

**Testimony
of
George McVicker
Senior athlete, West Des Moines, Iowa**

My name is George McVicker; I am a senior Iowa Athlete from West Des Moines. And, I would like to thank the chairman and my Senator, Charles Grassley, as well as Senator Breaux and all the members of the Committee for inviting me to testify here today.

If it was an accepted practice to place a title on testimony delivered before you mine would be "FITNESS and well-being bring true GUIDANCE that becomes the spark to release and direct POWER."

As a young high school student, ready to graduate in 1957, I was debating between the choice of which of two careers to embark on. One career was to pursue architecture, and to build structures that would last a lifetime. The other career choice was to pursue teaching and coaching and build bodies and minds that would last for a lifetime.

It became apparent even at a young age that the most important of the two was the latter, and my decision to become a teacher of physical education and exercise science was the correct decision.

As a young teacher, the coaching just simply went along with the teaching. I wasn't totally aware of how important the competition, that goes along with training the body to be strong, flexible, and fit was. It wasn't until later that I recognized that competition, whether as a team member or individually, was a necessary element to the continued motivation factor important in staying healthy and fit.

Research tells us that exercise is important in maintaining a healthy, functional body throughout our lifetime. It tells us that we should take time each day to exercise. It tells us what we should do to get the most from our exercise program. Research even goes so far as to tell us what we need to do to improve our compliance to exercising.

But the one ingredient that is overlooked by many is that compliance to exercise must be built around having fun, and it must include competition on some level to produce success or help one strive for goals.

We accomplish things, because on the way to reaching our goals, we are having fun. We enjoy the accolades given to us by other people as we pursue our goals, and we enjoy the God-given gift of competing and the challenges it provides, whether it is against another athletes or against ourselves.

As one who has exercised all my life, it would be easy to assume that exercising would come easy for me, mainly because of being around it all the time, and because of understanding its merits. To a certain extent this is true; but, like others, rote activity doesn't always create compliance. The times that were the most difficult to maintain a routine of daily or weekly exercise were the times when competition or challenges were limited and the goals I strived to reach were not there. And even as one whose profession promoted exercise, it took a while before I realized that it wasn't until the times that I plugged into various forms of competition that I moved up the fitness ladder.

Reaching the middle 50's, many of the forms of competition that I enjoyed and that motivated me to maintain a healthy, fit lifestyle were not available. Plugging into the Iowa Senior Games served as a catalyst for me to continue a high level of activity and exercise as I looked forward to competing against

athletes in my age group - yes, to win -- but also to have fun and enjoy the competition.

My goal for exercise and fitness, at the present time is to become a National Champion in cycling. I am not a former cyclist re-living my younger athleticism. I am a current cyclist because five years ago I found out how cycling would enhance my fitness level without the pressure and pain on my body that was being created by other forms of exercising. I am a current cyclist not so much because I understand the value of the exercise it provides, but because somebody told me about the cycling races at the Iowa Senior Games and competing in them stirred a latent desire in me for the thrill, excitement, and fun of competition.

To reach my goal of being a National Champion I will have to exercise almost daily. I will have to push my body to become more flexible. I will have to maintain good muscle-to-fat ratio. I will have to train my muscles to extend their stamina levels and their ability to contract longer and more efficiently, and I will have to push my cardiovascular system to reach and sustain levels close to maximum for the duration of the races. In short, I will need to do the things that will provide me with a healthier body.

But without the goals of succeeding in competition that is provided by the National Senior Games, this level of exercising and of reaching this level of fitness, or any increased level of fitness, for seniors would be almost impossible. Even for a person like myself who has spent a lifetime working with young people and adults in improving health, exercise and fitness, competition is vital.

As a former Clydesdale, who now believes he can compete with the thoroughbreds, I applaud the Senior Games organizations on the state level and especially the National Senior Games Association for providing outstanding athletic competition in a multitude of sporting events. And I thank them for providing a motivational outlet for thousands of seniors, enabling us to reach a pinnacle of health and fitness.

I hope you all have a chance to attend and feel the enthusiasm and excitement that has been created (all across this nation) by the 1999 National Senior Games in Orlando.