

'I was terrified, absolutely terrified'

Rehoboth area runners reflect on Boston Marathon

By Jon Bleiweis

Staff Writer

REHOBOTH BEACH — Monday was a day four friends from Rehoboth Beach were eagerly anticipating.

The quartet — Brandt Chi, Linda Schwartz-Chi, Mary Beth Evans and Linda Reck — qualified for the Boston Marathon together after completing the Chicago Marathon in October. They have known each other for years through running, but Evans said she has been good friends with the Chis for about two years and Reck for four.

Schwartz-Chi, 47, spent seven years trying to qualify for the big race for the first time. For practice, she ran a marathon last month in Arkansas to train for Boston's notorious hills.

"I've often heard people say the Boston Marathon is the holy grail for runners," she said. "And that's how it feels."

Evans, 47, was also participating in her first Boston Marathon. She had been training for a year to prepare, which include participating in the Chicago Marathon and an iron man competition in July.

"We were very excited," she said. "We had heard great things about the race. It's kind of a challenging course because there are rolling hills and there are no hills in Rehoboth."

Evans said the race, itself, was amazing, with spectators lining the streets cheering runners on, and giving them that extra boost to pump them up the rest of the way.

She finished with a time of 3:42 and felt great. She went to



Linda Reck at the Boston Marathon. COURTESY OF MARY BETH EVANS

grab her checked bag a few blocks away from the finish line and got her phone to check messages and return congratulatory texts.

As she was doing so, and getting ready to move to the family meeting area, she heard the explosion and saw smoke. She said she was stunned.

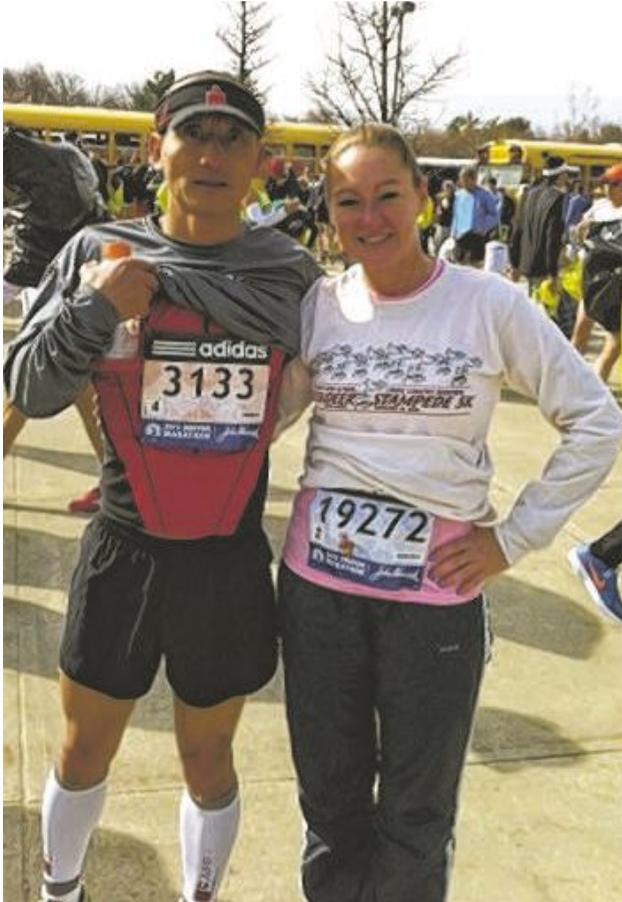
"I just kind of froze and stared at it and didn't know what to do," she said. "Some were panicked around me, but most of the people around me froze and did nothing. I didn't really know what to do."

Meanwhile, Schwartz-Chi,



Linda Reck, Mary Beth Evans and Linda Schwartz-Chi before the Boston Marathon. COURTESY OF MARY BETH EVANS

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Brandt Chi and Linda Schwartz-Chi pose for a photo before the Boston Marathon. COURTESY OF MARY BETH EVANS

Marathon

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who finished the race with a 4:07 time — a time she said she wasn't thrilled with, but she was happy to finish — had met with a friend to take photos, then turned around and started to walk away, when the first explosion occurred, about 50 yards away.

She saw the fireball and the smoke. While those around her thought it may have been a routine water main break or pipe burst, she was convinced it was a bomb.

"I was terrified, absolutely terrified," she said. "You don't expect that it's going to happen at the Boston Marathon."

Of the four Rehoboth runners, three finished the race.

Once Schwartz-Chi met up with Evans and her husband, who finished earlier, their focus turned to finding Reck, who was about half a mile from the

"It's a mixed feeling. I would love to remember it as the greatest experience of my life, but it was marred by tragedy. I think, sadly, I will remember that."

LINDA SCHWARTZ-CHI

Runner

finish line when the explosions went off.

At first, Evans said, there wasn't much worry because they didn't think their companion was running at a pace to be at the finish line when the explosions occurred. But as time went by without hearing from Reck, their concern grew.

"I knew she was behind me, close to where I was," Schwartz-Chi said. "I couldn't go back, and they kept saying to go forward. We were all just very concerned about where she was."

It took hours, Evans said, for Reck to get her bag, which had her phone, and meet up with the group, ultimately easing

the worry.

Schwartz-Chi said she'll look back at Monday with mixed feelings. While she said the race

was incredible, it won't be the first thing that comes to her mind when she thinks about the Boston Marathon.

"It's a mixed feeling," she said. "I would love to remember it as the greatest experience of my life, but it was marred by tragedy. I think, sadly, I will remember that."

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For another learning experience, go to CAMP Rehoboth tonight, April 24, at 7 p.m. to hear about "The Great Ship Titanic." Dr. William Flayhart's presentation about the sinking of the ship 100 years ago will include pictures of the Titanic and the tragic sinking of the ship. This free presentation is open to the general public and will take place at CAMP's Community Center, located at 37 Baltimore Ave., in Rehoboth Beach.

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