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- 1 - Draper here... So Long to The Gold

Joe Gold, a good friend, died this past Sunday night; he was 82 years old and heart complications earlier this year initiated a general downslide in his well being. He was active with projects till the end and recognized death as a place where he'd be "reunited with old friends."

He was a tough guy, an authority figure, straight as an arrow piercing the bull's eye. He built his first Gold's gym in Venice, California gym with his own hands and the hands of his buddies in 1964. You know the place; it's where the Golden Era of bodybuilding was conceived and its rambunctious brats grew big and strong. The cinderblock workshop on Pacific Avenue was decked with muscle-building equipment of thick iron engineered and constructed by Joe Gold himself and amused and comforted a rare family of brothers. Artie Zeller, bodybuilding's Van Gough with a Roloflex, composed inspirational portraits of the brawny gang as they restlessly played amid steel muscle-building contraptions, indestructible benches and superior pulley systems.

There's a series of black and white photos taken in the summer of '70 with Frank Zane, Franco, Katz, Arnold, Waller, Zabo and me barging about the upgraded, second-generation, ground-level dungeon. Bare stone walls and smooth-running, heavy metal torture racks stimulate and induce hard training and muscle growth. You can hear the weights rattle and clang as they're loaded on bars, you can feel the strain of sinew and might under hot resistance and you understand muscular satisfaction with every strenuous exhale. The pictures speak, they tell the story.

From that knarly gym, the original among imitations, grew a large population of World Gyms (350 global), a non-pushy, responsible and respectful gym licensing company where fewer jerks and more cool people gather. Until April, Laree and I owned two WGs in central California. After 15 years of duty to goodness, we passed the metal on to our dear friends and confidants. Everybody's happy.

Running a gym is not a laughing matter, I discovered early on, and when confronted with an unknown I'd say, "What would Joe do?" An unknown was, in fact, anything and everything, including the layout of the gym equipment, the collection of past dues, breaking up a fight, implementing rules and regulations, asking troublemakers to leave and maintaining respect and responsibility. What am I, a cop?

"To keep it simple," Joe said, "you run your gym like you run your house. Keep it clean and in good running order. No jerks allowed, members pay on time and if they give you any crap, throw them out. There's peace where there's order."

The gym became a sound refuge for many; it paid its bills and made no money, it sparkled, displayed no graffiti or broken windows and there was not a jerk in sight. All the troublemakers

made their way to the gyms down the street or the next town over, where they were typical, packed jungles. Thanks, Joe; if I had to do it over again, I'd follow your advice again. Integrity before the dollar is worth a fortune.

Because of his authentic Muscle Beach-ness and Mae West days in Las Vegas, his innovative gym equipment design and gym-empire building, his generosity to the underdog, honesty, commonsense and worldly courage and stoicism, The Gold has become good and important things to many people. He's an icon in the subculture that is bodybuilding and physical culture.

An anonymous giver, Joe sort of took Arnold under his wing when the young lad from Austria first arrived in California. Only the folks who train in his gym knew he didn't let Big Bill from Pennsylvania go hungry, unclothed and unsheltered for 25 years, though anyone else would have chased him away with a stick. If you were visiting from out of town and wanted a workout, the place was yours. He gave me woodworking projects when I was down and out, and paid me in advance so I could eat. Zabo, Eddie Giuliani, Steve Strong, Mike Uretz and Arnold will gladly take the microphone from my hand and tell stories of Joe's armor-plated character and fighting spirit. Those who sailed with him during the years he toured as a merchant marine said the ships' captains came to rely on his steadfastness. Joe could poke fun at life without meanness or disrespect and had name for everybody shaped by their nature and mannerisms: The Chief, Nature Boy, 911, Bug Eyes, Slick Dick, X R, The Fish, Doctor Strangelove, The Good Wife, Cyclops.

He took risks when everyone else took shelter. He took aim when others took flight. He walked, hiked and trudged when others stumbled or pulled up lame. They simply don't make them like that anymore. His broad smile lit up a room.

Sometime in 1967 -- spring, I think -- the Muscle Beach Dungeon was losing ground at its subterranean digs. It was then that I pulled up stakes and moved to Joe's facility to carry on my training. Mr. America and Mr. Universe were behind me and the continuation of bodybuilding as a competitive sport and the primary motivator in my life was questionable. Like I say today, I said then, "Why? Time for a real job."

There I sat in Joe's gym on the first day. It was early morning and the sun was blazing through the huge translucent windows facing Pacific Avenue in Venice. I hadn't seen the sunlight this time of day for years, my customary position being at least 20 feet below ground level. I felt self-conscious, almost naked, and the rags I noticed on my back were exactly that: rags on my back. I could see this for the first time because there were mirrors on the walls the size of billboards. Who's the creature? What kind of place is this? I felt as if I'd been extracted from my private and primal world against my will. I don't need no stinking mirror to look at myself. What's that, I hear voices! It sounds like people. There's no shadows, no dark corners, no place out of plain view. They'll see me if I don't do something and quick.

