

# INTRODUCTION

Accomplishing a first marathon is an extremely proud and momentous occasion especially when training takes nine months before the actual event. This was my first marathon through the American Diabetes Association (ADA). Having been in existence for the last twenty-five years or so, personal familiarity with this organization was all too comfortable. I am one of three diabetics in a family of five biological children.

With a deep personal interest involved, such an affair became all encompassing. Having raised \$2,000.00 of the required \$3,000.00, I was proudly on my way to Dublin, Ireland, to take part in that country's "Friendly Marathon."

And so it was. After completing a little more than half the marathon, 17 miles to be exact, I decided to be a tourist and enjoy the rest of the scenery with my husband before my knees wore out completely. But this book is not about that beautiful country or my glorious touristy adventures. It is about me. This is my story. I was diagnosed with diabetes in 1959 at the precious age of 2. At this writing I have been diabetic for fifty years. I almost gladly entitled this work *Diabetes: Infancy to Menopause*, but the present name came about through a particular fact that you will read on page 37. Yes, I honestly believe I was born with *it*. *It* didn't "just happen," and then was diagnosed a few years later.

In the meantime, many other books, articles (some written by me), magazine publications, etc., on the subject of diabetes are in existence and have been throughout my life. Media attention granted to this subject brings a trickle of joy to my soul if only to think that people are thinking about *it*.

This disease, already known as an "epidemic," has in recent years been labeled as a "pandemic." This means that *it* now

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covers and concerns the world and has become a frightening fact. It frightens me. Simply, it is “out of control,” a huge degradation for the diabetics that fight to survive, that fight to keep their bodies in one piece, that fight to sustain jobs, careers, family and overall happiness. A diabetic like me. Sadly enough, the continuous fundraising for more and more research has become a bottomless pit.

“Write a book!” bellowed Owen while driving the tour bus. “Write. Write it down. All of it, no matter what it is!” Therefore, I share the story of my life with diabetes with you. Having written it has been a dream come true.

After completion of this marathon and my two-week stay in Ireland, the ‘bellowing’ bus driver, Owen, became a brief yet essential character in my life at that time. It is proof to me of how all of humanity is linked in one continuous chain. It was during a tour through northwestern Ireland, its coast and inland, that Owen proclaimed his thoughts. Owen is an inspiration to this writing.

My endeavors, all of them specifically for this particular event – the nine-months of training, the time, the diet, the wardrobe, the taping of feet, special attention to footwear, and more time – were for the cure of this baffling and devastating disease known as *Diabetes*. After all, having been medically classified as a “juvenile diabetic,” that is what I was to remain all my life. Then again, maybe not. Maybe I will be given a shot to make this go away! That title, *Juvenile Diabetic*, also became a learned stereotype on me in the medical community.

My siblings and I have knocked door-to-door for monetary contributions for a cure toward diabetes when we were children. That experience is explained on page 57. Also having participated in yearly 5k and 10k walks to raise money toward the cure has culminated over the last four and a half decades of my life. This particular marathon was to be special. Although I

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have not limited my fundraising activities to diabetes, I have “wogged” for other fundraisers (e.g., Multiple Sclerosis, Heart Disease, Lung Disease, Breast Cancer, Leukemia, etc).

“Wogging” is a phrase I like to claim fame to: it is the act of walking and jogging. There’s also “wog-run” where I have started off running, going into a speedier jog if only because I feel good, knowing I can continue for another minute and then break out in a sweaty yet exhilarating run; slow down to a jog and back to a brisk walk. Once mentioning this to others, I am looked at quizzically and asked for an explanation. The term has since come to my ears from the lips of others. That makes me smile. Creativity always at play! *It* was understood meaning *I* was understood.

The highlight of *this* particular marathon was again for *the* cure, the actual cure of diabetes. I believed it was going to happen if only because I was a part of this team – this team of strangers that were also walking, wogging, running people who believed along with me. Well, knowing that personal participation was a necessity - a dire necessity - I was ready, willing, able, and determined to assist with the cure for this uncomfortably progressive disease. Anticipation was overflowing! Sponsors were continually contacted and updated; sponsorship checks were rolling in to help fulfill a *required* commitment to meet the ADA’s goal per participant at \$3,000.00. My energy level was overflowing!

