

JUNE / JULY 2020

~FOOTNOTES~



WE'RE BACK ON SATURDAY MORNINGS
We had almost 20 people out today for both walking and running. It was great to see friends again and have someone to run with. We did a great job social distancing. Wednesday Runs are on again!



AN ENCOUNTER WITH COVID 19

BY PETER MCCLUSKY



Stopping to drink a beer during the Berlin marathon.

At around the same time the first cases of what would come to be known as Covid-19 were being recorded at a hospital in Wuhan, China, I was sitting in the coffee shop at the Fredericton Airport reading the Daily Gleaner at the start of a journey that would take me a long way from home and make it difficult to return.

My dream was to spend the worst of the New Brunswick winter in a climate where I could wear shorts and sandals every day instead of long underwear and ill-fitting, clunky boots. I wanted to spend January, February and March complaining about the heat, not the cold. So I booked a trip to Buenos Aires, Argentina. I would leave on December 31, 2019 and return on March 27, 2020.



I have friends who live in Buenos Aires - one an artist and the other a former school teacher - and their main business is renting apartments to visitors, so for a

small amount of money I could rent a tiny studio apartment in a safe, peaceful area of Buenos Aires for the month of January. For February and part of March I had agreed to teach at a high school in rural Bolivia but that was cancelled at the last minute because of the uncertain political situation and the threat of civil unrest, so my time would be spent in Argentina with maybe a little side trip to Uruguay.

For the month of January I signed up for a literature course at the Universite de Buenos Aires. So every day I made my way on the overcrowded buses or the jam packed metro system, El Subte, to the centre of the city. There were about a dozen students in my class. Myself, an American, a Swede, two or three Germans, some Russians and four or five young women from China. The Chinese women were studious and very quiet. They hardly spoke in class at all. One day, around the middle of the month, in order to try to get them to talk, I asked if their families were affected by this new virus that had been reported in the city of Wuhan? I had heard about it on BBC World News. It was a deadly virus, similar to SARS, it caused serious respiratory problems in those who contracted the illness but this was a new corona virus and there was no vaccination, no cure, and it could be very dangerous. No, the young women said, our families don't live anywhere near Wuhan. I put it out of my mind.



I relaxed and enjoyed my days in Buenos Aires. The weather was warm and dry. There were a few uncomfortably hot periods but they never lasted more than a day or two. I joined a running club and tried my best to run on a wounded knee. The runners were friendly. Sometimes we went for coffee or a beer. One friend took me to a soccer match at La Bombonera, or The Chocolate Box, where Boca Juniors play. The entire stadium vibrated as the crowd bounced up and down throughout the entire match.

As January changed to February I extended my stay in the city for another month and decided to join the local YMCA and use the pool every day. The pain in my knee wouldn't go away so running was out. I even tried out acupuncture and although it helped, the pain persisted. So my routine changed a little, but not much. I still got up in the morning and made my way to the microcentro but a little later so the crowds on the El Subte weren't as bad. After my swim I'd visit a museum or go for a coffee in one of the beautiful and relaxing cafes. A cafe con leche and a medialuna while reading the newspaper was a decadent way to while away a few hours.



By the middle of February those newspapers were less concerned with Argentina's debt crisis than they were with something called the Coronavirus. On BBC World News there was nothing else: the Coronavirus was killing thousands of people in China. Meanwhile life in Buenos Aires continued. The virus, or Covid-19 as it was now being called, still hadn't arrived in Argentina. I checked the newspapers and news websites from home. No cases in Fredericton. Cases were starting to pop up in Vancouver and Toronto. All over the world people were getting sick. Very sick. China, South Korea, Italy, Spain. Covid-19 attacked the respiratory system and in extreme cases could shut down your lungs. Ventilators were needed. Critically ill patients needed to be intubated - put into an induced coma and a tube forced into their lungs - to allow them to breathe.

With February waning it was time to consider March. I decided to stay in the city and just to do some day trips or weekend trips to nearby places before returning home at the end of the month. I kept swimming, reading, spending evenings walking in the parks along the Rio Plata, having a beer at my local pub where the manager,

John, played music from the 60s and 70s. We talked about all the bands he had seen in Buenos Aires over the years during his time as a stagehand. We compared notes about favourite bands and favourite songs. It was great to remember where we were when we first heard certain songs, or heard certain bands. We talked about Argentina and its crippled economy; about Buenos Aires and the great cafes and restaurants; about books and travel and wine. We never once spoke of the virus that was going to change everything.



On March 14, a beautiful Saturday, I went to the Y to swim. In the afternoon, on my way home, I stopped at a local cafe for a "merienda" - an afternoon snack. I ordered a "cafe con leche y dos medialunas." I pulled out my phone and noticed I had quite a few emails. My friends and family were sending excited messages telling me the prime minister says I should leave, go home, get out of there! My eyes told me I was sitting in a lovely cafe, surrounded by friendly, nice people - and the coffee was much better than at home. I'll be leaving in two weeks anyway, I thought, why rush? But the emails kept coming. The prime minister says all Canadians should return home by commercial flights, the borders will be closing, you'll be trapped. I relented. I went to the Air Canada web site and discovered I couldn't change my ticket online. In my case, in order to change my ticket I would need to phone a 1-800 number - you can't phone from your cell phone, you must phone from a landline. But I don't have a landline. My friends don't have landlines, everyone here has a cell phone. There are little shops called locutorios that have telephones and computers hooked up to the

internet but all the shops in my neighbourhood are closed and won't open again until Monday. And to make matters even worse, the Buenos Aires city government has recommended that all businesses should close. The national government was going to hold a meeting on Sunday to decide what to do. There were almost no cases of Covid-19 in Argentina but it was coming.



