

Walter M. Bortz II, MD

Age: 86

Family: 62 year marriage (1953–2015) to Ruth Anne Bortz (dec.). Daughters Danna Breen, 62, Gretchen Lieff, 61. Sons Edward Charles Bortz, 59, Walter Michael Bortz IV, MD, 58; 9 grandchildren

Education: Williams College B.A., cum laude; Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, M.D.

Occupations: Clinical Professor of Medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine. Geriatrician. Author. Researcher. Lecturer. Blogger.

Residence: Portola Valley, CA

Accomplishment Highlights: *(partial list)*

Completed 45 marathons in consecutive years

Hiked Mt. Kilimanjaro; climbed to base of Mt. Everest

Author of 8 books on aging, longevity and living a long, robust life

Professional research and writings published in all of the major health and medical journals, as well as mainstream media

National network broadcast appearances; podcasts

Blog for Huffington Post online

Lectures widely to organizations and corporations

Introduced/taught course at Stanford "The Roadmap to 100: The Science of Living a Long Life."

Past co-chairman of the American Medical Association's Task Force on Aging

Former President of The American Geriatrics Society

Founding Chair of the Medical Advisory Board for the Diabetes Research and Wellness Foundation

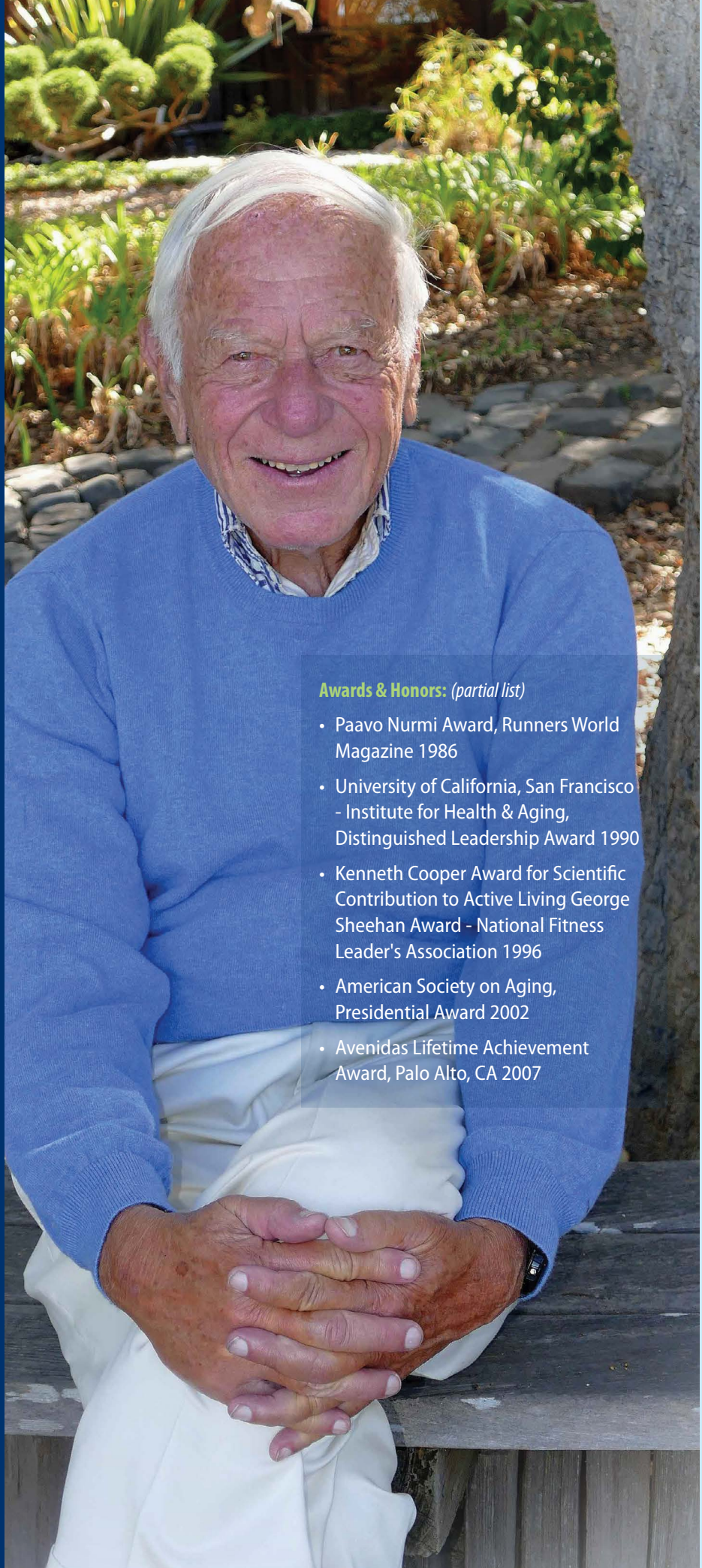
Chairman of the Board of Directors of Fifty-plus Lifelong Fitness

