

PAY IT FORWARD

Your gift to TROA's Scholarship Fund reaps many returns

COMPANY'S COMING

Follow these do's and don'ts for guests and hosts

WWW.TROA.ORG

TOPS resources can make your career transition a success

THE **RETIRED OFFICER** *Serving those who serve America*

December 2002 \$3

MAGAZINE

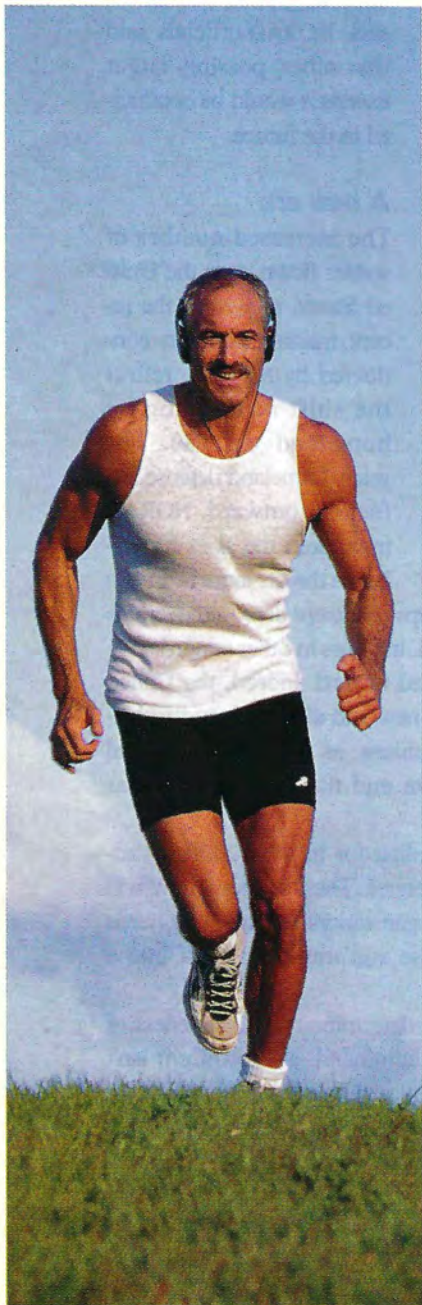
BLUEPRINT FOR SECURITY

A new, streamlined command structure supports homeland defense



FIT

FOR



F

O

R





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANTHONY MAGEBMAN/GETTY IMAGES; DIGITAL VISION/PICTUREQUEST; GUY FERGUSON/GETTY IMAGES; JAMES TAYLOR/GETTY IMAGES; ROY MORSCH/GETTY IMAGES

Maintain your
lust for life by
establishing a
fitness routine —
no matter what
your age.

BY ERIC MINTON



THE DAY WAS TYPICAL FOR James Wheeler. It started with an Air Force Association gathering at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (AFB) in Tucson, Ariz., where, as president of the Tucson Chapter, Wheeler hosted 35 people for a morning meeting and lunch at the base officers club. Afterward, Wheeler visited the base's new \$8.25 million recreation and fitness

center. He did 30 minutes of strength training, ran 3 miles, and managed another 30-minute round of weights. He then went home and prepared to give a dinner party and pack for a two-week trip to Alaska.

"And I'm only 79," says the retired Air Force colonel.

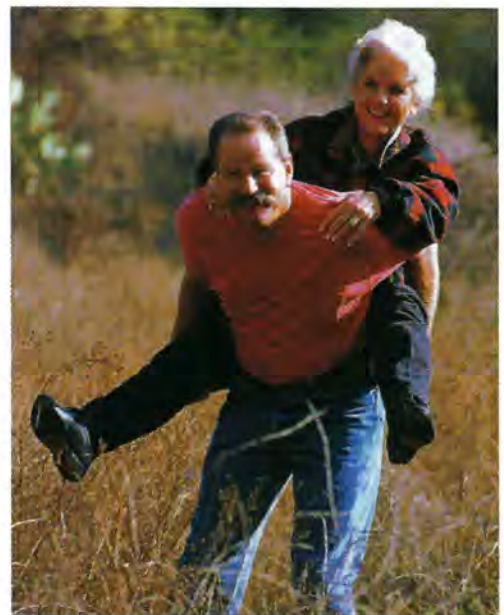
By some measures, the former fighter pilot, who saw action in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, is more fit now than he was when he retired from the Air Force in 1974 and started a second 15-year career with Hughes Aviation in Tucson. "In my mid-40s I was in the worst condition of my life. I guess you just get lazy," Wheeler says. "I'm no longer a 25-year-old fighter pilot, but right now I don't feel any older than I did 25 years ago. Not a bit older. I do the same things I did 25, 30 years ago, the same golfing, running, dancing. I'm so active I can't stand it."

