

This is the first in a series of runner interviews; our runner is Arnie Sweet, a retiree who is recovering from minor foot surgery and getting ready to resume running.

Q. Do you run year-round, and do you run both indoors and outdoors?

A. Yes, I do run year-round, usually outdoors. I'll run indoors when the weather is bad but I prefer not to because the frequency of turns on short indoor tracks can pose an injury risk.

Q. What are your most common running routes?

A. I normally go to the Purdue Ismail Center in the morning and start my run there by heading west on Stadium Avenue, most often running to the Purdue Airport and back. After my run I do some cross training with weights and some stretching. Occasionally I'll run the route of the Purdue Cancer Challenge 5k. In bad weather I use the Lambert Fieldhouse track.

Q. What about races, are they part of your running routine?

A. I'll do a local 5k race from time to time. The only longer race I've run in recent years is the Firecracker 6, a Fourth of July race in Indianapolis that my son also runs.

Q. Do you have a favorite shoe model and if so, are they ever hard to find?

A. I have a wide foot, and used to wear New Balance. However, they kept changing their designs so I gave up on them. Now I wear Brooks Ghost 4 for outdoor running because of the variety of running conditions; and I wear Brooks Green Silence for indoor running on the softer and smoother track.

Q. Do you travel much in retirement and when you do, do you run?

A. My travel is mostly to visit family, either at their homes or at a common destination. I'll do some informal runs when I visit their homes. When we meet elsewhere the trip usually includes other activities such as hiking, so running is not part of the plan.

Q. You mentioned your running son in Indianapolis. Any other runners in the family?

A. After I started running, my wife Janet, now deceased, became a highly-accomplished runner. She won her age group in the 400 meters at the 2008 Indoor USATF Masters championships and was fourth in the 400 meters at the 2009 National Senior Games.

Q. I know you've been running a long time. Our members would enjoy hearing about some of your early running memories.

A. I have kept almost all race entry forms and results for both my wife & myself. I entered the dates and results on my computer a couple of years ago. Looking at my records, I see that I have run in 182 events.

I started to jog for exercise in about 1973, when I was 38 years old. I jogged with a group of IE profs, using the locker room at the Lambert Fieldhouse as a base. One of the runners who used the locker room organized a 10 mile race, held on the outdoor Purdue track, in 1973. I ran in 1974, and 3 more times until the last one in 1977. The maximum number of runners in any year was 18.

I ran in the first two 500 mini-marathons in Indianapolis, in 1977 and 1978. In 1977, the route went through the "red light" district, and a group of prostitutes came out to cheer us on. I ran in the mini in 1984, pacing my wife to a 2nd place finish in her age group. I participated in the Run-in-the-new-year race in 1983, and the Run-in-the-mid-year race in 1987 and 1992.

When my wife started to enter national track events (at my insistence, since she was so fast), I decided to also try. I qualified for the USATF Masters Championships in the 400 meters in 2009, finishing 8th out of 8. I qualified for the USATF Masters Championships in the 400 meters and 800 meters in 2010, finishing 5th out of 8 in both events. Distance racing can be exhausting, but track is gut-wrenching. I had a blockage in the artery leading to my left knee, and a stent inserted, in 4/2011. I have not been the same runner since then.

A final note:

Arnie also mentioned that Medicare covers the cost of his membership at the Ismail Center through the SilverSneakers Fitness Program for older adults. There are other fitness centers in this area that also participate in the SilverSneakers program. Information is available at <http://www.silversneakers.com>.