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----- Wednesday, October 29, 2003 -----

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- 1 - Draper here... The Big Scoop

Shawn Perine, writer-at-large for Flex magazine and creator of the informative and entertaining website, IronAge, requested a telephone interview for an upcoming article. We would set up a date for the conversation; Shawn would ask a series of exciting questions to which I would respond with equally exciting answers, all to be completed in 90 exciting minutes. Any sane person would have said, "Sure." Not me. Instead, I sent the following letter.

Dear Shawn,

It's a compliment to be interviewed and I appreciate the exposure and attention and the thought that someone might be interested in what I have to say. Truth is I've read too many over-the-phone taped dialogues in which I sound as provocative and enlightening and entertaining as an old plowhorse snortin' in the barn. Try as I might, no expression or passion is conveyed without voice inflection, gestures or the use of the right words. Bright spontaneity is what you hope for and redundancy is what you get. "That's what I said, yeah, but that's not what I meant to say" is my agitated reaction to statements I throw out on tape. The truth hurts, I guess, and my on-the-spot articulation is for the birds. Plus, I am not fond of the phone and the anticipation of phone calls -- gives me hives, very itchy. Jeez, alright already, Bomber. With this in mind, let me mess with my keyboard instead.

Hardcore muscle-builders are a strange lot. Excuse me, time to light the incense and chant... DD

Shawn is a very cool guy, knows how to deal with the mentally disadvantaged and emotionally challenged, and said, "Whatever."

This is part one of the interview; next week's newsletter will be the second part, the final of two. When the article in its edited form will be published we do not know. Be sure you'll be the first to hear.

Part One:

The short background you requested: Born in Secaucus, N.J., in April of '42; moved to Santa Monica in early summer of '63, 21 years later. Worked for Weider Barbell Co. during that time till '69 and also did some work in Hollywood and began working in heavy wood. I won Jersey in '63, America in '65, Universe in '66 and World in '70, generally competing at 230, plus or minus, at six feet.

Q) Dave, you and Governor Schwarzenegger were friends and training partners during his first few years in America. How did that come about?

- a) What was your early impression of him?
- b) Are you surprised by his latest achievement?

I met Arnold in Miami a week after he arrived in the New York area in the fall of '68. He was competing in the Mr. Universe contest, which Frank Zane won and in which I was appearing as a guest poser. We met backstage amid the mass of busy contenders as we prepared for the evening show. Dimly lit, crowded, confusing, oily and hot, I made the best of the introduction. Arnold was bright-eyed, smiling broadly, at ease with the excitement, eager to please, child-like -- a very large and pulsating sponge soaking up every bit of his surroundings. I noticed immediately this tall and muscular fellow was aware, astute, a step ahead and to the right of the guy next to him and, indeed, very clever. I noted, too, thank God, that he was lovable.

He is the governor of California and I am not surprised. In the '80s when there were early signs of his political interests, I thought, "But, of course. That's what Arnold does best. He governs." The race was interesting, fun, nuts and I hoped he'd win, thought he would, glad he did and trust he'll do a good job, better than anyone else could do.

Q) How did you first come to meet Joe Weider? So there was no Gold's when you first came over? What was it like training at the Dungeon?

My first set of weights consisted of a 16" bar and four 10s, 7 1/2s, 5s, 3 1/2s and 1 1/4s. They sat on the sidewalk in front of our house, my father and brothers peering over my shoulder as I tried to make sense of them. I was 10, the iron weighed a ton and the family fan club quickly lost interest. Who remembers the details of discovery, but I pushed and pulled and rolled that iron in all directions over the years, in the basement on an old mattress, in the corner of a bedroom occupied by me and two bigger brothers and in the yard under a rotting maple. Over time by accident and luck and the grace of God, I grew, and my high school gym teacher began calling me "Arms." Time for more weight and another bar or two.

Oddly enough, or wouldn't-ya-know-it, the weights were made by Weider and his offices, foldout couch and shower, showroom, research clinic (an imaginary space) and warehouse -- the whole catastrophe -- was in Union City, only a bus ride and long walk from where I lived. I found myself on the doorstep of Weider Barbell Co. making purchases with my teenage fortune. Leroy Colbert, slick as a panther, made sure I got what I needed -- bars, collars and plates -- and gave me a heart full of inspiration based on a knowing grin and huge and powerful muscles. I measured his arms at 20 and a half, cold as ice.

One day while struggling toward a bulky 220 pounds or whatever and adding a pair of 35s to my collection, I met Joe Weider at the loading platform who asked me how he looked -- what can ya say? -- and did I want a part-time job. The answer to the second question was easy. Sure; it's me and Leroy and seated dumbbell alternate curls in the stockroom. Six months later after winning Mr. N.J., I transferred to the other side of the world, California. The Beach Boys were singing "Surfer Girl."

