

Cherry Blossom 10 Mile

Minami trio had a great time at Nortel Network Network Cherry Blossom 10 miler yesterday in Washington, DC. It was cool and drizzly during the race but it got sunny and hot after the race, which was perfect both for running and cherry blossom viewing we enjoyed afterward. Mary is very happy finishing the race at 11 minutes pace. It was her first 10 miler since she injured her knee three years ago. Yuki and I run together for 7 miles but she left me in the dust (splash) at the end to finish just under 8 minute pace. I intended to finish under 8 minutes pace but I run out the gas at the end. We met Karl Patnode and Peggy Turcotte at the Expo on Saturday as well at the race. It was nice to see other Striders with our proud GCS singlets in such a big event. (I thought it was funny that one runner noticed the map on our back and encouraged me by yelling "Go Vermont" Yuki Giggled and said "He must be looking our singlet upside down".) When we were huddled under a very small tent to avoid the downpour before the race, Bill Rogers ran hard to the tent from Jefferson Memorial direction and jumped in. He was pleased to see us all the way from NH with Strider singlets, and asked us to say Hello to all GCS. I wish I had my Number Jacket to show him. He promised me to sign at the Expo in Boston next weekend. Incidentally, my jacket attracted a lot of attention

again at the Expo. So many runners commented that they saw me on RW. Yep, I was touched by many women runners. The cherry blossom was wonderful. It could not have been a better timing. Apparently it is very rare to have full bloom and the race exactly coincide like this year. I think the cherry blossom in DC is prettier than even in Japan. You must see it once if you haven't. It's absolutely indescribable. •

School Bus Beat Wheelchair

By Shu Minami

What is common between a wheelchair and a school bus? There isn't much other than they both have four wheels. However, there was one more similarity in this year's Boston Marathon. They raced against each other! Mary and I volunteered for a mile-marker job this year together with several other Striders. Our assignment was to hold the mile-markers high in the air so that runners could clearly see it. Actually, the real reason why two volunteers are assigned for each marker is to prevent souvenir hunters from stealing the famous yellow mile-marker banners. The job is considered the easiest of all

volunteer assignments, and BAA does not issue the credentials for this job even though we "work" right on the race course. The only reward we get in addition to being able to watch the race from the best vantage position is the highly envied volunteer jacket. Well, not this year. We got one other unexpected reward. We had a chance to chase the wheelchair racers in a school bus! Being the least essential assignment, mile-marker holders are usually dispatched to the respective location by the last volunteer bus that leaves John Hancock building. However, for some reason the last bus and the pickup truck which was supposed to carry the mile-markers never showed up for the volunteers covering the second half of the course even after the race started. The anxiety and irritation showing on the faces of BAA coordinators were indescribable. It had never happened before according to Dave LaBrode, who was our team leader. We were all very disappointed as the probability of getting to our assignment spots in time diminished, and some impatient volunteers (Rich and Heidy, Glen Ford for 26 mile, and Kevin Hodge for 25mile, Steve Moland for 1 mile to go) walked to their locations without knowing the where-about of their markers, and of course without knowing the excitement they were going to miss. A little after high noon, a yellow school bus went by toward Chinatown on the street next to where we were anxiously waiting, and a couple of BAA officials jumped out from the Hancock building yelling into their cell phones. The bus is finally here, and all he has to do is to go



Yuki and Shu

around the block to be on our side. The question is how do we get to the assignment locations, since the race-course had already been closed to the traffic and some of the faster wheelchairs should be almost half way into the race. But never mind that, we are still standing in front of Hancock, and the bus is taking much too long to go around the block. We all rushed to the bus door when the bus finally arrived in front of us even though there was no sign of the pickup truck with the mile-markers. Then we realized that the BAA coordinators and the bus driver were having some serious communication problems. Apparently one of the buses used for shuttling the runners to Hopkinton was re-assigned to pick us up, but the driver did not know how to get back to Hancock building. He also lost the pickup truck, which was supposed to be travelling in tandem. The driver of the pickup truck used his quick thinking and delivered the mile-markers by himself, leaving them on the race-course unattended. Luckily, not many markers were apparently stolen, except for poor Rich and Heidi who ended up holding no mile-marker. Back to the school bus, the chief coordinators ordered the driver to close the door, and after vigorously shaking her head, the bus got rolling. Now it was Dave LaBrode's turn to shake his head, and shout "Does anyone know the quickest route to Wellesley?" Obviously the driver had no idea. Someone yelled "Take Mass Pike!" Dave is now acting as an interpreter and shouted back "How do we get onto Mass Pike?" Another volunteer yelled back "We just missed the entrance" when the sign for "Entrance

to Mass Pike" was on our back. After going around the block one more time we were on Mass Pike, thank God, on the outbound side. As we came out from the darkness of the tunnel, I noticed that cars beside us were quickly moving away from the bus as we passed them, and all drivers were looking up at us with scared