On Sunday I walked all over my neighbourhood looking for a locutorio. No luck. I expanded my search and eventually found a shop with a telephone. I called Air Canada on the 1-800 number and got a busy signal. I kept trying, on and off, for the next six hours. Twice I got through to the recorded message but after two minutes it cut me off. So it wasn't just me, there were thousands and thousands of Canadians trying to get in touch and change their tickets. I had a bad feeling. I started heading back to my apartment and in my mind I made plans to head to the Air Canada office the following day (Monday) and change my ticket.

When I arrived at the airline office on Monday morning there was already a small queue of about twenty-five people. It was a pleasant morning and people were strung out along Avenida Cordoba in ones and twos, some wearing masks, patiently waiting for the office to open. As we waited I spoke with a couple from Newmarket, Ontario, who were originally from Buenos Aires but now worked as medical researchers at one of the big hospitals in Toronto. They needed to get back because they had two sons who were spending a week at a sports camp in Ontario during March break and they couldn't afford to get stuck in Buenos Aires for long. Another family from Montreal told me they had just arrived in Argentina on Saturday afternoon. The first thing they discovered when they signed into their email accounts - the prime minister says everyone has to return as soon as possible. The family's Argentina adventure was going to last less than a week and mostly they'd see the

inside of a hotel room.

When my turn came to change my ticket I asked the agent if there was any point. I already had a ticket for March 27 and the earliest flight I could get was on March 22. The agent said it would probably be best to return a few days early, so I went ahead with the change. When I got back to my apartment I called my friends and explained that I was going to have to leave a few days early. We talked about the situation and what might happen - I said I didn't have much faith in Air Canada being able to get all of the Canadians home on regular flights. I laughed and said maybe I'll be here until December!

When Sunday rolled around I headed out to the airport by taxi. By this time Argentina had imposed a nationwide lockdown: no one was allowed to leave the house except for groceries or emergencies. I still had the keys to the apartment, unable to walk over to my friends' place and drop them off because of the restrictions on movement. I shoved them into my backpack along with my passport and other documents. The taxi driver said we'd be getting to the airport early because there was almost no traffic. And when we turned onto the main road leading to the expressway we were the only car in sight. Eleven a.m. on a Sunday morning in one of the biggest cities in South America - a population of around 18 million people - and we had the road to ourselves.

Halfway to the airport there's a toll plaza on the highway. The lanes were filled with cars being stopped by security forces checking everyone's documents. No one was being allowed in or out of the city without a good reason. The taxi driver spoke to the policeman, I showed my passport and we were waved through. When I got to the airport I was exceptionally early - 11:30 a.m. for a 3:30 p.m. flight - but there were already at least a hundred people standing in line. Some wore masks, some didn't. Some stood apart, some didn't, but what I found most unusual was no one spoke.

There was ambient sound but no conversations, no idle chat. The check-in process was a bit cumbersome and a little longer than usual but eventually I dropped off my suitcase, then I made it through security and immigration and into the departure area of the airport. I had a few pesos left and was dying for a coffee but it seemed everything was closed except one small place that sold sandwiches and beer. I asked if they had coffee and they did. So with my very last pesos I bought a cortado doble and an empanada. I sat down in a quiet area to read my book and wait for the plane.

The airport seemed deserted. There were very few people - I suspected most

of the ones I could see were on my Air Canada flight to Santiago, Chile and then on to Toronto. I thought about getting home and what the weather would be like. I had my jacket rolled up in my backpack and my fleece was at the top of my suitcase. Even if it's really cold I'll only have to go outside on that short walk from the plane to the terminal in Fredericton. Once I get my suitcase back I can put on my fleece. I thought about all the groceries I'd need to get, whether or not my WiFi would be working, taxes!

The departure board had only a few flights. One to Madrid another to Sao Paolo. The Air Canada flight to Santiago was also listed but there was no time for departure just a big red banner saying "delayed." One o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock. Finally someone from Air Canada walked through the airport telling the waiting passengers to go to Gate 12. We all shuffled down to the gate only to be told to wait a little longer. Finally at 7 p.m. they made an announcement - the flight has been cancelled, landing permission denied, everyone must leave the airport, the airport is closed. There were several hundred people. We all had to follow an airport guide through some doors and down some stairs until we all stood in the arrivals hall. We trooped through immigration and waited for our bags to be sent back from the bowels of the building.

At about 8 p.m., four and a half hours after we should have left Buenos Aires we were spit back out into the airport; no information, no attempt by Air Canada to explain why the flight had been denied permission to land, no rebooking, nothing. For some reason we were all told to stand in line again but it quickly emerged that Air Canada wasn't going to provide anyone with accommodations, wasn't going to arrange transport back into the city - we were on our own. Some people (like me) had spent their last peso, some didn't speak Spanish, most were baffled by what had happened. Luckily, I still had those keys. I stepped out of line and headed for the arrivals hall where I figured I'd find a taxi to take me back to the apartment but first I had to find a cash machine. The first one I tried wouldn't take my card but I had experience with the fickleness of the ATMs in South America. Sometimes they were just out of money, so I tried the other machine in the kiosk. Success. Now I had some cash to pay the taxi but when I got to the taxi desk I discovered there was a two or three hour wait.