Senior Advisor to Healthy Silicon Valley

Founded private 501(c)3: 100 Healthy Years

Awards & Honors: *(partial list)*

- Paavo Nurmi Award, Runners World Magazine 1986
- University of California, San Francisco - Institute for Health & Aging, Distinguished Leadership Award 1990
- Kenneth Cooper Award for Scientific Contribution to Active Living George Sheehan Award - National Fitness Leader's Association 1996
- American Society on Aging, Presidential Award 2002
- Avenidas Lifetime Achievement Award, Palo Alto, CA 2007



AGING IS NEGOTIABLE!*

By Marsha B. Felton

*This is the title of Dr. Walter Bortz' upcoming 9th book. Dr. Bortz has written popular columns for ActiveOver50 for 10 years. Right in front of us is one of the world's foremost experts on robust aging and longevity!

For this cover profile, I met with Walter at his pastoral Portola Valley home in California. Dr. Bortz has dedicated his life to helping people realize their full potential, whatever their age, by improving their health and fitness levels. His thesis is clear: exercise is the key to extending the human life span. "We know enough to live 100 healthy years," Bortz says, "but we screw it up."

Read on, learn more from and about the extraordinary Dr. Walter Bortz.

MBF: Where have you been, Dr. Bortz?

WB: I've been born terribly lucky! I was an only child. My dad was a Harvard MD and youngest president of the AMA. I made house calls and hospital rounds with him. I got into medical school before they got my grades because I was 'Ed's boy.' Dad created the first White House Conference on Aging. I've always wanted to honor that heritage and I think I have done him proud, taken his seeds and grown them into a wonderful orchard. So I'm taking advantage of this every day.

A family guy, I was married for 62 years to the same woman. I have four kids and nine grandkids. I live in a beautiful home. I'm still affiliated with Stanford University. I was spoiled in my youth; I like to believe that I've made the most of that spoiledness.

Still working hard today. I'm lecturing, writing and I just finished my blog for the Huffington Post. So where I've been is very fortunate.

MBF: You've run a marathon every year for 45 years but recently had a health scare with atrial fibrillation, then an ablation procedure. How are you doing now?

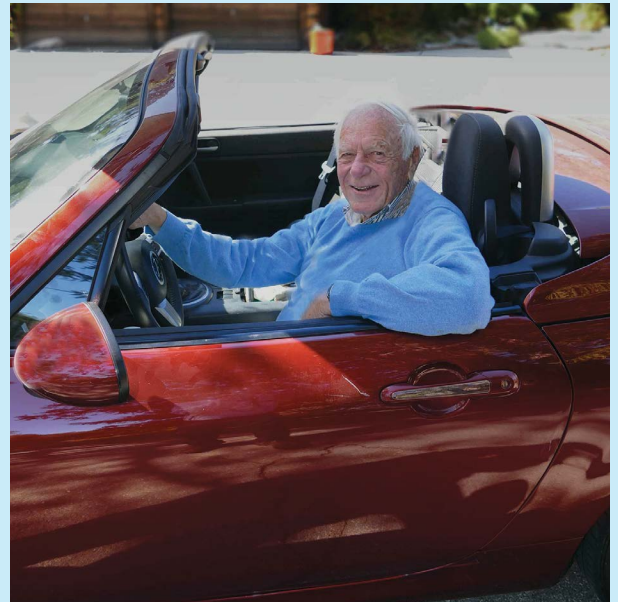
WB: Well, it used to be that I was interested in aging extrinsically. I would think of it as it's something that happens to other people. Now all of a sudden, I recognize it's happening to me. The biggest jolt in that direction was my wife Ruth Anne's death a little over a year ago from Alzheimer's. The last bit was tough.

The other thing that happened was my own heart started skipping. I didn't like it. I'm still a kid—I'm only 86. The heart is an electric organ with a cable down it that keeps the heartbeat regular. My electrical impulses were short-circuited going the wrong way, creating atrial fibrillation.

When you're fibrillating, you don't feel so hot. I didn't want to live that way. Fortunately I found my way to a grand doctor recently recruited at Stanford, Sanjiv Narayan.

A little over a month ago, I was under anesthesia for 8 hours of Sanjiv's innovative ablation. So here I am now with my heart ticking on cue and I love it. I'm rejoicing and facing my future of 14 more good years.

That's all I'm asking. I claim that our human life potential, our birthright, is 100 healthy years and that's what I seek.



