

# Flexibility and adaptation are keys to fitness

## *Moving Grays Harbor*

By Maryann Welch

It is hard to believe a New Year and decade are upon us. In every type of media there are numerous “look backs” at 2009. Prompted by this mindset, I spent some time reflecting on my personal journey through the past year. The purpose of my own “look back” was to evaluate what worked and what didn’t work for me in maintaining or improving my personal fitness.

Flood, travel, family loss, grandchildren, more travel, friends, travel, family, and new experiences filled the twelve months that seem to have passed in a blink of an eye. Various trips and travels added up to a total of five months away from home, making “routine” impossible.

So, how is my fitness level after all this? Well, I am a couple of pounds lighter, but still thicker in the middle. I believe I am a bit more fit but can’t say there’s a big difference. At my age, I’ll declare maintenance a victory!

What worked? A ski trip in February gave me confidence that cardio and strength workouts had prepared me for the rigors of two days of skiing and I learned to ski fresh powder.

Spouse Jim’s work experience in New York was a great chance to seek out new physical activity opportunities. Glens Falls YMCA classes became the

lynchpin of my workouts. Booklets featuring local walks and hikes provided adventure and discovery of lovely upstate New York and the Adirondacks.

Back at home a stint of physical therapy put me on the road to healing a nagging shoulder that had kept me away from weight training for a time.

Regular Pilates classes strengthened my core to the point that a long-time issue with my lower back disappeared. I felt strong enough to once again tackle spinning after more than a year hiatus. With both weights and spinning I have discovered how to adapt the workouts in a way that protects those vulnerable spots.

In the fall I challenged myself by using more incline programs on the treadmill and committed to my cardio workout lasting at least an hour. I have discovered that I give up on myself when exertion gets tough. I want to thank weight instructors at Monte Fitness, Tabitha Kowal and Darrell Bellis for urging me to push my limits. I have seen the results.

What did not work? Most of my travels coincided with good weather here at home to the extent that kayaking and biking got neglected – should have taken the equipment with me to New York. I gave up my long-time daily use of a pedometer and my obsession with tracking steps, exercise and weight on an Excel spreadsheet because of intermittent access to my home computer. I miss that detail but am not certain whether it truly helped or not.

Being away from home and having a normal routine made healthy eating a challenge. I have not found great success in consuming adequate amounts of fruits and vegetables outside of my own kitchen. Of course, the recent holiday season with all of its

temptations leaves me feeling like a nutritional failure. I may have to learn to accept that as a fact of life each year and just relax.

At the end of it all, I can only strive to keep a workout combination that seems to work best for me: Pilates, weight training, spinning, and incline walking. The new focus will be to push my limits more and yes, Darrell, I'll try "grunting"!

The lesson I'll take from 2009 and the message I'd like to share is this: however you commit to being healthy in 2010, always be prepared to adapt to life's unexpected changes. Literally keep your knees flexed and keep your eye on the goal of improving your health each and every year. Remember that every day makes a difference. Happy 2010!

*Maryann Welch is a life-long harborite, the retired director of Grays Harbor County's Public Health and Social Services Department, and an avid exercise enthusiast.*

*If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the health department at 532-8665 ext. 483, e-mail us at [moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us) or visit our web site at [www.healthygh.org](http://www.healthygh.org).*