

Chapter 13

The 60s: Boston or Bust (Part 2 of 2)

In 2011 I joined the Rotary Club of Cochrane. I had been to a number of meetings the year before and the motto of the organization, "Service above Self," really resonated with me. Since joining I had served as Director of the Public Image Committee and Club President. The highlight of each year is the District Conference and in 2019 it was held on May 1 to 3 in Olds, Alberta.

Rotary International

Rotary started with the vision of one man – Paul Harris. The Chicago attorney formed the Rotary Club of Chicago on 23 February 1905, so professionals with diverse backgrounds could exchange ideas and form meaningful, lifelong friendships. Over time, Rotary's reach and vision gradually extended to humanitarian service. Members have a long track record of addressing challenges in their communities and around the world.

That commitment endures today through an organization that remains truly international. Only 16 years after being founded, Rotary had clubs on six continents. Our members now span the globe, working to solve some of our world's most challenging problems. We're not afraid to dream big and set bold goals. We began our fight against polio in 1979 with a project to immunize 6 million children in the Philippines. Today, polio remains endemic in only three countries – down from 125 in 1988.

Rotary is a global network of 1.2 million neighbors, friends, leaders, and problem-solvers who see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change – across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves. Solving real problems takes real commitment and vision. For more than 110 years, Rotary's people of action have used their passion, energy, and intelligence to take action on sustainable projects. From literacy and peace to water and health, we are always working to better our world, and we stay committed to the end.

—Excerpted from www.rotary.org

Over the next two days there were a number of presentations and forums, including Mental Health Awareness and Understanding, International Projects, Setting up for Success and Let's talk about Diversity, Inclusion and Respect for all. The highlight of the weekend was my participation in the "Blanket Exercise."

Blanket Exercise

The Blanket Exercise is an interactive learning experience that teaches the Indigenous rights history we're rarely taught. Developed in response to the 1996 Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples – which recommended education on Canadian-Indigenous history as one of the key steps to reconciliation – the Blanket Exercise covers over 500 years of history in a one and a half hour participatory workshop.

Blanket Exercise participants take on the roles of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Standing on blankets that represent the land, they walk through pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization and resistance. They are directed by facilitators representing a narrator (or narrators) and the European colonizers. Participants are drawn into the experience by reading scrolls and carrying cards which ultimately determine their outcomes.

By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the Blanket Exercise effectively educates and increases empathy. Ideally, the exercise is followed by a debriefing session in which participants have the opportunity to discuss the experience as a group. This often takes the form of a talking circle.

—Excerpted from www.kairoscanada.org

The facilitators of the exercise were Russ Baker, Tim Fox and Elder Jackie Bromley. They took us on a journey that evoked emotions in me ranging from guilt to enlightenment. It wasn't an easy activity to participate in and afterwards I spent some time reflecting on what had just happened.

The next morning I went over to Malc's. However, I couldn't hang around too long as I was taking a flight that day to England. Sue had left two weeks earlier and was spending the time with Calum in Cardiff. I had a terrific 2½ weeks and there's no better time than spring in the UK.

Before heading back Sue and I spent time with family and friends in Cornwall, Devon and Dorset.

Arriving back in Canada there were two things that had to happen in quick succession. The first was the submission of *The Secret Marathon* film into film festivals. The first ones we applied for were the Vancouver and Toronto International Film Festivals. Others that we picked included Cinéfest, Calgary and Edmonton International Film Festivals, Zonta, Sundance, Slamdance, Austin SXSW and Tribeca. Next up was my 12-week training plan for the Edmonton Marathon and my goal: Boston or Bust! The key question of this training was, what had I learned from "62 beats 47"?

Well, three things stood out. The first was the stabilization exercises I had been doing with Malc. I felt stronger and wanted to continue with them.

Next was the mileage I had put into the California International Marathon in the 12 weeks before that race. Due to injury, the total figure was 395 km, or an average of 33 km/week. I knew this was way too low and that I would have to shoot for a total of around 700 km, or 60 km per week.

Finally, nutrition and hydration. The experiment with NUUN had not worked for me. I was much more comfortable with my CarboPro mix, and even though I would have to carry four 8-oz. bottles I would be far more confident in my race outcome.

The other factor that could not be ignored was training conditions. The 12-week buildup to the California International Marathon had been in September, October and November. The first month had been fine but the conditions deteriorated in the last two. For the Edmonton Marathon, training would be in June, July and August. The temperatures would be warm but the footing would be excellent. I felt this was a good plan and was looking forward to the training.

The first four weeks of training went well and I averaged 59 km per week. I remained injury-free and just hoped that things would continue that way.

On July 2 Kate and I received an email from the Executive of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan. It part it said:

I hope this finds you both well. From its inception, the partnership between The Secret Marathon and Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan has been very successful and mutually beneficial. The work we have done together has added great value to our chapters and their members, and expanded our reach beyond the activities our organization traditionally engages in.

The overlap of our values with The Secret Marathon may be significant, however the expectation from our donors and members is that, at a national level, the board is engaged in furthering partnerships for activities that fully align with our focus on educational programs. For these reasons, after careful consideration, our Board has decided not to participate as a national partner with the Secret Marathon in 2020.

We were sad to see them go. In the two years of working with CW4WAfghan and the Running Room we had built up an event from scratch that had participants from all over the world. Now the big question was, who would replace them as the national charity for the 2020 event?

