



# Run Ruth Run.

## *A Farewell to My Wife of 62 Years*

By Walter M. Bortz, II, MD

**My wife of 62 years died recently. The proximate cause of her death was a head injury suffered when she struck her occiput on the edge of a bedside table.**

The ultimate cause of her death was Alzheimer's disease that had ravaged her for 3+ years.

That comes close to fulfilling my criteria for a good death which is "no pain, no tubes, and no loneliness." She had no pain, no tubes and she died in her bedroom of the home that we love so much.

But her death was even better than just "a good death" because she is at last relieved of the torment of A.D. that terrorized all of us in recent times. Today is a better day than yesterday because this burden is removed.

So death intrudes on our long relationship. We met during college days, summer 1949. I after my second year at Williams and she after her first year at Mt. Holyoke. We later met at

Harvard summer school, romanced and were affiliated for the next 65 years. Such an experience few experience. We had four wonderful kids and nine burgeoning grandkids. Plus amazing friends.

She was queen of several college carnivals. In our Philadelphia years before 1970, she was a docent at Independence Hall for the Junior League and told visitors where Ben sat and Tom stood and George presided before the Park Service took it over.

But it was running that became the bastion of her adult life. I had begun running as a grief reaction to my dad's death several years before. She did not really accept my running and figured that at my age, it was not decent to be running around the neighborhood in my underpants.

But she became infected with the running bug and my little, sweet, retiring wife became committed.

Within a couple years, she ran a marathon and quickly became world class. She ran a 3 hour, 47 minute marathon when she was 61. She won first place for her age group in the Boston Marathon when she was 70 and 75 but was beaten by another 80-year-old in 2010. We both were still running in the infamous 2013 Boston marathon when the bombs went off.

In 1986, at the age of 56 she completed the famous Western States 100 mile Endurance Run in 24 hours and 20 minutes – truly unreal for my tiny Boston-born bride.

Her feats were widely celebrated in the major women's magazines and every local news outlet – Ruth Anne Bortz, famous long distance runner. MY WIFE.

She made her mark and in so doing gave vivid evidence of the human potential, my mantra. Little did I ever believe that my runty, 100-pound, 5 foot 2 wife would become "Exhibit One" in this human story.

Well done, well run, Ruth Anne.

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**Editor's Note:** "Dr. Walter Bortz and wife Ruth Anne have been friends of mine since launching *ActiveOver50* 10 years ago. Every time I saw her, she would ask: "How can we help you?" That was the kind of person she was. I will miss her dearly." — Larry Hayes, publisher *ActiveOver50*.

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**Dr. Walter M. Bortz, II is one of America's most distinguished scientific experts on healthy aging and longevity. He spent his entire career at Stanford University where he holds the position of Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine. An active marathoner, he has written seven books including "Dare to Be 100" and "Next Medicine." To learn more, visit [walterbortz.com](http://walterbortz.com) or email: [DRBortz@aol.com](mailto:DRBortz@aol.com).**