"It takes guts and smarts to grow old. You have to be bold as well as being smart if you want your whole tale to be told" – Dr. Walter Bortz

MBF: Since the ablation, what are you doing for exercise?

WB: I never stopped running, even while I was fibrillating. I lost a lot of vitality when I was down. I used to run 16 miles a week. I'm starting to train again. I run very slowly and will consistently run more miles. I plan to run my 11th Boston Marathon in 2020 when I will be 90!

MBF: You say: "Use it or Lose It." What is this about?

WB: After a ski accident 40 years ago, I had an epiphany. My left leg was in a cast for months. I noticed how it withered and began years of research. Most of the negative things we associate with aging aren't a result of chronological aging but rather a lack of physical activity. This profound truth has old roots. For our Paleolithic ancestors, movement was the central survival strategy.

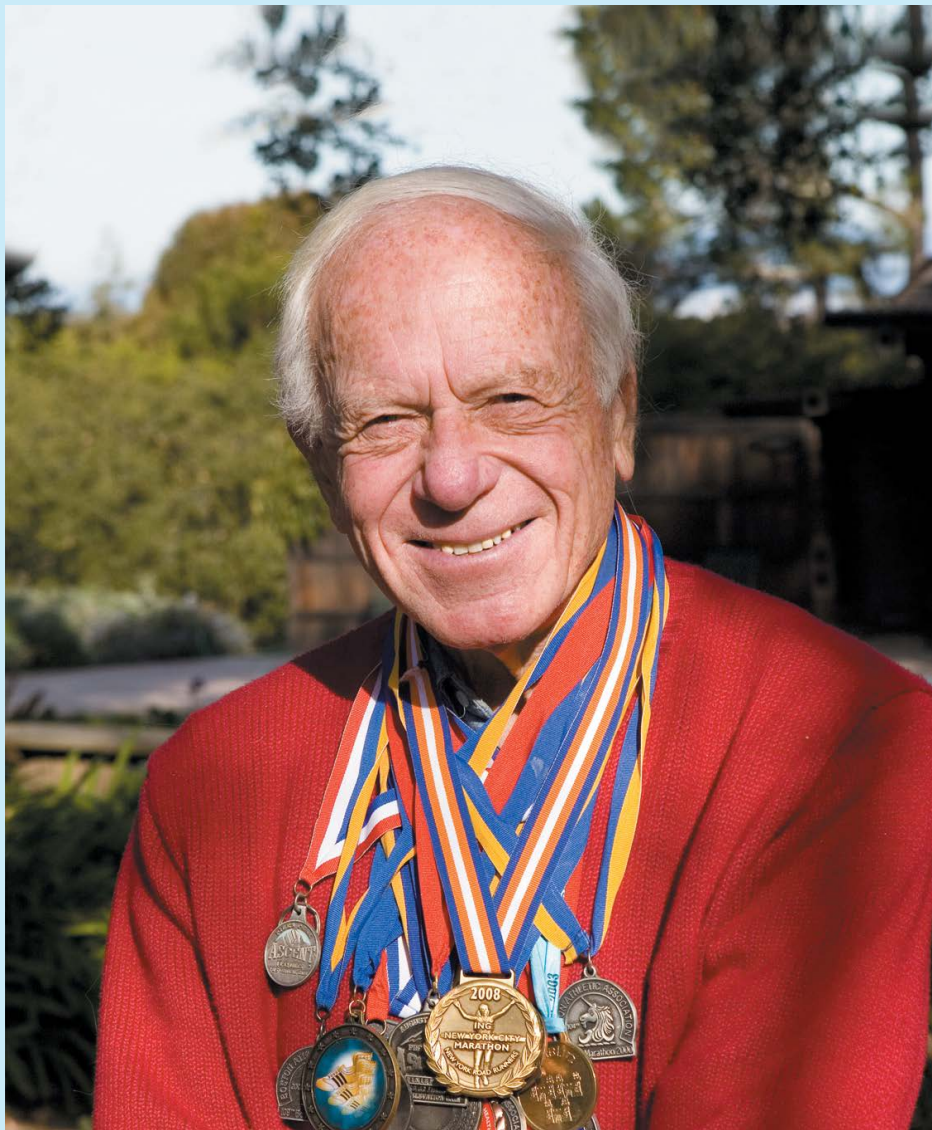


Photo: Allan Hayes

Movement and purposeful survival were intimately linked then, much as they are now. It is your choice. 'Survival of the Fittest' is not an archival whimsy. It is an everyday reality. You can increase vitality as you age. When you stop using yourself, you decay rapidly.

MBF: You've said: "It ain't the cards you're dealt, it's how you play the hand you're dealt." How does this relate to our genes?

