

Sydney Meadows, 65, rounds
10-mile track as pal clocks him.



Run for Your Life!

Stricken by heart attacks, these
businessmen slipped into
track shoes instead of rockers;
you, too, can attain better health
by following their example

By CHARLES CURTIS

SYD MEADOWS was celebrating his 65th birthday. His heart was scarred by what doctors called a complete left bundle branch block, a left axis deviation, and an anterior myocardial infarct. In short, a heart attack.

He balanced his old legs astride the starting line of the running track in Cleveland's Central YMCA. He had made a proud and possibly foolish birthday claim, promising to run ten miles without stopping. A skeptical crowd had come to watch.

Bill Cumler's gun exploded and Meadows was off running barefooted, a pacemaking companion at his

elbow. As he whirled into the first turn, the crowd watched with open mouths. This was no ancient eccentric about to commit suicide but a powerful man in fine physical shape. As the laps fell behind, Cumler heard a remark: "That guy could drop dead. What's he trying to prove?"

Cumler, physical director of the Y's Businessmen's Club, knew the answer. Meadows was proving that a man's arteries can be rejuvenated and made fit for a vigorous life at almost any age, provided they are free from disease. He would also prove that running was one of the world's easiest, safest, and most pleasant exercises.

FOUR YEARS AGO, Meadows had asked for a check-up. After running in place for 60 seconds, he was near collapse. "What'll I do?" he panted. "Start running," he was told. Cautiously, he was led through gradually toughening grades of running, swimming, and calisthenics. In four months, his pulse had dropped from 98 per minute to 58.

At the seven-mile mark, his pacemaker dropped out, but Grandfather Meadows plowed ahead. After the 243rd lap—ten miles—he trotted to a stop. The "old man" had run the incredible distance in 71 minutes, 11 seconds.

Meadows' feat, which can be matched in large degree by dozens of other Cleveland businessmen, is evidence of a growing understanding on the part of the public as well as medical men of the benefit of vigorous exercise. Dr. Paul Dudley White blazed the trail with his ardent advice to walk or to ride a bicycle as often as possible. Dr. Edward L. Bortz of Lankenau Hospital, Philadelphia, says, "It appears that exercise is the master conditioner for the healthy and the major therapy for the ill."

WILLIAM ROGERS, who runs Cleveland's airports and harbors, is a distinguished example. Now 65, he had his first heart attack in 1935, his second in 1956. Either one could have put him on the shelf for the remainder of his days. When he got out of the hospital, he went to Cumler and told him, "I want to exercise. My doctor says it's okay."

At this time, five years ago, Cumler was feeling his way. His new program was just taking hold, modeled on the research of Dr. Thomas Kirk Cureton, director of the Physical Fitness Research Laboratory at the University of Illinois. Its "secret" was a technique called progressive overloading. On a supervised basis, a man was encouraged to work just a bit beyond comfort every day, resulting ultimately in a tremendous increase in endurance. The working-up process could take up to six months—and in the case of a heart-attack victim, up to two years.

But Rogers was a prominent citizen and a two-time loser to heart disease. Was it safe? Cumler recalled a medical-journal account of sitters and walkers among the heart patients of a sanatorium. The walkers were permitted to climb a hill every day, and at the year's end they had suffered 70 percent fewer casualties than the sitters.

Before he allowed Rogers to enroll, they had it out. "This can cost you your life, but if you'll do it gradually and quit when I say, we'll try it," he said. They started work in the pool. Rogers walked its width once. Cumler ordered, "Out!"

"You're kidding," Rogers protested.

"Out!" Cumler said, and made it stick.

On his second visit, he was allowed to walk across and back through the water. On his third, he swam a single width. A gradual increase of work load is the essence of Bill Cumler's reconditioning method, and tests are taken before and after each session for blood pressure and pulse.

If you were in Miami last winter, you might have seen a lovely lady hiking swiftly along the beach for block after block while, offshore, a powerful swimmer paced her through a fast half-mile. They were Mr. and Mrs. William Rogers (who doesn't swim), enjoying their favorite sport.

Today, white-haired Bill Cumler is Cleveland's high priest of fitness. A few years ago, he was an overweight, jittery ex-YMCA secretary newly assigned to the Y's anemic Businessmen's Club. Now, club membership is more than 450. Swimmers pursue a scientific program, and two dozen times a week the most rugged company of businessmen in America gather for 45 minutes of hard, nonstop calisthenics, wind and weight work.

FOR YEARS, medical men have debated the value of exercise, plagued by a lack of research on human beings. When Dr. Herman Hellerstein of the Cardiovascular Research Department, Western Reserve University Medical School, heard of the Cleveland Y's program, he led a team of physicians and students to examine Bill Rogers and 17 other cardiacs who were exercising regularly. After a study of his findings, he said recently, "This is the shape of things to come. The Y should magnify its program tenfold."

The lesson is clear. You must walk (or swim) before you can run. But first consult your family doctor. If he approves, walk one block vigorously each day for a week. Add an extra block each week. When you can walk a mile without tiring—and if your doctor consents—you can begin jogging. Try 100 paces the first week, and build up gradually. After a while, if evidence of Bill Cumler's classes at the Cleveland Y is typical, you will discover that the springs of eternal youth are in your own body.

Run—if Your Doctor Says So

Ask your doctor for a health survey, review of your medical history, and laboratory tests. Ask him about an exercise program. He may recommend the individualized courses available at many YMCA's or other facilities. Or he may say, "Start walking, but work up slowly." Whatever you do, don't rush any exercise—and don't disregard your doctor's advice.

—Harold D. Morris, M.D., Consulting Physician
Central YMCA, Cleveland, Ohio

COVER:

As Homer Hill's painting indicates, autumn means back to school and football thrills, hunting and "trick or treat," turkey dinner and falling leaves. Cover is third in current series depicting the four seasons.

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