

THE FITNESS TRACK

Fitness enthusiast wants to bring Kennedy's vision to life

By GEORGE THOMAS KATTOUF
For the Mirror

President John F. Kennedy envisioned numerous strategies to strengthen the United States and our position in the world. Ending poverty, traveling to the moon, developing improved relationships with other nations, and avoiding unnecessary wars were just a few of the goals he laid out during his shortened Presidency. A vision Kennedy promulgated, which never came to fruition after his assassination may be a lesser-known ideation. Kennedy wanted the country to be physically fit.

Kennedy said, "A country is as strong as its citizens. Mental and physical health, mental and physical vigor, go hand in hand. I hope that we will not find a day in the United States when all of us are spectators except for a few who are out on the field. I hope when we have seen the astonishing results, which we have seen from our work in a few schools across the country where we have been able in a short space of two or three months to change the physical strength and habits of our children, that this will spread to every school district in the United States."

President Kennedy's template for his national fitness initiative was LaSierra High School, formerly located in Carmichael, California, before closing. In the late fifties, the football coach and athletic director Stan LeProtti developed a systematic approach to fitness that had specific requirements for advancement to a higher ranking. The ability designations were denoted by the color of gym shorts the participant wore. All freshmen wore white with the opportunity to meet criteria for advancement to red level. Higher levels included blue, purple, gold with navy considered the highly coveted level. The expectations for each level are too numerous to list. A student could move from white to red by performing 10 pull ups; blue 14 pull ups; and the highest level, navy, 34 consecutive pull ups. This is just one of a multitude of bench marks that determined progression. Perhaps one of the most challenging requirements to reach navy was to carry a student on your back who was within ten pounds of your weight and walk five miles with them ensuring that the person being carried did not touch the ground.

Ron Jones is determined to ensure that LeProtti classical fitness program and President Kennedy's



Courtesy photos

Ron Jones, 63, uses Indian Clubs, which build mobility and ballistic strength.

vision for a fit America does not become forgotten. The 63-year-old grew up like most children of his generation. He played Little League baseball, was a member of the Cub Scouts and later in his high school career competed as a long distance runner.

"My high school cross-country coach, Stan Ingram, was the first real health and fitness role model that I had. He was a deep track and field guy from Kansas University in the sixties. He was a big,

"People and even my uncle said, 'These kids are going to destroy you.' I ran cross-country and track for two years at the community college. ... I'm racing against guys 18 and set all my PRs (personal records) in college, 15 years after high school."

Ron Jones,
on joining cross-country team in his early 30s

a positive role model for me and generations of kids at my high school," explained Jones, who like so many during that time were influenced by a coach, mentor, or athlete.

After high school, Jones spent 15 years in the construction business. An uncle, who was a physical education teacher, encouraged him to enroll in college. Jones took the advice and enrolled in Bakersfield College. At the time of his enrollment, he was a high level competitive cyclist and continued to run for conditioning.

In his early thirties, he decided to become a member of the cross-country team.

"People and even my uncle said, 'These kids are going to destroy you.' I ran cross-country and track for two years at the community college. I made the second All Conference team and went to state cross-country championships two years in a row. I finished in the top third of my cross-country races. I'm racing against guys 18 and set all my PRs (personal records) in college, 15 years after high school," said Jones.

Jones was an outstanding competitive cyclist. In 1995 and 1996 he and a relay team competed in the Race

Across America. The three-thousand-mile race begins in Los Angeles and ends in Savannah, Georgia. The team won the open division the first year and broke the record the second year.

"It's a 3000-mile, 24-hour-a-day bike race and it's tough. I mean the Tour de France is excruciating and brutal but RAAM is a completely different breed of cat with its own unique sets of challenges such as sleep deprivation," explained Jones.

Jones' curriculum vitae is far too extensive for the purpose of this article. He has used his Bachelor of Arts Degree in physical education, Master's Degree in Kinesiology and his athletic endeavors to impact upon others' physicality through the corporate world and the classroom.

During this period of time, a phone call set the stage for an unlikely documentary to evolve.

