

THE IDLE AMERICAN

Life's Ups and Downs...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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To most mortals--mere or otherwise--the thought of jumping rope 30,660,000 times causes hair to stand on end, eyes to cross and regimens to crumble.

Not so to a preacher man named Van Minter, whose morning routine is vital to each day.

He has kept this commitment for almost 12,800 days, having begun his 36th year on "leap year," February 29. He made the pledge to himself upon completing his collegiate basketball career in 1989....

"I remember the time and place clearly," he said. "After my final game, I realized that I needed a plan to stay in shape without playing basketball."

Those who know him best have long regarded him to be "the man with a plan."

Thus his routine of jumping rope 2,400 times daily--mostly in his garage, but sometimes on hotel rooftops and in parking garages--began, and he hasn't missed a single day....

Claiming that he never feels quite right until after his 30-minute workout, Rev. Minter brushes his teeth, dons his size 14 training shoes and amps up his favorite 80s music for his "ups and downs."

His eyes are focused on 24 signs painted on his garage wall, numbered one through twenty-four. Silently, he counts to 100 while staring at each sign, mentally counting jumps he makes at 150-170 spins per minute. Over the years, his wife, Leslie, and three daughters-- Holli, Halee and Hattie--have "let him be" during his workout. Only emergency messages interrupt.

"When I began, I prayed to be able to jump rope daily for at least 40 years, and by God's grace, I'm getting close," said the pastor whose intent in college and seminary was to train to be a youth minister, a post he held for 22 years. Associated with Lake Ridge Bible Church in Mesquite for almost 21 years, he is a lead pastor there now, commonly preaching twice on Sundays....

His wife is likewise committed to fitness, has reached admirable heights with Optavia, a wellness program.

"Van has jumped rope through college, our honeymoon and helping guide three daughters through life, so why should he stop jumping now? It has worked so far." Leslie laughed.

Point taken....

Van has heard all the jokes and bromides about his height. He towers to 6'8", weighing around 250 pounds since college.

From his youth in Saudi Arabia, during his Blinn Jr. College/HPU days and since, he's dealt with all the "how's-the-weather-up-there" questions.

I am reminded of a "seven-footer-plus" encountered at a vacation spot in Arizona. Dressed in western attire, he, too, was good-natured about constant height references. "When folks ask me if I play basketball, I ask them if they play miniature golf," he joked....

Rev. Minter has "tips" for anyone with questions about Christianity and rope-jumping.

He identifies with country music artist Roy Clark's sentiments in his song "Thank God and Greyhound You're Gone." He, too, is thankful to God, but his sadness concerns Nike's decision to leave the custom jump rope market. Early on, Van's ordinary ropes were reduced to shreds in about three weeks. Thankfully, his "Nikes"--used for some three decades--have held up for about 18 months each.

"Luckily, I've got eight of 'em stashed away," he says....

His health is excellent, and most hospital visits are made to see members of his flock.

He has landed there as a patient three times, however, always for kidney stones that have troubled him 30 times to date. "My hospital stays have been over-nighters," he remarked, "So I have been able to get home in time to jump rope."

His resolve is remarkable, and his integrity and commitment have been evident since I met him during my presidency at Howard Payne upon his arrival there in 1988. He was a "class act" student, always focused on Christian service. That he is beloved by his church and all who know him is no surprise. Surely his name should appear in the Guinness World Records....

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