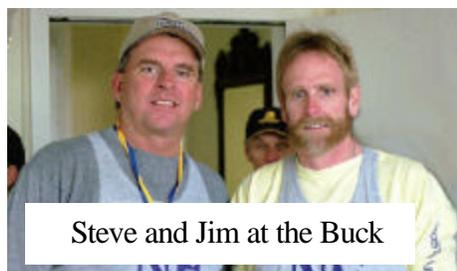
Mary Minami

looks. The bus was roaring with screech and bounce, and we the passengers in bright red volunteer jacket were screaming. I didn't have an idea how fast we were going but one thing for sure was that I never knew that a school bus could travel that fast. The driver even didn't slow down when he sped through the toll-booth. It was amazing that a highway patrol didn't catch up on us. We passed the Rt.128 over-pass in no time, and we were on a side road toward the racecourse, thanks to the volunteer who was familiar with the area. We finally came to the road-block near the 16mile point, and we could see spectators already cheering for the wheelchair racers. We cheered Dave LaBrode who jumped out the bus and engaged in an animated negotiation with the police officers that were guarding the road-

block. We could tell from his gestures that Dave was insisting that the race could not go on without us holding the mile-markers. The police officers shook their heads, and reluctantly removed the roadblock just enough for the bus to sneak through, and we were on the race course. Once we got on the race course, volunteers for 14 to 16 mile-markers got off, and the bus rolled toward Boston. This time, however, the driver cautiously zigzagged avoiding the wheelchair racers. Spectators along the race-course were clapping at us with awe-struck looks. We must have looked worthy of cheers for whatever the reason. Every time designated volunteers got off at the spot where mile-sign was written on the road, they were surrounded by inquisitive spectators who asked about the peculiar situation. It was the first time a school bus counted in the

I, at 24 mile point and kept on going who knows to where. We never heard how he managed to get off the racecourse between there and the finish line. One thing for sure was that the finish line chute couldn't handle the bus, and the bus driver couldn't get the finisher's medal. As for Mary and I, we found our mile-marker anxiously waiting for us on the curb. We set it up as quick as possible, and assumed the guarding position as spectators stared at us with admiring looks. Things after that went rather routinely. Elite runners zipped by, first with long intervals, and then Beacon Street became more and more crowded every second by sub-3hr runners. We had no problem spotting Jim Belanger, thanks to his distinguished height but we missed most of other Striders after that since we were busy pushing the spectators back onto the sidewalk so that runners could get every inch of the running space available. By about 4:30pm, runners on the racecourse finally thinned down and spectators started to go home. So, Mary and I left the mile-marker standing alone and started to jog down the racecourse toward the finish, hoping that the equipment volunteers will pick up the marker shortly. We even got some cheers from diehard spectators on our way as some of them obviously thought we ran all the way. We eventually sneaked out of the racecourse through a narrow crack in the fence on Boylston Street before the finish line. It was not as exciting as running the Boston Marathon, but it was an exciting volunteer experience after all. Why did we jog back? There was no way we were going to wait for the

same school bus driver to pick us up. Dave Salvias apparently had as little faith as we did in the school bus driver, and he opted to jump onto the equipment truck pretending to be a volunteer assigned to gather up the mile-markers. Other volunteers with more faith in the bus driver waited for him a long time with no avail. Judy Moland ended up walking 4 miles all the way back to Buckminster Hotel, and she got a huge blister on her foot that prevented her from running for more than a week. •



Event Report: Sherwood Marathon & Marathon Relay

By: Shu Minami

Kathy & Bill Engle, Mary and I entered the First Annual Sherwood Marathon and Marathon Relay in Exeter, RI as a relay team, and finished at 3:42 which, we believe, was the 3rd overall and 1st in the age group. The point-to-point course, which started at Metcalf Middle School in Exeter and ended at the beautiful Matunuck Beach in South Kingston, was mostly downhill with the largest elevation drop in all New England marathons. The first leg (5.1m: Kathy) had a significant hill toward the end but the second leg (8.7m: Shu) and the third leg (9.5m: Bill) were almost steady downhill.

The fourth leg (2.9m: Mary) was totally flat along the coastline. Although exact number is not available, I estimate the field to be about 250 including the relay teams. I was told that the winning time was slightly under 2:50.

Like any first road race, this marathon had a number of glitches, some of which were outrageous, and they might discourage many participants to return. However, there were also some very good points that are noteworthy. The most positive impression I had was the very visible police presence and excellent traffic control. The course intersects two major roads (Rte.138 and Rte.1) but both crossing points were manned by many police officers and patrol cars, and bright red cones were everywhere to warn the drivers. Most of the course was on scenic country roads through the woods and fields with many turns and forks. However, there was no danger of being lost, thanks to the numerous arrows and markers painted on the ground in multiple colors. It was by far the best course markers I have ever seen in a road race. The way they handled the transportation was also impressive. There were many busses available for sending the runners to the start, as well as for gathering the relay runners after finishing their legs. It almost looked like overkill considering the small number of relay teams. Unfortunately, the list for the glitches can be much longer but will not try to cover them all. After all, this is the first marathon event for the organizer, and it is understandable to have some slips. However, most of the glitches I noticed were directly due to the lack of volunteers, and they

could have been avoided if there were more volunteers helping in the race. Actually, the whole race seemed to be handled by the race director himself with the exception of traffic control, transportation, and medical aid stations that were excel-



Kathy, Bill, Shu, and Mary

lently managed by respective organ