American society today seems to see aging as a sin, and people (and, consequently, cosmetic companies) are focusing on creams, formulas, supplements, and tucks to keep the years at bay. However, the notion of age, like beauty, is more than skin deep. In fact, what lies immediately below the skin — the muscles, tendons, ligaments,

and bones — should get as much attention as, if not more than, the wrinkles above. That requires an exercise program.

Will exercise prolong life? Even Wheeler is not so sure. "Maybe I have some good genes," he says. "My mother died in her 80s, my grandparents in their late 70s." Even if we can't say an exercise regimen will prolong life, it does prolong "living," or as Wheeler puts it, "the idea is you just keep active, keep mentally alert."

Yet, intriguing research does suggest that exercise could reverse the natural aging process. The American Council on Exercise (ACE) cites a study of five men who took part in an aerobic capacity test in 1966 when they were 20. Researchers revisited these five men 30 years later. At 50, the men were an average of 25 percent heavier than they had been at 20, their body fat had doubled, and their aerobic capacity had declined by 11 percent. Back on a monitored exercise program for six months, the men increased their aerobic capacity by an



"I do the same things I did 25, 30 years ago. . . . I'm so active I can't stand it." — James Wheeler

average of 15 percent; in other words, they were more cardiovascularly fit than they had been as 20-year-olds.

"A good fitness program would focus not on longevity but on quality of life," says Roger Braner, athletic director at Robins AFB in Warner Robins, Ga. Braner has a master's degree in health fitness management from American University, is an American College of Sports Medicine certified health fitness instructor, and holds a physical specialist certification from the Cooper Institute. He worked as a senior fitness specialist at Army Materiel Command Headquarters and was director of the Naval Air Systems Command Headquarters' fitness program before moving to Robins. This year his fitness center was named the best in the entire U.S. Air Force.

"It's the old cliché: You use it or lose it," he says. "If you don't actively work on your strength, you're going to lose

A THREE-PART STRATEGY

One of the difficulties for anybody establishing a lifelong exercise regimen is merely getting through the first two weeks. If that busy schedule of yours doesn't crowd out exercise time (sorry, that's an invalid excuse), then those sore muscles do you in. But if you have lingering sore muscles, you are trying to do too much. Here are some tips to keep you going.

First, your goal is to maintain your lifestyle without tiring too soon, getting short of breath, or experiencing aching joints and to add years to your lifestyle with stronger muscles and bones, more flexibility, and greater cardiovascular capacity.

Second, you should consult your physician before launching any regimented exercise program. Even some popular, properly done exercises can injure or harm people with certain health conditions.

Third, you should get a coach. Today's instructors do benchmark measures of your current condition, establish a proper program for you to pursue on your own, and periodically monitor your improvement. They also can provide advice on and demonstrations of exercise techniques. If you live near a military base, you'll find a qualified coach there. All the military services have made great strides in improving their physical fitness facilities, and they are staffing these with certified physical fitness instructors. Check at the base gym for more information.

Your exercise program should have three components:

1) Cardiovascular or aerobic training. These exercises increase your heart rate over a set period of time; they include walking, running, rowing, stair climbing, cross-country skiing, and swimming. None of these activities is more effective than any other; the choice comes down to personal preference and physical comfort. For example, some seniors should not engage in high-impact aerobics (defined as two feet off the ground, such as running) because of its wear on the ankle, knee, and hip joints. They are better off doing low-impact aerobics, such as walking, or no-impact, such as swimming or water aerobics. A good exercise program includes cardiovascular exercise three to five times a week.

