

Philosophy

Physical Readiness for Homeland Security and National Defense:

The Iowa connection

by
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Volens et Potens

Thousands of highly fit and physically prepared military personnel and first responders stand ready and able to defend our homeland, but a growing number are physically unprepared. The widely publicized devolution of our national physical culture is as apparent in our military, law enforcement and public safety communities as it is in our schools.

Numerous government leaders including Senator Tom Harkin (Lillis, 2005) have spoken publicly about the link between declining physical readiness and national security. "Increased weight problems among military personnel are yet another example of the staggering impact that the obesity epidemic has on our nation," he said. "It is clear that the obesity epidemic doesn't discriminate against anyone, and . . . underscores the importance of developing a nationwide plan to combat poor nutrition and promote physical activity."

The military has three physical readiness training delivery systems. Doctrine is developed and disseminated through published manuals, which are supported by training and a variety of other media. Recreation based primarily at installation fitness centers provides leisure opportunities to improve physical readiness. Off-duty education offers opportunities for post-secondary studies. Of these three, the last has traditionally been the least employed. Through the efforts of two Iowa universities, the off-duty education option for the study of quality physical readiness training, aimed at those who protect us, has become a reality.

The Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) is a national consortium of over 1,800 colleges and universities that provide educational opportunities for military personnel

and their families. Many of these institutions have campuses on hundreds of our military installations located around the world. In 1994, SOC member Upper Iowa University-Fort Benning pioneered the military's first four-year degree in Fitness Leadership. It received Army-wide recognition for excellence and innovation.



Fort Benning RAMA students studied with
World Class Judoka Nak Jun Kim

More recently, SOC member Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa has created an updated and online Fitness Leadership Bachelor of Arts degree scheduled to launch by 2006. Courses can also be offered onsite. The curriculum was developed over a three-year period with numerous field tests including three pilot courses for the Iowa Army National Guard at Camp Dodge and a recent course for Marine, Navy and Air Force personnel at Corry Station, Florida. Instructors for the Graceland program have been selected from around the country, and the major courses reflect a classical restorative and martial arts (RAMA) emphasis. These courses include:

PHED1200 Motor Learning 2 s.h.
 PHED1210 Tumbling and Balancing 3 s.h.
 PHED1250 Calisthenics I 3 s.h.
 PHED2100 Anatomy and Physiology 4 s.h.
 PHED2110 History of Physical Educ. I 3 s.h.
 PHED2250 Calisthenics II 3 s.h.
 PHED2290 Close Range Martial Arts I 3 s.h.
 PHED2300 Medium Range Martial Arts I 3 s.h.
 PHED3110 History of Physical Educ. II 3 s.h.
 PHED3280 The Foundations of Physical Education 3 s.h.
 PHED3290 Close Range Martial Arts II 3 s.h.
 PHED3300 Medium Range Martial Arts II 3 s.h.
 PHED3490 Test and Measurement 3 s.h.
 PHED4100 Tactical Aquatics 3 s.h.
 PHED4120 Speed, Agility, and Endurance 3 s.h.
 PHED4340 Body Mechanics and Applied Kinesiology 3 s.h.
 PHED4901 Topics in Fitness Leadership 3 s.h.



Functional fitness was the foundation of the IARNG courses



IARNG soldiers trained with UFC champion Pat Miletich



Marine RAMA students did dumbbell drills on the beach

No doubt thousands of American men who were declared fit for service in World War II lost their lives because of their physical inability to endure the adverse situations into which the exigencies of war plunged them.

Mabel Lee, 1949

Body Mechanics and Conditioning



Juan Carlos Santana worked with
Marines at Corry Station



Corry Station RAMA students training at
historic Fort Barancas

Curriculum Roots

Although rarely employed in our current national physical education paradigm, the RAMA emphasis of the Upper Iowa University and Graceland University programs has quietly endured throughout the recorded history of education in Western civilization. It represents

the philosophical, historical and linguistic high ground of transcultural physical education, and can be traced in recent United States history to the writings of John F. Kennedy and his efforts in the early 1960s to inspire Americans to get fit for service to their nation. Numerous giants in the field of physical education including Mabel Lee and Charles McCloy emphasized the restorative and martial elements of physical education.



