



A Tale of Two Cities

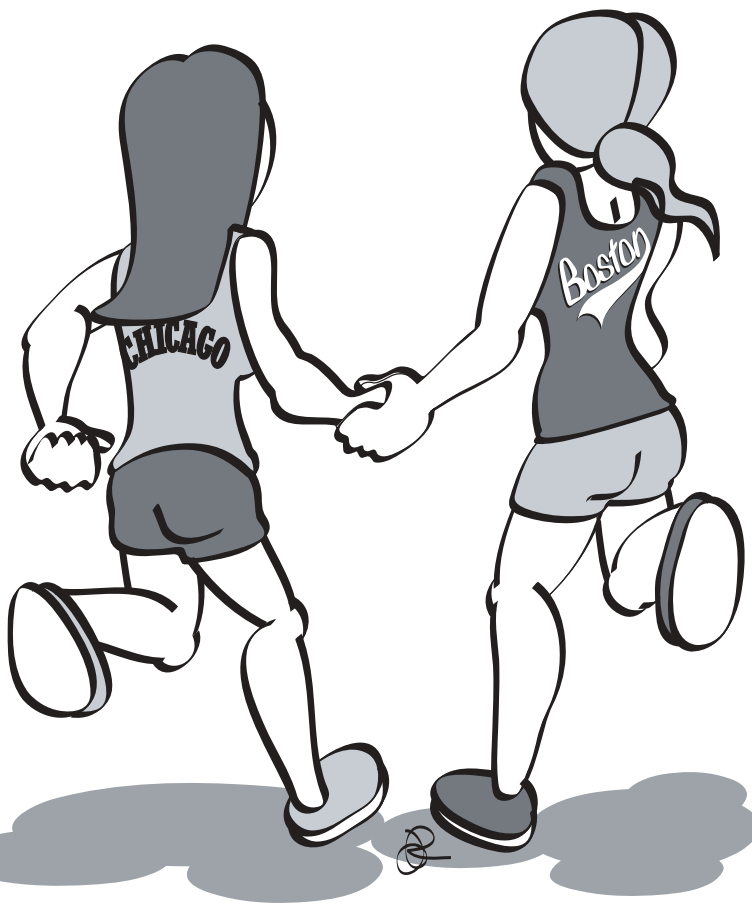
Margaret had not run the best of times and she had not run the worst of times, but in her 24 years she touched the souls of runners in two cities. Her sudden and unusual death numbed, angered, and stunned her teammates on two track clubs; her funeral in Falmouth was painful.

Margaret L. Bradley first showed up at the Greater Boston Track Club practice in the fall of 2001. She wasn't in shape and ran on her heels. In college at the University of Chicago she had run 17:43.86 for 5,000m and had been a DIII All-American in 1999. Before that she had run at Falmouth High School.

Still running on her heels, she ran her first race for GBTC indoors, going only 11:22 for 3K, a minute slower than she had in college. About a year later, in the best shape of her life, she broke three hours in the Chicago Marathon and, in 2004, led the GBTC women to first place in the Boston Marathon.

But the magic of Margaret rested not in her ability to run well but in the magnetism of her personality. Success in running is clearly expressed by the numbers, but the emotional profit found in the relationships of people-to-people in our hard, simple sport is the gift. In Margaret's case it reached across half a continent.

I first made contact with members of Chicago's Universal Sole team while sitting in a hotel Jacuzzi after the national USATF cross-country championships in North Carolina. I told Jeremy Boreling that our runner, Margaret Bradley, had just moved to Chicago to begin medical school and would be looking for a club. I told him about Margaret, and he said to send her along. I told Margaret by e-mail, and she joined runners who were very much like those that she had been training with in Boston. Her charm captured them as much as it had captured us. She was, of course, a hardworking, able, and game athlete, but so are all people who continue to train and compete post-collegiately. But Margaret's quiet presence in a room or on a run would buoy all in earshot with a potential for mirth and irreverence, because anything she was likely to say promised to be thoughtful, sincere, or wickedly funny. Bridget Sullivan, a GBTC member who had moved to Chicago but had not known Margaret in Boston wrote to me upon meeting her, "Margaret is great! There is something oddly bizarre about her that makes everyone adore her." In contrast to her wit was



a toughness, a quality of mind and body that allowed her to race in the heat of this past Boston Marathon, running only five minutes slower than her personal best while most others ran far off theirs.

Perhaps it was that toughness that brought her to challenges like running, medical school, classical violin (she could play the virtuoso Bach Partia #2 in D-minor, the chaconne), that took her to vacation in the desert in July. Temperature there averaged a desiccated 100-105°F with a night-time low of 75°F when she left the south rim of the Grand Canyon in Arizona to hike on the Tonto trail to Phantom Ranch. Later she planned to meet her parents and brother in Flagstaff.

Maybe her growing up to run in the heat and humidity of New England and the wind-chilling cold of Chicago did not prepare her to understand high altitude heat and dryness. In the winter of 2003 I ran with her in a 10-miler along the New Hampshire coast in the winter rain. She beat me. After, we had to stand around shivering for the bus that held our dry clothes. But in the high desert, sweat evaporates quickly and cools effectively, leaving a person comfortable until no water is left for cooling and suddenly the body temperature soars to a fever that impedes thought and reason. Margaret had descended into a dry wash called Cremation—perhaps in a downhill search for water. Such areas look as if they would lead to water but are a dry abyss. Many people are deceived by them

and die there.

When Margaret did not meet her parents in Flagstaff they notified park rangers. On July 10th, at approximately 2:00 pm they found her body in the Cremation dry wash. I would like to think that she went calmly, that she had stopped to rest, her head upon her backpack, and closed her eyes.

I picked up Margaret's teammates from Chicago in the GBTC van on July 18th, to drive them to the visitation and then the funeral in Falmouth. Jeremy was there, and Bridget and others who had been drawn to Margaret. Thirty runners from GBTC met a dozen from Universal Sole. The Chicago runners stayed in a house in Hyannis owned by a GBTC member. There they thought about a way to remember Margaret. They liked the idea of a "Margaret L. Bradley Prize" to be awarded twice a year to a young woman marathoner from Universal Sole or GBTC. The Chicago runner would race in the

Boston Marathon and the Boston runner in the Chicago Marathon with members of the respective clubs hosting the runner's stay.

Here is a way runners from clubs that would compete with each other can show that the dominant activity in competition is really cooperation. At the women's National 5K Freihofer's race in Albany in May I had suggested to Margaret that she bring her Universal Sole team. She did, and they beat us and won the money that we had won the previous year with Margaret on OUR team, but it was good to see her and meet her team.

Margaret Bradley brought together the marathoners of two cities in a way that made me go to Charles Dickens' Tale of Two Cities (London and Paris) and find in the closing chapter:

"I see a beautiful city and a brilliant people rising from this abyss, and, in their struggles to be truly free, in their triumphs and defeats, through long years to come, I see the evil of this time and of the previous time of which this is the natural birth, gradually making expiation for itself and wearing out..."

It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest I go to than I have ever known." **NR**

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Illustration by Josh Randall