WB: The statement 'if you want to live a long time, choose old grandparents' is simply wrong. I have research from 20,000 pairs of twins, records of Veterans from World War II.

If heredity is important, they should die simultaneously of the same disease. Heredity was the cause of 15 percent of deaths. The ultimate challenge of anyone's life is the opportunity to make the most of it that can be made.

Who you get to be—how old, wise, competent, active, creative, sexy, fun you become—depends largely on how you plan. Decrepitude and loss are not predetermined. How you determine your course—personal responsibility—is predictive of the journey you will take.

MBF: What is one of your ideas to motivate people to exercise? What do you think about today's exercise apps?

WB: One of my theories is that we should insert a step-counter under the skin. On the 14th of April before you pay your income taxes, you turn it in and if you haven't taken enough steps, you pay more. When you get around to taking care of yourself, then I'll help share your bill.

Forbes magazine recently came to ask me what I think about health and exercise apps. The answer is pretty self-evident: they're valuable if they will help you to get more active, not put them in your bedside table.

It's never too late to start but always too soon to stop – Bortz' law

MBF: You wrote *Next Medicine* in 2011 about our broken U.S. healthcare system. Many, including *The Journal of the AMA*, praised it. Has there been much progress in the last five years?

WB: I think it's still pretty bad. The U.S. spends 3x more on healthcare than any country in the world. The present capitalistic medical system is like a body shop with devices and drugs. Come in and we'll fix you, put in a new organ and then we'll send you a bill.

One way to lower your medical bills is to take a walk, not a pill
– Dr. Walter Bortz

My paradigm: **prevention** rather than repair. We need to make health pay, not sickness. No drugs, operations or other fancy medical maneuvers can replace this. Our well-being is tied to our fitness level which is accomplished only by exercise. Movement is life and life is movement.

(Dr. Bortz presented the same message to the AARP to try to convince them to invest in health promotion and embed it in everything they do. One idea was to connect seniors with fitness ambassadors.)

It's not how old you are. It's how you are old. And that's a choice
– Dr. Walter Bortz

MBF: Your 1996 Dare To Be 100 and 2010's The Roadmap to 100 are still among the top books on how to live long and enjoy life to its fullest. What is your DARE and what are some updated advisories?

WB: Diet-Attitude-Renewal-Exercise are part of my DARE formula, supported by lifelong research, to have a more fulfilling life:

Diet (pay attention to amounts eaten; avoid risk of caloric excess by exercise)

Attitude (own your self-care; be necessary; involvement in life)

Renewal (recharge yourself; maintain creative spark)

Exercise (keep your oxygen tanks full...be sexy, be fit)

Four forms of exercise:

1. Aerobic is the most important
(*oxygen is like spark to a candle*)
2. Muscle strengthening
(*so not to drop your grandkids!*)
3. Flexibility
4. Balance

I'm unsure of my balance which is the part that gets me right now. I should be doing the 'flamingo stand' more often and I recommend it to others.

Be persistent getting improved sleep and avoid sleep deprivation in our lives. Don't waste time with anti-aging hoaxes such as vitamins to help you live longer. Exercising just because it is good for you isn't enough for most people. It should be fun, too. If not, chances are you won't sustain it. Keep a sense of humor and optimism. KNOW YOURSELF.



Interview with ActiveOver50 publisher Larry Hayes

MBF: You've described yourself as a "symphony buff." How do you compare the start of a symphony performance to vital exercise?

WB: I wrote a blog 'Exercise as the oboe's A.' The orchestra is busy bashing away randomly until the Concert Master summons the oboe to play 'A.' All of the instruments tune in to the signal, and from that moment on, they are all an ensemble. So too does exercise give all of the body's trillions of genes the signal that they should tune in to the master signal.

MBF: What is the most important lesson you learned from your paternal grandfather?

WB: 'Go Make Yourself Necessary.' Stay engaged with life. Maintain social activity and intellectual pursuits.

MBF: What are you involved in now?

WB: I'm lecturing and writing my next book. I just finished my Huff Post blog. I founded '100 Healthy Years,' private 501(c)3 to expand my online presence. Also teaching at Santa Barbara's City College Center for Lifelong Learning. So I'm rich ideologically but I also need a woman in my life! My two attendant daughters are trying to fix daddy up!

"Living longer is a choice, not fate. Living longer is active, not passive. You create your own destiny" – Dr. Walter Bortz

I used to know how when I was 15 but at 86, it's a very different scenario. I'm learning and failing but that's all right. It's also fun.



ABOUT MARSHA B. FELTON

"I'm on the 'inspiring and motivating' beat. I cover exciting people and uplifting endeavors."

Marsha Felton is a Marketing Consultant and freelance writer.

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