

JD Dudek

In September 2005, 49-year-old JD Dudek leaped from a platform into the cold current of the Pacific Ocean as a competitor in the annual Alcatraz swim. He took in the beautiful arc of the Golden Gate Bridge and glanced back at the sign posted on the shore of Alcatraz that says, "You are now leaving prison, where no one ever escapes." In that swim, JD symbolically left behind the illness that dared to confine him since 2003, when the ironman tri-athlete was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.



A competitive athlete his entire life, *Iron-Dudek*, as he is known, also achieved financial success as founder of Western Mission Mortgage, a multimillion-dollar firm in San Diego. His energy and intensity are inspired by the ethics and words of his father, who JD lost to cancer when he was 10 years old. "Do the things I could never do in my life," his father told him. "Never, Never quit."

JD summoned every ounce of will in an arduous battle with the leukemia that included a bone marrow transplant (BMT), but he did not fight alone. Along with his brother who was his donor, plus friends and family, JD got a huge boost from cancer survivor Lance Armstrong. In an e-mail to JD during his fifth Tour De France championship, Armstrong wrote, "...you seem to be in the same shoes I was

in a few years back — and they aren't cycling shoes! I just want to let you know that I am with you and I will ride in your honor...be strong JD and never give up."

With athletic determination, a week after his BMT, JD was "doing laps around the BMT unit like there was no stopping him," says his physician, Neil Kogut, M.D. In September 2004, he pedaled with Armstrong in the Ride for the Roses in Austin, Texas.

Dedicated to inspiring others who, as he says, "must swim the treacherous waters of cancer," JD serves as an ambassador for The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, and, with deep gratitude, has funded the establishment of the *JD Dudek Never, Never Quit Gym* in City of Hope's BMT Unit.