

# Julia's Weekend to End Breast Cancer

(7.1 million Canadian dollars raised - 2,281 walkers - 60 kms)

*All events took place at the Round-Up Centre, Stampede Park.*

**Fri. Aug. 12 (Day Zero)** between 5-9pm, was registration, tent assignments, safety, etc.

*(On the way to registration I met Mark, a retired English man on the train and we walked together most of the way - pictured here).*



**Sat. Aug. 13 (Day One).** I arrived at 6.30am for breakfast, some motivational speeches and at 7.30am we were off. It was cold for the first hour or so and we were held back by the huge crowd in front of us, so it was slow going. At the first pit stop, about 5 kms along, we had to line up for the washrooms, for food and drinks, but after that the crowd started to thin out a little and those problems became less and less as the day went along and the walkers stretched out.

The hundreds of crew members were everywhere - directing us across roads, driving in the completely decorated "sweeper" vans, in case anyone needed help and at the pit stops, encouraging us on and telling us how well we were doing. The pit stops were in school playgrounds, and here we could refill our water, Gatorade, eat snacks and of course use the many portable washrooms. There was also a medical tent.



At lunchtime, when we entered the playground, the Police Piped Band greeted us by playing on the bagpipes which was wonderful. Policemen were also directing us and the traffic at the major intersections and even they wore pink ribbons and had beads around their necks. The crew members directing us at the other intersections were mostly with motorbikes which were completely decorated in pink - one was even sprayed pink.

People sat outside their houses or stood at street corners, wearing pink or carrying signs. Pink ribbon was strewn everywhere, on trees, houses, on dogs and cats. Small children set up lemonade stands for us in front of their house and other people offered us chocolate, gum, water - one lady made small ice cream cones. Everywhere we went, people cheered,



clapped, played music and generally just lifted our spirits. I don't know how many times we said thank you and waved to all those people who came



out to be there for us, as well as all the cars that went past us honking their horns. I wonder if they knew just how much effect it had on us, particularly as we became tired. The sweeper vans kept driving past honking their horns and shouting to us, then all the walkers would wave again and everybody would regain strength.

I found the last 5kms of our 35 km walk that day, rather tiring and my calf muscles were starting to hurt, but otherwise I was still in good shape.

Finally, at the end of Day One, we arrived to a sea of blue tents at Currie Barracks, where everyone



immediately changed into sandals. There were hot showers (although it was a long wait), massage therapists and chiropractors, as well as the medical tent which was doing a roaring trade all evening and the following morning. We had a good hot meal, followed by deserts and sat on the grass outside, listening to the live

band playing, while people danced - yes danced! Someone gave me their massage appointment for 8.45pm, so I took that and really enjoyed my first ever massage. At 9pm everything suddenly stopped and everyone went to bed by 9.30pm.

**Sun. Aug. 14 (Day Two).** After a hot breakfast of pancakes, bacon and eggs, we left camp at 7.15am, but the pace of most people was considerably slower than the previous day. Many people had knee braces or were hobbling along on blistered feet. I actually felt really good again and my feet didn't hurt at all, but my calf muscles started to get tight again quite quickly even though I was stretching at every pit stop. Apart from that I was feeling good even by lunchtime, but the last 10kms were tiring and my calf muscles got worse all the time. Still, looking at other people, I felt pretty good and knew it would not be a problem for me to complete the 60km. The support from public was even more critical today, as the walkers were tired and hurting.

At long last, Stampede Park came in sight and I arrived at 3.15pm, where I was first greeted by many friends and family of the walkers. Eventually I found myself walking down the middle of two never-ending lines of people wearing blue shirts, all clapping, cheering and offering me their hands. It was very emotional and I cried most of the way through that. At the end I was then directed to the table of shirts and for the first time realized that it was all the walkers before me who had formed the welcoming lines. I got my shirt and then joined the lines to welcome and cheer on the next arrivals.



Eventually, we assembled for the closing ceremony at 4pm. They then asked those wearing the pink shirts (survivors) to wait at one side as they would go in separately. All the walkers wearing blue shirts then filed along the corridor and into the Corral for the ceremony, while we, in the pink shirts, stood and cheered them on. Then it was our turn to go in and we walked through the corridor past all the crew who were now wearing white shirts and they clapped and cheered us on. It was a



roller-coaster of emotions and it was difficult to stop the tears. We were announced and walked into a packed hall, separating into two lines in front of the blue shirts. Then the crew was announced and they came running in, filling up the middle section. It was very beautifully done and everyone felt so special. There were a few very emotional and motivating speeches before the end.

*Would I do it again? I would definitely do the walk again as I loved every moment of that, but I don't think I want to do the fundraising again. Also I wonder if it could ever be as awesome as this, the first time. On the other hand, I don't think I could walk away either, so I will perhaps join the crew next year, then I would still be involved and could help out in that way.*

*Next year, it will also be held in Edmonton, so two events in Alberta. They are also taking it to London, England in 2006 - now that should be interesting!*