

Wellness@BCTF

September 2010



Snapshot from the edge Escape from Alcatraz

By Rob Taylor

**4:00 a.m., May 2, 2010,
San Francisco**

After two hours of not sleeping I quietly get out of bed and start to walk through my race gear for the 15th time. Planning is crucial: at 8:00 a.m. I'll be jumping off the San Francisco Belle into the 9-degree waters of San Francisco Bay in the Escape From Alcatraz Triathlon.

Wetsuit, goggles, two swim caps, shorts, jersey, bib number... check.

The Escape was my strange idea of a 50th birthday present. I wanted to do something significant, and the tri caught my attention.

Runners, towel, water bottle for the first transition... check.

I started running the year I turned 40. My youngest son was four and I discovered after years of relative inactivity and too much good food that I could barely keep up with him. One of my colleagues suggested a teachers' team for our annual 20 km relay. I said sure, not realizing what I was doing. The first 6 weeks of training were horrible.

Bike, helmet, gloves, socks, towel, gel, water, water bottles, biking shoes: second transition, ready.

That year, I completed the 5k in 38 minutes, thrilled to finish. The next year I did the whole 20 km. In 2006, I ran the Vancouver marathon and joined the one in a thousand club and wear that "Finisher" t-shirt proudly.

Runners, for the final transition... check. It was ready, but was I?

The Escape from Alcatraz is just that. Participants leap 2.5 m from the San Francisco Belle's lowest deck as she sits off the infamous Alcatraz Penitentiary and head for shore. The swim is daunting. The currents are so strong that you end up nearly 5k away from where you expect. 100 kayaks dot the surface of the water urging the swimmers to go left, or risk a quick trip under Golden Gate Bridge and on to Japan. Luckily the water is dead calm, with the sun shining through the plumes of spray from a coast guard fireboat that follows behind us so the spectators on shore can monitor our progress.

The swim ends with a hurried stripping of wetsuits on shore, donning runners for a 1 km run to our bikes. The ride is uneventful, but beautiful, out along the ocean through Golden Gate Park and back. It's hilly and technical.

The 13k run is incredible. We duck through a civil war tunnel that is less than a metre high at one end, climb 200 stairs to an old gun emplacement and then head out along the cliffs to Baker Beach. We descend quickly, running the length of the beach with 4-metre waves crashing alongside us. We reach the turnaround at the end of the beach and face the final challenge, the Sand Ladder, a 400 stair climb. The participant email said most athletes "drag themselves up by the wire hand rails." It wasn't that tough. I pass 60 or more runners on the ladder feeling great.

The run to the finish was awesome. I could hear the announcer and looked into the crowd, hoping to see my family who have supported me all along. I see the timing clock above the finish line. I had hoped to finish in about 4 hours. I gave a final push coming in at 3:23:57. Not bad for an old guy!

BCTF staff participate in a broad range of healthy activities, from volunteering in the community, playing a musical instrument, gardening, or challenging yourself in the gym. What do you do for personal well-being? We'd like to feature your experiences in future newsletters. Contact wellness@bctf.ca if you are interested.

Personal wellness inventory

Fall fitness anyone?

By James Chamberlain

So autumn is just around the corner, and signs of activity are everywhere. Staff participated in the Sun Run, Vancouver Marathon, Bike to Work Week and their lunch hour walks just to name a few events. Yay team!!!

Me? I struggle to go the gym three times a week at 6 a.m. I'd hibernated for the winter months. Initially, when I returned to the gym I felt like a 98-pound weakling again. (Shades of elementary school returned as a geeky, unathletic child) I paid for my lethargy as well as the non-stop supply of gummy bears and other sweets outside my office door. What can I say, I have no willpower!

So enough about me.....what are your plans for fall fitness? Do you exercise, play sports, run, hike, walk at lunch, do yoga or some other endeavour? Despite the struggle it may be to make time in our lives for some form of exercise, the benefits are well worth it. Check out the cool links on page 4 on office exercises to keep you moving and fit.

So get out there and have some fun!

Exercise

Some statistics regarding exercise & performance:

- 47.5 % in reduction in absenteeism for participants in corporate fitness programs, including 14% fewer disability days.
- Physically fit workers commit 27% fewer errors on tasks involving concentration and short-term memory as compared to unfit workers.
- Executives who worked out regularly over a 9-month period showed a 70% improvement in their ability to make complex decisions as compared with non-exercisers.
- 47% of participants in fitness programs were shown to be more alert, enjoyed work more, and had better rapport with co-workers.
- Corporations consistently report between \$3 and \$6 return for every \$1 invested in corporate fitness programs.
- You will definitely feel better and very possibly live longer!

(Recent studies show that those who exercise regularly have a biological age of up to 9 years younger than those who don't, as well as lower rates of heart disease, diabetes and cancer.)

- 1) I do a minimum of 20-30 minutes of continuous exercise, 3-5 days a week, at 60-85% of my maximum heart rate.
(check one) No _____ Yes _____
- 2) I do some of kind of strengthening exercise 2-3 days per week (weights, yoga, Pilates).
No _____ Yes _____
- 3) My body feels flexible and free of stiffness or achiness.
almost never *almost always*
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- 4) I give my body the optimal exercise it needs for me to feel good, energetic and strong.
almost never *almost always*
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
- 5) I have a positive relationship to exercise.
almost never *almost always*
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your body is the only place you have to live.

Low scores are a sign that your body is not receiving proper care.