I was trying to think what to do and walked over to the area where the Remis offices are located. They're like airport limousines and charge about double what a taxi would charge. I spoke with one of the drivers who was hanging around and he told me the office would be open in about half an hour. There were a few drivers waiting because they couldn't get home unless they had a document from the

company to allow them past the police checkpoint. I chatted to the driver for a while and then went to find a place to wait nearby.

People were milling around trying to figure out what to do. There was nothing open - no food, no drinks. There were lots of families with small children and many elderly. Everyone looked lost. After about half an hour the Remis driver I had been speaking with came and asked me where I was going. I gave him the address: Blanco Encalada 2328, I said. He punched the address into his phone and made a call. The person in the airport office hadn't returned so he called someone else. He was sent a document showing he was driving me to the Belgrano neighbourhood and off we went. Shortly after 10 p.m. I was back in my Buenos Aires apartment with no food, no bottled water and no hope of getting a flight to Fredericton.

Monday morning looked a lot brighter. I managed to find a little local kiosk that had a coffee machine, went to the grocery store and had no problem using my credit card. On the way home I stopped at the local fruit and vegetable stand and filled my bags with peppers, tomatoes, melons and extraordinarily delicious potatoes called papas negra, or black potatoes. I'm not sure where they got the name, the flesh is white, probably from the generous amounts of earth that stick to the skin. I spoke for a while with the young couple from Bolivia that ran the shop. I spoke with them almost every day but now they were the essential workers that would keep the city running during lockdown.

I knew I would have to develop some sort of routine in order to keep myself sane so I got up every morning at a reasonable time, made breakfast, read the newspapers, sent some emails, went for groceries, stopped at the panaderia, did a little exercise on the balcony, played the guitar and read the Spanish novels I had bought before the lockdown. In the evening I watched BBC World News, sometimes one of the Argentinian cooking shows and old episodes of The Office. The TV had Netflix but I don't have an account. The TV also had YouTube but after about half an hour the video would freeze. I watched the USA-USSR hockey game from the 1980 Winter Olympics but it lost some of its appeal when I had to continually reboot the WiFi. Instead of two and a half hours it took me two and a half days to watch it - and I knew the outcome in advance!

I tried to stay away from television and especially the news. Wall-to-wall coverage of Covid-19 quickly became unwatchable. I later heard Canadian poet Susan Musgrave describe it as "fear porn." On BBC World News they covered nothing else. On the local Buenos Aires stations the news was unrelenting. On and on and on. People were terrified. The once friendly and loquacious Portenos now looked at everyone with suspicion - especially foreigners. My friends said I should

tell everyone I've been here since January but no one was interested. The continual, non-stop delivery of terrifying news about hundreds of deaths in Spain and Italy had some people frantic. One of my neighbours accused me of throwing out garbage without wrapping it properly. I told her it wasn't me. I'm not sure she believed me, but she started screaming about the visitors who were making life unbearable. I never saw her again.

Another neighbour took a phone call every night from some family member and screamed into her phone about her fears and mental anguish. During the day I could hear her singing through the thin walls and at night I could hear her moaning. I would have talked to her but any time we were both on our respective balconies she would go back inside her apartment and slam the door shut.

The changes were starting to appear in the streets too. After a few weeks of lockdown people were edgier, they stared at each other on the street as they passed. I don't know what they were looking for, maybe some tell tale signs of infection? The lines outside the grocery stores started to get less friendly, there was no conversation, the novelty had worn off and people were now starting to feel the psychological pressure of staying indoors all day, not being able to visit their friends or family. For me home and family were thousands of kilometres away. I thought I would happily exchange this nice weather for a day spent looking out my window at the river, a leisurely stroll through Sobey's or the Superstore and then cooking in my own kitchen. Sure the wine was excellent but the inertia, the inactivity, was taking its toll. The more I sat and waited the less I wanted to move around. The daily swim was a thing of the past, long forgotten.

The days and weeks stretched out. I received a few emails from the Canadian embassy, nothing from Air Canada. By the middle of April I understood I was on my own. If I was going to get back home to Fredericton it was going to be through my initiative, no one was going to rescue me. In the early days of April Air Canada had mounted a "rescue" flight to Buenos Aires but it was charging \$2,000 for a flight to Toronto. After that you were on your own. I decided I would wait out the month of April in Buenos Aires and then rebook with Air Canada when its regular flights resumed in May. But when I went to the Air Canada website I couldn't find any information on flights in May. I called the Air Canada reservations number in Montreal. Surprisingly I got through almost immediately. The woman at the other end of the phone told me that there were no flights in April or May. The first flights would be at the end of June and when those flights resumed the return portion of my ticket would be valid. I thanked her for the information and hung up. I'll have to stay for another two months.

I decided to look and see if any other airlines might be flying in May and found that United Airlines could get me back home with a flight from Buenos Aires via Houston and Toronto with the journey starting on May 5. I patiently started entering all the information into the system and after several attempts and a few crashes I had a ticket from Buenos Aires to Fredericton for \$800. But that didn't last long.

