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- 1 - Draper here... The Strong Survive and the Relentless Aspire

I'm home alone. Laree hopped in her wheels and cruised up the coast to visit her mom for a few days. Her mom, Carol, is an amazing, swell, lovely person not much older than me -- a child, one might say -- and a genuine artist. That is, her works in wood are on display in numerous galleries and universities in California and are sighted in states across the country. She works at her art lovingly, devotedly and always, and is, like her daughter and her daughter's spouse, broke. Broke, but rich.

Two of her fine pieces reside in our digs in the woods. I say reside because they are statues of sorts, with heads like busts and have names to add to their lifelike presence. San Maricia is a noble creature, a female saint of purity and refinement. Arrogance is her expression. Then there's Herophilus, I think, the tall one with dangling tree limbs for arms and a stoop to indicate centuries of burden. He's named after the Greek thinker who, coincidentally, once said, "When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless, and intelligence cannot be applied." He went on to say, "Blast it, brothers and sisters!"

Herophilus, a Bomber before our time.

Laree doesn't like to leave me alone for very long because no one takes out the garbage; pizza boxes pile up on the coffee table, beer cans spill, the TV is left on, cigarette butts gather in heaps, the gas stove leaks when improperly shut, and Mugsy invites his friends over to play rugby. This time I promise things will be different. I explain I've been on the tuna and water diet for three days and I'm a new man. She agrees, "You're leaner and more muscular, too, more considerate and taller." I agree.

She went on to say I was looser, more fluid -- flowing. Some folks would attribute that to an increase of mercury in my tuna-dedicated diet. Not likely, I'd quickly point out and refer them to davesalbacore.com, where the world's best canned tuna can be acquired. Dave, a hearty man from Washington, fished commercially before he could play little league baseball. His accumulated research is outlined on his website, and tells us that mercury is found predominantly in older, larger tuna from which tuna steaks and such feasts are prepared. Young, smaller tuna, retaining far less mercury due to factors apart from size, go into canned preparations. Very cool. And, not incidentally, a fetus is most vulnerable to merc poisoning. Hi, mom. What's for dinner?

Dinner already? It's still bright outside. The days are getting longer, at least half-an-hour by my calculations. It's like coming out of darkness and into the light. That's 30 minutes more time to train, repair and grow, if you're an optimist and ambitious. We've turned the corner, gotten through the thick of it, weathered the storm, reached the mountain's peak and it's downhill from here, clear sailing and the road is straight ahead. There's no stopping us now. I shall use the next

months to establish my health and assure a lifetime of training. I shall blast it without detonating the blaster.

You who receive the newsletter and reference the website are sincere in your endeavors to improve yourself. And improving oneself takes on a variety of forms. To many it's plainly and simply getting in shape, dropping a few or many unwanted pounds and firming up. Many more want serious development in muscle size and strength for appearance, sport participation or personal wellbeing. Some seek repair, rejuvenation, a counterbalance to aging, or life-extension and quality in the surrounding years.

I aim for all of the above and much more... all I can get. Am I greedy? Nah. Self-centered? I beg your pardon. Smart? Well, what can one say without sounding boastful? How's this: If your aim was similar, I'd say you were smart. There are a hundred benefits and payoffs for us when we exercise and eat right, why narrow them down to a few isolated purposes, wants and needs? Fill your pockets with the good stuff; shove them down your shirt, pants and socks. They're yours. It's your sacrifice, hard work, commitment and love affair, after all. Reach far, grasp more and be generous; it all comes back home.

Alas, there are always problems along the way. Every good thing, it seems, is accompanied by resistance, and the greater the thing, the greater the resistance. This fact of life we know better than ever, as we practice it day by day in the gym. Training does that. That's why we call it training. "Training's tough. It's tough being tough. Tough toughens. Tough is cool." Herophilus, again?

Tough lifters attack problems head on, there's no other way. They perceive them, identify them, resolve them and apply the solution. You name it.

How about training plateaus? They're nasty. Sticking points plague trainees every time they get comfortable in a routine and take the freedom out of training. Plateaus baffle us and cause us to squirm. And they're as certain and definite as night and day.

Yeah, well, maybe and maybe not. Not everything that looks like and feels like a hairy three-headed snake is a hairy three-headed snake.

Listen... closely. Sticking points might be a shadow somewhere between night and day. I say plateaus are the progress we make when progress hides from our eyes and registers internally only -- beneath the skin, inside the body, within the chemistry -- and in the rough recesses of the mind and psychology: discipline, courage and trust. To carry on when the rewards are not apparent and forthcoming is devotion, passion and daring. But you knew that.

