

distinctly

people  
events  
style

# OKLAHOMA

APRIL 2012

**Financing Higher  
Education**

**Solar-Powered  
Gadgets**

**Beads of Courage**

**Oklahoma Caviar**

**Oklahoma Crime Writers**

**"Emotipops" for Easter**

**Visit Fort Reno**

**DR. KENNETH  
COOPER**

**The Father  
of Aerobics**

*Kenneth H. Cooper M.D.*

PRSR STD  
US POSTAGE PAID  
FULTON, MO  
PERMIT #38

\$4.95



0 74470 23576 7

0 4>



# Dr. Kenneth Cooper:

## This Energetic Okie Continues to Change Our World

By Staci E. Hensley

**A**t age 81, Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper has more energy than your average 20-year-old. He's in the office most days by 6:45 a.m., does a morning Bible study, works a 60-hour week, and exercises for at least an hour a day, five or six days a week. Or to put it another way, the Oklahoma-born "Father of Aerobics" spends most of his time on the run.

As a young Army and Air Force physician, Cooper flew in the face of established medical convention by focusing on prevention of disease rather than treatment. Today, he is the nation's – and arguably the world's – leading authority on preventive medicine and fitness. Through his brainchild, the internationally known Cooper Institute, his vision is ultimately responsible for most of what we know today about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Thanks to Cooper and the CI team, the basic research has been done, the benefits quantified, and societal changes are steadily being implemented to focus worldwide attention on the benefits of eating right and exercising. From his groundbreaking 1968 bestseller "Aerobics," which sparked an exercise craze and changed the fitness world forever, to guiding the snack food industry to eliminate harmful trans fats in recent years, he's been an innovator like no other.

In fact, Cooper coined the word aerobics to represent both

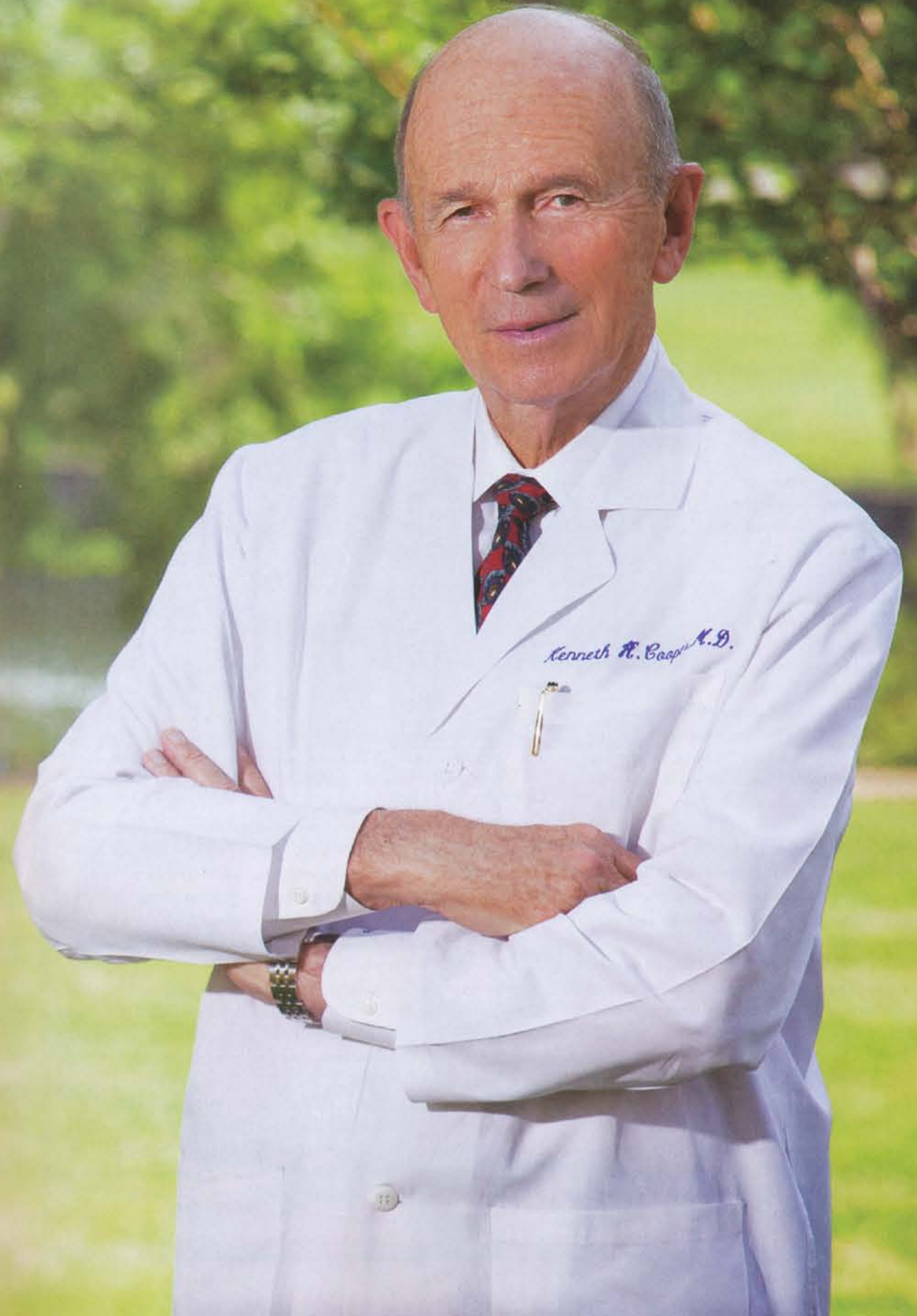
"I'm proud of  
Oklahoma City for what  
people have done"