A few days later United sent me an email announcing that the flight had been cancelled. They wouldn't have any regular flights again until June. Now, I thought, I'll be here for another two months. Oh well, try to be positive: you're safe and healthy, there's lots of food in the markets, wine is cheap and the weather is beautiful. So I can't go for a walk or a swim or to a cafe, I can't do those things back home either. I'll be patient and wait for June. But that didn't last long.

The lockdown in Argentina started in the middle of March and was originally for two weeks. The government kept extending the lockdown even though the country wasn't really seeing the kind of explosion in infections or deaths that were being experienced in Europe, the United States and parts of Asia. As we moved towards the end of April the government felt secure enough to partially lift the restrictions in some of the provinces where there hadn't been any reports of contagion. That didn't happen in Buenos Aires. The strict lockdown continued and to add to the pressure the government announced it was suspending all domestic and international flights until September 1, at the earliest. So those Air Canada flights in June wouldn't be happening and neither would flights by United or any other airline. Now, it appeared, I was going to be stuck in Argentina for four or five more months! I might be here for a year!

I didn't really seem to have any options but an email from the embassy said there was another flight leaving Buenos Aires on April 29 for Miami. The complication was that Air Canada announced it was suspending all flights to the U.S. starting April 30 and the border between the two countries would remain closed. So if I got to Miami could I get home?

I did some searches and found that American Airlines had flights on the morning of the 30th from Miami to Philadelphia and then a connection to Toronto, then Montreal, then Fredericton. I managed to book all of the flights and got myself ready for a 42 hour trip through three countries - none of which seemed very eager to have travellers.

The taxi came for me at 7 a.m. Traffic was much heavier now than six weeks earlier; lots more private cars, transport trucks, even public buses. But as we got to the toll plaza again I noticed a sea of parked cars on both sides of the barriers. What

are all those cars doing here I asked the driver. Confiscated, he said. People trying to get in or get out of Buenos Aires without the proper documents had their vehicles impounded. For how long I asked. Until it's over, he said.

I got to the airport just before 8 a.m. There was only one door open with a policewoman to check your passport and ticket and a health care worker to take your temperature. I passed through and looked up at the departure screen. There was one flight leaving at 12 p.m. - the flight to Miami. Nothing else. I headed for the ticket counter and found a departure area that would normally be thronged with lines of people snaking around velvet ropes completely deserted. Not one person in sight.

After a few minutes a steady stream of travelers arrived. They had been bused to the airport from their hotels in the city. Most had come from outside the capital and were only allowed to travel with police security. One couple from Montreal told me they had left the city of Mendoza in western Argentina two days earlier, driven in a bus escorted by police to Buenos Aires, put in a hotel and told to stay inside. On the morning of their flight they were put back into the same bus and shuttled to the airport. There were now several hundred people in the queue looking to leave - including quite a few Canadians. I got through the check-in process, headed for security and immigration and then waited and waited in an almost empty departure area. I could see the aircraft sitting at the gate. The crew arrived but the passengers continued to sit and wait. I started getting nervous. Finally at about 12:30 p.m. the announcement came to begin boarding.

We boarded and then waited and waited and waited. At around 1:30 p.m. the pilot made an announcement. The reason we were waiting was because they needed a document from the Argentinian authorities and without that document they wouldn't be allowed to land in Miami. My heart sank. I thought, oh no, last time I got to the departure gate and the flight was cancelled, this time I'm actually going to have to leave the airplane. But my fears didn't come true. The document arrived and the only flight departure from Buenos Aires for the entire day took off three hours late.

Now events were mostly out of my hands. I had no control over U.S. Customs. If they decided to make it difficult to enter the country there was nothing I could do but that proved not to be a problem. I explained I was catching a flight the following morning. I called a hotel from the airport arrivals hall and a few minutes later a shuttle bus arrived to take me to the hotel

The next morning I had a coffee at the hotel and then headed back to the airport. All of the flights were on time and by early afternoon I was in Montreal. The flights were different with people wearing face masks and no drinks or snacks but I

found it pleasant not to have to worry about that trolley whacking me on the shoulder or the shin every time it passed. The return to Canada was also simple and pleasant. I was expecting a long difficult process but the customs and immigration people just collected a form and stamped my passport. I was back in Canada and just a one hour flight from home. Of course I had a long wait but the adventure would be over tonight.

The final leg of my journey was the flight from Montreal to Fredericton, scheduled to leave at 9 p.m. but once again things weren't going so smoothly. The flight attendant had gone to the wrong gate, people were crowding the desk and being warned to maintain social distance, departure time came and went and we were still in the terminal. Finally the doors were opened, we stepped into the chill air of Montreal on the last night of April 2020 and climbed the few steps into the plane. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief and the plane taxied down the runway and lifted off. The plane landed just before midnight on April 30 and waiting for us was yet another checkpoint where everyone was being questioned by health officials, supported by police. They took our names, addresses and phone numbers; they told us to quarantine for fourteen days; don't go out other than on your own property. But I knew I was back home when one of the police officers was kind enough to phone for a taxi since my phone battery had died.

