

## SUZANNE EVANS

Though running has been a part of my life for over 30 of my 38 years, my own personal relationship with running did not begin in earnest until 1996, when I was 24. Like my father before me, I started running as a way to lose some extra weight that I found myself with. Though his was a result of being a busy father with a great cook for a wife, mine had steadily accumulated throughout my university years as high school sports and home-cooked meals gave way to keg parties and residence hall buffets.

As a kid (and still now) I was always proud and impressed with my Dad who ran at the crack of dawn before work. Rain or shine...or snow and ice (I grew up near Montreal), often in the dark, he ran. People would refer to him as 'that crazy Tom Evans-always running', and I was secretly proud of this freak for a Dad!

I was a very athletic kid, and later teen, who easily picked up most sports I tried. And I tried a lot of them! My small-town high school was around 300 students in a 'big' year, and so I (and anybody else who was remotely athletic) was recruited for any and all sports teams. We somehow always managed to scrape together just enough players to cover the field, or the court, or the course, but we usually lost...at all of them! And I had even dabbled with running, having been dragged out to the odd cross-country or track meet on zero training, and learning the hard way that one cannot sprint 800m. Running never stuck though, as I continually made the typical beginner's mistake-going too far, too fast and giving up after a few tries. But this time would be different, I vowed. This time I would be smart.

And I was; before long my four-minute jogs on the communal condo treadmill became 6 and then 10... and then 20...and then within a month or so I'd given it up for running outside with my dog. I was officially hooked. I ran my first 10km race-the Longest Day 10km at UBC about 8 months later at the suggestion of someone I was working with. I hadn't even considered racing-I was just enjoying how great I started to feel about myself after years of neglect. But I enjoyed the race so much, that I decided that I wanted to try my first ½ marathon. I LOVED IT. I think I was smiling for the last 5 miles as I realized that I was actually going to make it...easily. Then, of course, the marathon beckoned. My Dad was a marathoner and boy would he be proud! We were already having entire long-distance phone conversations about nothing but running, and training and speedwork and fartleks, and it was awesome.



It wasn't until after the birth of my 2 children a few years later that I felt the need for somebody to run with. My Dad, until that point, had been my sole training partner though we'd never actually run together! Perhaps partly out of the isolation that came from being a stay-at-home Mom with 2 children under 3, with few friends on this coast. Perhaps it was the competitive athlete in me finally reappearing after laying dormant for countless years. In any case, I eventually stumbled upon the Phoenix Running Club in Coquitlam, and that is when my running rose to a new level in terms of both my commitment, and my racing successes. It went beyond being a great form of exercise and stress reliever, to becoming a major focus in both mine and my family's life. I reaped the benefits of training with others, and my children learned that there were always great treats to be had after mommy crossed the finish line. I still don't know if they were cheering for me, or for the fact that they could now go and attack the food tables!

For almost ten years, I had the good fortune of being a stay-at-home mom, and so I viewed training as almost my part-time job. And I continued to improve, both on the road and off. Now though, for about the last 6 months, I have been working full-time as a cabinet-maker, something I was just taking up when my husband and I decided to start a family. I am trying desperately to keep up my training, but it's a challenge!

Even if my fastest days are long gone, I am very proud of my running achievements. Who knew all those years ago what those 4-minute jogs would one day lead to! I have been chosen twice to compete for Canada as a member of a four-person team at the Austin Marathon and the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon, in 2008. I won the Victoria Marathon 3 years running-from 2005 to 2007. I own the course record for the Diez Vista 50k, and up until a few weeks ago, I did for the Knee Knacker 50k as well. I have twice run the Haney to Harrison 100km ultra, and have just been chosen to be on the Canadian team for the world 100km championships in Gibraltar in November.

Perhaps what I am most proud of though, is the example that I am setting for my children about leading a healthy and active lifestyle. One that will hopefully stick with them for life as my 'crazy' father's has for me.

Susanne will join Lucy Smith, Marilyn Arsenault and Cheryl Murphy on Saturday, October 9, 2010 in a session titled "*Running Into Forty*".