I buried myself under a bench press. Works every time.

Once I got past the sunlight, mirrors and half-dozen morning people, fresh air and sense of the living and breathing, things really kicked in. Like, there were these incredible cable systems with real pulleys six inches in diameter for smooth-rolling action, not the kind of rope pulleys used for drying underwear in the backyard. There were rugged steel benches instead of colossal splintery wood structures, Olympic bars that weren't bent like trailer truck springs and dumbbells that were balanced and machine bolted, not welded one drowsy afternoon in some beefy tan guy's driveway. I felt modern, slightly spoiled and feared I'd get soft, but soon realized gravity is gravity and might is might. Besides, all these contemporary conveniences bore the Joe Gold

signature and they were guaranteed to build big muscles practically overnight. No one made the claim, but you could tell by the way they felt. Just right.

Old Bombers never die, they just fly away. If you see an airborne craft on the horizon tipping its wings, it's probably The Gold saying, "Press on."

Go with God... Dave

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

What I think of most when I think of Joe is his smile, a billion-watter if ever there was one, even up to the final days when we saw him just last week. 82 years old, never needed glasses, had a gorgeous head of thick white hair, a brilliant smile, perfect hearing, his brain as sharp as a tack. We'll never know if his beach lifestyle, his weight training and his high protein diet were the dominant factors, but those were part of what made him The Gold. This guy:

<http://www.davedraper.com/photo-joe-gold-venice.html>

3 - IronOnline Bash News

New York City, September 24, 25, 26, 2004

Bash 04, Manhattan here we come! To help with your trip plans, I made a pdf with event details and links to the most popular Manhattan sight-seeing locations. If you're planning to make the trip and haven't made your hotel reservation yet, here's the toll-free number: Crowne Plaza, Times Square, 800-243-6969. And please, drop me an email to add your name to the list once you've made a reservation.

<http://www.davedraper.com/Bash04-event-details.pdf>

4 - What's New at davedraper.com

July 14... Updates to the website this week include Dave's report of our Muscle Beach trip; a long discussion on Sisco & Little's Static Contraction Training (featuring a glimpse of Arthur Jones and Casey Viator); and Nelson Montana's The Bodybuilding Truth now with 11 new e-reports for \$39.95. There's also a new photo archive of the July 4 Muscle Beach show.

July 7... Last week's online article probes Dave's thoughts on the peaks and valleys of training, and his approach to dealing with a downturn. New to our store, John Fair tells the Bob Hoffman story in his fascinating book, Muscletown USA \$24.95, which I think all enthusiasts of training history should have on their bookshelves. In the forum, for those interested in Vince Gironda's training secrets, I'll drop you off at the beginning of a long Gironda thread.

All of this new stuff can be found below:

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

The forum is here:

<http://www.davedraper.com/forum/ubbthreads.php>

5 - Trailing thoughts...

Joe's death brought forth a lot of reminiscing throughout the world of weights, not only among his friends, but also between the guys who grew up knowing of Joe's gym and Dave, Arnold, Frank and the others of that generation and the next who hung there. Younger enthusiasts were inspired to search the web for bodybuilding history, and boomer-aged guys are digging around garages and attics looking for the muscle mags that brightened their teen-aged lives 30 years ago. And not to sell on eBay either, even though the Joe Gold covers are probably fetching more than a couple, three twenties this week.

No, thinking of Joe reminds us of the sweetness and purity for which Muscle Beach and the Golden Era of bodybuilding are known. It brings up a smile, a joy -- and a desire for more, which is exactly what we get when we page through our old muscle mags. Joe and Zabo, Dick and Dave and Artie and Russ, their pictures plastered through the pages, teasing each other, laughing and enjoying their time.

That's what I've been thinking of a lot this week, and considering that our page referencing Joe was five to one the most popular page of the site this week, I think that's what others are thinking of these days, too.

In case you didn't know it was online, here's a sweet reflection from Dave, written several years ago:

<http://www.davedraper.com/joe-gold-dungeon.html>

To take you back a tiny bit farther, Dave gets his start here:

<http://www.davedraper.com/bodybuilder-history.html>

(Much of the Golden Era muscle material is recovered in Dick Tyler's West Coast Bodybuilding Scene, which you can find in our webstore, and enthusiasts who don't have it should add that and Bill Pearl's autobiography, Beyond the Universe, to their archive.)

To add some class to your muscle collection, why don't you grab yourself a limited edition print of Steve Wedan's drawing of Dave's biceps shot. This one's good enough to fit in your house or office, not just your garage gym. No kidding, it's a gem.

<http://www.davedraper.com/steve-wedan-late-morning.html>

Have fun with the memory links and watch yourself on those eBay buys.

Laree

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Quick links to support IronOnline

Dave's new Top Squat

<http://davedraper.com/top-squat.html>

IronOnline bookstore

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

Dave's Bomber Blend whey protein powder
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mv?ID=Bomber>

Super Spectrim, Anabol Naturals, Ageless Growth & Body Ammo
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mv?ID=Supplements>

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