Now, it is wise and good to review your training regularly -- your workouts and your eating regimen -- to determine its value and effectiveness, but it is not smart to doubt it or change it before its time has come. Unless you've installed a no-brainer, dopey workout for some half-witted reason, give it all your heart for four to six weeks (tweaking permitted) before giving up and going on. Some guys and gals, guys mostly, believe it or not, are impatient and distressed when they have not made visible gains in seven to ten days. Rats, another sticking point.

Stick out the sticking points; check your workout intensity, attitude, involvement, pace, form and focus. Here's where the fix usually buries itself. Let your workout do its work; all you have to do is sit back and add the passion, pump, burn and maximum-muscle overload.

If one exercise disturbs you, trade it for another. Point in case: more trainees relate to the bench press as if it were sacrosanct, the leader of the pack, the mountain's peak or the best exercise for building strong bodies 20 ways fast. And when they reach a plateau (scream), the world comes tumbling down around them. It's a pretty good exercise and we all love it... till it falls short of its high and mighty qualifications and guarantees. More shoulders have succumbed to heavy bench pressing, more time is wasted in efforts to achieve a well-formed pec line, and more lifters have hesitated or refused to return to the gym because the bench has failed them... or they it. Toss the faker, the false hope, the overrated troublemaker; swap it for something in the dumbbell department. It'll be there for you another time. The bench is loyal; I'll say that for it.

There comes an intelligent time when changes are needed or you have determined a fresh approach or discovered a new course to your weightlifting advancement. Plateaus and sticking points have been fully examined and confidence and composure move you forward. This is lifting at its best, wise and thoughtful, not hasty, anxious and short-circuited. See you there.

Big problems dress up in short shorts. A good thing once it becomes excessive is no longer good; reach too far and it's no longer smart, expect too much and your smile fades. Over-reaching and daydreaming result in disappointment and discouragement, mean problems difficult to surmount. Don't drag them into your path. Look forward and don't stumble. Look up, but not into the face of the sun. Be real. Be realistic.

Oh, my aching back. Nothing imaginary about an injury, another resistant to the lifter's good. There it is, pain, swelling and despair. My conclusion, and perhaps you agree, is injuries happen and, whether accidental or accumulated overload, we either conquer and learn from them, or we submit and fail by them. They are not pretty, friendly or welcome and to give them room and board is to encourage their stay. After their cruel pounding on the door has come to an end, chase them away with a broom. Train with renewed focus and intention, lightly and tenderly. Where there is no pain there's room for exercise. Where there is pain there's need for loving persuasion. Press on, or pull, if that's all you can do.

The strong survive and the relentless aspire.

Excuses are the major sources of resistance. They are the problems we face every day, whether the problems we face are real or not. South of the border I call them banditos, stinking banditos. No time, too much work, I'm tired, the car, the kids, the crowds, school reports, meetings, engagements, appointments, my dog has fleas.

"What dog? You don't have a dog."

I'll get one.

Did I ever tell you about the guy who joined our gym to rejuvenate his soul? It was more work than he had bargained for and gave it up after two weeks, stating his fear of wearing out his body and accelerating his aging process. Indeed, the aches and pains were evidence of irreparable damage. As he wanted to live to be a ripe old age, he firmly asked to be released of his membership obligation, which was beyond the 10-day grace period. I think he muttered "lawyer" and "sue" as I walked him to the back doors where the dumpster was conveniently located and wished him well in his fabulous life. The guy's life is an excuse.

An excuse is no reason to dismiss your training. Remember the Bomber's criteria for skipping a workout: Unless you're unconscious or bleeding from an open wound, you don't.

Nothing like flying, is there, bombers -- stirring up the air, chasing the wind and cruising on breezes?

God's speed... DD

JOHNNY CARSON -- A BRIGHT LIGHT, A STAR

We all have moments in our lives that are special, those we return to for joy, laughter, warmth, refreshment and affirmation. I have one such moment that I recall frequently: the portion of an hour I spent one evening with Johnny Carson before an audience of millions. I was 25 and it was 1967. I was Mr. Universe and his guest, promoting a forthcoming film called Don't Make Waves. Truthfully, I was a guy from Jersey who lifted weights.

I was backstage in makeup when Johnny came in with a handful of papers, introduced himself and briefly reviewed our on-stage presentation. He was cordial, straightforward, all business, no jokes and I was petrified, my face of stone being dabbed with tan, sticky stuff.

I sat forever in the dim Green Room where guests gathered in limbo before going on stage. This was a comfortable place to relax and enjoy soft drinks and each other's company and watch Johnny's live performance on TV monitors. Have you ever tried to relax before jumping off a cliff, committing Hare Kari, standing on rails before an oncoming train? Someone asked my name and I remember saying, "umma, umma, umma" till she backed away and joined another party. I'd better get my act together.

"Mr. Draper, You're next. Come with me, please."

By now I'm sniveling.