If we don't change the oil and take care of the basic needs of our car, breakdowns will inevitably happen.

We can't afford to look at exercise as a luxury that we do if we have time.

What do you see as you look at your scores in this section?

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Snapshot from the edge Slow food cycle Sunday in Pemberton

August 15th, 2010

By Jenny Rasmussen

I first read about this event in a magazine a few years ago. The event web site referred to the “Sea to Sky’s signature agritourism event” as “a sensory smorgasbord.” Riding bikes through country roads with stops to sample local growers produce sounded like a good idea to me. This year we decided to check it out.

We waited anxiously after hearing of the slide in the area until organizers posted an update on their web site that reported ‘the event is a go’; good news for all residents for sure. The wait was well worth it. A few others thought so too... this year there were 3000 riders! All kinds of pedal power out there... road bikes, mountain bikes, coaster-type bikes, tiny kids bikes—some stored on the back of bike trailers, even a chopper style with big handlebars. This well-organized event attracts all ages and capabilities, a real family friendly atmosphere. The Pemberton Valley, with its wide open meadows against a backdrop of the mountains, offers flat country roads to cycle at a leisurely pace. “Participant” signs invite riders to stop and purchase some of their produce, baked goods or enjoy some live music with local artisan’s creations for sale as well.

This year with record temperatures (30+C) cycling provided a much appreciated breeze. From the first farm there was plenty of opportunity to keep your energy replenished; starting with organic coffee and assorted baked scones, muffins, lemonade and apple cider to the end of the route where a local restaurant was set up to cater the event. All the food and beverages were reasonably priced. We shared a plate of beef on a bun with the best fries including water



or iced tea for \$10.00 and a wonderful mixed greens salad with beets, feta cheese, couscous and toasted pumpkin seeds for \$5.00 (all made using local ingredients). All very yummy and more than enough to keep us satisfied for the return trip.

On the way back we decided it was worth the 3km ride off the main road to check out another part of the route as there was one participant out that way we didn’t want to miss. We purchased some wildflower honey as well as the best cookies I have ever eaten. This farm also sold alpaca wool and knitted garments. We stopped to enjoy the very cute recently-shorn alpacas with their woolly heads and feet before we headed back over the Lillooet River to the main road. At a nice easy pace with stops at as many participants as we could see, we took 5 to 6 hours (including the stop for lunch) to complete the ride for the day which was around 50km.

Things you may need to pack are: some kind of bag, backpack, crate, or panniers to carry your purchases like potatoes and other root vegetables, fresh baked goodies, beeswax candles, crafts. Remember to bring cash, not cards. If you are lucky enough to have the weather we did, make sure you also pack lots of water and sunscreen.

If you are looking for a great way to spend a Sunday in August and you enjoy good local food, mark your calendars for August 21, 2011 next year. I know we will!

Check out the website at www.slowfoodcyclesunday.com for more information.

10 good reasons for making exercise a part of your day

Prepared by Margaret White

There is growing medical evidence that exercise can improve our quality of life, reduce the risk of many diseases and help manage health conditions. Research shows that regular physical activity helps to:

- Improve mood and sense of well-being
- Control body weight
- Boost energy
- Promote better sleep
- Control high blood pressure
- Lower the risk of heart disease
- Reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes
- Strengthen bones, delaying or preventing bone loss
- Manage chronic diseases such as arthritis and osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of some types of cancer

References:

Mayo Clinic staff. *Exercise: 7 benefits of regular physical activity* (www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise/hq01676).

Strength training: Get stronger, leaner, healthier. (www.mayoclinic.com/health/strength-training/HQ01710).

UB Berkeley Wellness Letter.com. Taking Exercise in Stride-For: Walking for Goodness Sake, March 2004 (http://wellnessletter.com/subCorner/RA2001/RA2004/scRA0304_03.php).

Resources for starting and maintaining a fitness program:

The *UB Berkeley Wellness Letter* web-site includes several articles on a range of physical activities, including

- 1) Twenty-three Tips for the Best Cycling,
- 2) A Dozen Ways to Improve Your Walking Work-outs,
- 3) Do-It-Yourself Home Gym,
- 4) Building Muscle and Bone—At Home, On Your Own,
- 5) The Home Stretch, and
- 6) Getting Fit

<http://wellnessletter.com/html/fw/fwFitness.html>

The *Mayo Clinic* web-site has a wealth of resources on physical fitness including slide presentations and articles on integrating exercise into the work day. Scroll to end of the feature article for a full menu of on-line resources:

www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise/hq01676

Two resources of interest for those working in an office are:
Office exercise: How to burn calories at work

www.mayoclinic.com/health/office-exercise/SM00115 and

Stress management and fitness strategies including a slide show presentation on integrating stretching into an office routine:

www.mayoclinic.com/health/burnout/WL00062

De-cluttering workshop 101 things to do with your stuff

The workshop presenters mentioned a GVRD publication: *101 Things to do with all your stuff: Buy It, Sell It, Reuse It, Donate it.*

Here is the link to the publication for those who are interested:

www.metrovancouver.org/about/publications/Publications/101Things.pdf

—Margaret White

Myehealth.ca

If you have had medical lab tests done in the last ten days, you can access your results through this website: myehealth.ca

This is a free service for BC residents. You must register and log in to view your lab results.

—Joel Siverson

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The contents of this newsletter are intended to encourage better health decisions, not to provide medical advice. Please consult a qualified health professional before embarking on any new diet or exercise regime.

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