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Printable pdf version of this newsletter:
<http://davedraper.com/pdfs/irononline443.pdf>

You'll also find Dave's column online at the link below.
<http://davedraper.com/url/column.php>

1 – Draper here... Ah, the Good Old Days

I remember when weights were 17 cents a pound, I grew like a weed and muscle aches were some sort of mystery my parents grumbled about.

Recollection is an inevitable, involuntary and necessary process. It can be profitable, instructive, entertaining and insightful and painfully dull. And recollections, memories, can be ominous; guilt, fear and doubt are not infrequently lurking in their shadows.

Occasionally I'll recall the past purposefully to awaken my brain, arouse my wits, stir my thoughts and put current events into perspective. Besides, wandering the halls of days gone-by can be plain fun, snoozy and musey. I compare then to now and determine what's next. However, when the moon is out-of-round and its smile faded, retrospection leads to introspection, and often disappointment and bewilderment.

Less than a smile, my past during those periods resembles an edge-of-town junkyard littered with crumpled chassis, dismantled engines, threadbare tires and rusting fenders. Battered witnesses stand clutching the far side of the fence and stare inward. Imagined voices from the deteriorating images call out as a mob, whatta bum, getta job, grow up, what's it all mean, lift and shut up.

My blissful journey of innocent wonder started when I was 10 years old with a heap of battered weights totaling 100 pounds. At ten, 100 pounds sounds serious, grown-up, impressive, huge and worldly.

You heard it all before, but what the heck: There they lay in my designated space on the bedroom floor, dumb, heavy and inert. While my brothers stepped over the dense and confined mess, I crawled under it, into it. I proceeded to haul the clattering and merciless load everywhere I went, like it was treasure, food and shelter, a matter of life and death, the Holy Grail. Perhaps companionship -- he ain't heavy, he's my brother.

Soon enough I was eighteen and the Newark YMCA was my first introduction to working out in a gym. Ha! It was an afterthought crammed into a space adjacent to the boiler room and clogged with Olympic bars and benches from a defunct detention center. Order was non-existent, and neither form nor focus were encouraged; grab 'n hoist was the preferred MO. Move the iron, heft and toss it. I learned something right in learning everything wrong.

When I benched 400 for the first time, I was 19 and training at the far end of a snazzy Vic Tanny's in Jersey City. The place looked more like a tawdry madam's house than a gym, with

red carpeting and chrome weights and mirror-covered walls and ceilings and strange electrical devices that wriggled and vibrated various puffy bodyparts. A few of the occupants -- trendy rascals -- wore leotards and tights.

And me, fresh from the Elizabeth Y -- and plumbers, carpenters and cops, sweaty T-shirts, BO and expletives, splinters, leaky pipes and cold steel.

Anyhow, I pressed the chrome bar adorned with 18 shiny 20-pound plates (biggest in the house and gathered from all corners), two tens and a pair of cutesy chrome collars. The contrivance was silly and unwieldy and the racks upon which it balanced were spindly and chrome and attached tentatively to a bench upholstered in gold-flecked plastic. I could hear the tinkle of weights amid the muzak in the background.

I considered asking for a spot, but the consequences of the request, should it be accepted, were unimaginable. Better alone than assisted by a dapper dude with trembling hands clasped over his tightly shut eyes. I warmed up, paced, peered out the second-story windows at the sparkling nightlife of Journal Square, pawed and sucked in air like a rhino and knocked out one good rep. Nobody cared. Better that way.

It's all history now, in a nutshell, where it belongs.

Nevertheless, next stop, new job, another phase, the warehouse of Weider Barbell Company, alongside Leroy -- you remember Leroy -- for seated dumbbell alternate curls and overhead triceps extensions. A brief stint in Hackensack at American Health Studios precluded a flight destined for LA and the doorstep of Muscle Beach Gym, AKA the Dungeon, the home I'd been looking for.

Good day, sunshine. Hello, Southern California, 1963.

My second outstanding recollection of bench pressing four plates and change -- 440, if my shaggy, braggy memory serves me well -- was shortly before dawn in the dim yellow light of the silent, empty, grim and wonderful Muscle Beach Dungeon. I stared at the bent bar long after the clang of the last plate had ceased. What a stark contrast to the perky atmosphere 3,000 miles east and six months earlier. Freedom in captivity.

