

Cancer strikes old and young alike

I'm slogging through the fourth mile of a three miler on the Old River south levee headed toward home as I start this column Friday morning about 6:30. I want to tell my readers a well-kept secret, so I'm working out how to tell my story.

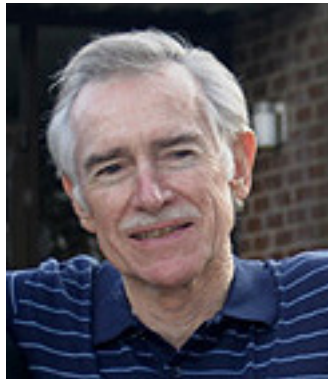
In October, I had a pain in my armpit when I did my pushups after my run. The pain grew. I felt a lump under my arm. I thought at first the lump was a reaction to my deodorant and switched brands. The lump grew as did the pain. I could do only five rather than 25 pushups. I knew the lump was in a potentially dangerous place.

I headed to my doctor; he referred me to a surgeon. The surgeon said the growth needed to be excised, but not before a biopsy. The biopsy brought bad news. The growth was cancer. The surgeon referred me to an oncologist. I was depressed and afraid I might die within six months to a year.

The surgeon removed a lump the size of a small orange on Jan. 26, along with six lymph nodes and part of a nerve. He is confident that he removed all the cancerous tissue. I must, however, undergo radiation treatment and frequent examinations and checks to see if cancer reoccurs.

So why me? I live a healthy lifestyle, I am not overweight, and I exercise regularly. I

don't drink, and I don't smoke, at least I haven't smoked for about 25 years. My younger sister's death by cancer at 59 should have been a clue. Those of us who are physically fit and live a healthy lifestyle are not immune to cancers of unknown origin; we must be ever vigilant about our health. We must also be optimistic if we



do fall victim to cancer and continue our physical fitness regimens whenever we have sufficiently recovered to do so. I hit the road again on Feb. 18, shortly after the surgeon removed a drainage tube from my armpit. I told my oncologist I wanted to be ready for a triathlon in mid-May. He was skeptical. I am hopeful.

In the meantime, I shall train as I can.

On the threshold of 70, I can expect to fall victim to maladies such as cancer. But here are some shocking statistics about childhood cancer. Childhood cancer is the leading cause of non-accidental deaths in children. Nine children die of cancer every school day, 3000 a year. Pediatric cancer claims the lives of more children each year than asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, congenital abnormalities and AIDS combined.

The second annual B.I.G. Love Fun Run and Carnival at Dickey-Bates Park in Angleton on Saturday, March 7, benefits

youngsters with cancer and their parents.

B.I.G. is a non-profit organization that provides personalized and "relationship based" care to cancer kids at Texas Children's Hospital and Arkansas Children's Hospital. B.I.G. stands for Brook's Incredible Gift. Brooke Phillips fought cancer for two years and died at five after intense chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant at Texas Children's Hospital.

The event includes a Little Kids Dash at 9:30 a. m., a Kids Mile Run at 9:40 a. m., and a 5K Run/Walk for all ages at 10 a. m., followed by a BBQ lunch, silent auction and carnival at 11 a. m.

Participants may register Saturday: the registration fees are \$10 for youngsters and \$15 for adults. All kids who finish the race will receive medals. The top two finishers of each race receive prizes. The school that collects the most donations will be given the Fight Childhood Cancer trophy to keep in the school's trophy case until next year's event.

See www.biglovecancer-care.org/index.html for more information about BIG Love Cancer Care.