I stood outside in the fresh cold air and waited for the cab. It dropped me off at Queen and Regent as the clock at city hall chimed one. I was back home for the first time in four months and was facing two weeks of quarantine - but at least that quarantine would be at home where I had my books, my music, my friends and my view of Officers' Square and the Saint John river. I had two weeks to plot what I would do first but I didn't have to think too long: a run across the walking bridge with a stop in the middle to watch the ice speed along the river. I thought to myself, I hope I'm not too late.

I have also included some paintings by my friend Jorge Bravo (who has given his permission for use) to use as illustrations.)



THE SIMPLY AMAZING JOAN BENOIT

By Mike Henson - BBC Sport



Joan Benoit wins the 1984 Olympic marathon

Fort Williams was the perfect hideout. A decade before its guns had stared out into the shining Atlantic, protecting Maine and the north-east US coast from unknown foe.

Now, in the early 1970s, it was where the 15-year-old went to push her own boundaries, running faster and further around the abandoned army base, undetected and undeterred.

“This was a time when there really weren’t a lot of runners period, let alone a lot of woman runners,” Benoit Samuelson told BBC Sport.

“Back then sport was seen as more of a male-dominated sector of society. I would hide out there and do my running alone because I was trying to shed my tomboy image I had.”

As she jogged back home, Benoit Samuelson would self-consciously slow to a walk if a car appeared on the quiet coastal roads around her home town of Cape Elizabeth.

Her love of sport came from more than 3,000 miles away in the Italian Alps. Her father had been part of the US Army’s 10th Mountain Division during the Second World War - a specialist unit trained for combat in Arctic and high-altitude theatres and deployed in 1944 to help end German occupation.

He brought home a love of skiing and Joan’s dreams were initially of racing downhill

rather than on a road or track. It was only when she broke her leg as a teenager that she took up running as part of her rehabilitation.

The simplicity of pulling on trainers and heading out the door immediately appealed to her. The lower cost appealed to her parents. And, after a childhood spent knocking around as an only daughter with three sporty brothers, she was good at it.

What she lacked was the final nudge of confidence to take on the world.

“All of a sudden one day, I saw another woman running - she was a coxswain for Princeton - and I thought to myself, ‘well, if she can get out there and run so can I’ and then I just sort of threw it all to the wind and started running on public roads,” remembers Benoit Samuelson.

“I am still out there today.”

Now 62, she estimates that she has done 150,000 miles in that time. On her way she has passed plenty of landmarks; the first woman to win Olympic marathon gold, a former world record holder, a three-time Boston champion. This Sunday, had the London Marathon taken place, would have been another - running a marathon in a sixth consecutive decade.



Her first was in Boston in 1979, aged 22. Twelve years previously Kathrine Switzer had famously resisted organisers’ attempts to physically throw her out of the race and become the first woman to officially complete it.

But Benoit Samuelson was only vaguely aware of the episode. She had been focused on skiing and then shorter distances after switching to running.

At the time running a marathon was something of a curiosity. Opposition on misguided medical grounds and the claim that female distance running was too much of a niche interest had kept the longest race for women at Olympic level to only 1500m.

So why step up to 26.2 miles?

“Well it was out there,” said Benoit Samuelson.

“Even though I was still in college it seemed like the next logical step, even though

it probably wasn't!"

She ran Boston "sight unseen" and with "reckless abandon". Wearing a college vest and a Boston Red Sox cap, she won by a distance, setting a new American record.

As she zeroed in on the Los Angeles 1984 and the first women's Olympic marathon she was almost derailed by injury, only to win the US trials just 17 days after undergoing keyhole knee surgery.

"I took every step not knowing if there would be another," she remembers.



Finally on 5 August, she arrived safely on the Olympic startline. From Fort Williams, hidden from even a casual passer-by, she now was the focus of a nation's hopes.

Twenty-six miles up the road, adjacent to the Coliseum and the finish line, a mural had been painted of her world-record setting Boston Marathon win the previous year.

If she was to claim another victory, she would have to beat Norway's Grete Waitz, who had won five of the previous six New

York marathons.

Benoit Samuelson didn't just beat Waitz, she trounced her with a daring, devastating display of solo front-running, taking the pace on after just three miles and leaving the field behind. The expected duel on the baking concrete of LA's streets never really emerged.

"I was approaching the first water station and realised I was not running efficiently," she remembers. "I was doing everything I tell myself not to do and I just said, it may be the Olympic marathon but I have got to run my own race."

"The commentators were apparently astounded by what I had done as I broke away and thought I had made a big mistake."

Instead she reached the Coliseum in glorious isolation, crossing the line almost a minute and a half ahead of Waitz, with Switzer calling her home as a commentator on ABC's television coverage.

"I don't say this in a cocky way, but I have run much more difficult marathons. I felt

pretty good the entire way. It was hard for me to comprehend that this is the Olympic marathon and you are not being challenged by it,” said Benoit Samuelson.

As she went on her victory lap of the Coliseum, Benoit Samuelson’s mother was in the one of the foremost rows.

“The first thing she said to me was ‘now can you quit?’,” remembers Benoit Samuelson.

“I just looked at her like ‘what do you mean?’ I still had goals.”

It was not just her mother who seemed to think sport was something that Benoit, then 27, might consign to her past.

The final line of the New York Times report on her win notes that “in the near future her challenge will be marriage”, referencing her wedding planned for the following month.