– Dr. Kenneth Cooper

"aerobic" (meaning living in oxygen), and the fact that the body's capacity to measure oxygen is the best way to measure cardiovascular fitness.

Cooper's attitudes were strongly influenced by his father, a periodontist, who encouraged him to pursue medical school; he also personally believed in treating the whole patient, not just a particular symptom or illness.

Throughout a truly phenomenal career, Cooper has treated everyone from former President George W. Bush to University of Oklahoma head football coach Bob Stoops. He's worked with Texas Governor Rick Perry to get physical education programs back into public schools, had research projects funded by Ross Perot (a fellow Eagle Scout) and befriended early-day fitness legends like Jack LaLanne and Jim Fix. Twice he turned down the position of U.S. Surgeon General, believing he could do more good outside of Washington, D.C.

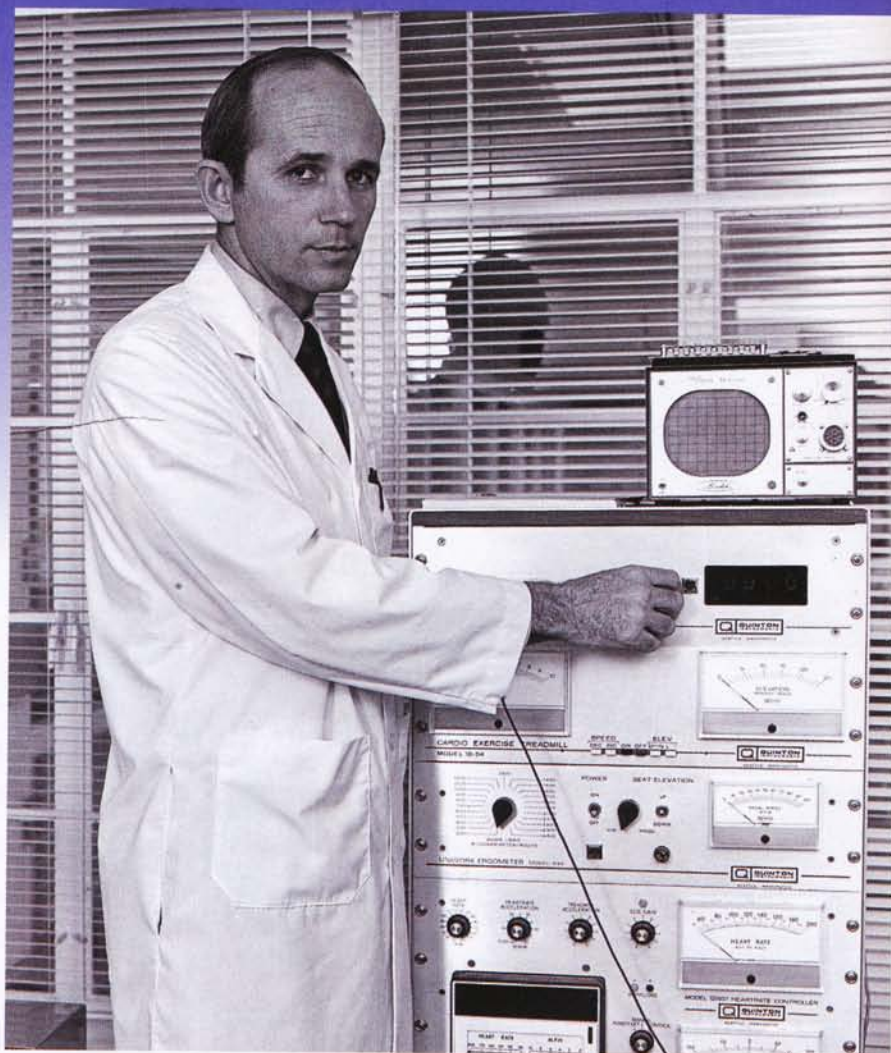




## on the cover

It would literally take a book (or two) to detail all the accomplishments of Cooper and his CI team. But here are some of the highlights:

