

DOTTIE MI BUH-DE

Dana Regopoulos

[Assignment: Write a paper describing the ability of an individual to perform certain actions under stress. The source of information on the performance is to be based on an interview with the performer.]

(1) If someone said to you, 26 miles, what comes to mind? A trip to Grandma's? A leisurely drive in the country? Maybe--a MARATHON? I cringe at the thought of running 2 miles, let alone 26. Yet 26 miles of long stretches of seemingly never-ending road, some steep, others not so steep are what's required in order to finish the famous Boston Marathon. On Monday, April 17, 1978, 7000 people lined up at the starting line in the center of Boston to begin a 26 mile race of physical as well as mental endurance. My father, Steve Regopoulos, was one of 7000 eager, anxious, and nervous competitors to line up.

(2) What would possess someone (who, until he decided to run in the Marathon, had run one mile at a time, at the most) to take on such a challenge? He says, "I had always been in top physical condition . . . I was a bodybuilder and powerlifter and I was built like a steamroller. So when I went to the Insurance agency, I expected to get premium coverage at a cheaper rate. But when my agent told me I was overweight and I couldn't get the cheaper rate, I got mad. I wanted to lose weight to get the cheaper coverage. A few days later, someone at the gym interested me in the idea of running a marathon . . . so I decided then and there that I would. That's all it took! 1--2--3 and my mind was made up."

(3) Immediately thereafter, he and the marathon instigator (Rich Vacula) began training together. Regopoulos says that having another person there to push you is vital. "There are days when you just don't feel like working out; if it weren't for the other pushing you along you wouldn't do it." Regopoulos adds that the other person motivates you to excel and that the two of you are in constant competition.

(4) After almost seven months of preparation, the time had finally come to prove himself. Back home in Chicago, Regopoulos had quite a cheering section rooting for him. In the *Chicago Tribune* an article was written about him. Family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors were all rooting for him.

(5) The day was cloudy, misty, and forty degrees--a perfect day for a marathon. Regopoulos and Vacula were at the starting line side by side. They would keep each going throughout the race just as they had done in training. Their game plan was to just take it one mile at a time.

(6) As they began their race, the excitement of it all pushed them to run faster miles. The sheer excitement of the race made the first five miles just fly by. Millions of people lined the street to cheer the runners. However, as time and some ten more miles passed, the sparkle wore off and the pain and fatigue set in. Regopoulos and Vacula were still running side by side. They both knew what was coming up in this leg of the journey--Heartbreak Hill. This is a four mile series of hills between

the 17-21 mile marker. If a runner can make it up Heartbreak Hill, it's mostly downhill thereafter. This is when most runners hit the wall. Hitting the wall refers to the point when runners can go no further. Mentally and physically they are fatigued and they drop out of the race. I asked Regopoulos what kept him going when he realized that Heartbreak Hill was upon him. He replied, "The fear of failure was the key motivating factor. Everyone and his uncle knew I was going to be in this race. I couldn't quit, I absolutely had to do it. Besides, if I quit the airfare would have been a waste of money."

(7) He then said it was as if he went into a trance. To the rhythm of each footstep, he would repeat, (for the last 6 miles), *Dottie mi buh-de* (Daddy's my buddy). This was how his 3-year-old son described their relationship. "It kept me going. I would tell myself--you can't let your son down."

(8) The finish line soon approached. Vacula had hit a runner's high around the 20th mile and had run faster than Regopoulos. Vacula ended up finishing 15 minutes faster. And so 4 hours and 23 minutes after beginning a journey of a lifetime, Steve Regopoulos finished. He cried with joy and with pain at the finish line and yet continued to repeat--*Dottie mi buh-de*, over and over and over.