



## THERE IS NO FINISH LINE

At 86, Harold McKeen works out harder than ever

The sound echoes off the walls of the dimly lit room as Harold McKeen works on the punching bag. McKeen is 86, but he has the energy of a 20-year-old as he turns the small bag into a bouncing blur.

He takes a last swipe that nearly knocks the bag off its rack, then he turns his attention to the larger heavy bag across the room. Moving in close, McKeen gives the bag a series of short, quick jabs. He talks as he punches.

"When you're going to make a blow," he explains, "you have 1/10 of a second to do it. Maybe less, maybe only 1/100 of a second."

Then he moves back a step and starts slapping the bag—hard. After giving it 20 or 30 good shots, he pauses.

"That's nothing but a good slap," he observes, "but in my life I've seen trouble stop many times with just a slap, when a blow would have started a fight.

He goes back to take a few more quick sets on the smaller bag. He moves around to hit it from different angles and alternates using fists and elbows. Finally, he turns away with a gleam in his eye.

"You're not killing your enemy, you're destroying him," he announces triumphantly. "Your hands, your elbows, your knees, and your feet are your weapons!"

McKeen bases his boxing workout on the self-defense training he received during World War II in the Army Air Force. While he's working with them, the punching bags become living beings, leather and canvas adversaries to be defeated.

McKeen's enthusiasm for physical fitness began in high school when he substituted for a sick schoolmate on the track team, he says.

Since then, he has tried just about everything, including amateur boxing, bowling, dancing, handball, bicycling, swimming, and tennis.

His dedication to personal fitness continued through two marriages, service in two wars and 35 years as an accountant for Skelly Petroleum.

McKeen credits W.G. Skelly with starting him on his daily workout program.

"I went to work for Skelly on August 1, 1929," he says. "The next week I was told 'Mr. Skelly will give you a YMCA membership and he expects you to use it!'"

Even after all these years, McKeen still works out five

days a week at the Downtown YMCA.

He always starts his routine with an hour battling the punching bags and doing pull-ups on a wall bar.

Then he goes downstairs for a brisk 40-minute walk on the indoor track and 20 minutes of upper body work on the Nautilus equipment.

McKeen times his workouts closely with a stopwatch he keeps pinned to his shirt.

"When I stop working, the watch stops. A two hour workout is two hours of work, not just two hours around," he says.

McKeen always finishes his workout with 15 minutes in the whirlpool.

"That hot water—that just does wonders for my ankles," he says as he climbs into the circular pool.

McKeen also stays busy when he is not in the gym. He goes dancing two nights a week, rides a stationary bike at home, and takes care of his house. He says he never gets bored, now that his time is all his own.

"I'm busy all the time. I never have enough time to do what I want to do," he says.

Arthritis has slowed him over the years, so McKeen has modified his workout to fit his abilities. He thinks it is important to keep up some sort of physical activity and not make excuses.

"There's always something a person can do no matter what's wrong with him," he says.

McKeen's is a well-know face at the Y. He is the senior member in age and length of membership, according to membership director J.B. Bufkin.

He is also a good role model.

"You can be around him for 10 minutes and see that he enjoys life so much," says Bufkin. "You can't walk away without being inspired."

McKeen takes a more lighthearted approach to his reputation.

When asked what others may think of his dedication, he replies, "They think I'm pretty crazy. Not ready for an institution, but nutty anyway."

But he also admits he probably couldn't slow down if he tried.

"I don't have any choice," he says. "I have to take a two-hour workout to keep going. I'm not bragging. I've brought it on myself. I don't have any choice."

"But," he adds with a chuckle, "I thoroughly enjoy doing it."

