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Daring and slightly presumptuous -- it's only the twenty-ninth, but I'd say we did it again; another \_\_\_\_\_ year in our life on the planet earth. I left a convenient blank space before year for your personal defining word or two. The choices range from magnificent to maleficent or prosperous to disastrous, depending on your perspective, disposition, philosophical bent and reality. Being deep, lifting weights and all, I chose very cool as my descriptive phrase, and Laree, after 10 minutes of scratching her head and going through the dictionary, picked really far-out.

The countdown has begun. I must admit the recent years have come and gone like water dripping from a leaky faucet -- a bit of a nuisance. Alas, I'm no plumber, can't stop the leak, and it continues slowly wearing away the surface upon which it falls and gathering in ponds around me. Though I'm clever and have managed to stay dry by seeking high ground, I look down and wonder how long it will be before my feet are wet, and the all-of-me? Don't tell me it's time for galoshes.

As the old year fades away you can be sure we'll be stirring the fire in the hearth -- gets nippy in central California during the winter -- and listening to the boom of distant fireworks on the beaches along the coast. New Year's, 2005. Impressive.

Who are we, where are we and what have we done; where are we going? As if it wasn't enough to have survived the past 365 days, we now have to answer a bunch of dumb personal questions.

It's not uncommon to review the year gone by, a convenient packet of time, and assess our steps forward and steps back, and determine the place we presently habit. Either by tradition or perchance we count our blessings and total our troubles, score the wins and scorn the losses, value our wise moves and rationalize the foolish ones. Are we more or less, we wonder, better off or worse off, bigger and stronger, fatter or leaner, and how is our health; how are our relationships, friendships and surroundings, our economics, finances and holdings, our standards, values and morals and how about our accomplishments this year and our possibilities for next.

At this juncture, if you're a drinking man or woman, you'll either put the bottle back on the shelf or pour yourself a tall one.

The TV rounds up and defines the year with year-end specials and media reports, neat boxes reminding us of the good, the bad and the ugly. Wow! Aren't you glad you exercise hard, eat the right food and continually look forward? Those fine deeds and exemplary habits enable us to do good, endure the bad and resist the ugly that surround us. You and I admit the world, except for the jerks, is a beautiful place and would be frightening and unbearable if we didn't lift weights and live wisely.

The weights fortify: They add strength to our shoulders, arms, back and legs to fight the enemy, and improve our physical health to resist disease and fatigue. Our character is broadened by their calling and they strengthen our spirit by humbling it. Get ye behind me, wise guy.

They simplify: The order that comes from lifting weights provides order to the mind, ease to one's manners, and calm to the soul. Complexities are defused, snags are untangled and obstacles are overcome when the mind, body and soul are synchronized. One more rep and another... every rep counts... push that iron, bomber.

They modify: Stress can kill and stress can sustain life. The weights and lifting them with keenness take stress by the ear and bring it to practical submission. Resistance training and exercise use stress like a race car utilizes a tank full of high-octane fuel -- to win. How it got there isn't important, how it's dispersed is another story.

They amplify: The clang alone, as metal meets metal, is enough to arouse the emotions and spirits and adrenaline of a passionate lifter. A passionate lifter is anyone, male or female, young or old, who has lifted weights long enough to have gotten hooked for one reason or another, known or unknown. That would be you, me, us and any other bomber by any other name.

They magnify: Who can deny that lifting weights (and eating right -- it's part of the package) doesn't clarify the objects and objectives before you, make you see more clearly and more precisely and add to your creativity. Creativity, like understanding, is one's vision of life magnified. Lift weights long enough -- one tough workout will do it -- and you see what you wouldn't have if you hadn't had. See what I mean? I thought you would.

They identify: You might know who you are, or think you know who you are, or want or need to know who you are. Good. That pile of iron and your will to lift it, those countless sets and innumerable reps, the distinct form and strict concentration -- they are telling signs. Take note. Workout upon workout, day after day, consistently with intensity and resolve -- they will give you a clue. Observe closely. Who you are is who you're becoming with the steel in your hands and the mettle in your heart. Lookin' good... who you are, that is.

