

What the Body Makes Possible

Capability, Presence, and Purpose at Seventy-Two — a first-person account of physical capability as the foundation for a life fully engaged

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Written September 2026, three weeks into a 40-hour-per-week physical role undertaken at age 72.

“Orandum est ut sit mens sana in corpore sano.”

One should pray for a sound mind in a sound body. — Juvenal, *Satires*, X

The claim I am testing

This is a personal account, not a controlled study, and I want to be honest about that from the first line. I am the subject, the author, and the only data point. What follows is my story over the past three weeks — but I am telling it because I think it is illustrative of something larger than me.

The claim is simple to state and, I have found, difficult to live: **physical capability is the foundation that everything else stands on.** Not the goal — the foundation. Because the body is in condition, recovery holds. Because recovery holds, I wake without pain and with energy. Because I have energy, I can be fully present. Because I am present, I can teach, connect, pay attention to people, stay curious. And that engagement — not the fitness itself — is what lets a man contribute and even inspire at an age when most people have quietly been written off.

Fitness, in other words, is the enabling condition for living well. The research community has arrived at a version of this that I find striking: physical function — strength, gait, endurance — is now treated as a biomarker of healthy aging, predictive of disability, and of mortality itself². Juvenal said it in six Latin words two thousand years ago. I decided to field-test it in a warehouse.

The deliberate choice

At 72, with a career behind me across engineering, international operations, and building companies, I took an entry-level, 40-hour-per-week physical job: roughly nine hours a shift, on the fluid/outbound side of a large-scale cross-dock fulfillment operation, loading trailers. Two to three trailers a day. It is among the more physically demanding roles in the building, and I am, as best I can tell, the oldest person doing it.

This was not a fallback. It was a strategy — a deliberate decision to enter an operation I respect at ground level, learn it from the floor up, and let competence rather than a résumé open the next door. I have spent my life treating domains as engineering problems; I wanted to understand this one by standing inside it. I also, frankly, wanted to know whether the body I had built through years of deliberate training could actually cash the check. A physical job is an honest examiner. It does not care how many companies you have founded.

The choice carries a quieter thesis about age. The default cultural script says a 72-year-old winds down. I wanted to test the opposite proposition: that with the right physical foundation, late-career reinvention is not only possible but can compound — that you can enter at the bottom and rise on merit, at any age, if you show up capable and relentless in goodwill.

The foundation is real: what the data shows

I have tracked my body composition for a while, anchored to periodic DEXA scans — the clinical standard — which earlier this year established the real baseline: a body-fat percentage in the healthy range for my age, an appendicular lean-mass index comfortably above the sarcopenia threshold, and bone density well above the young-adult mean. That is the validated anchor. Between those scans I track higher-frequency trends on a bioelectrical-impedance (BIA) scale, which is where the numbers below come from.

A word on that instrument before the numbers, because intellectual honesty is the point of the Research Hub. BIA is reliable for detecting *direction* within the same device over time, but it carries meaningful absolute error against DEXA and is sensitive to hydration⁴. So I read it as a compass, not a GPS: sub-pound movements in muscle, protein, or water across two weeks are inside the noise and should not be over-read. The trustworthy signal is the fat trend.

Table 1. Body composition over 14 days on the floor (BIA; 9/9/26 → 9/23/26).

Measure	9/9/26	9/23/26	Change	Read
Weight (lb)	216.0	214.2	−1.8	trending down
Body fat (%)	21.0	20.5	−0.5	signal
Body fat mass (lb)	45.4	44.0	−1.4	signal
Muscle mass (lb)	159.4	159.0	−0.4	held (within noise)
Skeletal muscle (%)	45.7	45.9	+0.2	held
Visceral fat (index)	7	7	0	favorable, stable
Subcutaneous fat (%)	15.0	14.7	−0.3	signal
Metabolic age	71	71	0	below chronological (72)

BIA scale; body score 83/100 and WHR 0.83 on the 9/23 reading. Muscle/protein/water sub-pound moves are within device noise; the fat-mass and body-fat-% reductions are the trustworthy directional signal.

The shape of it is the same recomposition signature my DEXA work showed earlier this year, only now the driver is not a programmed gym block — it is the job. Fat down about a pound and a half over two weeks, body fat down half a point, muscle essentially defended, visceral fat holding at a healthy level, metabolic age still reading below my chronological age. The work has become the training stimulus⁵.

One figure in Table 1 deserves more than its single digit suggests: a visceral-fat index holding at 7 — at 214 lb, at 72. Visceral fat is not inert storage. It is the metabolically active depot that secretes proinflammatory signaling such as IL-6 and TNF- α , and it is the fat most strongly associated with systemic, low-grade inflammation in humans⁸; in men my age it independently predicts cardiovascular events⁷. Keeping it in single digits means a lower inflammatory burden moving through the body — which plausibly *contributes to* how well my joints and connective tissue are tolerating four consecutive ten-hour days, rather than flaring under the

systemic load. I would not claim it is the sole reason the joints stay quiet. I would claim it is part of the mechanism, and the data supports that narrower reading.

The activity data says why. These are four representative days on the floor, against daily goals of 6,000 steps, 90 active minutes, and 500 activity calories:

Table 2. Daily activity on the floor (4 representative days).

Day	Steps	Active min	Activity Cal	Distance (mi)
Sat 9/19	15,278	169	727	7.22
Sun 9/20	10,094	111	484	4.78
Mon 9/21	13,657	150	646	6.41
Tue 9/22	10,529	116	513	4.99
Average	12,390	137	593	5.85

Goals: 6,000 steps / 90 active minutes / 500 activity calories. Every day roughly doubles the step goal; distances are covered inside the building.