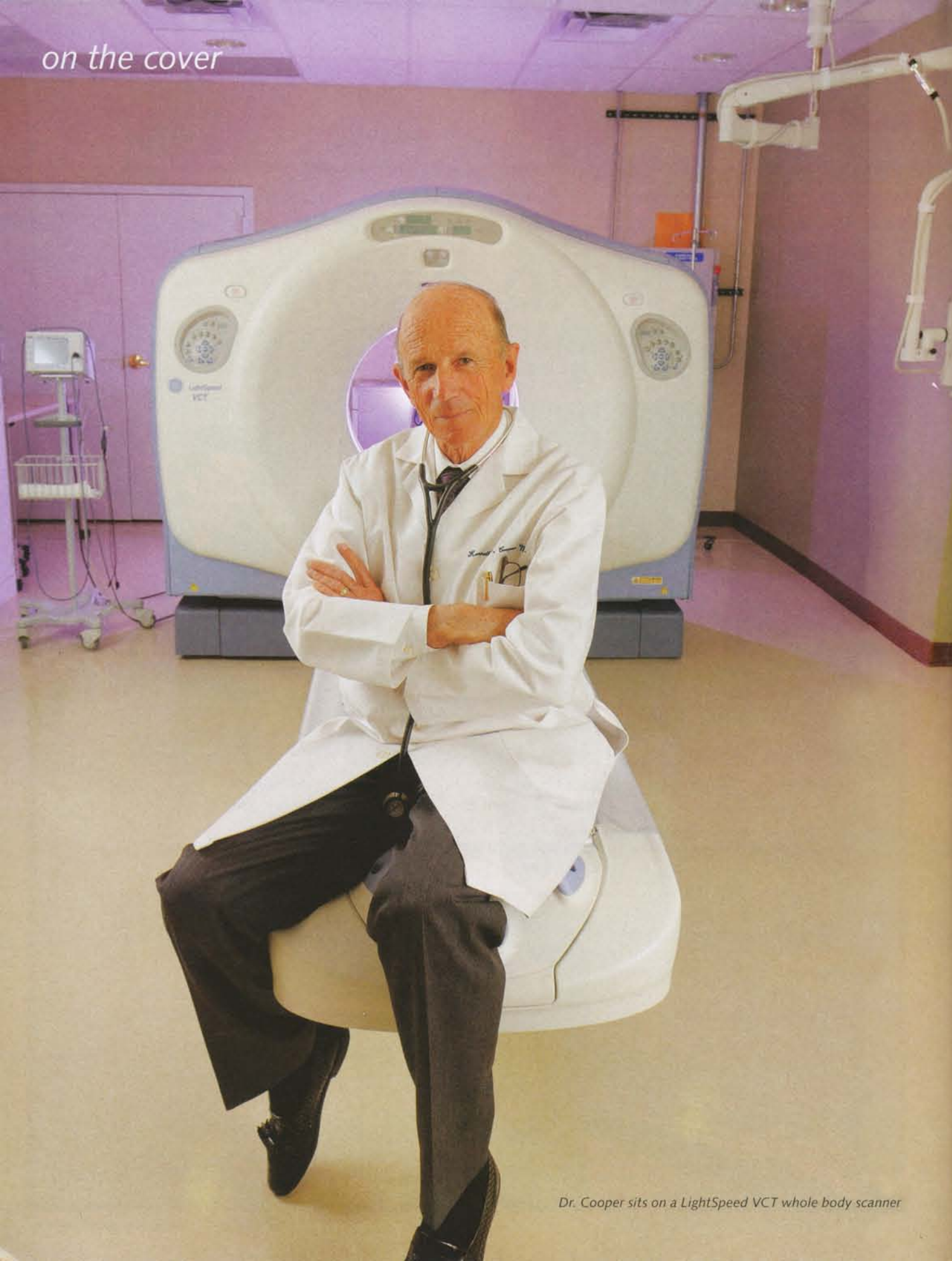
- Trans fats have been eliminated from most snack foods in the United States, saving what Cooper believes to be an estimated 60,000 lives per year. Several years ago, the CEO of PepsiCo (which owns Frito Lay) came to Cooper asking how the company could make its snacks less unhealthy. Cooper's response was to take out the trans fats, which he says is "what's killing Americans." So persuasive was he in his argument against trans fats that PepsiCo opted to spend \$67 million to phase them out, without raising the price of its products. The move eventually led to a 2006 FDA mandate to remove trans fats from all food products – a movement that Cooper says is "exploding" around the world.
- He consults with businesses around the world, including Oklahoma City's Devon Energy Corporation, to establish workplace exercise and wellness programs that save literally thousands of dollars per employee. "There are about 15 corporations we work with consistently, and about 350 corporations sending people to consult with us each year," Cooper said. "We have proven that if companies invest in exercise, it reduces absenteeism, increases productivity and helps recruitment."
- He developed the 12-minute and 1.5-mile fitness tests and the Aerobics Point System, all used today by military organizations, amateur and professional athletic teams, law enforcement agencies, and public schools and universities all over the world.
