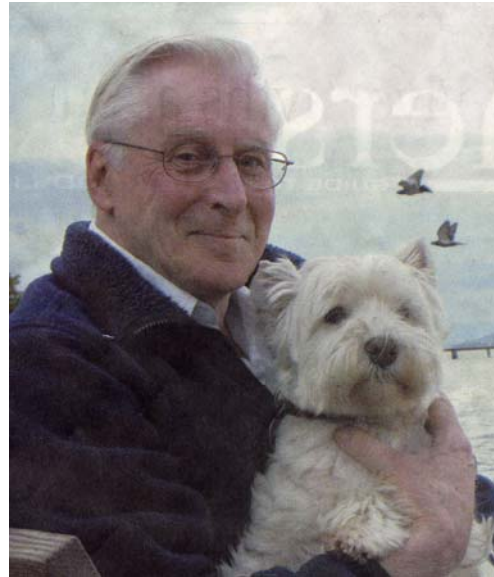


“ Fitness Program Boosts Confidence in Seniors “

The Vancouver Sun -- page E2— May 25/05

A family history of heart problems and a bout of angina finally convinced retired physician Alan Grant that it was time to get active. Through a lucky coincidence a flyer arrived in the letterbox offering the solution he was looking for.

The UBC School of Human Kinetics was hosting an open house at its Changing Aging fitness facility. An instructor-led, machine-based exercise system, Changing Aging is taught by carefully selected UBC students who have received specialized training from experts in exercise physiology for older adults. Participants range in age from 50 to 80 plus and attend classes on campus three times a week in a specially designed fitness facility.



Medically approved exercise machines mean load settings can be electronically adjusted without interruption and, more importantly, without heavy lifting or awkward movements that can be difficult for older adults. Some of the machines such as the recumbent bikes, are designed to minimize strain to the lower back, an important feature for those with impaired mobility or osteoporosis. Each program has three components: aerobic exercise, strength training and stretching.

Grant joined the program five and a half years ago and at 71 he says he feels as strong as he did when he was 40. Initially, he admits he was not overly pleased to be there. "I went there under duress and felt the trainers were pushing us to do more than we were capable of." "But in three months or less I was challenging myself and much to My surprise I enjoyed it."

Participants in the program are given a thorough fitness assessment and then matched with a personal trainer. Individual programs are designed to provide prevention of the common problems of aging: osteoporosis, falls, cardiovascular disease, dependent living. The personal trainers are all certified to prescribe fitness programs and take extensive training on the contraindications of clinical conditions. The exercises prescribed are very similar to those given to athletes, but are toned down to the individual's abilities. As participants reach higher levels of fitness, programs are reassessed and updated accordingly.

Grant says the confidence that comes with getting fit is a major bonus. "I realized that aging is not a big disaster after all," he says. "This program breaks the mindset that you're weak and vulnerable, you don't feel like a frail old person who's afraid to step off the curb." He says the social aspect of the program is also a benefit. It's an opportunity

to meet optimistic like-minded people. "We have a lot of fun," says Grant. "There is a real sense of community. We get together for coffee after class and have philosophical discussions. But if it's not funny we're not interested." He says the classmates also keep an eye out for one another. "If someone misses a class without a note we give them a hard time. But if they are ill we visit with soup or casseroles."

For more information about the UBC Changing Aging program or the UBC BodyWorks Fitness Centre which are both open to the public please contact the:

**UBC School of Human Kinetics Fitness Centre and Changing Aging Program
604-822-0207**

or

visit the website at www.hkin.educ.ubc.ca