Family, friends, neighbors, strangers believed along with me. I had their checks, I had their cash. They were all going to help me wog and get that cure! I felt blessed.

Scheduled to take place on October 30, 2000, this “Friendly Marathon” brought a delightful, anticipatory visit to Ireland. Never having visited this part of Europe, excitement was enhanced through the overall participation of this marathon and my having made a *huge* commitment. With that monetary goal

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figure in mind along with the registration fee, the personal training, and the bulk of tremendous planning and organizing, February was a great time to start! When September rolled around and I accomplished 17.5 miles along the concrete shore of the Pacific Ocean in 3.5 hours between the cities of Torrance, California, and Manhattan Beach, California, I knew I was ready. Self-perseverance with a positive attitude became one and the same. This attitude was grown and nurtured from my very beginnings! I knew what my body could and could not take. Once again I was learning and re-learning how to take care of myself.

With a diligent and purposefully pre-planned earlier arrival than was expected to Ireland, departure took place from Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) on October 25<sup>th</sup> to arrive in Dublin International Airport (DUB) on October 26<sup>th</sup>. As the marathon schedule was to take place on October 30<sup>th</sup>, this early-bird planning was for good reason. I needed to adjust my insulin dosages, get acquainted and acclimated with the environment, learn where available restaurants and foods stores were, as well as become psychologically ready for this endeavor.

I must tell you, I wasn't alone. My husband of ten years at the time, Wayne, rented a bicycle when we reached Dublin, Ireland, and was able to ride by my side as I wogged. As it was bitter cold and rainy, known as the "worst storm in fifty years," Wayne wore socks on his hands because of no available gloves. We were not expecting and not prepared for such miserably wet and cold weather. On his back he toted a backpack full of water, juices, granola bars, peanut butter crackers, and glucose tabs – just in case. I am ever so glad he did because there were no such preparations that I saw on our route. He carried enough for a few other marathoners if the need arose. Many of them are diabetics.

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And so, dear reader, I've walked in your shoes, *wogged* in your shoes, and maybe even ran in them! I consider this book as a deadline to my life. I must share my story, my life as a diabetic, with you who know all too well or do not know at all. If you believe as I do, my intuition, my spirit, my soul has been energized to write this book. I want to be an inspiration for you. There has not been a day or night in the many years that it took to accomplish this task that my conscious mind, through angelic voices or spirit guides, has encouraged and motivated this effort. Yes, this dream has been side-tracked. However, I need to be of service to you, dear reader, through this story of my life with diabetes.

Be aware that, even though this is an autobiography, much research is used to express facts with my personal opinions.

I describe myself as being a winsome, attractive, extremely personable, knowledgeable, resourceful, and helpful woman; a 'giver' as opposed to a 'taker. In no way, shape or form does my physique even hint at the terminal condition that assails my body.

I am a realist, I am an optimist, I am a believer, I am always a learner, I am many things. I invite you to encounter my life. I need you to know what it has been like.

*My life has been a tapestry  
Of rich and royal hue.  
An everlasting vision  
Of an ever-changing view.  
A wondrous woven magic  
In bits of blue and gold.  
A tapestry to feel and see,  
Impossible to hold.  
Once amid the soft*

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*Silver sadness in the sky,  
There came a man of fortune-  
A drifter passing by.  
He wore a torn and tattered cloth  
Around his leathered hide  
And a coat of many colors,  
Yellow green on either side.  
He moved with some uncertainty  
As if he didn't know  
Just what he was there for  
Or where he ought to go.  
Once he reached for something  
Golden hanging from a tree  
But his hand came down empty.  
Soon within my tapestry  
Along the rutted road  
He sat down on a river rock  
And turned in to a toad.  
It seemed that he had fallen  
Into someone's wicked spell.  
And I wept to see him suffer,  
Though I didn't know him well.  
As I watched in sorrow  
There suddenly appeared  
A figure grey and ghostly  
Beneath a flowing beard.  
In times of deepest darkness  
I've seen him dressed in black.  
Now my tapestry's unraveling.  
He's come to take me back.  
He's come to take me back.*

Sung by Carole King on her "Tapestry" Album/CD.