Roughly twelve thousand steps and nearly six miles a day, most active minutes at better than 150% of target — accumulated not on a treadmill but while doing a job. And the tracker almost certainly *undercounts* the real load. A step-based accelerometer captures ambulatory movement, but it is largely blind to the isometric and eccentric cost of the work: the sustained time under tension of a parcel held overhead, the spinal compression of a lift, the effort of stabilizing a 30-to-60-lb load while climbing a trailer stool. None of that registers as a “step.” The figures in Table 2 are a floor, not a ceiling — which reinforces the theme running through all of this: measure what matters, not only what is easy to measure.

And here is the marker I care about most, the one that usually breaks first at any age: **recovery is improving, not degrading**. Three weeks in, I wake on a Wednesday with no pain. That is the whole ballgame. Load that a body cannot recover from is just injury on a delay; load a body *can* recover from is training. Mine is recovering. I protect that deliberately — sleep and protein are not optional — and I program a full rest day every Friday before my Saturday shift, which is simply a deload before the highest-load day of my week.

The trend inside those three weeks is the real tell. In week one my elbows and shoulders complained; by week three, with volume *higher*, that joint stress had eased. I want to be careful about why, because the honest mechanism matters more than the flattering one. It is almost certainly not that my tendons rebuilt themselves in twenty-one days — connective tissue remodels over months, not weeks. What changes this fast is neural: motor-pattern optimization and neuromuscular adaptation⁹. The nervous system learns the movement, recruits muscle more efficiently and in better sequence, and — once it has rehearsed and come to trust the pattern — releases the protective guarding it imposes on an unfamiliar load, distributing force across the tissues built to carry it. Connective-tissue remodeling is the slower adaptation now getting underway beneath that early relief; it is not what produced it. That distinction is the difference between describing what happened and flattering it.

What the foundation enables

If the paper stopped at body composition it would miss the point, because the fitness is not the story — it is the platform the story runs on. Here is what the platform enabled.

Presence. Because I am not managing pain or fatigue, I have attention left over for people. I introduce myself to everyone — associates, managers, the security staff who often go a whole shift without being spoken to. I don't miss a chance to say hello or trade a fist bump. That is not a technique; it is what becomes possible when the body is not taxing all of your bandwidth just to get through the day.

Teaching. Within days I was asked to become a Learning Ambassador — training associates on proper load technique and running class. We are short on computers, so I teach mostly without slides, extemporaneously, working from a few notes on a Kindle and telling the thing as a story. It lands. The learning manager told me I hold the room. The younger associates ask me, constantly, why I am doing this at all; one, a musician, wanted to hear about the record label. That curiosity is a door, and I walk through every one of them. None of it happens if I am too worn down to be interesting.

Partnership. Within three weeks the area manager and I were talking as partners — working through proper strapping of loads, how often is too often, where the process can tighten. She takes my read seriously. That is the ground-level-to-operations path I set out to build, and it opened not because of my history but because the floor performance made me credible first.

The method: catch people doing something right

Everything above runs on a single operating principle, and it is the same one whether I am applying it to my own training or to the roughly thirteen people I have now trained. I tell every class the same thing: **nobody leaves home in the morning — leaving a spouse, a partner, a family — planning to fail today.** We all come to do a good job. So our job as trainers and as operations is to *catch people doing something right*.

The discipline in that is real. It means you do not praise with one hand and tear down with the other. You identify what a person is doing well, you help them amplify it, and where something needs to improve you talk about it as *process* — how we do this better — not as criticism of the person. When I gave feedback on an ambassador candidate whose load technique was genuinely poor, I was explicit: I do not want to throttle his opportunity; he needs to be worked with more. That is the whole philosophy in one sentence. Raise the standard; never cut the person off from the chance to meet it.

I have run teams this way my entire career. What is new is discovering that the same principle is what I have been applying to my own body all along: find what is working, amplify it, correct through better process rather than through punishment. Progressive load, honest measurement, deliberate recovery. It turns out the way you develop a person and the way you develop a body are the same method aimed at two different systems.

Living well: the synthesis

So let me close the loop back to Juvenal. The classical idea was never that a sound body and a sound mind were two separate goods you might collect. It was that they are one integrated capacity — that physical vitality is part of the ability to think clearly, serve others, lead, and stay engaged with the world. We have spent a couple of centuries splitting them apart, treating fitness as vanity and the life of the mind as something that happens in a chair. I think that is exactly backward.

What these three weeks have shown me — in data I can measure and in a room full of people I did not know a month ago — is that the pieces are not separate at all. The physical foundation buys the recovery. The recovery buys the presence. The presence buys the connection and the teaching. And the teaching, the curiosity, the goodwill — that is the part that makes a life feel large rather than small, at 72 as much as at 42. The strength is not the achievement. The strength is what lets you show up for everything else.

I do not think there is another person my age doing exactly this job in this system. But that is not really the point I want to leave. The point is that the door was there to be walked through, and the only thing that made walking through it possible was a body kept capable enough to try. That is available to more people than believe it is. Keep the foundation sound, and the rest of the building is yours to put up.

An honest frame

I hold my own claims to the same standard I hold everyone else's, so: this is an n-of-1 account. I am one person, self-selected, already fit and already experienced at deliberate training when I started — which is exactly the population most able to do this and least representative of everyone else. The composition figures are from a bioelectrical-impedance scale read as a trend, not a clinical instrument, and the window is short. Occupational load as a training stimulus is real, but how it plays out depends entirely on the starting foundation; the same job could injure someone who arrived without one. Nothing here is medical or occupational advice. It is one man's field test of an old idea — offered because the idea is worth testing, and because the result, so far, has been the best three weeks I have had in a long time.

References & Notes

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