Neither her mother’s wishes nor her own nuptials have interrupted Benoit Samuelson’s running.

The goals have kept coming. She chased, in vain, a sub two hours 20 minutes marathon in her prime. Now, in her later years, she runs to satisfy the narrative arcs her previous achievements have set in motion.

She was going to run her last marathon in Boston in 2008, after achieving a sub 2:50 time at 50 plus. But then the 25th anniversary of her Olympic win coincided with the 40th running of the New York Marathon, so she was persuaded to run the Big Apple in 2009.

Then in 2010, Chicago was a chance to mark the 25th anniversary of her fastest time in the city. Of course, she couldn’t turn down a opportunity to mark the 2,500th anniversary of the Battle of Marathon in Athens in that year either...

Whenever one race ends there is always another landmark on the horizon.

“If I can tell a story by running an event, a marathon especially, then that’s enough excitement for me to gear up,” she says.

And the single strand that runs through Benoit Samuelson’s lifetime is of another long distance covered, as women, once barred from marathon, make 26.2 their own.

“Oh, I mean, there’s so many more women out there running. You know, the marathon is really a metaphor for life. And I think people understand that even more so once they experience it,” she said.

“You never know what’s around the next bend. Are you gonna hit the wall? Are you gonna feel good the entire way? Are you gonna have, you know, miles that are really taxing and challenging?

“Either way, each runner dictates their own course of action among a much larger population all seeking the same goal. It is such an individual, but collective event.”

What is Benoit’s own course of action?

Her mother died last October in her 90s having heard Benoit promise that outings in Tokyo and London would be her last marathons. She was unable to race the first because of coronavirus, but still plans to line up for London’s revised date of 4 October.

“I don’t know what I am going to do,” she concludes. “I want to be able to run 5km and 10kms for years into the future. I don’t want to run my last mile training for or running a marathon.”

Benoit Samuelson now has her own 10km. Each August, more than 6,000 runners compete in the Beach to Beacon 10km that she has organised each year since 1998. The finish is at Fort Williams, bringing masses to the same roads she trained on alone as a teenager in the 1970s.

When that final mile does come, it would be difficult to find a more fitting setting for it.



Joan Benoit Samuelson was speaking before the postponement of the London Marathon. She is currently training in Maine and is hopeful of attending the rearranged race on Sunday, 4 October.

RUNBERS By Rob Jackson

From the Monday, June 28, 1920 edition of the Saint John Standard newspaper under the headline “Turnbull of Springhill Won The Olympic Marathon Trial”



The field day of sports on the East End Grounds, Saturday, was an unqualified success. A perfect day, a large field of high-class entrants and judges, most of whom had been star athletes in their day and knew the game, all combined to make it so, in spite of counter attractions. As large a crowd as ever turned out for sports in the city in the old days was present, and, judging by the comments passed, they were extremely pleased with the sports.

The feature event on the day's card was the 15-mile run, which also was an Olympic Marathon trial. There were four starters in this event, all from Nova Scotia. It was won by Norman Turnbull, wearing the colors of the Springhill Athletic Club. Turnbull, who was a well-known long distance runner a few years ago, had dropped out of the game for a while, but he sure staged a good come-back Saturday. He is one of those long-distance men who, while not exceptionally fast, can keep a steady pace for hours. He did not show much signs of exhaustion at the finish, sprinting as he came to the tape. He was given a great hand by the crowd, whose best wishes will accompany him when he goes to Hamilton next month to represent the Maritime Provinces at the finals. Alf Rogers, who has also been in the game for years and has won many long-distance races, finished second after leading the field about two-thirds of the race. He had trouble with his legs and walked most of the distance from the Three-Mile House home. Rogers was also given an ovation by the crowd as he appeared on the track.

The race began out beyond Quispamsis, approximately fourteen miles from the city. Four runners faced Mayor Schofield, the starter: Jimmie Martin, Alf Rogers, Al Harrison and Norman Turnbull. They got the word to go about 2.45 o'clock. Rogers took the lead and maintained it as far as the Three-Mile House. Martin dropped out early in the race. Harrison dropped out about the eighth mile. At that time he was running a good second to Rogers. Both he and Martin said that it was their off-day. From this point on, Turnbull, who had been running last, steadily gained on Rogers. Rogers turned Rothesay Corner at 3.33, Turnbull at 3.35. Turnbull caught Rogers at the Three-Mile House. Rogers stopped running shortly afterwards, complaining of trouble with his legs. The heat was intense and had its effect on the Tarvia road,

which made the running very hard. Turnbull was running at a good steady pace at this time, and the gruelling race did not seem to affect him much.

As he entered the track at 4.21 o'clock it was the signal for prolonged cheering, and the crowd was not stinted in giving credit to this test of man's endurance. Turnbull did not show appreciable signs of exhaustion and sprinted the last hundred home to the accompaniment of cheers and tooting of horns. His time for the race was 1 hour, 45 min. and 50 sec. Rogers entered the course about fifteen minutes after, and he also received his meed of applause. His time for the race was 2 hours, 2 minutes and 10 seconds.

Camera men were present and filmed the runners at different points along the road. They snapped Turnbull as he sprinted home. The runners were not bothered by automobiles on the road. The drivers all showed the proper spirit and gave the men a clear path. The spirit that the auto owners manifested is greatly appreciated by the officials.

