

□ PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WHILE ON POST □

Michel Careau is currently Director of International Affairs at Health and Welfare Canada. From 1967 to 1981 he was a foreign service officer and was posted in the Dominican Republic, Colombia and Washington. He is a top-ranking super-marathoner who has represented Canada in several international racing competitions.

In the past two years, he twice finished in second place (in 1985 and 1987) in the Five-Day Race in New York, which he won in 1986 by running 413 miles and 367 yards.

In June 1987, again in New York, Michel Careau finished second in the 1 300-Mile Race which ranked him second in the world for the longest certified race ever organized.

If there is one life-style that demands the undivided attention of its adherents, it is that of the public servant abroad, whether as diplomat, spouse or member of the administrative staff. To be convinced of this, you need only have lived a few years on post and experienced this life, which is an endless round of official and private receptions, cocktail parties, dinners and business luncheons, where the drinks often flow freely. Along with being separated from family, you have to continually adapt to new colleagues, integrate into cultural environments different from your own, learn a new language, when necessary, and lastly, accept an often politically and socially unstable environment. All just so many stress factors.

What to do?

You do not have to be an expert to realize that for most people working for External Affairs, physical activity will be a safety valve. If the saying that fit employees make a fit enterprise is to have any credibility, one can easily paraphrase and say that fit employees make a fit Canadian foreign service. The sound mind in a sound body of times past still has currency in 1988.

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Eating, drinking, breathing their own or someone else's nicotine, working long hours often under pressure are forcing human beings to find an escape hatch in order to bring stability to their lives. Regular physical activity can contribute to this stability. The rest is only a matter of choice, taste and availability.

Which sport to take up?

There are numerous physical activities that foreign service officers and their families can engage in. Some are less strenuous, i.e. they demand less energy to be expended than others and may, it seems, entail few risks (it is said that the nineteenth hole in golf may, in a few minutes, undo all the good derived from the first eighteen!) Other sports, while being physically quite strenuous at times, such as singles tennis, require equally strong partners and special indoor or outdoor facilities, which are unavailable at some locations. Cycling, which you can do on your own, is certainly an active sport. A foreign service employee abroad will find it almost unfeasible at certain posts because they do not have the infrastructures to ensure that it is a safe sport; the risks of riding a bicycle off reserved roads, as in the Scandinavian countries, or on bicycle paths are much too great. Swimming, which you can enjoy almost anywhere in any season, is certainly a very worthwhile activity provided, however, that you know how to swim and can motivate yourself to swim laps of the pool for hours with no change in scenery!

Walking, jogging and running

Walking, jogging and running are activities where you can burn off a great many calories (see the table hereunder); yet they can be enjoyed at any time, almost anywhere, either individually or in a group, and without a lot of equipment (proper footwear and clothing to suit the weather). Walking, at a more or less fast pace ranging from four to eight kilometres an hour, can be the preferred activity of young and old alike. In fact, one of the advantages of