## Chapter 1

### Origins

The era was the 1950's. A happy time, a rockin' and rollin' time. Although I was born later in the decade, the mood lingered.

Front page news headlines displayed such titles as: "*President Eisenhower Sworn Into Office for Second Term;*" "*Eisenhower signs Civil Rights Act of 1957;*" "*USSR Sends Sputnik into Space;*" and "*Interferon is discovered.*"

Do *you* remember this stuff? I don't.

How about trends of poodle haircuts, black and white saddle shoes, Silly Putty, and Hula Hoops? *Althea Gibson* was the first African-American woman to win the U. S. Open tennis title, while *Don Bowden* was the first U. S. runner to break the 4-minute mile.

Top tunes were: "*A White Sport Coat and a Pink Carnation,*" "*All Shook Up,*" "*Jailhouse Rock,*" "*Lucille,*" and "*Love Letters in the Sand.*" The most popular television shows, in black-and-white, were "*Wagon Train,*" "*Maverick,*" "*Leave it to Beaver,*" and "*Perry Mason.*" Movie stars such as Jerry Lewis, Rock Hudson, John Wayne, Elvis Presley, and Yul Brynner were the cat's meow. Jerry Lewis still is!

Furthermore, it was in 1957 that New York loses Giants and Dodgers to California; "*The Music Man*" opened on Broadway; DNA is synthesized; drive-in movie theaters peaked to popularity, a new Ford cost \$2,045.00; and factory workers earned \$2.00 an hour. All here in the good 'ol United States!

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No, I don't remember *all* these facts. The ones I do remember were always shared while my mother was present, usually while she ironed as the black and white television played.

**B**orn to a United States Naval Chief and a promising fashion designer/seamstress in Portsmouth, Virginia, my mother gave up her career to concentrate on the specialties needed to assist her second of three children at the time. The year was 1957 and the U. S. Navy needed my father to concentrate on his assignments, always leaving his young wife to care for their children, alone, for weeks on end.

As thinly related to me, my father was born to German immigrants. It wasn't until the mid-nineteen eighties that I learned from my father's elderly cousins whom emigrated to Canada that Estonia was the paternal family's country of origin. With the ensuing communist controversy at that time, it seems that the country of Estonia was back-and-forth trying to maintain its own identity while being subject to the captive auspices of Germany. These specific cousins literally and physically ran away from the horrors that took place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I recall being told that my father's father was a Lutheran Minister who captivated audiences in Boston Common. His name was Frederick Buchroth. I know even less about his mother, my paternal Grandmother, Lydia, other than the sketchy fact that they resided in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, after a move from Chicago, Illinois. That is where my father was born. No one was available to embellish or encourage this ancestry. My paternal genealogy never went much farther than that and my imagination. However, Lydia re-married a wonderful man by the name of John Underhill, who became known to me and my siblings as *dziadzi* (short for *dziadek*),

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Polish for *Grandfather*.

My mother, however, was the fifth child of six siblings born to Polish immigrants. Her demeanor remains strong, full-proof, and *very* Catholic which seems to be typical of that ethnicity.

After their sojourn to the United States via the infamous *Ellis Island*, New York State, my maternal grandparents, Mary and Alexander, were greeted a new beginning also in the very early 19<sup>th</sup> century. From what I am to understand, this couple met in Massachusetts, married, toiled New England, raised six children, and died.

You'll become somewhat acquainted with my Polish/American upbringing as this story continues.

