

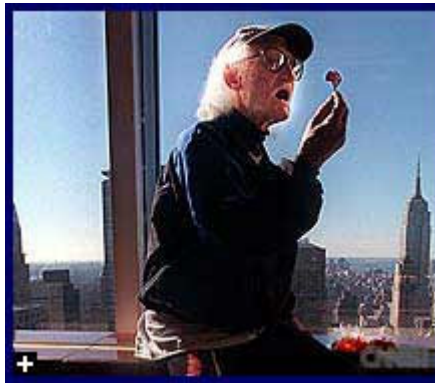
# ***New York City Marathon*** *Sunday, November 1, 1998*

## **`I'm living my youth now'**

### **91-year old marathoner takes on New York**

*Posted: Friday October 30, 1998 07:00 PM*

NEW YORK, New York (AP) -- When Sam Gadless was in his 70s, his body was a mess and a doctor told him he might not last much longer. He decided it was a good time to start life over again.



"Age is just numbers," Gadless said. "When I was younger, I was sick as could be. I'm living my youth now" AP

On Sunday, at 91, he's competing in his seventh New York City Marathon, along with his son and grandson. "If you can do it, I can do it!" he yelled at fellow runners last year at the starting line.

This year, as the 26.2-mile (42.16-kilometer) marathon's oldest entrant, the Boca Raton, Florida, resident hopes to beat his 1997 time of 8 hours, 10 minutes. It would be a triumph of mind over body, since Gadless missed six weeks of training this year recovering from being hit by a car September 1.

If the Einstein lookalike with the flying white hair makes it, he'll cross the finish line in Central Park Sunday wearing a peace-and-love ring in his left ear.

"I had one ear pierced for my 90th birthday. There was so much killing in my life that we need to run for love and peace," said Gadless, his English thick with the Yiddish he spoke as a child in his native Poland.

He survived German attacks in World War I and escaped the Holocaust by boarding a ship in 1939 and landing in Cuba. He spent nearly two years there before sailing to New York.

Later, as an immigrant tailor in California, he chain-smoked his way through hard times until an ulcer forced him to have more than half his stomach removed.

"I was very unhealthy all my life and I don't have good genes," he says. "My father died when he was 42."

When he moved to Florida during the 1970s, he had arthritis so severe he couldn't lift an arm and had to have the bones in his big toes replaced with artificial ones. His cholesterol and blood pressure were high and he was a borderline diabetic.

The future looked bleak, a doctor told him.

Then Gadless started reading "Prevention" magazine and other health publications. He entered his first New York City Marathon at 85, and has since completed races in Los Angeles, Buffalo, Miami and Orlando.

His secret?

He cooks his own meals, skipping meat, dairy products, sugar and white flour, and eating fruit, vegetables and grains - with some red wine. He also eats red salmon, sardines and white tuna.

"I don't eat the bad stuff, like milkshakes, or the (matzo ball) soup my wife used to cook," with butter or chicken fat.

He's replaced it with a 16-bean soup. "And I eat garlic by the pound. It's an antibiotic," he said.

Gadless trains by doing aerobics, stretching and swimming, as well as light weightlifting. And he walks up to 40 miles (60 kilometers) per week, alternating among 10 pairs of shoes.

He has to watch his money, since he lives off a \$755 monthly Social Security check, plus help from his children. He lost his life's savings paying his late wife's nursing home bills.

Gadless goes into Sunday's race hoping to acquire a corporate sponsor. This year, marathon sponsors didn't pay his expenses to New York as they had in the past.

Three years ago he was surprised by his 56-year-old son, Lou, and grandson, Steve, 26. They trained secretly so they could be at the start line as "Team Gadless" with T-shirts that read, "Three Generations" -

one with "Grandpa," the others "Son" and "Grandson."

"Age is just numbers," Gadless said. "When I was younger, I was sick as could be. I'm living my youth now."