

# ON THE RUN

By Robin Steckley

"Heavy rains and high winds coming from the northeast," promised the weather advisory sent to all those who qualified and registered for the 111th Boston Marathon on April 16.

This forecast, along with cancelled flights into Boston, forced 2,400 of the more than 23,000 people registered for this year's marathon to do a no-show. But Leona Newlands and Lori Robertson of Whitchurch-Stouffville were not changing any of their plans.

They both ran the Mississauga Marathon last May and qualified to run Boston this year. They trained at home through some extreme weather in preparation for this race and they weren't about to back out. Lori was determined she would run and enjoy the race no matter what was coming.

"As runners, we all want that perfect day," she said, "but you know it just isn't going to happen so the weather becomes part of the challenge." In fact, the rain subsided as Lori and Leona moved to the start line and they found themselves running in wind, but little or no-rain.

Leona admits that she was not quite as positive as Lori. "My struggle with defeat began with a series of small challenges leading up to race day, along with the much larger challenge of the heavy rains and high winds predicted for that day," she said.

Email weather advisories and reports on Boston TV right up to the night before the event predicted that this would be a formidable storm unlike any other encountered in the race. "As the rain and wind continued and the start time approached, I realized that I needed to gather myself and run the race, regardless of any and all



of the events leading to that moment," said Leona.

She went on to run a negative split, meaning the second half of her race was faster than the first, an accomplishment for any runner, especially on this course. The hills are continuous and taxing, particularly in the second half. Lori found this part of the race her biggest challenge.

"The final few hills coming into Boston were a struggle", she said. "The biggest and best known hill on the course, Heartbreak Hill, was not as difficult as these final few." She found the effort to lift her quads up yet one more hill to be taxing. But with 25 miles already behind her, she found the determination to do one more and cross the finish line knowing she had given it her all.

Both runners said they were thrilled with the experience and the unique opportunity to run the Boston Marathon. They found the Bostonians very accommodating -- one family ushered Leona into their home to use the bathroom during the run!

They were extremely motivated by the crowds, the unrelenting "high-fives" with spectators along the way, and stepping over timing pads knowing that everyone at home knew where they were. Even though they didn't have family with them, it felt as though they did as the timing pads reported their progress in real time back home.

Both Lori and Leona faced their challenges along the way, but to come into the final 500 metres with the stands full of cheering fans, knowing that you are just about to complete the Boston Marathon; there is no feeling like it.



Leona Newlands and Lori Robertson of Whitchurch-Stouffville were among thousands of people who participated in the 2007 Boston Marathon, battling wind, rain and chill temperatures to reach the finish line.

# FLIGHT TO FREEDOM

Residents left behind family, friends and worldly goods

By Kate Gilderdale  
Stouffville Free Press

Urgay Tamas was 14 when he fled Hungary with his aunt in November, 1956 after the courageous revolution against communist rule was brutally crushed.

Escaping was fraught with danger; many years later, Tamas still wakes up in a cold sweat remembering how everyone had to jump on and off the trains taking them to the border to avoid capture by Russian inspectors. "It took about three days to make it to the border and getting across took two hours," the Whitchurch-Stouffville resident recalled.

"When we got to a village we were not sure if we were in Austria or Hungary." It was a Coca Cola sign on one of the buildings that finally convinced them they were free.

The Canadian government supplied an old World War II troop carrier to fly them out. "One engine after another went until three of the four were not working, so we flew back to Iceland." Repairs completed, they flew to Greenland. "The Americans were wearing winter uniforms which made them look like Russians and for a while we thought we'd been betrayed."

Back in Hungary, young men were still being put to death for their part in the revolution. "You had to be 18 to be executed, and until 1962 they continued executing those they had arrested when they reached their 18th birthday," said Tamas. "My cousin was sentenced at 17 and spent six months on death row."

"I was just a year older than Tamas when I left," said Marta Tomory. "I had a brother in the air force. When the revolution broke out the soldiers disappeared to their home towns, but my brother stayed because he was in charge of the sports equipment store."

When the Russians came back they broke into the store and took the equipment. Marta's brother got hold of a pistol and walked home. "My mother said, 'You have to go back or they will take you to Siberia'. He said he would rather die than go back."

The family left at the end of November, leaving Marta's father behind because he

was too sick to travel. They hooked up with another family and headed for the border. "We could hear the Russian tanks and the soldiers talking. We had to run between the searchlights and people in villages opened up their backyards for us to go through so we could avoid the streets."

When the revolution started, Ildiko Ugray-Hary was living with her sister, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother in an apartment in Budapest. "Things were happening all around us."

Ildiko, who was 11, had to search for food to sustain the family. She was on her way home with a milk tin filled with sauerkraut when she was asked to fill gun belts with ammunition to use against the Russian troops, a task she accepted. "When the Russians had passed I went home. To me it wasn't heroic, it was exciting."

As the situation deteriorated, Ildiko's mother visited a friend who said her family were leaving for Canada. "My mother asked if we could go with them." They took the train and had to crawl through deep snow to get to the border.

"Mother paid a person smuggler at one of the border towns; he walked us across the fields and they were shooting up flares. We had white sheets that we threw over ourselves when the flares went up so it would look like snow."

After they crossed the border, they were taken to Holland by train. "Dutch people at every stop had their bands playing the Hungarian anthem," said Ildiko. "We stayed at the NATO base in Holland for a few months and the Dutch government and Canadian Red Cross helped us. I would do anything for them," she said, with tears in her eyes.

"Princess Beatrice bought out a whole department store and clothed hundreds of refugees. She came to the camp and personally helped out." The Canadian government sent an English teacher to give the refugees lessons while they waited for the ship that would bring them to Canada, their new home, where they, along with thousands of other refugees, built a life free from fear and persecution for themselves and their families.

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