

Boston:

By BOB KOWELUK
Tundra Times Reporter

Running. Barbara Fleet's goals started out small—just a mile a day to get back in shape after having a baby. Eventually she increased her mileage for new goals, each one she set, she was able to meet, with the support from her family and friends.

Now after some 6,000 miles of running, the Alaska Native Sisterhood Camp 72 sponsored Barbara to run in the prestigious Boston Marathon. To qualify, she finished 10th in her age class (30-39) in the 1980 Seattle Marathon, the biggest marathon held in the Northwest, with a time of 3 hours 18 minutes and 39 seconds. Barbara has been a member of ANS Camp 72 for six years.

Barbara Fleet, a Tlingit, will be with six other Anchorage residents joining 8,000 runners Monday to run in the Boston Marathon which began in 1897. The Boston is known the world over and runners from as far away as Finland, Japan and Australia are expected to run the Boston Marathon held on Patriots' Day in Boston.

Barbara, a 37-year-old housewife, said it is a race a runner has to work at to qualify to be a part of. "You have to be a fairly good runner to be able to run in the Boston Marathon," Barbara said. "You have to have run in a race of 26 miles and 385 yards and with a qualifying time."

Barbara, who has lived all her life in Alaska is excited about going "outside" to run in the Boston Marathon. "I never thought I could run a marathon until I ran my first two years ago," Barbara said. "And after that I thought, well if I could run a marathon in 3 hours and 38 minutes, if I work hard enough at it, eventually I might have a qualifying time for the Boston."

Barbara was born in Ketchikan and grew up in Skagway. "It's (Skagway) a little tiny



Barbara Fleet

town and is kind of in between the mountains," she says. "So what we did in our leisure time when we weren't helping our folks was to run up and down the mountains on the many trails there."

"I was always pretty active that way. But when I had my second child, I was 25 years old, and I thought, my God, I'm a quarter of a century old! Before that I thought, I'm young, and didn't have to worry about keeping in shape or taking care of my body. But after a quarter century! And then I thought I had better try to do something about that. And I hate to exercise."

Her husband Wayne and her daughters Courtney and Susanne were stationed at Yakutat at the time, so one day Barbara decided to get back into shape and back to running again.

marathon dream for Tlingit woman

"One day I thought to myself, I'll just go out and run a mile, so I told my husband Wayne to stop the truck while driving on an old logging road and to let me out so I could run a mile. I told him to drive a mile and stop. He said fine and let me out on one of those logging roads which were pretty straight. So he drove off," she says with a chuckle. "And he keeps on going and keeps on going...I was getting a little angry at him because it looked like he drove at least two miles. So here I am trying to run this mile. And I couldn't believe I had a hard time running that mile. I think I just barely made it. So when I got to the truck I told my husband that he drove farther than a mile, he said, no, he drove exactly one mile. I still couldn't believe I had that hard a time in running just a mile."

I began running a mile a day for about two to three years. After a few years, I began to think, I've been running a mile a day and that takes so few minutes, I began to run three miles a day. Then I thought, wow, this is great! I'll never want to run any more distance than three miles a day, that only lasted a couple years and then I was doing about 7 miles every other day. I started training for my first marathon in '79.

"So I've been running off and on all these years, and I thought it was easier than doing exercises like sit ups and such and look where it's got me now." She says with a laugh. "I thought I was taking the easy way out and look where it's gotten me, 26 miles, the Boston Marathon."

"I didn't start keeping track of my mileage until two years ago. Now, after keeping track of it, I think I've run about 6,000 miles just in two years."

She recalls her high school years when there were few opportunities for girls in sports. Growing up in Skagway, "there were sports for boys, such as baseball or basketball, but there

was never anything for girls. Now the opportunities for girls sports is fantastic and is growing by leaps and bounds. The physical education classes were kind of dumb because we played basketball different from the boys and it wasn't any fun playing. I liked sports but I wasn't into any kind of sport in high school."



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