California has a bad rap today because the world is full of dumb people, but remains the land of wonder and plenty. Santa Monica was the Garden of Eden after 21 years in the Garden State and pig farms and swamps and dirty rivers. The Dungeon was a palace where the original kings and princes and knights and warriors met to play noble games -- my gym and I'm proud of it, bub. It was also dark and dank and crumbling; it was broken down and fixed and broken again. It was a large, awful space dug out of the ground on the corner of 4th and Broadway upon which sat a century-old hotel and its faulty plumbing. But, oh, the atmosphere oozed from every rusty bent-bar and pair of rattling dumbbells, every clang of steel, every heated set and burning rep. The 2x4s held together by carpenter's nails to suggest a bench supported the back of George Eiferman as he slowly did his perfect reps with 425. Peanuts West moved mucho iron from that

power rack of oversized beams in the middle of the puddle of diluted beer dripping from the upstairs time-warped tavern, a watering hole for the old and inebriated.

Atmosphere doesn't come from a paint brush or a wall decoration or an expensive carpet, it comes from the passing of time over a place or a thing, the heavy impression of memory, the lingering breath and experience of original characters who live once and forever: Reeves, Eiferman, Gene Shuey, Zabo, Joe Gold, Artie Zeller, Chuck Collras, Chuck Pendleton, Dick Dubois, John Tristram, Hugo Labra, Danny Vafiadis, Steve Merjanean, Chuck Ahrens. Environment can supercharge the air or it can bury you alive. The Dungeon, once the Muscle Beach of sand and sea and finally displaced to the Muscle Beach Gym on 4th, became the launching pad of the greatest era of bodybuilding for the world's greatest bodies.

In the middle of the '60s the Dungeon ironically offered itself up as a sacrifice to the growing population and man's hungry needs; as Joni Mitchell predicted, "They put up a parking lot." The subterranean castle became a five-story parking garage.

Enter Joe Gold's Gym. Talk about solid, bold and mighty.

Q) What was it like training in Gold's back then?

a) Who else was training there with you?

b) Is it true that you were its first member? If so, how did that happen?

I don't know how it is for you, but changing gyms in the middle of life is like trading your faithful old dog for a new one. No way, no thanks; I like the way he drools. I sat there on ground level with the bright light of day pouring through the windows and skylights of Joe's first muscle emporium, surrounded by walls of mirrors and Olympic bars that weren't bent and dumbbells that weren't cracked and steel machinery that purred and hummed. I sat there and stood and walked in a circle and sat. I didn't know what to do. The mirrors were immediate enemies and that I couldn't hide in dark, shadowy corners was uncomfortable, almost miserable. But there's a clean and working toilet at the top of the stairs -- the relief, you have no idea -- and there's a huge spotless shower. I lay down and proceeded to knock out reps with a straight, well-knurled and rust-free bar without picking up a splinter in the backside. I can get used to this.

Joe put together a first-class hardcore gym with rugged steel benches of varying dimensions and degrees of incline, oversized pulleys for smoothness, sturdy racks for curling, pressing and squatting and platforms for powerlifting and Olympic lifting. The place was charmed. No crowds, no music, no hustle, no hassle, long hours and Joe said, "It's free, Draper." I had no money so I agreed.

The year was 1966 and it was the beginning of The Golden Era of Bodybuilding. Frank and Christine Zane and Arnold and Franco and Giuliani and Chet Yorton and big Mike Katz showed up in those months throughout '65, '66, '67 and '68. The fever had begun in '62 with Larry Scott and Don Howorth and Bill McArdle out of Vince Gironda's gym and coincided with Bill Pearl at his gym in East LA and Chuck Sipes bending spikes in Northern California, Boyer Coe in Louisiana dueling it out with Casey Viator over the new-age Nautilus contraptions, Sergio in Chicago spreading his wings like an eagle, Dennis Tinnerino and Chris Dickerson in NYC with more to come from under rocks and out of trees. And, you know what was weird? They all trained like animals, they all liked each other and they all looked different.

Different bodies with different minds, chemistry, genes and motives groped about with differing results. Some trained harder than others; some cruised, many were good and a few were great. I hooked up with a Mr. California Muscle Beach original who pointed me in the right direction

and I haven't veered more than five degrees since: straight ahead, around the strains and hurts, with intensity, volume, focus and form. Superset and keep your eye on power, use common sense and depend on your intuition, rest only when you're certain you're fatigued, and watch out for the devils of procrastination, laziness, carelessness and disorder. I adopted the precepts as my credo, chiseled them onto my forehead, the blood dried and the scars remain.

We are halfway through the gory details, Bombers. Hate to leave you hanging on the edge of your seats like this, but that's showbiz. Next week will be here in just seven days.

Engage engines. Push that throttle, raise those flaps and lift that metal skyward with God's strength... Draper

2 - Laree here, taking over with Draper News...

