

“You can have two men who are 6'0" and weigh 200 pounds...”

by Brent Jang

"Don't laugh," said Dru Marshall. Dru was measuring my body fat and I was sucking in my stomach. She noticed. Besides, calipers aren't easily fooled. The caliper did the splits and Dru recorded the instrument's impersonal reading: 17.4 mm. Dru smiled. I wasn't sure to take this as a good sign or if she was ready to tell me a joke. "Relax," she said.

Dru works at the U of A Fitness Unit, and for a \$35 fee, she'll run a series of tests to tell you what kind of shape you're in.

The first test checked how much of my total weight was fat. Caliper measurements were taken at the biceps, triceps, behind the back, and at the waist.

These skinfold measurements give a fairly accurate description of total body fat. In my case, about 18 per cent of my total weight was body fat.

That test was easy. All you have to do is stand up, relax, and try not to suck in your stomach.

The bicycling test, which tells you how hard your heart is pumping, was next.

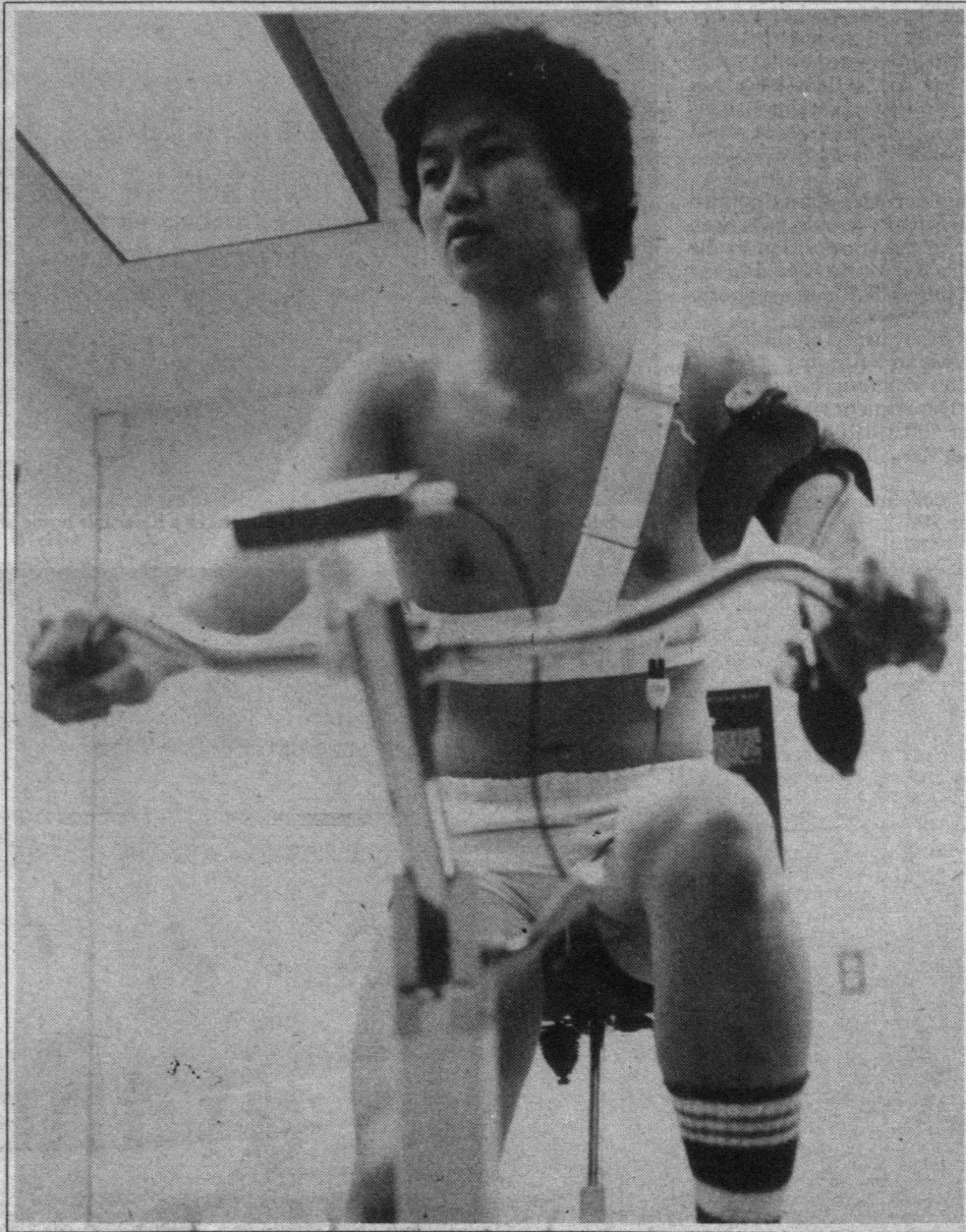
Dru hooked up a couple wires and I was off. While pedaling, she checked my blood pressure: 128 over 86. Normal.