As told to me years later, mom was in tears too often due to my sickness. That's the way it was: father breadwinner through the government; mother caretaker and housewife; children 'Navy brats'. Not glamorous by any means, diabetes requires change and extra monetary allotments, often at the expense of tangibles as well as intangibles. As all couples of the time, my parents did what they had to do, what they could. They were one couple among thousands embedded in the income status as "military poor." Stationed in Portsmouth, Norfolk County, Virginia at the time, our humble trailer home was filled with five: two parents and three children. My brother, Charles, was born then and there as well. As told to me many years later by my father, a Navy Chief, I was named after the glamorous ocean liner, the "Andrea Doria." It seems perfectly befitting my life. A short story follows:

"It was Wednesday, July 25th 1956. At 11:10pm on a dark and foggy night, two great ocean liners, *T/N Andrea Doria* and *MV Stockholm*, collided near Nantucket, Massachusetts. I was there, I am a survivor...My name is Anthony Grillo..."

**([www.AndreaDoria.org](http://www.AndreaDoria.org))**

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After seeing the movie “*The Perfect Storm*” numerous times, I can’t help but wonder if there are any *Andrea Gail’s* out there. It’s a New England thing.

This diabetes diagnosis in 1959 was due to Mom’s suspicions of my daily activities. With a surge of energy to climb the kitchen counter, invading the cookie jar, followed with an *immense* thirst for anything drinkable, to napping wherever and whenever led her to bring me to the Naval Hospital’s Emergency Room. Hospitalized for seven days, I lapsed into a coma for approximately 24 hours. I just must have been exhausted! All that climbing, you know.

I can only imagine my parents’ anguish. I was 2 years old. What did I know? What did they know? I certainly have no recollections of my first insulin injections; or my first use of Clinitest tablets for glucose urine testing at that time; nor scheduled and “balanced” meal planning; nor the tears my mother shed in her attempts to keep her baby healthy and alive. I can only imagine the heartbreak and fright. “Where did this come from? How did my daughter get this?” she would continually ask many physicians.

Many of you, dear readers, know the same. On and on and on. To this day, those questions continue unanswered. Too many theories have been born.

I grew up with the speculation that diabetes was genetic. However, my grandparents were unaffected; the same with the aunts and uncles we were aware of along with my first cousins, *except* for a first cousin on my mother’s side of the family, Barbara Jean. As told to me, this first maternal cousin was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 24 or 25 somewhere in the late 1970’s as I recall.

Before it became popular, I became acquainted with the possibility that stress, believe it or not, had something to do with the development of this disease in our family. I theorize

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that stress put upon my mother during her pregnancy with me may have been the cause, not neglecting the fact of my father's possible alcoholism.

Anguish is the best word I can use to describe my parents' feelings at the onslaught of this news. One of many stories my mother tells me is when she attempted to give me an insulin injection.

"Don't cry, mommy," from the mouth of this two-year old. "It will be okay."

And this became the first of many, *many*, other shots until I learned how to do *it* myself.

Therefore, insulin introductions to our family became quickly absorbed as in being accepted; it became a necessity as water sustains life.

From my mother's recollections, my first type of insulin was called '*Lente*.' Known as an "intermediate-acting insulin, [it] covers insulin needs for about half the day or overnight. This type of insulin is often combined with rapid- or short- acting insulin." (<http://diabetes.webmd.com>.) For your convenience, an article link is pasted below listing the multiple types of insulins that are available today:

Type of Insulin & Brand Names	Onset	Peak	Duration	Role in Blood Glucose Management
<b>Rapid-Acting</b>				
<b>Humalog</b> or lispro	15-30 min.	30-90 min	3-5 hours	Rapid-acting insulin covers insulin needs for meals eaten at the same time as the
<b>Novolog</b> or aspart	10-20 min.	40-50 min.	3-5 hours	