On July 7 I had my first real test of my goal to achieve a Boston qualifying time. It was at the Stampede Half Marathon in Calgary. On the day I felt strong. I pushed the pace and came in with a 1:47:49. There's an app called the McMillan Running Calculator and I've used it many times. I put in my half marathon time and it came up with a predicted marathon time of 3:46:54. This was great news. My target is a 3:50:00 qualifying time for Boston and so I knew that I was on target. The key was to stay injury free and keep the mileage up.

In mid-July Scott, Kate and I had our bi-weekly *The Secret Marathon* film call. We had all been waiting to hear from one of the film festivals to see if any of them were interested in having our film at their event. We hadn't heard anything for a while and self-doubts were beginning to creep in. Then Scott shared the news: we had got into Cinéfest for a screening on September 22. Here is part of the acceptance letter:

Hi Scott,

We are very pleased to invite The Secret Marathon to screen at the 2019 edition of Cinéfest Sudbury International Film Festival, which will run September 14–22, 2019, as we are confident that your film will make an ideal addition to the Festival.

Specifically, we are looking to screen the film on September 22 as part of our Cinema 9 Prime Time program, as Martin will be in Sudbury on that date and we would like to reach out to him to attend if the film is confirmed.

Screening a selection of upwards of 130 films, and hosting an audience that exceeded 34,000 in 2018, Cinéfest Sudbury International Film Festival enjoys the status of being one of Canada's premiere film festivals. Cinéfest Sudbury has proven to be a successful model for developing, educating, and sustaining new audiences for Canadian and international cinema.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Thank you.

Michael Scherzinger

Development and Industry Relations

CINÉFEST SUDBURY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

I was thrilled that the premiere of *The Secret Marathon* was going to be shown in Sudbury. I had worked 18 years for Falconbridge Ltd. and had family and friends in the area. But I had one very special person I wanted to come to the premiere: granddaughter Autumn.

At 7 a.m. on Sunday, August 18, I was at the start line of the Edmonton Marathon. The last time I had run this race was in 2009, so this would be my tenth anniversary. The morning was overcast with a misty drizzle and the temperature was 10°C, just how I like it. I felt good.

In any race I set myself a number of goals. In this one I set three: the first was to beat the time I'd set ten years ago, 4 hours and 10 minutes, the second was to come under 4 hours, and the third was to qualify for the Boston Marathon, which meant finishing in under 3 hours and 50 minutes.

Now it's great to have goals, but in reality they are meaningless unless you've done the planning, prepared well and put in the work to achieve them. In this case it meant following a 12-week training program, running over 600 km and completing a variety of sessions including running hills, tempo runs (marathon pace), intervals of speed running and long runs.

It's often said that finishing strong is the key to any race, but you can't finish strong unless you start strong and you can't start strong unless you've prepared.

Another key element is race day preparation. I was up at 5 a.m. and had my usual marathon breakfast of oatmeal, a banana and two cups of coffee. I prepared my four bottles of a mix of water and CarboPro. I also carry electrolyte tablets. This would ensure that my nutrition intake would be 250 calories an hour. Another important lesson: never try anything new on race day. I was ready.

At 6:30 a.m. I left the hotel and joined the other runners on the way to the start. I followed my usual warm-up with a 20-minute run and 4 × 100 m strides.

John Stanton, was the race announcer, and after "O Canada" he started the countdown and we were off. I had spotted the 3:45 Pace Bunny and decided to run just behind him. Things went well for the first half of the race. I followed my hydration/nutrition/electrolyte regime every 30 minutes and stayed slightly at the back of the pack behind the bunny. My pace was just over five minutes per kilometre and the cool condition stopped me from overheating.

However, the truth of any marathon is that it only really starts in the second half of the race. At kilometre 25 I felt a knot in my right calf. I could only hope that it didn't turn into an all-out cramp. The bunny was moving away from me and my quads were tightening up. A friend of mine, Ray Zahab, said that marathons and ultramarathons are 90 per cent mental and 10 per cent in your head. It was time to dig deep.

Before the race I had checked my emails and had a message from Zainab, the first Afghan woman to have run a marathon. She had recently had a baby girl and named her Cedar, after a kind of tree that grows in Turkey, Canada and in the Himalaya. In Persian it means evergreen or eternal.

Zainab had inspired me to go to Afghanistan, in 2016, where I ran the 2nd Marathon of Afghanistan, in support of the women and girls running for freedom and equality. Now Zainab and Cedar inspired me to push through the pain. I used the mantra “Zainab and Cedar, Zainab and Cedar” kilometre after kilometre and before I knew it I was at the 35 km marker. I had taken 3 hours, 4 minutes and 32 seconds, leaving 45 minutes to run the final 7.2 km. I had a chance.

The kilometres ticked by, and with 1 km to go my legs were pretty much done. I looked at my watch and it was 3 hours, 39 minutes, and then it hit me: I could walk in and still come in under my 3 hours, 50 minutes target. I was flooded with relief, but kept on running.



As I approached the finish line I could see the countdown clock at 3 hours, 46 minutes. I then looked to my right and saw my wife, Sue, in the crowd, behind the barrier. I ran over, gave her a kiss and sprinted

across the finish line: 3 hours, 46 minutes and 23 seconds. Made it by 3 minutes and 37 seconds. I was exhausted, but happy.

Staggering along the finishing chute, to get my medal, my body and mind started to shut down. Sue met me at the exit to the chute and gave me a big hug. Job done. Boston here I come.

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