"I wrote a couple of posts on Stan LeProtti and his daughter, who is a retired PE teacher living in South Carolina, saw one of my posts online. She called me and she told me who she was. She said, 'I want you to fly back to South Carolina. I have something for you,' which is kind of a bizarre premise as I was living in Los Angeles. I flew across the country, and I went to the backwoods of South Carolina. LaSierra was the last great PE program in America. She gave me two trunks of films and information about the program," explained Jones.

The information he acquired led Jones to set out on a mission to influence and perhaps restore President Kennedy's dream of a healthy and fit America through classical physical education.

He shared his LaSierra treasure trove with a filmmaker he trained and had a great impact upon named Doug Orchard. Orchard thought the material provided by LeProtti's daughter had the makings of a film.

"I said, 'Really?' Who would watch a PE film? — That's a crazy idea," said Jones.

The crazy idea led to the creation of "The Motivation Factor" with Jones as the executive producer. The documentary won the 2017 Life Fest Film Festival's Audience Favorite and Best Documentary awards. The film also won the Intendence 2017 Festival's Heart and Audience Favorite awards.

"The Motivation Factor" can be viewed at motivationmovie.com. The documentary features those



Stan LeProtti (left) developed a world-renowned fitness program at LaSierra High School, where his color-clad students hang from a monkey bar in the 1960s.

who participated in the physical fitness program at LaSierra and other school districts that adopted the protocol. The anecdotal accounts of these adults is inspiring as each proclaims the benefits of regimented exercise, goals and structured expectations. The documentary also visits our not so distant past and the advanced systems of training which previous generations understood to be a vital part of human development.

During one segment of "The Motivation Factor," Jones looks backward, "That golden era of American fitness was from 1885-1920. They, the instructors, and physical culturists, were far more sophisticated. They were physically educated and physically literate. When you start reading those books that were written in the mid-1800s through the 1920, it is just

mind blowing how sophisticated they were, how eloquent they described movement. They had a classical sense going all the way back to the Greek era of what it took to move the body well without injury and mastery of movement and control."

So as a senior or interested reader how does this impact upon you? If you have children, grandchildren or influence the young, advocate for physical fitness in the schools and encourage the young to get away from the screens and get out and recreate. Model eating habits that reduce processed food consumption, particularly sugar. Know how much physical fitness your child or grandchild is getting in school. Are basic exercises part of the school's fitness protocol such as push-ups, pull-ups, and sit-ups and how often do they engage

in these activities? Between the home and school an environment of good health and fitness needs to be a priority, not an afterthought.

As John Kilbourne, Ph.D., and a product of LaSierra states in the trailer for the Motivation Factor, "If we don't turn this around, this generation will be the first in the history of this country to Not live as long as their moms and dads."

George Thomas Kattouf of Altoona is the developer of the website AgelessTimeless.com. If you or someone you know in Blair County is age 50 or older and would be a good candidate for the Fitness Track, email Kattouf at george@agelesstimeless.com. Would you like to know how some of the world's leading experts maintain amazing levels of health and fitness? Tune in to the YouTube channel AgelessTimeless to learn more.

Live Your Best Life at Homewood!



Come see for yourself!

Independent Living
Cottages and Apartments

Open House

FEBRUARY 22 • 10AM-2PM

Activities & Amenities

- Indoor Pool & Spa
- Wood Shop
- Walking Trail
- So Much More!

Cottages & Apartments

- Newly Renovated
- Pet-Friendly
- Home Maintenance

Continuum of Care

- Priority Access
- Personal Care
- Top-Rated Healthcare
- Memory Care

HOMWOOD

AT MARTINSBURG

437 Givler Drive • Martinsburg, PA 16662

Homewood does not discriminate in admissions or the provision of services in accordance with federal, state and local law.

Like us on



homewoodmartinsburg.com



ABC ABC

TEACHERS!

No matter the weather, help your students SHINE!

Elementary school teachers are invited to have their students submit drawings for the Mirror's Kids Weather feature. The Mirror will send a copy of the form to teachers who email:

news@altoonamirror.com or call 814-946-7450

Include the students first and last names, grade level, and school below the picture.

Send the drawing to:
Kids Weather-Altoona Mirror
P.O. Box 2008
Altoona, PA 16603

