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- 1 - Draper here... Superman, Super Girl, and Me

I sat in the waiting room of an out-patient surgery clinic, bemused by the piles of magazines placed for the entertainment of the clientele. Magazines have never been a hot item in my prudent life, and there were enough in this one space to have consumed an acre of trees. What a colossal waste of money and resources, I thought. I could buy a double In N Out burger -- protein style -- and a large milk for the price of Field and Stream or Vanity Fair.

There are weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies about teens, women, the glamorous, the overweight, camping, race cars, hiking, Hollywood, baseball, football, mechanics, software, movies, millionaires, the economy and home-making -- nothing about musclebuilding or getting ripped. I stood and was about to protest when a family of three -- mom, dad and daughter -- walked in and beat me to the receptionist's desk. Rats!

I'm an adult... I'll survive. I found a tattered Superman comic in the children's corner and settled in for a good read. My antenna for incoming data remained up and active just in case. Laree, my sweet petunia and Captain of Operations, had an appointment with her doc, who persuaded her to do a series of basic health screenings now that she's 39, going on 39. It's a girl thing. Guys wait till they pass out behind the wheel going 75 on the interstate.

As Superman was about to thwart a major attack on a nuclear facility by stuffing terrorists into a tank of radio-active waste and burying it in the center of the earth, I overheard that the girl accompanied by her parents was being admitted for substantial ankle surgery. Poor kid, just 19. She'd been a competitive athlete all her life -- running, jumping, kicking and scoring -- and the games had taken their toll. Payback at an early age, heartbreak and pain and loss of ability.

Her mom and dad shared her story with another pair of parents in similar circumstances in the waiting room. I tuned in my secret Superman listening powers. At least the parents were deeply sympathetic and not the insensitive whackos who drive their kids to the edge, over the precipice, and finally to the grim operating room.

My kid's scar's bigger than you kid's scar!

As the parents bonded, exchanging the details of the procedures proposed by the attending physicians, I recalled the gloom of my own not-too-different encounters with the scalpel. It is not a delightful experience, as many of you know. After the shock and awe of the injury, there are the pain and realities of disability, the cessation of zealous training, and the mounting disappointments: the doctor visits, the diagnosis, the recommended treatment, the second opinion and the surgery date. Then, there's the anticipation of the dreaded day during which you learn the meaning of aloneness. And just when it becomes too much, there's the long dark moment you stand before the door that separates you from your warm, colorful world and the cold world of

black and white and sharp metallic silver, thick with the hideous and foreboding smell of disinfectant where very serious and mysterious things happen.

Mom says, "Our college girl will train in the rain and run in the sun and race in place 'til red in the face, this day, every season with undying reason." Her dad confesses, "She catches balls tossed in her direction, or slugs them sightless with bold connection. She steals them, too, the lane, the puck and the base, and never comes in last, winning first place." In my corner and to myself I add, "She's a star, a champ, poetry in motion whose life has been altered, emotional commotion."

Where's Laree? It's been 20 minutes. How long do these tests take? I've got things to do. I'm hungry.

I'm sitting on a little crayon-marked tabletop encircled by little crayon-marked chairs studying Superman. The comic's not as big or exciting as it used to be, it seems to me. Besides, Ronnie Coleman makes Superman look like a shrimp. I'm growing up. I'd use an adult chair, if there was one available. The fix-it business is good.

I think of the young athlete under the knife, the trials of life and the tests we endure, and gradually see the bright light that transcends the darkest darkness. I see the streaming dawn of another day, the brilliant silver edge lining the stormy cloud. I see the hope of good times emerging from the bad. She's a heroine now, smiling radiantly, who's more than won a race; she's overcome defeat.

Her mom and dad, each slumped in resignation and their favorite magazine, stare at the glossy pages selling glamour, pleasure cruises and a black high-speed Porsche. They don't see what I see. I wait. It takes eyes to see or the light grows dim. At the first opportunity I wiggle my way between the pair and introduce myself as a concerned parent "with grandchildren of my own. Yes indeed. I couldn't help but notice the young lady's plight and overhear your conversations." That I'm a snoop and like to meddle in other peoples' hardships did not come up.

They are sufficiently bored and become interested in my paternal concern. They know enough about life to realize the impact of the trauma on their precious daughter, but have not exactly regarded it as an opportunity to embrace, nurture, fully experience and appreciate. I certainly do not mention the idiom "That which does not kill you makes you stronger," and dare not say at this moment, "God has a plan for your little girl." But I do give them my positive point of view, the view of someone who knows battle but is outside this particular war zone.