- Under his guidance, CI has built up a volume of research over the years scientifically proving the benefits of diet and exercise. On average, the team publishes at least one major journal article per month. "Research is my basic interest," Cooper said. "What we are trying to do is bridge the gap between faddism and proven data – namely that exercise promotes health and longer life."
- As one example of its cutting-edge research, CI is conducting a \$1 million study to determine the beneficial impact of vitamin supplements. ("I challenge the latest statements that vitamin supplements do no good," Cooper said.)



*Dr. Cooper in the early days of the Cooper Clinic*

- The American Heart Association's annual HeartWalk, celebrating its 20th anniversary last year, was co-created by Cooper. Initially raising \$50,000, last year it generated \$3.8 million nationwide.
- His syndicated radio show aired in 200 cities each Saturday morning for almost nine years, ending in 2008. Cooper responded personally to call-in questions from the audience, and says he truly regretted when time constraints made it impossible to continue.
- He worked with Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett to develop the groundbreaking "This City is Going on a Diet" program, in which city residents lost a collective total of 1 million pounds. "I'm proud of Oklahoma City for what people have done," Cooper observed. "I mention it when I'm doing presentations, and I'm encouraging other cities like Dallas to do it."
- The nationally syndicated comic strip "Crankshaft" mentioned the Cooper Institute in several cartoons after one of its staff lost more than 200 pounds with Cooper's help. "People mentioned the cartoon to me before I ever saw it," he said. "If you're in the cartoons, you know you've achieved something."