At the conclusion of the sports, Mayor Schofield presented the prizes. Before doing so he expressed his satisfaction over the success of the sports and hoped that several other such field days would be held before the summer is over. He commented on the absence of any St. John entry in the Marathon, and it was his hope that when another race of that kind is held in this city that a St. John man would face the starter, too. "If it is financial assistance you need," he said, "don't let that worry. We'll dig it up somewhere."



Photo by Nadine Currie Jackson

A JOG DOWN MEMORY LANE

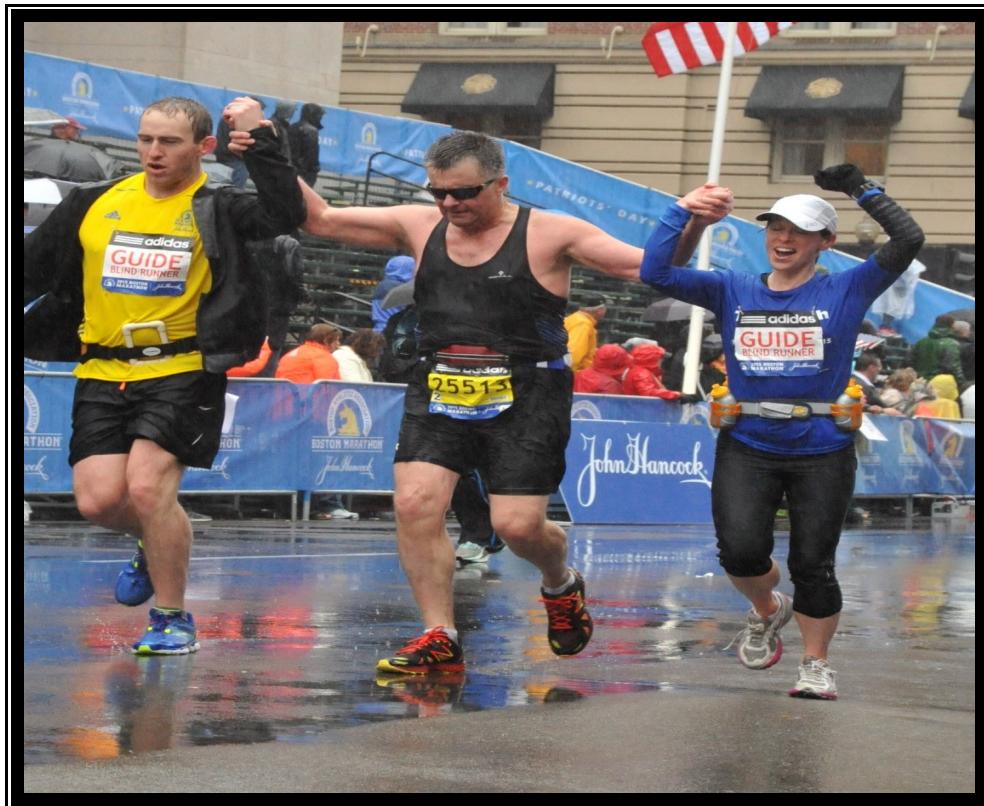
~ a picture is worth 1,000 words ~



BOSTON MEMORIES

Deaf and blind runner Gaston Bédard conquers marathon

It was 2015 that Aylmer, Que. resident Gaston Bédard, a blind and deaf runner, raced the Boston Marathon, his 16th marathon, with his two guides.



Christopher Yule, Gaston Bédard and Melany Gauvin finishing the 2015 Boston Marathon.

On April 20, 2015, Aylmer, Que. resident Gaston Bédard completed what many runners consider the world's most famous races, the Boston Marathon. Bédard, 63, is blind and deaf and ran the race with his two guides, Christopher Yule and Melany Gauvin, and had his son Marc cheer him on from the sidelines.

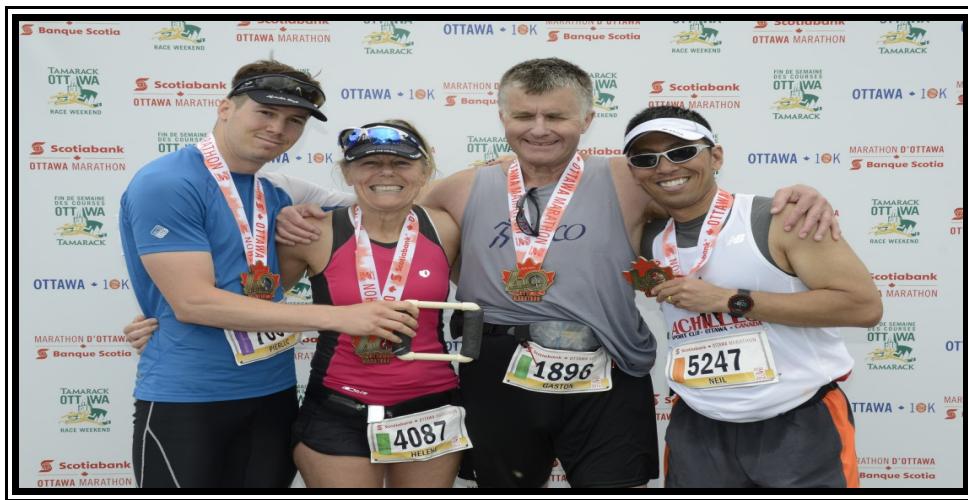
The 63-year-old (62 at the time of the race) ran the race with Team with a Vision, which raises funds for the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Bédard completed the race in 5:26:58.