Anticipation kills. Once you're on stage it's great. The studio audience is warm, Johnny's alive, Ed McMann's all smiles, there are bright lights and loud music and you're in one piece and the cameras are rolling. No time to think, just be.

After the pre-arranged Hollywood questions were handily attended and business was complete, I expected to bow, exit stage left and dissolve. Ha. Johnny, my buddy, asked me to stay through the commercial break, whereupon he hoped I would demonstrate my muscular form and physical prowess. Rats. It was early spring when winter fat lingers around the midsection, keeping serious lifters warm and accommodating remnants of their heavy off-season training. I fought successfully to retain my tank top, strategically worn under my sport coat while meeting his muscley requests, a big hairy mutt jumping through hoops, rolling over, playing dead and begging.

Actually, Mr. Carson sat on my back while I did pushups; we performed towel pulls, cooperative freehand exercises, dynamic tension, a duel posing routine and talked about the value and fun of physical fitness. Johnny privately sympathized with my reluctance to be a pile of on-stage muscle and chose another course of entertainment, one where I was involved, in control, lifted up and respectable. I believe he was guiding and protecting us both. I like to think it was beyond professional. I like to think it was personal.

Sounds like you're bragging, Draper.

You betcha. What a great guy, this Johnny Carson. I'm rich.

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

Sure wish I could send you off to a film clip of Dave's appearance on Johnny Carson. Wouldn't that be a hoot! Alas, none exist, or the research crew from E! would have found it when they were collecting the background material for Dave's True Hollywood Story.

Meanwhile, Dave mentioned my mom's art -- sculpture, this is, and some larger than life. If you're curious, I do have a link to the Stellar Somerset Gallery, Palo Alto, where her work shows in February. Once there, click on the word "sculpture," then on the small sculpture images to get a closer look.

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

Dave's not really doing the tuna and water gig right now (he's not drinking, smoking, eating pizza, playing rugby with the cat or burning down the house, either), but he did remember too late that last week's newsletter didn't cover the mercury-in-tuna issue, and wanted this week to address that. Here's a link to Dave's Albacore Tuna, where you'll find the answers to your spouse's mercury concerns at the top link, under the Health and Nutrition tab.

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

Wondering what to have for breakfast when you've had one too many protein drinks, and it takes a dozen scrambled eggs to fill you up? One of the personal trainers in the IronOnline forum designed a new high protein pancake recipe, and our squatting chef Stella is perfecting a high protein cookie recipe. Both these recipes are ultra-low carb, use Bomber Blend and Udo's Wholesome Fast Food powder, and lend themselves well to ingredient adjustments. You almost can't miss with these; it's my new daily breakfast and I'm lovin' it.

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

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

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

April 9th will be a day for the big guys around town, when our friend, Steve Brickman, and his partner, Barney Bolt, present the NorCal Strongman contest here at long-time World Gym member Wayne Shaffer's event park. Competitors can get event and registration information at the NorCal site; the friend-and-spouse spectators will discover in Santa Cruz a fabulous resort weekend spot.

Secret IOL tip: After he competes in the Strongman events, Clay Edgin, our favorite grip guy from the IronOnline Forum, promises to bend some nails and rip some phone books for us, providing he can still move his fingers.

Spectators and competitors alike, get details below on the Strongman event, Wayne Shaffer and his private park, and one of our strongest pals, Clay:

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

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

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

Looks like those of us who are supplement enthusiasts could be in line for another fight for buying rights. The FDA is reviewing its dietary supplement act of 1994, and if not favorably influenced, could make it harder for manufacturers to bring new food supplement products to market. That's not all bad, of course, knowing as we do that some products are bogus and a waste of money at best and downright dangerous at worst. However, it would also mean that people like us would not be able to bring out new products (like Bomber Blend) because we wouldn't be able to afford the testing necessary to prove the safety of a simple whey and casein protein blend. The Health Action Center at citizens.org has prepared an online citizen's response letter in order to make your thoughts heard, which you can access by clicking the link below.

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

Winter and summer, Dave and I round out our personal supplement list with a selection of NOW Foods nutrients. Some are hard to find; others are hard to find in a bottle that lasts longer than a month, so we've made our personal selection available in our online store.

Here are the 12 Now Foods products we added last week:

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

Each time Dave does a written interview we gain insight into something -- him, his training, his faith, or maybe just an endearing story as only he, through crafty elaboration, can tell it. In a toss at new insight, and to give you something to read this weekend, here's Dave's interview with San Diego radio host Dave DePew.

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

As for us, we'll enjoy the rain pattering on the roof and the occasional glimpses of bright blue sky until we drop back by your mailbox next week.

Laree

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Super Spectrim, Anabol Naturals, NSP, NOW Foods, Ageless Growth, Udo's, Body Ammo

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