many stories. There were the thousands of folks running or walking on behalf of charities -- 7,000 - 8,000 I believe. Many have their own personal stories. One woman's aunt had passed away a few days before and she was running for her. There were a lot of folks celebrating their birthdays on Sunday, October 11. There were the old timers and the newbies. There were those who would taste the thrill of success that afternoon and those that had to face the pain of not finishing. These aren't new or different stories -- just another day in the life of a marathon.

Around Mile 23 a random gentleman singled me out put out his hand for a high five and gave me a look that said "you are doing this and you will finish". For whatever reason, this brought tears to my eyes. I guess it was the impact that a random act of kindness can have and also the fact that I was so ready to be done and needed him to actually step in and run for me!

I know that this is a cliché, but it's true that the marathon is such a metaphor for life. There are good times, good feelings and there are bad times and not such great feelings. There are ups and downs and things can change from one minute to the next. All you can do is do your best to be prepared and be willing to shift along with the wind.

I'm thinking about retiring from marathoning -- at least for awhile. At least while my little ones are still little. That was the initial thought when I finished last Sunday. But, what if my running marathons inspires my little ones to try their best, to do good for the world, to help someone else who needs it? What if I need the marathon to take life as it comes and to shift with the wind when it changes course?

What if? I'll keep you posted. For now, enjoy the time you have when you are running or walking. Take a moment or two to breathe in the air, feel the wind on your face and face a new day!

See you on the roads!