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## Surgery Doesn't Stop Marathoner

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The heat was sweltering in New York City last Sunday, enough so that it was a factor in the slowest winning time of the New York City Marathon since 1975.

Al Reyes was not among the leaders. In fact, he was nearly four hours off the pace. But just by crossing the finish line, Reyes may have made a bigger accomplishment than winners Orlando Pizzolato or Grete Waitz did.

The 68-year-old Reyes, a South Burlington resident, completed the 26-mile, 385-yard course in five hours, 58 minutes, just four months after having quadruple bypass surgery.

Doctors had to clear a blockage of an artery on the left side of his head. At the time of the surgery, it would have been safer to bet that the Houston Oilers would be in the Super Bowl as opposed to Reyes running in the NYC Marathon in October.

"I didn't think of it in those terms," said Reyes. "I guess I'll just run until I die."

Reyes nearly died in 1973, when he had three heart attacks. He had been running for three years and believes his conditioning saved his life.

"My arteries were clogged all along," he said. "A lot of people

thought my running caused my heart attack. But I took the opposite viewpoint. My exercise program kept me strong.

"I had hardening of the arteries. I think that by exercising, I was in decent enough shape to withstand the heart attacks."

Reyes previously ran the New York City Marathon in 1980, 1982 and 1983. He missed it in 1981 because his house burnt down. He nearly missed it this year because he needs additional surgery.

He must undergo surgery similar to the type he had in June, this time to clear up a blockage on the right side of his head. He had to convince his doctor, Dr. Dennis DeSilvey of Rutland, to postpone the surgery to allow him to compete in the marathon.

"I need more blood going to my head," he said. "But I felt the operation could wait a few weeks. I mean, I enjoy doing this so much, I couldn't see what difference an extra couple of weeks could make.

"I've had a lot of medical problems, so I'm kind of used to that. I wanted to do the marathon as long as the risk wasn't that great. It wasn't urgent, so I went ahead and ran."

Reyes normally runs 40-50 miles per week in preparation for a marathon, but had to cut back to 30



AL REYES

miles this year because of the surgery. He was unsure whether he could complete a marathon with that minimal amount of training under his belt.

The marathon itself helped him endure, however. It is run through New York's five boroughs — Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan, Staten Island and the Bronx — and two million people lined the course, cheering on the runners.

"There's no other marathon like it for the closeness between runner and fan," Reyes said. "These people really encourage you

"As I came across the Verrazano Bridge, the people there really kept me going. They were cheering, 'Come on, Grandpa, you can do it.' It made me feel so good, there was no way I could quit."