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<b>Apidra</b> glulisine	or	20-30 min.	30-90 min.	1-2½ hours	injection. This type of insulin is used with longer-acting insulin.
<b>Short-Acting</b>					
<b>Regular</b> (R) humulin or novolin		30 min. - 1 hour	2-5 hours	5-8 hours	Short-acting insulin covers insulin needs for meals eaten within 30-60 minutes
<b>Velosulin</b> (for use in the insulin pump)		30 min.-1 hour	2-3 hours	2-3 hours	
<b>Intermediate-Acting</b>					
<b>NPH</b> (N)		1-2 hours	4-12 hours	18-24 hours	Intermediate-acting insulin covers insulin needs for about half the day or overnight. This type of insulin is often combined with rapid- or short-acting insulin.
<b>Lente</b> (L)		1-2½ hours	3-10 hours	18-24 hours	
<b>Long-Acting</b>					
<b>Ultralente</b> (U)		30 min.-3 hours	10-20 hours	20-36 hours	Long-acting insulin covers insulin needs for about 1 full day. This type of insulin is often combined, when needed, with rapid- or short-acting insulin.
<b>Lantus</b>		1-1½ hour	No peak time; insulin is delivered at a steady level	20-24 hours	
<b>Levemir</b> or Detemir(FDA approved June 2005)		1-2 hours	6-8 hours	Up to 24 hours	

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<b>Pre-Mixed*</b>				
Humulin 70/30	30 min.	2-4 hours	14-24 hours	These products are generally taken twice a day before mealtime.
Novolin 70/30	30 min.	2-12 hours	Up to 24 hours	
Novolog 70/30	10-20 min.	1-4 hours	Up to 24 hours	
Humulin 50/50	30 min.	2-5 hours	18-24 hours	
Humalog mix 75/25	15 min.	30 min.- 2½ hours	16-20 hours	
*Premixed insulins are a combination of specific proportions of intermediate-acting and short-acting insulin in one bottle or insulin pen (the numbers following the brand name indicate the percentage of each type of insulin).				

**WebMD Medical Reference provided in collaboration with the Cleveland Clinic** 

The bolded insulin brand names are all of the types that I have ever used to date.

How does a doctor/physician choose which insulin would be the best for a patient, never mind a child patient? I honestly do not know. I think it is a hit or miss, experimental type of choice with the attitude of “Let’s put you on this one;” or “Try this one and see if it works for you.”

Going down the list, beginning with “Humalog,” I was prescribed this brand in the mid-nineties. It made me physically and mentally ill. This was the ultimate reason that I purchased an insulin pump through the serious and frightening complication that I was literally going insane because of this disease. My personal experiences with the insulin pump are extravagantly explained in upcoming pages!

“Apidra” is my present insulin within the insulin pump. As I

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was told, it is *manufactured* with a buffer so as not to clog the infusion set tubing. Yes, I know; *manufactured* means *man-made*.

The “Regular” and “NPH” types were used by me, together, during my late teens to late thirties. It was quite an art to accomplishing the measuring and mixing of separate insulins in specific micrometer units to then inject in your own body. To this day, I have a sense of pride in being able to perform this so-called chore.

“Humalog” was a type of insulin that my sister, Gina, used. Yes, we are a family of multi-diabetics, also explained further on. She was allergic to it! At the time, I had never heard of a person being *allergic* to insulin. However, I have heard about such instances since her demise.

For personal reasons, I wanted to know the *ingredients* of the insulin I use. Inside each and every pre-packaged box of any and every insulin that I have ever been familiar with, are sheets of finely printed pages, usually two, that are not and never have been reader friendly – at least to me. Right at the beginning of one sheet it reads “Insulin aspart [DNA origin] Injection.” What the heck is *that*? Not specific in its definition, once again I found my answer through simple internet research. It is partially quoted as follows with the website addresses that are provided for your interest and benefit if you choose:

“Insulin aspart-insulin aspart protamine, Generic Name: insulin aspart and insulin aspart protamine (IN su lin AS part, IN su lin AS part PRO ta meen).

“Brand names: *NovoLog Mix 70/30*, *NovoLog Mix 70/30 FlexPen*, *Novolog Mix 70/30 PenFill*

Official Site- LANTUS® (insulin glargine [rDNA origin] injection) Get Facts About LANTUS® [www.LANTUS.com](http://www.LANTUS.com)

Improve your blood sugar control.

Information and tips on insulin [www.GoInsulin.com](http://www.GoInsulin.com)”