Mabel Lee

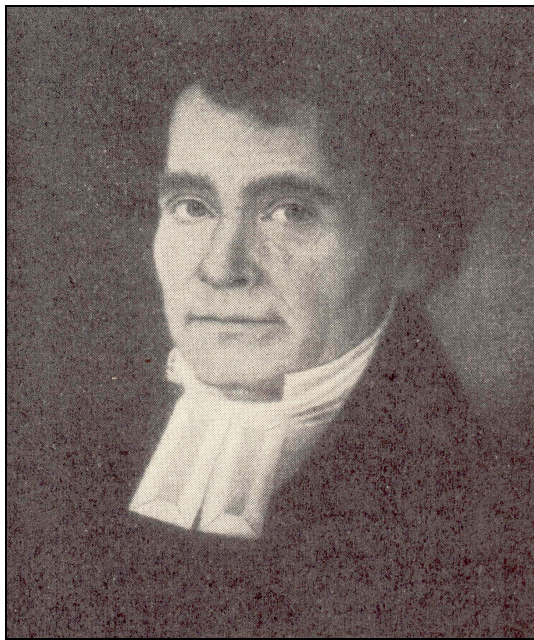


Charles McCloy

Mabel Lee (1949) wrote at length about the importance of including fitness for war in our national physical education paradigm, and McCloy was relentless in calling physical educators to abandon the still familiar activities-based “New Physical Education” of the 1930s and to revisit some of the earlier physical training principles abandoned in around 1920.

Swedish physical education pioneer Andres Otto Lindfors (1781-1841) wrote of the classical RAMA model at the University of Lund in his 1803 dissertation. Guided by the ancient Greek model with minor modifications, Lindfors divided physical education into:

1. orthopedic—to prevent and cure bodily sickness,
2. military—for the purposes of war, and
3. athletic or pedagogical—games, dance, and acrobatics. (Prytz, 1937)



A. O. Lindfors

Activities associated with the first two classifications eventually became known as gymnastics, and the orthopedic component has since morphed into a variety of incarnations tagged with numerous descriptors including

medical, corrective, individual, developmental, pure, applied, therapeutic, fundamental, preventive and many more. The restorative power of rational movement was beautifully articulated by the 18th Century French physician Simon Andre Tissot when he wrote that “Movement as such may replace by its effect any remedy, but all the remedies in the world cannot take the place of the effect of movement.” Military gymnastics include the enormous range of skills required to endure and effectively operate in a hostile environment.



Physical training from
De Arte Gymnastica by Mercurialis

By bringing men’s bodies and minds toward their optimal state of harmony and teaching them to respond appropriately to external aggression, the ancients sought to build

societies both powerful and just. The French philosopher Pascal said of this ideal:

Justice without power is inefficient;
power without justice is tyranny.
Justice without power is opposed,
because there are always wicked men.
Power without justice is soon
questioned. Justice and power
therefore be brought together, so that
whatever is just may be powerful, and
whatever is powerful may be just.

Physical fitness is slowly becoming more prominent in the traditionally sports and games-based universe of physical education, but the shift from cosmetic to functional fitness (Wuest & Bucher 2006) is even more recent. Curriculum reform in mainstream physical education remains sluggish, and physical readiness for homeland and national security has been widely ignored in the physical education profession for several decades.

Over twenty years ago, Don Franks (1984) spoke for mainstream physical educators when he wrote:

Physical conditioning has often been associated with the military preparedness of our nation. Because of the perceived public support for high level military and athletic performance, it has been tempting for professional physical educators to attempt to justify our programs on those bases . . . the military bases for a strong physical education program [are] no longer necessary.” (p. 41)

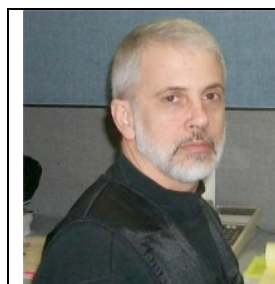
The wise throughout history have often said, “In times of war, prepare for peace. In times of peace, prepare for war.” The common mind and weak of heart have often ignored this wisdom, and have been led to foolishly assume that by avoiding our responsibility to remain

strong and disciplined during times of peace, we will somehow avoid conflict. This of course cannot and does not stand the test of reason, but the notion has been accepted for years. It has left our nation malformed, inert and clumsy, and our enemies are watching.

Over ten years ago, and long before thousands of our men and women were being sent abroad to fight and die, Upper Iowa University conceived of and built a concept of physical education designed for the future. In recent years, Graceland University has reshaped the RAMA concept and added a revolutionary online component that will allow for widespread dissemination of cutting-edge physical readiness training methods and material. Iowans should be proud of these two universities, and we should all be asking what we can do to grow the RAMA concept. The clock is ticking.

References

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