

Tony Handler (57) shares his personal story with fellow Weequahic alumni with the hope that it gives some inspiration to cancer patients:

The purpose of sharing my personal story is not to initiate in our weekly Weequahic newsletter a discussion on cancer treatments or the benefit of exercise and self-discipline guides. The newsletter is not the forum for such discussions. Rather I share to give hope to other Weequahic graduates and with whom they choose to share my story.

In 1984, at age 45 years old, I was diagnosed with a rare form of pancreatic cancer. After surgery, I was told I had two years to live. I did not like that prospect, so I decided to figure out a way to fight it. While recovering in the hospital, I saw the Ironman Triathlon on TV (it is a 2.5-mile swim, a 112-mile bike, and a 26.2-mile run). I was so impressed that I determined the triathlon was the way I will fight the prognosis.

I set 4 goals for myself when I got out of the hospital. First, to get in shape and do an Ironman Triathlon in my 60's. I completed one at 61 and then another at 62. Second, to do 300 shorter distance Triathlons

In 2021, I did #300 and decided that I will continue doing them until this old body says, "ENOUGH ALREADY." But in May I completed #327, so I have increased this goal to 350.

The third goal was to do a 1/2 Ironman (1.5-mile swim, 56-mile bike, 13-mile run) for each birthday in my 70's. I completed all 9, 70-79. The fourth goal was to celebrate each new age with an age bike ride for each birthday in my 70s and 80s. I have completed the 70s' rides, and the first four of the 80's. In May I rode 84 miles to celebrate my 84th.

I truly believe that all the above craziness (exercise) has helped me survive the six different types of cancer (pancreatic, prostate, basil cell, squamous cell, melanoma/3 times, and liver). I am still being treated for liver cancer with a monthly injection for the last 23 years.

In addition to all the exercise (training and racing) and having goals to keep me going, I am blessed to have great support from my family, especially from Narda my wonderful wife of 64 years.

It also helped to have many great doctors that got me through the 21 surgeries/procedures. So, if you are blessed (like I have been) to be able to exercise, hopefully you are able to do some, even if it's only a short walk around the block. Remember: "DON'T EVER GIVE UP. THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE" Tony