I rambled on. She walked into the procedure room an hour ago, and will be wheeled out in another two. The procedure room is a nifty term for the sterile place where they cut, drill holes, scrape bone, replace, reshape and reattach tendons and ligaments. The first days are up in the air as pain, novelty, initial recovery and adjustment occur in a slowly clarifying haze. Rest and recovery are consuming. From the onset, certainly, she must be offered loving care, but more than that alone, the hope and suggestion of advancement -- physically and mentally -- as she strides to overcome the setbacks thrust upon her. Trials are difficult; they are also the precursors of inspiration. They slow us down, that we may prepare to go faster and further. They sidetrack us, that we may find the true way.

Here's a frightening, all-to-familiar scenario to accompany the load of the injury, the surgery and the recovery: A weak person sits idly as the wound takes its own time to repair. They eat and watch TV (the obvious distractions), grow sorrowful, cynical, lazy and fat. I shudder at the sound of my words, saying them intentionally to provoke the parents. They shake their heads

emphatically, "Not our girl." That's the response I was hoping for, staunch rejection of my disturbing portrait.

If I were she, I'd be as active as possible as soon as possible. If the in-ambulatory days turn into weeks, I'd beg, borrow or steal a wheelchair, a walker, a crutch or a cane and get to the gym. There I'd learn to hoist my body safely and effectively around, as I visited various machines for full-on resistance training. This is not only externally fortifying, the determination and discipline exhibited under duress are self-inspiring, self-stimulating and internally constructive. One comes to know one's self as few individuals do when battling the odds, an awesome achievement to complement one's life.

There's a movement for every muscle group, right down to that well-protected ankle. And with the administration of wisely chosen exercises, the accompanying oxygen- and nutrient-packed blood flow and the positive attitude fueling the whole wonderful process, your body and mind will enjoy accelerated repair and development.

The fields and courts, the team and teammates, the practices and games, and the balls of various shapes and sizes can wait. The champ's in training. And muscle grows strong and injuries heal fast when the athlete is eating right. This is an easy one. A smart athlete eats smaller balanced meals regularly throughout the day with an accent on high protein foods. She'll ingest enough nutrient-high carbs from fresh salads, vegetables and fruit, and useful, non-greasy fats (low in triglycerides) offering plenty of essential fatty acids. That means no junk food, fries, sugar and pop, Pop. Fact is, the entire family will sparkle from practicing the simple plan... but you knew that.

Here's my card. You might suggest the young gazelle meet me at the wilds of the gym when she's ready. I may be an old bear, but I can clear a tidy path for her in the right direction. You two can tag along, too, if you'd like to.

Do either of you fly; are you afraid of heights? I have an imaginary bomber parked outside, if you're interested in taking to the sky. My friends and I do it all the time. There's no way like up.

C'mon. It's a pretty afternoon. Let the sunshine in.

The Bomber

2 - Laree here, taking over with online news

I was looking at our newsletter logs this morning to see what kind of links have been the most popular in this section over the past couple of years and, aside from the davedraper.com product or event reports and photos, by far the most popular click-throughs from the newsletter were links to squat-related articles. By far, as in 2-to-1 over other topics.

This screams for a recap, so here are the top five.

1) Most-used newsletter link: How to Squat -- simple instruction to learn functional squat form
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=HowToSquat>

2) Second most-visited: High-rep squat workouts
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=20RepSquats>

3) Third most-popular squatting link: A lengthy forum discussion with squat form instructions

<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Squat-technique>

4) Fourth on this list: Another forum discussion, this one on simple squat tips
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=SquatTips>

5) Fifth: An excerpt from Randy Strossen's Super Squats book
<http://www.davedraper.com/super-squats.html>

And of course an archive like this wouldn't be complete without the following links:

~ Correct squat form and protect shoulders with Dave's Top Squat device:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=TopSquat>

~ Spend your morning break tripping around our wiki database for excellent information and links to squat technique tips on the web:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Wiki-Squat-Archive>

Next time you see me, I'll be a real techie; I'm going to school next week for MySQL/PHP web database and programming instruction. I plan to use it for our upcoming baby names library subscription business.

Just kidding.

I'm taking a 4-foot stick and a single kettlebell for workouts. Would you have guessed?

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Pearl/Draper seminar DVD:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Pearl-Draper-DVD>

IronOnline forum:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Forum>

IronOnline health and fitness database:
<http://www.healthandfitnesswiki.com>

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

Dave's Top Squat:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=TopSquat>

Dave's thick bar handles:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=ThickBarHandles>

IronOnline bookstore:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Books>

Super Spectrim, Anabol Naturals, NSP, NOW Foods, Ageless Growth, Udo's, Body Ammo:
<http://www.davedraper.com/go4x.mvc?ID=Supplements>

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