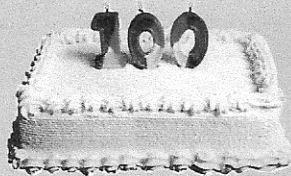


Living to 100

By Dr. Tyson Swigart



On April 13th, 2008, 101 year-old, Buster Martin of the United Kingdom, attempted to become the oldest person in history to complete a marathon. This extraordinary individual has become a celebrity in the United Kingdom due to his vibrant personality and amazing longevity. The father of 17 children, he returned to work at the age of 99 due to "boredom" and once went 80 years of work without taking a sick day. At the age of 100, he made the news fighting off 3 assailants utilizing kung fu kicks. When asked, Buster Martin attributes some of his longevity to his continuing to remain active and stimulated. Mr. Martin is a former fitness instructor and martial arts student. Despite being a daily drinker and smoker, he has maintained a healthy weight thru moderation. He has had numerous career changes and remained mentally challenged throughout his life. Mr. Martin is a living example that the secret of longevity is a combination of nurturing not just the body, but challenging the mind as well.

Three common traits exist in almost all centenarians.

1.) 100 year-old individuals are not overweight. Recent research has strongly linked low calorie, high protein diets to improved longevity. The latest demographic epidemiologic evidence shows that Japan has the highest percentage of centenarians. There are 28,000 people in Japan that are 100 years-old or older. Not coincidentally, the typical Japanese diet is lower in calories and higher in lean protein consumption. Japanese obesity rates are among the lowest in the world.

2.) 100 year-old individuals have a history of exercise. Exercise is preventative and/or therapeutic for medical conditions ranging from heart disease to back pain. Exercise also supports the immune system and prevents depression. Individuals with a history of exercise are less likely to develop osteoporosis. It is no coincidence that nearly all centenarians have a long history of regular physical activity.

3.) 100 year-old individuals are mentally stimulated. A high percentage of 100 year-old individuals maintain full or part-time jobs. Buster Martin returned to work at the age of 99 in order to keep his mind stimulated. This type of story is common among the very old. Work provides a sense of purpose and allows for interaction with younger individuals. In addition, research is showing that the brain, like muscle, declines quickly when it doesn't receive stimulation.

Studying the common characteristics of the very old demonstrates that longevity is much more than luck and good genetics. As our understanding of aging continues to grow, the percentage of individuals who will live to advanced ages will increase steadily. The key is nurturing both the mind and body throughout the entire lifetime.

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