

## New fashion school in Toronto

A Chicago-based academy of fashion merchandising and design, as well as interior design, plans to open a campus this September in Toronto, reports the *Canadian Press*.

The academy, an affiliate of The Academy, Chicago, will offer students a two-year diploma program. Former Canadian world figure-skating champion Barbara Ann Scott has been named chancellor of the Toronto campus.

Registered and approved as a private vocational school under the Private Vocational Schools Act, The Academy in Toronto will be headed by president Jori Kadlec, former dean of the school of fashion arts at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario.

Unlike most colleges, The Academy's faculty is expected to comprise leading professionals currently active in fields of fashion design, merchandising and interior design.

Admission requirements for the two-year course include a Grade 12 diploma or secondary school graduation diploma or mature student status (age 19) plus demonstrated skills or interest in the general subject area offered by the college. Applicants must also pass a personal interview.

Annual fees excluding supplies and tax will be \$3 500 for three ten-week terms. Students must provide their own accommodation and personal expenses.

There are approximately 15 community colleges in Canada offering fashion design and merchandising courses. The new college will accommodate 150 students in the first year and eventually will have a capacity of 400.

## Fitness doctor still going strong

Dr. Thomas Kirk Cureton, 81, gets more exercise in one day than many North Americans manage in a week, reports the *Canadian Press*.

That is only fitting for a man who helped eliminate a lot of flab since he wrote a book on exercise published in 1941.

Since 1936, Dr. Cureton has written almost 1 000 articles and more than 56 books, including *Physical Fitness* and *Dynamic Health*.

Dr. Cureton, who lives in Winnipeg, practices what he preaches — running, swimming and cycling an average of

about 30 kilometres a day. He has won virtually every swimming and track and field event he has entered in the Senior Olympics in the United States.

When not competing or training, he edits a physical fitness encyclopedia. Dr. Cureton has conducted more than 600 clinics on physical fitness and has lectured in 70 countries.

"I'm still going very hard, but I'm not the only older person who's still exercising hard. There are hundreds like me."

### Strenuous activities

Perhaps, but his own program is a little more strenuous than the one he recommends for the middle-aged.

He generally starts the morning with a walk of 3 to 4 kilometres, accompanied by his wife, Portia, a youthful 65.

He spends the rest of the morning working, then breaks to walk and jog, following that with a few warmup exercises and a swim. Later in the afternoon, he will cycle 15 to 20 kilometres and go for another swim.

For 25 years, Dr. Cureton directed the physical fitness research laboratory at the University of Illinois, where he is professor emeritus and director of the university's physical fitness institute.

## Voice-controlled wheelchair

A new wheelchair operated by the sound of the voice could offer new mobility and independence to quadriplegics who cannot manage the stick controls on the standard electric wheelchairs.

A standard electric model coupled with a computer, the wheelchair is controlled solely by voice commands and requires no body movement whatsoever.

The voice-operated wheelchair was developed by Haleh Vafaie, a fourth-year student in the systems and computer engineering department at Carleton University, Ottawa.

The 21-year-old Iranian said she chose the project because "I always wanted to help people, so this is my way of doing that."

Vafaie has worked on the chair since last fall, programming the computer to recognize voice commands and change them into signals that control the chair.

The chair responds to seven commands — left and right (forward turns), east (backward turn to the right), turn (backward turn to the left), forward, back and stop — in each of three speeds, precaution, slow and normal.



Haleh Vafaie (left) and Archie Bowen (right) with wheelchair victim, Bob Brown, in voice-controlled wheelchair.

"Listen" prepares it for a command, and "relax" tells it to ignore any voice sounds.

Vafaie said it is important to have the relax command because "the person in the chair may stop to talk to someone and say 'I left my books at home'. If the computer is in the listen mode, the chair may start moving left".

The computer can be programmed to recognize any sound in any language. Because it recognizes a sound's frequency, it must be re-programmed for each person's voice.

Vafaie's supervisor, Archie Bowen, said the voice-controlled wheelchair "brings together a range of technologies already in existence".

The voice recognition unit inside the computer is an electronic board about the size of a sheet of letter paper. It has a 100-word vocabulary and is available only in the US.

A video terminal was donated by Digital Equipment of Canada Limited in Kanata and was booked into the university's computer. The cost so far has been about \$2 000, including about \$1 200 (US) for the voice recognition unit. The wheelchair costs about \$4 000 new.

Bowen, 53, said he expects the next step, combining the computer and voice recognition unit onto one prototype electronic board on the back of the wheelchair, to cost \$5 000.

Bowen said he doesn't know if there is a commercial market for a voice-operated wheelchair, but said manufacturing costs would depend on volume.