

LAWYERS ON THE LOOSE To The Limit At The Chicago Marathon

As if running a busy PI practice was not challenging enough, Bill Berenson decided to attempt a marathon to “celebrate” his fiftieth birthday. He had not run much before then, but he said that he wanted to make sure that the second half of his life was as healthy as the first.

After Bill worked up to running an eight-mile relay leg of the Cowtown Marathon in February 2004, he signed up for and began quickly training for the “Rock and Roll Marathon” in San Diego. That race was a lot of fun and even though it had never occurred to him, he came within a minute of the time necessary to qualify for the Boston Marathon. Bill was hooked. After his lottery entry to the New York City Marathon was accepted, he kept running and lifting weights three times a week as his training regime. He then qualified for Boston and ran it in April 2005.

Bill has run in seven other marathons in six states. He also completed a Half Ironman triathlon and several century-bicycle rides, including the notorious “Hotter than Hell 100.”

By far his most difficult race was the Chicago Marathon which he somehow completed in October of this year. To prevent injury, Bill limits himself to running three days a week, either along the river at 6:00 a.m. or inside at TCU on a treadmill (with plasma tv screen, of course) and track during the summer heat. Because it was already very warm and humid when he left the hotel at 7:00 a.m., he suspected that it would be tough, but no one knew that it would be an all-time record-high day.

The prestigious race, one of the world’s five major marathons, had quickly sold out in April. There was a lot of excitement at the starting line. Jo Dee Messina, who was also running, sang a moving National Anthem. After the wheel chair participants and the first two groups left, Bill’s corral dashed off to blaring rock music.

The runners sped through downtown and Lincoln Park, near Wrigley Field (where the Cubs had lost their playoff series the night before), and did another loop through downtown. The massive crowds screamed encouragement. Music from bands and loudspeakers boomed out. The noise was exhilarating and deafening. Bill was running well under his goal pace at 7:00 to 8:00 minutes a mile.



At mile 18, he passed a bank clock that said that it was already 92 degrees. The cloud cover had burned off and there was no wind in the “Windy City.” He slowed down and walked through each aid station to hydrate and pour water on his head. He saw people lying on the side of the road and an ambulance hauling a runner away. He finally made it over the only hill on the course at mile 26 and crossed the finish line with his slowest time yet, but it

was still good enough for the top twenty percent. Bill laughed and said that he had lost track of time hours ago and didn’t care, as long as he finished standing up.

He described the finish area as chaotic. People were shouting out “runner down over here!” and calling out for medics. Sirens were wailing. Over three hundred people were taken to the hospital, five to the ICU. Many people were slumped on tables and lying on the ground.

Bill began to feel a little weak and laid down. A medic rushed over and took his blood pressure, which was a dangerously low 70/55. His family had no idea where he was. A man had died on the course and that news circulated quickly. The race was cancelled and the remaining twenty thousand or so people still on the course were ordered from police helicopters to walk in. Bill recovered and found his family.

He has discussed that crazy, unforgettable morning with different groups that he works with, including children at the Rufino Mendoza Elementary School, which he adopted



four years ago. He supports the school, especially its athletic programs, and pays race-registration fees. He pledged twenty dollars for every mile that he completed. Bill has tried to motivate the children and urge them not to quit their education or stop pursuing their dreams. A third grader came up to him and said that he wanted to be a lawyer because “lawyers are tough.”

Bill hopes to run marathons in Hawaii, Vermont and another state next year and keep running them in different states as long as his body holds out.

This column has been reinstated in interest of those attorneys in our membership who have “extracurricular” activities they would like to share with the membership. If you have any such activity, please forward your text in a Word document to Pat Leake, Staff Editor, at pat@tarrantbar.org. Photos should be submitted in a .jpg format to the same email.

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800 West Weatherford Street 817-335-0220
 Fort Worth, Texas 76102 Fax: 817-335-0240
millslaw@immigrationnation.net