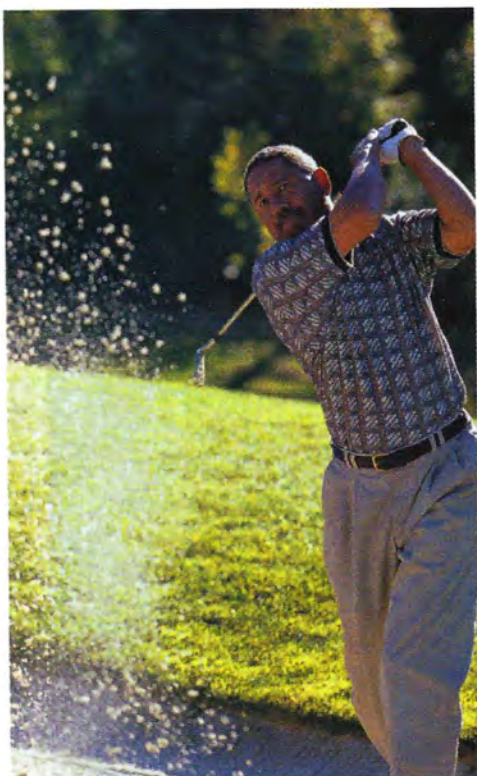
2) Strength training. Yes, this is weight lifting. You can start with basic calisthenics, then you should gradually increase resistance, using weight machines, free weights, or some other effective resistance device. To avoid soreness, start slow and low, and do not train the same muscles on consecutive days. Your overall program should include strength training two to three times a week.

3) Flexibility. This often-overlooked aspect of fitness is in some ways the most important. You should stretch whenever you engage in any physical activity. "You can't overtrain from proper stretching," says Roger Braner, athletic director at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia. Stretch before and after doing any of the above exercise programs. Some recent studies suggest stretching before exercising is of no quantifiable value, but many fitness experts still encourage it. Stretching may reduce risk of injury in your exercise program and could reduce muscle soreness. It also could improve your flexibility over time. Just make sure you warm up the muscles *before* stretching. Your instructor can give you a good sequence with proper techniques for stretching all the appropriate muscles.

A good source for information on exercising and health and fitness tips is the American Council on Exercise Web site, accessible via TROA's links page, www.troa.org/magazine/links.asp.



FROM LEFT: CHUCK SAVAGE/CORBIS; FRANK CONWAY PRINCE/EP/INDEX; STOCK/IMAGERY/PICTUREQUEST; JOHN HENLEY/CORBIS



**“Exercise doesn’t
have to be regimented.
The main thing is
just to move.”**

— Roger Braner



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JIM CUMMINS/CORBIS; R.W. JONES/CORBIS; CONSTANTINOS LOUMAKIS/CORBIS

it. If you don't work on your flexibility, you're going to lose it. If you maintain it, you are going to be much more active as you get older." Many research studies have shown that a good exercise regimen helps control blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and weight. Exercise also can help manage the symptoms of arthritis, lower back pain, and diabetes. "As people get older they start to experience bone deterioration," Braner says. "Just walking strengthens bones. Weight-bearing exercise helps retain the calcium in the bones and

will slow down bone degeneration."

While overseeing Robins' fitness and wellness programs, Braner says he works equally with active duty members and retirees. In this capacity he debunks two common myths about exercising.

The first myth suggests it can sometimes be too late to start an exercise program. But the ACE study of five men in 1966 and 1996 provides evidence that even people who have not maintained fitness over the years still can see positive results from an exer-

cise program within just a few months.

In a 1995 study by Wayne Westcott for the South Shore YMCA in Quincy, Mass., 85 men and women between the ages of 61 and 80 increased their muscle strength by about 50 percent after an eight-week exercise program comprising 30 minutes of strength training and 20 minutes of endurance exercise just twice a week. Westcott discovered in a parallel study that the seniors replaced body fat with muscle mass at roughly the same rate as young adults and middle-aged participants.

Westcott also conducted a trial program with 19 nursing home patients with a mean age of 88½ years. After 14 weeks of two workouts a week, the group reduced body fat, increased muscle mass, and more importantly, saw major increases in flexibility, mobility, and endurance as well as a decrease in the number of falls.