They exemplify: There was a time when lifting weights was the weird choice of weird characters. Well, thank God, things have not changed too much. We're still at it and properly proud of it. No one is perfect, including lifters, whatever that means; some lead, some follow, some imitate. The act and the outcome -- the work and the product -- of weightlifters and weightlifting vary with the generation and school from which they come.

Bombers do it because they love it -- even when they don't -- and something vitally important is missing when the weights are silent and still. They glow like a black star and thump like a single heartbeat; they soothe like an ointment, comfort like an old friend, satisfy like cool, clear water to the thirsty and give life like oxygen. They make us rich, yet very few grasp the solid advocate by the handle to push or pull.

I wonder, if the weights made us money -- hard, cold cash -- would the tale to tell be different?

Do I hear someone saying, "Hey, Draper... ya go to the gym, do some benches with the guys, get a pump, go home and have a few beers. What's the big deal?"

Yup. He's the same guy who doesn't now how to fly an imaginary warship above the radar and bomb it. Go figure.

See you there... Draper

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About my past workouts, 2004: I estimate of some 200 workouts, 10 were disappointing (painful, unfulfilling, unsubstantial but acceptable -- what should I do, throw them out?), 50 were merely sufficient -- blips on the screen, 100 were quite satisfactory (orderly, focused, well paced and gratifying) and 40 were superior (sets, reps or weight in excess of expectation, pump and form superior, well-being and rewards exceptional). Not bad for a kid.

About my next workout, the last one before 2005; It will be no record-setter, but, according to the year's previous records, will be thrilling. I shall not demand too much of myself, which is a sure way to achieve plenty. I shall work the gut out of fear and obligation, and go on to things left undone (anything that doesn't hurt) with whatever mood accompanies me on the gym floor. This could mean lighter weight and quicker pace with a grin, or a focused stare of contentment to match a slower pace and a battle against the pleasant gravity of the iron.

I plan to make no enemies of the metal, racks, cables and benches. We are partners this day, the last day of the year, and have many more interlockings before us. Civility -- nay, more than that -- kinship is to be sought from this year forth. I'm aggrieved of unneeded enemies and unwanted foe. I'll fight the good fight, but I'll seek no danger. Lengthen the years of my physical banter and play is my quest, not body-breaking battles to see who's the best.

Blast to last and be the last to blast.

That's what I always say.

Happy New Year and God's blessings

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

Can I ask you something?

Are you ending the year better than you started? Was there something about yourself or your life that you fixed this past year, something you disliked that had been in your face for years and is no more? Something big, something small -- doesn't matter... is there a nag that's gloriously missing?

As the year ends and you find yourself a couple pounds lighter than this time last year, or a couple pounds more muscular -- whatever small progress you recognize -- you have a mellow sense of peace that blankets the whole of 2004, even as you look behind and see a year of turmoil.

Don't you want that for next year?

Right now -- today, this week -- now's the time to make a commitment to change. Not a long list of revolutionary daydream wishes, no, not that sure-fire failure strategy. Instead pick one small thing that with sufficient desire you can make a step of progress this year; you'll find yourself this time next year... accomplished, able to say, "Yes, I'm better than last year."

Fat loss, muscle gain -- these are the things that identify our crowd. But there are others that may nag at you even more. Maybe you do okay in the fitness aspect, but your finances are a mess and your use of a handful of credit cards is destroying your peace of mind.

Do you smoke? Drink too much? Put off bills to buy stuff you can't afford? Eat too much chocolate even if you're not overweight?

What one single thing about yourself bugs you the most?

Wouldn't you like it to be gone next Christmas?

You can catch up with our forum members' thoughts of 2004 -- and share yours -- at the link below. Then find a place, here on our forum board with us or elsewhere, to make yourself accountable. Most of the successful change-makers of IronOnline will tell you that accountability made the difference, and knowing they were soon to report in to others pulled them from pending failure.

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Year2004>

Laree

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