

Boston Marathon

George Neil, Free Electron Laser Group, got to mix business and pleasure during a recent trip to Boston. But bear in mind, his definition of pleasure involves running 26.2 miles in 40-degree temperatures with a stiff wind hitting him in the face!



George Neil out for his lunch-time run

Neil ran in the 104th Boston Marathon on Monday, April 17, and followed that up the next day with a visit to MIT's Plasma Science and Fusion Center to give a seminar on Jefferson Lab's FEL and to discuss MIT's high brightness (17 GHz) injector program.

This year's running of the Boston Marathon — billed as the world's oldest annually contested marathon — included a new high in participation with nearly 18,500 entrants, and resulted in one of the closest finishes in event history.

Neil finished the event in 3 hours, 10 minutes, which put him in 2,672nd place overall and in 110th in the Male Veterans (50-plus) Division. "I'm happy with my time," he says. "It's not my best [marathon time], but the Boston course is very challenging. It has several hills including one called 'Heartbreak Hill' between the 19- and 21-mile markers on the course.

"And," he added, "the 42-degree temperature and 15 mph headwind made it grueling at times. I was numb from the cold by the time I hit the finish line."

He earned his berth among the Boston Marathon's competitors by making his qualifying time while running a marathon in South Carolina in December 1999. Qualifying times are based upon age. This was Neil's second Boston Marathon; his first was three years ago. "It was a wonderful event. I believe it's the second largest spectator sporting event in the U.S. behind the Super Bowl," Neil added.

Will he run in the 105th Boston Marathon on April 16, 2001? He hopes to, and with this year's finishing time he's already qualified for next year's race. In the nearer future, Neil is hoping for the chance to run in the New York Marathon this fall; but competitors for the NY race are drawn by lottery so he needs to be selected first.

Neil started running about five years ago; and he likes what it has done to his life. "It's made a real difference in both my physical and mental health," he says. "I encourage everyone to try it. I have nothing but praise for people who take up running. It can turn your life around in so many ways."

For more information about the Boston Marathon, visit the Boston Athletic Association's official marathon Web page at <http://www.bostonmarathon.org/>. The Web page provides browsers information on this year's running, the history of the Boston Marathon, information on next year's race and much more. Digital images from the race may be viewed at runnersworld.com/boston00/home.html.