

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with exercise. Paul wrote to Timothy: **“Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”** (1 Tim. 4:7-8 KJV).

Obesity is a serious health problem, and the major cause is a lack of exercise. *“Inactivity rather than overeating could be driving the surge in Americans' obesity, according to a study by a team of Stanford University School of Medicine researchers.”* According to the World Health Organization obesity has nearly tripled since 1975. The Center For Disease Control states: *“Obesity is also associated with the leading causes of death in the United States and worldwide, including diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer”*. Your physical health is obviously very important!

I'm sure you are weary of hearing stories of how parents in a previous generation walked miles to school in all kinds of weather when it was uphill both ways. Let me share with you, however, a true story of a young man named Andy Payne. His family farm was 5 miles from school and he ran to and from school every day until he graduated. Strenuous exercise was an integral part of his life!

Andy graduated from high school in Foyil, Oklahoma in 1927. This is a small town with a population of 234 according to the 2,000 census. It is on Route 66 10 miles northeast of Claremore where Granny once lived, and 9 miles southwest of Chelsea where Granny and Grandpa Myers used to live. All these towns are in Rogers County, named for Will Rogers, the famous cowboy and actor who was born not far from Foyil. My father and I used to hunt quail on the Roger's farm.

Andy, a Cherokee Indian boy, enjoyed running and, as we have said, developed the habit of running 5 miles to school every day, and another 5 miles running home. As we also said, he graduated from high school in 1927. In 1928 his years of exercise made him a rich man.

Route 66 was officially commissioned on November 11, 1926 and it went right through Foyil, Oklahoma. Route 66 covered a distance of 2,448 miles from Los Angeles to Chicago but only 800 miles of the famous highway were paved at that time. Charles C. Pyle was a famous promoter known as the P.T. Barnum of sports. He was also called “Cash and Carry Pyle”. Pyle conceived the idea of a transcontinental foot race from Los Angeles to New York. This is a distance of 3,423 miles. He promoted the event with such success that he was able to offer a \$25,000 cash prize to the winner. The race followed Route 66 most of the way to Chicago and then other highways to New York.

The race began March 4, 1928. By the third day over half of the 275 runners had dropped out. Pyle, the ever enterprising businessman, arranged for towns along the way to bid for the privilege of the race traveling down their Main Street. Towns that didn't come up with the money were bypassed, causing the race to take odd alternate routes. Pyle also made the footrace into a traveling sideshow, exhibited the embalmed remains of an Oklahoma outlaw named Elmer McCurdy, a 5-legged pig and a dog that talked with its ears.

The race continued through desert heat and torrential rains. Runners succumbed along the way to injuries, exhaustion, and one was even hit by a car. Andy's chief competitor was British runner Peter Jacuzzi. They traded the lead back and forth for 5 weeks, but Jacuzzi finally dropped out in Ohio

complaining of a bad tooth. Andy Payne won the race completing the 3,423 miles in 573 hours, 4 minutes, 34 seconds. He averaged 6 miles an hour, completing the grueling race in 23 days. Andy used the \$25,000 prize money to pay off the mortgage on the family farm. \$25,000 in 1928 translates into over \$411,000 in 2022.

Andy, of course, enjoyed a measure of fame for a while. A bronze statue of him is proudly on display in his home town of Foyil. Andy was elected clerk to the supreme court in Oklahoma City and was reelected 5 times. He died Dec. 3, 1977 at the age of 70. We salute him for his achievements, but remind you that **“bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come”**. Exercising unto godliness is far more important than physical exercise!

Andy Payne did not exercise occasionally, or sporadically, he exercised all the time. This was the key to his success. We too should exercise to godliness all the time for we never know when our spiritual strength will be needed. David killed Goliath with a single stone but undoubtedly had practiced throwing stones thousands of times before his hours of practice was needed to save his life.

Paul put it like this: **“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (1 Cor. 9:24-27).**

PLEASE EXERCISE YOURSELF UNTO GODLINESS!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce