

Grace and Passion

Lamorinda marathoners to show their love for Boston a year after bombing

By Laurie Snyder



Tim O'Brien finishing the 2013 Boston Marathon. Photos provided

smack in the middle of an intersection." Sirens propelled O'Brien to start looking for his wife, Leslie.

Director of Community Life at the Orinda Community Church, she was in town to support her husband. "At first, when I heard the second blast," says Leslie O'Brien, "I thought it must have been a blown transformer." She smelled smoke – and sulfur. "This very tough looking man was walking away from the race crying; my heart sank." A single tear trailed down his cheek. For 45 minutes, she unsuccessfully tried phoning her husband, all the while flashing back to images of him rounding the marathon's final turn – waving to her at the vantage point they'd staked out a day earlier. "If the last memory I have is of my hus-

Life in LAMORINDA

band running and saying, 'I love you babe,' we did just fine."

Working her way back to their hotel, Leslie found Lamorindans Heather Callister and Carter Hemming, who had both finished running. Terming Hemming her knight in shining armor for texting her husband non-stop, she also remains grateful to Callister for making the wait easier.

Meanwhile, Tim O'Brien headed for his employer's office – a

mile-and-a-half away. Passing Faneuil Hall where he and Leslie had been tourists just hours before, he noticed "a lot of people walking in the same direction, mostly spectators and some fellow runners." Colleagues and clients expressed relief at his arrival. He collected himself, rehydrated and phoned to let folks know he was okay before returning to the hotel where he found and promptly kissed Leslie.

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"We were greatly moved by the outpouring of love from Boston and our friends in Lamorinda," says Leslie Darwin O'Brien, pictured here during one of her many happy moments with husband, Tim. They attended a Congregational Church Blessing of the Runners in Boston last year, and plan to do so again this Easter.

"We absolutely heard it; we turned and looked, and there was a puff of smoke." Showering spectators with carpenter nails and ball bearings, a pair of homemade pressure cooker bombs rocked Boylston Street on April 15 at 2:49 p.m. Eastern time – just 50 minutes after Orinda native son, Tim O'Brien, crossed the 2013 Boston Marathon finish line. Three

people were killed and more than 260 others were injured, including a Martinez sixth grader who suffered severe shrapnel wounds.

There was concern, but no fear among runners recuperating at the finish area, recalls O'Brien. Then, everything changed. "I saw a race official break down. This person was someone who was on an elevated stand to direct traffic, right



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