Dr. Cooper sits on a LightSpeed VCT whole body scanner

Cooper's unbounded energy is reflected in his communication style – he speaks rapidly, and every comment is precise and loaded with information. It's a necessary thing, considering all the irons he has in the fire. Already a globetrotter, his passport continues to get a regular workout. For instance, trips to Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing to meet with corporate executives and school administrators are planned over the next several months ("Dubya" is likely to tag along). Often, Cooper is accompanied by his son, Dr. Tyler Cooper, a practicing physician who also serves as CEO of Cooper Aerobics Enterprises.

"Thirteen percent of the kids in China are overweight and six to seven percent are obese," Cooper said. "Forty percent of American kids are. It's established that kids who are physically fit get better grades, have a better mindset and are less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol. We've got a disaster facing us in the U.S., but with rare exceptions, I can't get anybody to listen to me here. In China and elsewhere, they are listening."

Believe it or not, the father of aerobics was once pretty hefty himself. A star athlete at Putnam City High School (he played basketball, football and ran track, not to mention jogging three miles to and from school every day), the stress

of medical school caused him to become inactive. His weight ballooned from 168 to 204 pounds, his blood pressure spiked, and at age 29, while water skiing, he thought he was having a heart attack. The incident was a wake-up call, and Cooper immediately began an exercise program. Within six months the extra pounds had dropped away, and his BP returned to normal.

As icing on the cake, a year later he ran in the Boston Marathon.

"If I hadn't changed my lifestyle, I'd already be dead," he said. "Half of my med school class has already died, and most of those left can't travel any more."


After graduating from medical school in 1952, Cooper served 13 years as a flight surgeon in both the U.S. Army and Air Force, including a stint as director of the Aerospace Medical Laboratory in San Antonio. He completed a master's degree in public health at Harvard University in 1962, then in 1963 earned his Ph.D. in exercise physiology.

Fascinated with the changes in muscle tone experienced by astronauts after several days in space, he determined that he wanted to be a science astronaut. Working with NASA, he helped create the conditioning program preparing astronauts for space, along with an anti-deconditioning program to

ULTIMATE PERFORMANCE  
STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY  
THE LUXURY YOU EXPECT ONLY FROM LINCOLN