If you're not aware of what these numbers mean, a booklet by the Fitness Unit is helpful.

The top number is heart muscle contraction (systolic) and the bottom number is heart muscle relaxation (diastolic). A normal systolic range at rest is between 100 and 145 mm. Hg. A normal diastolic range is between 60 and 90. Isn't being normal wonderful?

Typical Canadian male Brent Jang ponders his fitness.

Photo by Ray Giguere



At the end of eight minutes of bicycling, my heart rate was 156 beats a minute. I was out of shape. Bad news.

No more Hennessey Cognac, no more evenings of fresh strawberries with Dom Perignon Champagne, no more Budweiser by the case. (Alcohol is fattening.)

No more hoarding the cheese and cracker plate. (Snacking is fattening.)

It took about five minutes for my heart rate to drop back to normal. My colleague Jim Miller took about two minutes.

The bicycling test showed my cardio-respiratory was in need of an overhaul.

At the point of exhaustion, "oxygen can't be transported by the blood to the muscles fast enough to provide energy for exercise," says the Fitness booklet.

I did a bit better on the remaining tests. In push-ups, I was above the national average; in grip strength, I was below the average. I scored average in flexibility and scored average in sit-ups, despite running out of sit-ups after 45 seconds. (I had a feeling I was going too fast.)

Once the tests were finished, Dru sat down with Jim and myself. She gave us a computer print-out and a booklet to take home.

She recommended that I work out for twenty minutes per day, four days a week, at various activities. During that twenty minute period, I would keep my heart rate at between 149 beats and 179 beats per minute.

Once the sweating is over, then a cool glass of orange juice usually beckons.

And if things go according to plan, then a warm glass of cognac is just around the corner.

...One man is an athlete while the other is a typical Canadian male.”

by Jim Miller

The recent measurement of my physical condition through the U of A's Fitness Assessment program held few surprises for me. But I still feel it was worth the time and effort. There's nothing quite like having your bodily sins in black and white to instill a 'healthy' fear in you.

The assessment measures four components of physical fitness; your potential for death in the 12 most popular ways for your age group and then presents your results to you as palatably as possible. Palatably means comparing you to other Canadians. A result booklet given you compares two people. "One man is an athlete while the other is a typical Canadian male," it says. How reassuring.

Cardio-respiratory fitness is by far the most important parameter measured. This test is given on an exercise bicycle equipped to measure heart rate. By placing the individual under a particular load it is possible to approximate maximal capabilities. In this area I rated very high even though I do not exercise regularly. The examiner's explanation was that I must be doing something to my cardio-respiratory system that I am unaware of. I find this hard to believe since any improvement in cardio-respiratory fitness supposedly involves bringing the heart rate to exercise rate (max. 200 minus your age) for 20 minutes at a time. My explanation is that I have practised Transcendental Meditation for 10 years which has been shown to have positive effects on body physiology.

In the per cent body fat and composition test which involves clamping your skin in three locations with a cold metal micrometer the icy hand showed no mercy. I proved to be average and only 2 per cent away from being above average. But since the solution to this sad state would mean eating less or cutting back on beer consumption with the Gateway staff I have the feeling this could remain, for me, one of life's unsolved problems.

My muscular strength and endurance proved to be 'good'. Incidentally these terms are all relative and are made by comparing your results with other Canadians of your age. 'Average' is when you score what the top 30 per cent of your age bracket scored. Good is the top 20 per cent etc. Muscular strength is gauged on grip strength; number of set ups in 60 seconds and total number of push ups.

Flexibility turned out to be my major shortcoming. This ability is determined very simply by sitting legs out and measuring the distance of forward stretch with the arms. My percentage score in this area was embarrassingly low. Suffice it to say that I was 'below average'. I had always thought of flexibility as having to do with the 'mobility' of the joint and was quite surprised to find it was actually more concerned with muscle stretching. Well there goes the job as ambassador to Japan. All that bowing would kill me.

The 'dozen ways to die' analysis is based on a questionnaire of your lifetime habits. It then compares these habits with applicable ways to die. In this area it was found I could improve my life expectancy by using my seatbelt and getting regular exercise.

After the testing is completed, a counselling session is given where the results are analyzed and basic recommendations given.

As I said earlier I found the experience beneficial and feel it is generally worth the \$35 fee. At this point a follow-up program is not available, but, response to the assessment program has been so great, something may be arranged in the future.

For more information on the program or for an appointment call Dru Marshall at 432-4435.

DINWOODIE

2nd Floor SUB.

Thursday, November 18  
"HONKY TONK HEROES"  
Sponsored by U of A Rodeo Club

Friday, November 19  
PRETTY ROUGH  
Sponsored by U of A Mineral Engineering

Friday, November 26  
THE MODS  
with Special Guests The Thieves  
Sponsored by U of A Rowing Club

Tickets are available from the SUB Box-Office (2nd Floor, SUB) and various club members.

Note: These events are open only to U of A students, staff, and guests. Absolutely no minors admitted!

LINE!  
NOVEMBER