

# Poetry in motion

By Bill Shaw

*The Facts*

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“If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know *that* is poetry,” wrote the reclusive “Belle of Amherst” Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). “If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry.”

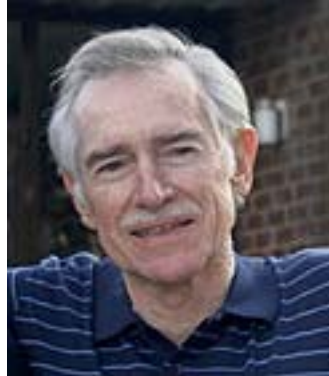
At the end of my marathons and triathlons and some shorter races, I felt so cold that no fire could warm me. I felt physically as if the top of my head were taken off. I had a tingling throughout my body, a lightness in my head. Tears welled up in my eyes. These feelings were real runner’s highs, all the endorphins I could stand. These were moments of poetry in running.

April is National Poetry Month sponsored by the Academy of American Poets and time for my annual poetry in running column.

Poets pen profound poems as rarely as runners experience the ultimate high. But even those who rarely read poetry know when they experience poetry.

Think just a second and try to remember a poem that profoundly touched you. It might be something from Shakespeare,

one of his sonnets or a purple passage from a play, lines that make you think, “I know that’s poetry,” something you have never been able to say for yourself, in the words of Alexander Pope in his *Essay on Criticism* (1711), “What oft was thought but ne’er so well expressed.”



Even if you are not a runner, not an athlete of any ilk, you have moments in your life when you have experienced the same feelings Emily Dickinson calls poetry—in a religious service, in the birth of a child,

in watching your child graduate from high school or college. These experiences are poetry.

Well, I drifted considerably from running, but just a few more words about poetry. Read a poem this month, a classic poem. I suggest the well-known and frequently anthologized poem about running, A. E. Houseman’s “To An Athlete Dying Young.” You can find it at on the Internet or in any British literature anthology.

Congratulations to Amy Plander and the Danbury Community Baptist Church for an outstanding run Saturday. The weather was perfect; we finished before the wild west wind whirled in. The folks in Danbury are friendly and hospitable.

The San Jacinto Festival 5K has been canceled, but Jason Culverhouse promises to resurrect it next year.

Runners and walkers still have two local contests this spring, the Freeport Flapjack 5K is on April 28. Veteran runners know the Flapjack presents the unique challenge of the levee and the Velasco Bridge. The bridge doesn’t look challenging until you head back to downtown Freeport and over the bridge for a second time. If I see you walking, I’ll yell at you. For race information, call Mary Stotler at e-mail [mstotler@freeport.tx.us](mailto:mstotler@freeport.tx.us)

The Brazosport Regional Health System 5K/10K is May 12. First-year race director Patty Green and her BRHS Race Committee have big plans for the race and a health expo on race day. Register online at [active.com](http://active.com) or call 979-297-6190 for information.

On June 2, join cancer survivors in the Race for the Cure 5K in West Columbia on the scenic out-and-back race route to Varner Hogg Plantation. For information and registration forms, contact Teresa Holland at 979-647-5058 or e-mail [teresa.holland@conocophillips.com](mailto:teresa.holland@conocophillips.com).

Over 100 youngsters 12 and under turned out for the BASF non-competitive Kids Run at the Gator Gallop. BARRA and BASF hope to see the youngsters turn out as well at the Flapjack 5K, BRHS 5K/10K and Race for the Cure. All finishers receive T-shirts and medals.

Even though I am not poetry in motion when I run, I shall see you at the starting lines.