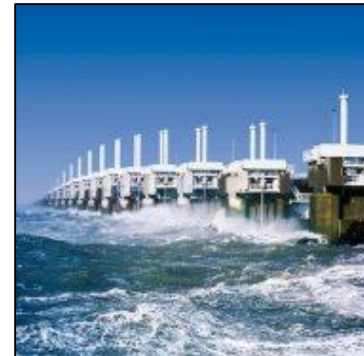


## Marianne's Marathon Experience – October 3, 2009

**I DID IT!!!** I started and finished the Zeeland Coastal Marathon on Saturday, October 3, 2009 – A marathon is 26.2 miles or 42.195 meters . This one would take me beyond anything I could imagine.



This was the 7<sup>th</sup> Zeeland Coastal Marathon and will go in the books as the toughest one since it began in 2003. The weather was rough, a Northwestern wind force 6 through 8; (35 – 45 miles per hour winds) straight in my face all the way from start to finish and high tide on the beach. The running conditions were tough, but I felt as though I had struggled through worse this past year and therefore my slogan for this day was: *"I am going for it, for myself, for Rene, for us, my family, for the school I was sponsoring in Indonesia – I was so grateful I could run for a charity – but in my mind I also ran for Joshua David in Sierra Leone, for my supporters and friends and WITH my God"*. By the way, you can still sponsor the building project for the school in Indonesia, through January 2010 every amount received will be doubled.



I decided to train for a marathon at a moment in my life where it seemed that everything had been turned upside down and so I started doing it for myself more than anything else. I wanted to stay positive and work toward a goal that seemed almost too much to tackle on my own. During the months of training I spent many hours alone on the road, using the time to reflect on the past but also praying and seeking comfort and strength and wisdom for the future. Due to problems with his knees Rene did not start running again until late June. The last couple of months we could run together at times. There were definitely moments when I was ready to give up and forget all the kilometers/miles/hours I still needed to train, yet I kept going. Since April 1<sup>st</sup>, I have run 918 miles (1487 km) in training.

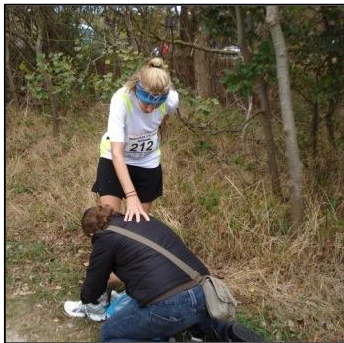


Many of you have been cheerleaders along the way. I received emails from all over the world, some from my Anastasis – Amsterdam marathon training buddies! Then there were people to cheer me on from the sidelines: my kids, our oldest granddaughter (who could not understand WHY “oma” looked so funny), of course Rene, my wonderful friends and their kids and grandkids, and people from church. Each and every part was special and kept me going – TO THE FINISH.

It would not be honest to say that it was easy. The first half went great and I was on a good schedule. There was a lot of wind on the “Storm Surge Barrier” but I had a great group to run with. This part alone was 10 km. As we neared the beach at Vrouwenpolder (about 12 miles /20km into the race) I entered more familiar training territory. This was also where I first encountered my FAN club! And the moment at which I would need to trek approximately 4 miles/6 km over the beach; with high tide and very loose sand and the wind in our faces.



At 14.5 miles/23 km my right foot started to cramp up and soon afterwards both my calves and my thighs. It was painful. The last 1 ½ mile/2 kilometers on the beach I ran thinking about Mariska and the baby. It kept me going. After the beach I went up and down a slope at Oostkapelle dunes where again I saw some of my fan club. My right foot was soaked from some of the waves and Sandra and Rene helped me change into a dry sock. Now, it was time for the dunes and dikes. I reached the 16 mile/25 km mark, with only 10 plus miles/17km more to go. The wind seemed to get stronger and stronger and on the dike by Westkapelle I had moments that the wind almost blew me over. My new strategy – try to keep moving and brace yourself against a pushover by the wind.



I walked and ran as my legs were still cramping up. Towards the end of the Westkapelle dike Hanneke helped me to get the sandbox out of my right shoe and it was “fun” to see her struggle to get her bike going again; the wind was *strong*. *Wind force 7 – 8*, which is 35 – 45 miles per hour. When I reached the 22 mile/35 km mark my first thought was ‘yikes 6 more kilometers’ yet I was able to transfer this positively and thought ‘Yah, *only 4 more miles*’ and continued up and down the dunes. There was still a stretch of beach to tackle but to be honest, knowing that I was almost there, only 2 more miles/3.5 km to go – I did not mind that part too much. Once on top of the last dike in Zoutelande, I could see the finish and knew I had less than 1 mile/1200 meters to go. Somebody from church handed me a rose just before the finish. And over the finish I ran. WOW, I made it, I did it, I conquered! I got flowers from my family and friends and a beautiful Flag of Zeeland, our province! My time 5.17.49 - my secret goal was 45 minutes less but to be honest, I did not care, I gave it my all, I tackled my own battles on the way and it symbolized the end of a difficult year. I ran with God and will run with Him towards a bright, promising new future.

More pictures and larger format can be found under ‘photos’ on <http://www.lakomission.org>