

# Dick Clark's brave struggle to walk again

by MICHAEL GLYNN and ROBIN MIZRAHI

**D**ick Clark is desperately battling back after the massive stroke that robbed him of the ability to talk or speak - but friends say the TV legend still wants to be in New York for his annual New Year's Rockin' Eve Special. It's a tall order for Dick, 76, the man whose eternally youthful looks earned him the title of America's Oldest Living Teenager. Sources close to the former American Bandstand host

*"His recovery has been amazing"*

by his speech is still slurred and, as these first photos since his stroke last December show, he needs the aid of a cane or a walker and is pushed in a wheelchair when he's tired. But brave Dick - who has produced and hosted Rockin' Eve for 32 years - has vowed to make it to Times Square for the dropping of the ball and the countdown to 2006. Dick is definitely planning on being there in New York on top of the Times Square building," said an insider. "He's been practicing

counting backward for months.

"His speech is still slow, but he's starting to say whole sentences at a time. Sometimes his speech suddenly slurs, but he's gone from being unintelligible to speaking in full sentences.

"From where Dick was just after his stroke, his recovery has been amazing."

For months, Dick couldn't leave his Malibu home. But, according to the friend, he now leaves twice a week to go to Burbank, where he owns a house near his old office. He spends a few hours going through mail with his assistant and then goes to a nearby hospital for therapy.

When approached by The National Enquirer outside his Burbank office-home, Dick refused to talk about the New Year's special.

He paused before slowly telling a reporter: "I have nothing to say. I have no comment."

Dick still showed signs of a sharp mind, joking with his nurse and companion as he was wheeled down the street.

But every few seconds the star's ailing health became clear as he broke into a coughing fit lasting several seconds. At one point, a nurse had to run inside to collect tissues to wipe his



**STRUGGLING:** Dick today and, right inset, in better days on the New Year's Eve special

mouth for him.

Meanwhile, another pal says that Dick has tackled his recovery with amazing fervor.

"He puts every ounce of his strength and concentration into his daily physical and

speech therapy," said the friend.

Added the insider: "Dick walks daily on his treadmill - he holds the handles and walks as the treadmill goes on a slow speed. He'll do it for up to an hour at a time.

"He also has a physical therapist, walking therapist and speech therapist. All three come to his house every day to work with him. Dick has taken on his recovery like a full-time job.

"He has to use his walker

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