TEST DRIVE ONE TODAY


**REINVENTING THE DRIVING EXPERIENCE**



2013 LINCOLN MKS

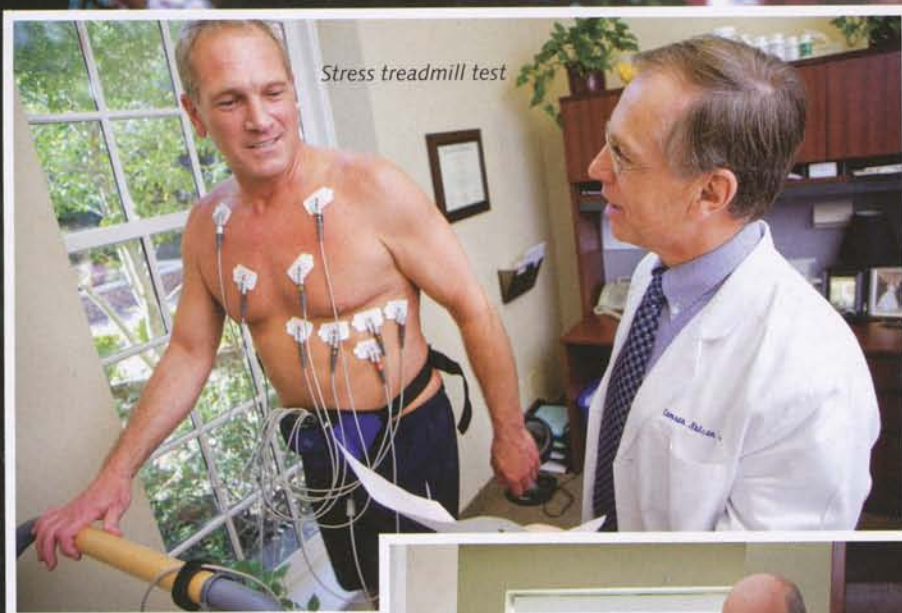
**DIFFEE**  
FORD | LINCOLN

Just West of the Metro  
on I-40, Exit 125  
1-405-262-4546  
www.diffee.com

 LINCOLN



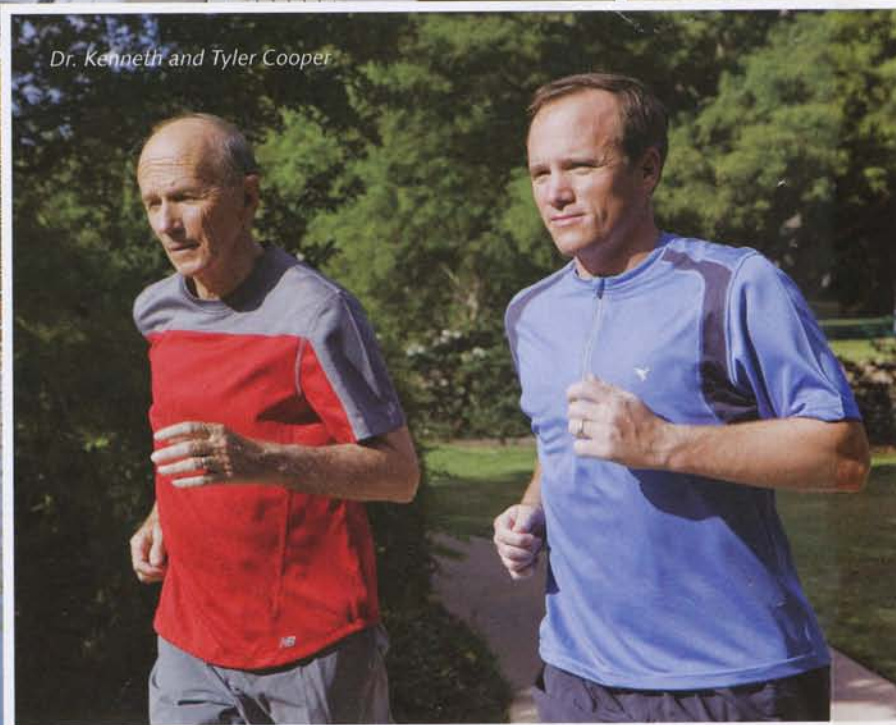
## on the cover



Stress treadmill test



Dr. Kenneth Cooper



Dr. Kenneth and Tyler Cooper

be used on board the spacecraft. Cooper enjoyed working with NASA, but faced with a long wait and no guarantee he'd ever make it into space, he decided he didn't want to spend his career that way.

He left the military in 1970, two years after "Aerobics" was published. Starting with a small office and two employees, over the next decades his tenacity and innovation saw the Cooper Institute grow to a \$55 million operating budget with 550 employees, multiple campuses and some 110,000 patients around the world.

His Oklahoma roots remain important to Cooper; he still owns a home in Norman and frequently makes the trip up I-35 to visit his siblings, nieces and in-laws. A member of the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, he relishes his days growing up in Oklahoma City.

"It's one of my great honors that in 1993 they named a middle school in Oklahoma City after me," Cooper said. "I still love Oklahoma."

Above all, Cooper says his faith and his family are what keep him grounded. He has been married to his wife, Millie, for 52 years. Son Tyler was born in 1970 (the same year CI was founded). Cooper and his wife also have five grandchildren, meaning it's distinctly possible that a third generation of Coopers could be influencing our collective health strategy down the road.

Outside of his family, Cooper says one of the things he finds most gratifying is that most of his personal patients are near his own age.

"My patients don't die; they keep coming back, and many of them are breaking fitness records for their age," he said. "I have one 85-year-old female patient who told me 'Because of you, I forgot to grow old!' That's the kind of stories that keep me going."