Though Wheeler has been running three miles a day, five days a week for 28 years — “I don’t run fast, I run steady,” he says — he started his weight training program only recently. “I just wanted to firm up muscles in my upper body and improve my golf swing,” he explains. “I’m not out to bulk up muscles; I just want to tone and see what happens.” He does between 15 and 25 repetitions a session working with 100-pound weights on his back and abdominal muscles, 50 pounds on his shoulders, and 10 pounds on each arm. “I’m just staying within what I can do and building up gradually. I don’t want to pull a muscle; it takes a long time to heal.”

“We change the intensity, but we recommend they do the same things as young folks. At any age, people who are sedentary can go on any program, and they will adapt,” Braner says of establishing a fitness-training program for seniors.

The second myth contends it can be too early to start an exercise program. Braner pooh-poohs that idea, but he doesn’t necessarily mean children (though he does coach youths and teens). He is referring to active duty personnel and those transitioning into retirement. A contradiction persists in the military: While the services require their members to maintain certain standards of physical fitness, many active duty personnel still are not as fit as they could be. A primary reason is that the military lifestyle itself — and, these days, the demands on people moving to postmilitary lives — leads busy servicemembers to feel they don’t have enough time for an exercise program.

“We hear from people that mission requirements don’t give them the time,” Braner says. “We have the [two star] general exercise on a regular basis, and we know he’s quite busy. I know it’s easy to fall into habits. I run a fitness program, I work in a fitness center, the equipment is right outside my door, but I have a busy schedule and two kids, and I’m as guilty as anybody else [of not maintaining an exercise program].”

At a minimum Braner promotes activity. For example, people who don’t find the time to exercise still find the time to shop. “Park farther away from the mall instead of circling around for the nearest spot,” Braner suggests. “Walk at night with family members or a friend, or play tennis. Exercise doesn’t have to be regimented. The main thing

is just to move. The benefits of exercise don’t have to [come from] a gym.”

Braner does not have any psychological tricks to get people into the habit of exercising. “Motivation has to be intrinsic, not extrinsic,” he says. “Too many people wait until they have a heart attack or have a stroke.”

Wheeler started running while serving in Vietnam in 1966. After that tour he went to the Pentagon and fell out of his running program. Not until he retired from the Air Force in 1974 did he take it up again. “Even while traveling, I do my walking or running,” Wheeler says. “It’s got to be a way of life. You can’t say, ‘I don’t feel like it this morning,’ or ‘I’ll wait until tomorrow.’ If you miss a day, you miss it. You miss the activity. You cheated yourself.” ★

RISK FACTORS

Can a person be too unhealthy to exercise? Research indicates no. Even the most sedentary individuals of advanced age have taken up exercise programs and seen improvements to their physical and mental well-being. However, the American College of Sports Medicine does offer some recommendations for people at various risk levels.

The college says people at moderate risk, defined as men age 45 and older and women 55 and older or those with two or more major risk factors, should take a maximal treadmill exercise test prior to beginning a vigorous exercise program — which is to say that people at moderate risk still can proceed with a moderate exercise program without the treadmill test. The major risk factors are hypertension, high cholesterol, current cigarette smoking, diabetes, sedentary lifestyle, obesity, or a family history of metabolic diseases.

People considered high risk, defined as individuals with symptoms of cardiovascular, pulmonary, or metabolic disease, should take a maximal treadmill exercise test prior to beginning a moderate exercise program.

Moderate exercise is defined as exercising at 60 percent to 85 percent of functional capacity that causes mild breathlessness, some perspiration, and for first-timers a bit of discomfort and possible soreness. Vigorous exercise is of sufficient intensity to result in cardiorespiratory improvements if done on a regular basis.

In other words, moderate versus vigorous is in the eye of the beholder. “For example,” says Roger Braner, athletic director at Robins Air Force Base in Georgia, “in a strength program ‘moderate’ would use lighter weights, ‘vigorous’ would use heavier weights. What is light to one person is relatively heavy to another person. On the cardiovascular side, walking would be moderate, running would be vigorous.”