

## Beating Father Time: For Harold Miller, 67, running is a life-long activity

Published: Monday, July 25, 2011, 12:42 PM Updated: Monday, July 25, 2011, 1:05 PM



By **BOB FLOUNDERS, The Patriot-News**

**Click here for more on the Patriot-News' summer series on masters athletes.**

There is running and there is competitive running.

There is competitive masters running in the midstate area, and there is Carlisle's Harold 'Hap' Miller.

Miller, 67, has run in every Harrisburg Marathon since 1975. He is actually the caretaker for the event, having put together a 213-page book on it, chock full of numbers and statistics, two of the former computer programmer's favorite things.

In Miller's age range, you won't find many better runners in the country. He ran last year's Harrisburg Marathon, held every November, in 3 hours and 47 minutes and back in the day, once ran the Boston Marathon in 2:43.

"I think if you run in the area, you know Hap," said 51-year-old Cindy Blood, a Summerdale resident who is one of the top women's masters (over age 40) runners in the area.

"He's just got a really amazing energy and spirit and he doesn't look anywhere near this age. It's very clear that Hap loves the sport. He loves the competition and I really think he enjoys the camaraderie that goes with making friends in the sport."

Not bad for the former fatty who, with his waistline changing monthly back in his late 20s, turned to running to change his life.



**View full size**

Chris Knight, The Patriot-News

Harold "Hap" Miller, 67, a man with 36 years of competitive running under his belt, gets a workout in along Waggoners Gap Road in North Middleton Twp

“When people ask me about running, I tell them it’s an addiction. A very good addiction,” said Miller, who was raised in the Johnstown, Pa. area before moving to Carlisle in the late 1960s when he took a job at the Naval Supply Depot in Mechanicsburg.

Today, Miller, who could pass for his mid-50s, carries just under 150 pounds on his wiry 5-9 frame.

**Local runner Hap Miller**

Local runner Hap Miller

That was not always the case.

Following a hitch in the Air Force in his early 20s, Miller, who ran in high school, watched his weight balloon into the 180-pound range.

Miller, stationed in Germany, developed a fondness for German beer (“My friends in the Air Force started calling me ‘Hap’ because of the happy mood I was in when I drank”, Miller said) and began to bulk up. He also developed chest pains and shortness of breath. Miller, who has a history of heart trouble in his family, knew something had to change.

“Actually, I quit smoking as I approached 30,” Miller said. “You know what they say about your 20s — wine, women and song. Well, I had a good time.

“But when I quit smoking, I gained a lot of weight.”

Miller started slow — it took him more than five hours to run his first Harrisburg Marathon in 1975 — but slowly his times improved and the weight melted off. Hap was hooked.

“Heart trouble runs in my family,” Miller said.

“I have an older brother, who died of stomach cancer, who had heart issues. I have a younger brother, three years younger, and he had a triple-bypass a couple years ago. They were basically sedentary.”

Miller introduced his wife Betsy, a Big Spring High School graduate, to running. He’s run two marathons with his daughter, Kelly, and hopes one day to train with his six-year-old grand-daughter Bella.

Miller has run in nine Boston Marathons and admits that as he’s aged, he’s grown fond of the friendships he’s forged within the sport.

There are a number of running clubs in the midstate and Miller said he is affiliated with the Harrisburg Area Road Runners Club (HARRC) and the Carlisle Running Club.

“There’s a social aspect to running,” said Miller, who still runs four days a week, six miles a clip.

"That's one of the things about the Boston Marathon. It's really a high because the crowd is so supportive, you've got the crowd cheering you the whole way. The closer you get to town, the bigger the crowd gets.

"You can smell the barbecue in the air, and you'll have some people try to hand you a beer. That's happened to me more than once."

He may look 55 but Miller said he's made some concessions in his training.

"I walk every day. I do about a mile walk to warmup, and I walk after," said Miller, who is a prostate cancer survivor (seven years).

"It's probably 40 percent walking, 60 percent running for me now."

Betsy Miller rolls her eyes at that last statement. She said her husband is as active as he's ever been.

"You should see the work he does around the house," laughed Betsy. The house sits on four acres. Hap said he oversees a large garden and does all of the grass-cutting and trimming.

"He can go four straight hours, working in the yard, in the heat," Betsy said.

"And I lift light weights and I do my stomach crunches," added Hap. "It's a routine."

Routine? Hap Miller, who turns 68 next month, is anything but.