

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Orinda resident completes 32nd consecutive Boston Marathon

By Jon Kingdon



Track workout in San Francisco with Patty Hung's significant other Don Maxon, sons Erick and David, and step-daughter, Mailee. Photos provided

One of the great traditions in sports is the annual running of the Boston Marathon, which is run on Patriot's Day, the third Monday of April. The race began in 1897 with a total of 18 runners and has grown to the point where there are over 30,000 runners and 500,000 spectators every year.

Longtime Orinda resident Patty Hung, 72, has created a tradition of her own having just run her 32nd consecutive Boston Marathon, owning the women's longest active streak. (Daniel Larsen, with 48 races has the overall longest streak).

Many people will run the Boston Marathon for the same reason others climb Mt. Everest – because it's there. They accomplish these things once, knock them off their bucket list and move on to other things.

Hung began running marathons for more personal reasons. "I took a strong interest in it when I became a single mom with three children," she said. "I needed a way to release frustration and anxiety and I found it was a good way to exhibit a wonderful release of energy. When I train for a marathon, the discipline I must go through is the way I lead my life. You learn that you have challenges in life. You learn timing and hard work and eating properly. It has led me through a spiritual life of good habits."

One does not just show up to the Boston Marathon, the Holy Grail of marathons. As someone who grew up in Boston, it was Hung's goal to return as a competitor. "I have run marathons for a long time," Hung said. "My first race was in Marin and I officially qualified for the Boston Marathon at the California International Marathon in Sacramento. It was always in my heart to run this race."

The Boston Marathon is more than a race to Hung; it's family. Hung's uncle Joe was always very supportive of her running and would bring her to Harvard stadium for some runs. "It was exhilarating," she said. She has also run the race with her two sons, Erick and David, "so it's truly a family affair."

It's not the finishing time that is the most important thing for Hung in Boston. She always stops at the 13-mile mark, where her family meets her. "I spend all my energy at that point giving them all a hug and a kiss."

At Hung's first Boston Marathon, the idea of 31 more marathons was the last thing on her mind.

"I didn't see much future in it initially but my body held up and I did quite well and every year it got better, plus my family was always there. Knowing that they would meet me at the end, I just had to go back."

Besides family, Hung finds

much inspiration and joy from the spectators that line the race: "The most wonderful part of the Boston Marathon is the participation of the bystanders. They stand out there and cheer as if they're running."

The weather at the Boston Marathon has run the gamut through the years. Hung has experienced it all: "I have run in rain, snow and temperatures in the high 80s. This year was the worst. It was a torrential rain and the wind was against us and it was cold. In the athletes' village, the grounds were mud filled. The rain can be refreshing but it makes it hard to stay dry. My sons advised me to wear a gortex running jacket that was light and rainproof. I was also given surgical gloves to wear over my regular

gloves and that worked great."

The Boston Marathon hardly tells Hung's whole story; she has run close to 100 marathons all over the United States. "The terrain [is] different but the feeling at the end of the race is the same. You realize that you can do this again."

Ironically, the most memorable marathon for Hung came in Hawaii. "I ran in the Honolulu marathon in a torrential downpour. They had provided a spaghetti feed to the runners and several people got food poisoning," she said. "I got sick early in the race but fought through it and finished while hundreds of other runners had to drop out."

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Hung shares hugs after her recent Boston Marathon finish with cousin Hannah Donnelly. Hannah's dad, Jack Donnelly, in the background.



Sons Erick and David run Boston Marathon with Patty Hung in 2016.

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