



MONIQUE SAVIN

# Health & Fitness

## Low-fat mountain

Preparation for trek up Mt. Kilimanjaro leads friends to summit of shape

Three women training to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro are reaching new fitness peaks post age 40.

"I'm turning 60 in a year and I want to do something really exciting — like climb a mountain," says Elaine Dembe, a chiropractor and author of *Use the Good Dishes*.

Pals Valerie Campbell, 43, who owns her own philanthropic consulting boutique firm, and Andrea Kraus, 47, a commercial real estate agent, were in.

Cardio lovers before the climb, the trio added resistance training 12 months ago for the Tusker.com trek next month with 15 other women up the African mountain, spending 10 days hauling 30-pound packs.

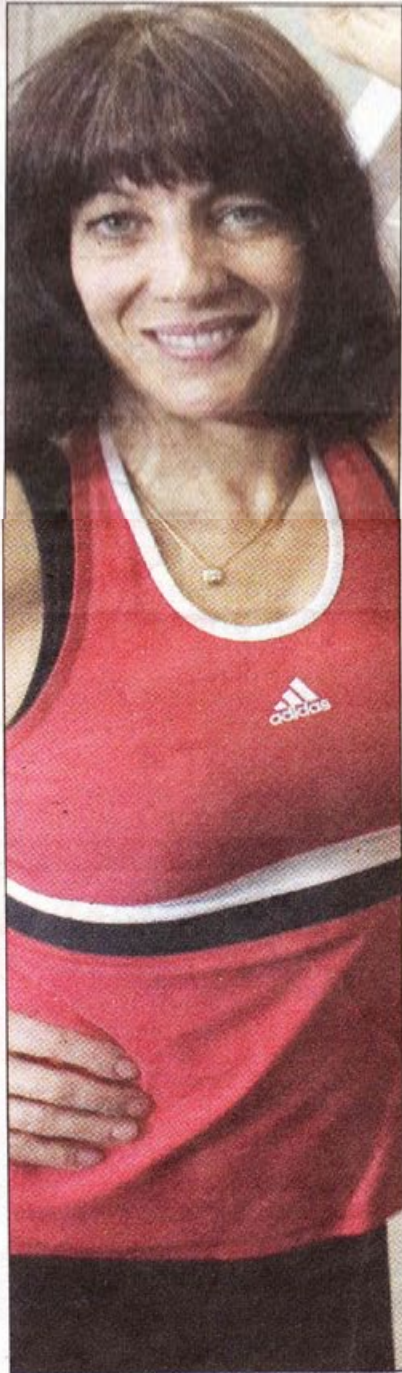
But before they put a foot on the mountain, they've discovered they're reaching the zenith of their fitness through strength training.

Studies show pumping iron or performing body weight exercise regularly helps maintain and grow lean muscle tissue that enables physical activity and enhances energy utilization in maturing years — even for those beginning an exercise program in their 40s.

Strength training also decreases resting blood pressure, lowers cholesterol levels, improves insulin response and wards off osteoporosis, arthritis and depression.

No other group can experience more benefits from strength training than those over 40, experts say.

Werner Bruggemann, of Laylor Performance Systems, says he knew this when prescribing training plans for these trekkers who often train together. He combined mini sets of multiple muscle



Fitness friends, from left, Andrea Kraus, Elaine Dembe, and Valerie Campbell are training to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro.

moves with aerobic bursts, the mode of exercise the ladies favoured, instead of performing sustained cardio, such as a one-hour run.

Bruggemann implemented unusual training modes, such as the farm-

er's walk with weight plates in hands, or furious rounds of circuits, the kind Dembe and Kraus endured, to create a high-intensity fat-burning workout.

"We bike 20 seconds, rest 10 seconds, pull a sled back-

wards 50 feet, rest 10 seconds then pull the sled back by rope repeating the circuit up to 20 times," says Dembe.

Her body fat is 18.7%.

Adds Campbell, "Three times per week I do a one-hour intense workout at the

gym. I add interval hill runs and wind sprints for 60-seconds, then 30-second breaks to build up the heart and get footing used to the terrain."

The size 4 of the group achieved a personal best pushing 225 pounds on a leg

press for seven sets of 15 reps. Within three months, Campbell's body fat was down to 13%.

Despite its benefits, many women fear resistance training will add bulk.

Instead, the mountaineers found they became leaner while building strength.

More muscle on their bodies made their fat-burning furnace highly efficient and accordingly the more body fat they shed.

Strength training three non-consecutive days per week for Canadians 40 and over is the professional recommendation. However, these trekkers required intense conditioning to meet the demands of climbing six hours a day. The higher these ladies go, the harder it gets.

"We will trek 2,000 to 2,500 metres a day," says Campbell, "and because of the altitude and decreased air pressure, we breathe in less air so it's harder on the body, the heart and lungs to deliver oxygen to muscles."

As formidable as Mt. Kilimanjaro, these ladies sport sexy action figures cut as a consequence of strength training.

Most importantly, from these new heights of fitness, the women see themselves with a fresh perspective: Physically and emotionally stronger and more resilient.

"I've never looked better or leaner and now I feel the strength of my muscle matches the will of my mind," says Campbell.

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