To keep him on course, Bédard's guides run with him on opposite sides while holding a tether, a plastic tube with foam gripping. Before the race, the 63-year-old has to remove his two hearing aids to prevent moisture from reaching his hearing devices which leaves him completely deaf.

Usher syndrome with retinitis pigmentosa led to Bedard's hearing and sight loss.

Bédard says it took him nearly nine minutes to cross the storied start line in Hopkinton, Mass. before running 42.2K to the finish line on Boylston Street in downtown Boston.

Conditions were wet and cold during last year's event, which didn't deter Bédard and his team. Knowing that his son Marc would be waiting for him at the finish line helped Bédard push through the final 10K of the race.



Pierluc Seguin, Helene Tremblay-Allen, Gaston Bédard and Neil Cachero after the 2014 Ottawa Marathon.

The whole experience was a special father-son experience as the two got to experience Boston during one of its finest events of the year. Runners from around the world converge on the east coast city each year to race, which requires athletes to attain certain qualifying times, based on age and sex, to be eligible to run.

In 2014, the event's 40th anniversary, Bédard ran the Scotiabank Ottawa Marathon with his two guides. He achieved his goal of qualifying for Boston with a sub-five-hour marathon.

His motto is: "If you have good people around you, it's amazing what you can do."

The retired elementary school teacher has been a runner for much of his life. In 1981 he qualified for the Boston Marathon with a 2:51 at the Ottawa Marathon. Between 1981 and 1983, he ran sub-3:05 on five occasions including his 2:51 performance though he never raced Boston because he was a "local runner and didn't have it on my radar."

He took a decade off running before getting back into the sport in 2008. Training led

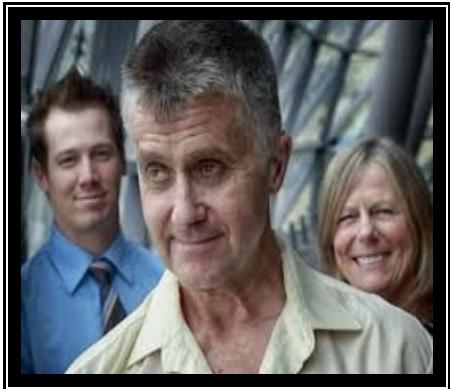
to racing four years later.

“I made my comeback as a deaf blind runner in May 2012, and since then I have run some 30 road races, including 2 full marathons, with sighted guides,” says Bédard.



Pierluc Seguin, Hélène Tremblay-Allen, Gaston Bédard and Neil Cachero cross the finish line at the 2014 Ottawa Marathon

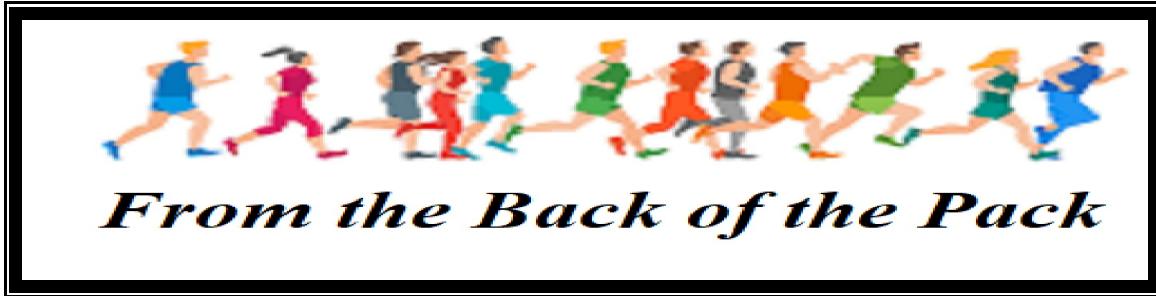
Gaston says his love and appreciation for the guides he’s run with is immense.



“Our sighted guides are very special people who help us blind and deaf blind runners accomplish incredible things,” he says. “They’re more than good runners, they rise above it all, and get us to the finish line.”

Since making his comeback, Gaston has completed over 30 races, including the Boston Marathon in 2015. And at 66-years-old, Gaston is still running and still setting goals.

Gaston is currently looking for guides to help him reach his next goals – running the 2018 Ottawa Marathon half-marathon, the New York City Marathon and Canada Army Run half-marathon. He needs three guides to train with and to run each race who are comfortable at 5:30 marathon pace. Does this sound like you?



Good morning from Dryden, Ontario.

Henny and I are on our way to visit Rob and Michelle and their 7 children. You know already that they live in Sherwood Park, Alberta. It is the first time that we are going to see them after Rob's liver transplant.

We are very excited and blessed that he is doing so well now. In a few weeks he is planning to go back to work again.

Henny and I would like to thank all the Capital City Road Runners for their prayers and positive thoughts and monetary support! It is a humbling experience that so many people care for the Drost family! The Capital City Road Runners are the Best!

Take care from a couple of seniors who have not run or biked since Sunday!

Harry and Henny.