We moved the davedraper.com website and upgraded our store software over the weekend. Had a lot of help from our superb new hosts and the whole process went amazingly well. Still, there are probably a few broken links or missing store features -- if you find anything you think I might want to know about next time you're clicking around davedraper.com, would you take a minute to send me a link to let me know? That would be terrific... you'll be my new best friend.

Here's a link to our host, in case you're in the market for a website or email list hosting company. They're very good, and their servers blaze.

<http://www.hostasaurus.com>

Here's a link to our store in case you have a minute to bang around looking for breaks. If you tried to order in the past and had trouble with our shopping cart, could I beg you to click around and let me know if the problems went away?

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mv?ID=Storefront>

I'm at <mailto:ldraper@davedraper.com>.

3 - IronOnline Bash News

New York City, September 24, 25, 26, 2004 -- All welcome, no prerequisites; it's the modern version of the York picnic, only the buzz is created through the internet. More details to follow, just keep the dates open if you can make the trip. I started a search on the 'net for a hofbrau house in Manhattan; all you can eat meat sounds pretty right-on for our group. Sort of gave up trying to find a park to bbq for a couple hundred out-of-town visitors (hicks, right?) -- tough search in the first place, then Dr. Ken clued me in: No way can we light our fires in downtown Manhattan. Oh, right. Central Park allows groups (sans bbq), but ya gotta get your event -- wedding, whatever -- done and get out of there in 30 minutes. Since most of us will be at least a half-hour late after sorting out how to read a subway route card, I figured we wouldn't fit too well into their parameters. About the hofbrau restaurant scheme, thoughts from NYC residents welcome.

Meanwhile, to keep you intrigued, here's a link to the Bash 03 overview from St. Petersburg, Florida. The one coming up next September will be our fourth annual all-comers fun, food and seminar gathering.

<http://davedraper.com/bash-03-overview.html>

4 - What's New at davedraper.com

October 28... Dave's Florida Bash seminar partner, Tom Incledon, had his research on Ageless Growth accepted by the American College of Nutrition earlier this month. You'll find a link to the abstract on the "what's new" page.

October 27... Lack of Motivation, that's the bottom line for most of us. Dave's got a couple of ideas in last week's column. And from the week before, it's a touchy one for sure, but excellent for all who have ears to hear: World War III, Man Against Fat. Plus, the rest of the weekly articles are in the Draper columns archive if you missed some, 219 in all.

October 23... Photos and a partial guest list of the Chuck Pendleton memorial this past weekend.

October 22... With all the hoopla over Arnold, and by reflection his training days with Dave, I was reminded of Joe Weider's yellowed report of their training partnership in Team Up To Train.

All of this new stuff is here:

<http://davedraper.com/iron-online-whats-new.html>

AOL users click here

5 - Trailing thoughts...

I read Dave's interview notes earlier in the week, several days into my deepest phase of publishing work on Dick Tyler's West Coast Bodybuilding Scene, immersed in Golden Era bodybuilding. Dave and Dick's memories of those sweeter days (feel free to explain to me how nostalgia of anything can be remembered negatively) when physique men from around the country -- there were few women who trained then, and those who did weren't too vocal about it -- jammed a battered suitcase with sweat clothes and made way for a coast, east or west, didn't much matter, probably depended on which was easier to get to by Greyhound.

These coastal musclemen would gather in the fall for the annual contests, sometimes in New York City or Florida, less often in LA, once in a while in Columbus or London. In Dick's writing the same names pop up over and over, names you know, along with a few you probably don't, guys who interested the Tyler journalistic brain for one reason or another, characters all, memorable for their physiques and more so for their personalities. These were and remain men who trained with a passion for the activity, guys Dave calls "originals, not imitators," and if you take a minute to think about that, you'll realize what a great compliment it is. It's something I'd like to be known as, an original, but there's less opportunity for that kind of thing now. In those days one had to be brave to be an original; now it'd take less bravery (the highlight of the compliment), I'd just have to work awfully hard at it, which would sort of make the whole process a gigantic imitation.

In the few years before Muscle Beach melted into the Golden Era, Hoffman's crowd over in York, Pennsylvania, had the camaraderie angle nailed. As a little treat for ya, here's Dr. Al Thomas' York picnic report, reprinted with permission of the late Vic Boff. Physical culturists, take your time and savor the joy of those days we can't duplicate.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=York>

We missed the pre-Christmas target for Dick's book delivery, in case you don't read between lines well. The schedule now is to ship to the printer by December 15, books in hand by the end of January.

For more Golden Era impressions, visit Shawn's site, IronAge:

<http://www.ironage.us/>

Keeping you in suspense for the fun of it,

Laree

mailto:ldraper@davedraper.com

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PS: If you know people who might want to receive this weekly newsletter, forward them this copy and have them send a blank email to:

join-davedraper@dd.lyrishosting.com

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