

Columbia's Silverzweig Beating Testicular Cancer

BY E. SCOTT THOMPSON, II,
Southern Mississippi '99

It was a typical October afternoon in New York City. At Columbia University there was a soccer match between SigEp and Delta Sigma Phi. **Zachary A. Silverzweig, '05**, did a slide tackle to intercept the soccer ball when he felt something pull in his groin. Limping to the sidelines he wondered how bad the injury might be. Would he be out of playing intramurals for the chapter for a couple of weeks? Maybe longer? After the game, when the swelling had gone down, Zach noticed a lump on his testicle. His first thoughts were to have a doctor look at it just to be safe. He wasn't thinking that a week later he would undergo surgery for testicular cancer.

Make No Mistake

Testicular cancer is the number one malignancy for men aged 20-34, and it is the number one cancer killer for men in that age group. When discovered early it is almost always curable.

Zach was 20 years old when he discovered his lump. As a health conscience SigEp, he went to Columbia Health Services for a diagnosis and was referred to a doctor. Early detection is the key to eliminating testicular cancer and once diagnosed the surgery to eliminate it was quickly scheduled. The doctor removed the malignant testicle from Zach. On a follow-up visit, the doctor performed a cat scan of his midsection and found that the cancer had spread to his lymph system.

A second, more complicated surgery was required to help rid his body of cancer, and this surgery took place one

month after the first. The procedure calls for an incision from the sternum to the groin, right down the middle of his torso. The lymph nodes are removed entirely from the body then checked for cancer. After this procedure is completed, the cure rate for cancer is 95 percent. Zach had to drop out of classes for the fall semester. He is an economics major with a 3.87 GPA. Since losing time in the fall, Zach decided to not minor in the arts so that he could graduate on time.



Brother Silverzweig at the 2003 Ruck Leadership Institute and eight months later during chemotherapy.

Intense Chemotherapy

There was a possibility the cancer was not completely gone. After the



surgery, Zach had to undergo two rounds of intense chemotherapy. Chemotherapy is using chemical agents or drugs to selectively destroy malignant tissues. In January of 2004, he had his first round, which consisted of taking the chemotherapy for eight hours a day, five times for one week. After this round was completed, he was off of the chemotherapy for one month and went back for a second and final round.

Zach's hair fell out all over his body, and he was very weak from both the surgery and the chemotherapy. He is originally from Park City, Utah, but he stayed in New York for the surgeries and recovery. During that time he was in the chapter house and his mother was by his side. Several members of the chapter and his girlfriend helped look after Zach during this time. His recovery from the operations and chemotherapy has been slow. As of April 2004, he is just now able to run and be moderately active.

At his first chapter meeting, the rest of the SigEps wanted to know what they could do to be helpful to Zach. His answer was to get involved with Relay for Life, a community event that raises money for cancer research and celebrates cancer survivors. The chapter agreed and to date has raised more money for the cause than any other student organization on

campus. Zach currently sits on the Board of Directors for Relay for Life and plans to do so next year. With his background in economics, Zach plans to work for a biotech company that manufactures, develops or tests cancer medication. As he says, "There will always be a need for these companies to have someone do economic forecasting. Since I won't be wearing a lab coat, this will be my way of giving back."

Should you have questions for Zach about his ordeal with testicular cancer, email him at zas2002@columbia.edu.

Zach's chapter got involved with "Relay for Life" as a means of support for him during his recovery. The chapter raised over \$13,000 and six Brothers logged over 25 miles each in the relay.