The clearly homemade-in-the-USA wooden bench had no shortage of splinters and wobbles and incorrect body-accommodating measurements -- low to the ground, wide as an ironing board with short, precarious uprights. No padding.

First attempt, after numbing doubt, resulted in the ever-popular, noisy and embarrassing survival movement -- slowly tipping the bar to the right and then swiftly tipping to the left, a graceless method of unloading the bar of excess plates. Slam Bam.

Second attempt, after self-castigation and vigorous rib-rubbing, the bar now bent convincingly across the chest, was rotated from the sternum to the hips, where movement ceased, and I was forced against all laws of physics and degrees of tolerable pain, to sit upright and maneuver the deadly iron from my lap to the floor several light-years away. I saw stars.

Third attempt, after unacceptable thoughts of failure under the bar and unbearable images of ascending the gym steps in defeat, I blew out one honest rep. At the same moment, early-morning strongman, Steve Merjanian, emerged from the sunlit Netherlands above and greeted me with cheers, "What's up, Drapes?" Not much, Steve.

What elevated the weight is beyond me: muscle and might, power of the mind, fearful emotion, peaking energies, dumb luck, resident ghosts, coincidence, or the right combination of them all? Go figure.

Three years and a lifetime later, Joe Gold, the Maestro, opened the original Gold's Gym, and I merged and evolved -- for good and evil -- with the '60s. A few contests and a few hoorays and a few years and a few beers and it's off to Central California and a few World Gyms. They come and they go, they came and they went, along with 15 or 20 years. Ask Laree, if you don't believe me.

Hello, IronOnline and bombers in the sky and 1999. Welcome 2000. Greetings, Brother Iron, Sister Steel.

Growing up is hard to do, and lifting weights apparently slows down the process. I've never met a musclebuilder who isn't part kid, the better part. Some try to fake it -- me man, me woman -- but it's a bust when they get that last rep or an outstanding pump, and break spontaneously into hulky pirouettes across the gym floor, howling incoherently something like, who's ya momma now, or I'm cool, I'm bad. I think it's healthy and hopeful... endearing and authentic... and dumb.

I feel like a kid at times playing with a bunch of scrappy toys worn out by years of roughhousing. Duct tape works wonders to hold loose ends together, and most wear and tear gets by with a coat of rust-resistant paint or a shot of lubricant. Occasionally, some damaged parts have got to be fixed by a pro.

There ya go, Bomber, good as new. Thanks, Doc.

Alas, some nifty bits and pieces are beyond repair and will be missed: wheels fall off, wing missing, stuffing sticking out. You know, the usual. But that doesn't mean ya can't play and have fun. Kids become increasingly inventive and clever as they grow older.

I go to the gym in an hour, dragging my wagon of toys bumpity-bump. No wings, no wheels, just air and high hopes. Ready for change, ready for the fundamentals.

Maybe I should run for president.

The Bomber

Bomber Blend for a strong, secure, prosperous and happy America.
Lift weights and give thanks.

My name is Dave Drapeless and I approve this message.

2 – Dave's Q&A blog

Last week's updates in Dave's Q&A blog:

- [Focusing on shoulders](#)
- [Cutting the legs for competition](#)
- [High reps for ectomorphs](#)
- [Over 50 and just getting started on a workout program](#)

... where you'll find tidbits from Dave's email outbox, a one-liner or two to clarify something that's been nagging at you.

<http://www.davedraper.com/dd/index.php>

2 - Laree, taking over with IronOnline news

Body alignment starts at the ground and works its way up the body via the fascia beginning at the toes and moving through each joint. Over time and for a variety of reasons, we develop weakness and tightness in various muscles around the joints, which will need to be addressed for good body function. However, if foot problems aren't fixed, the structure will never be fully sound.

Let's take a closer look at what happens when a foot doesn't sit right.

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/fix-the-feet.php>

Last week's discussion of strengthening the weak and loosening the tight muscles that move us through space and hold the joints solidly in place triggered a suggestion to create a new space in the forum. Most of us are older than the average weight training internet junkie, and we've got more functional movement problems. Join us as we sort out some of these issues in the new section: Rehab, Prehab and Movement Patterns.

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/rehab-prehab.php>

I'm a big fan of attending seminars and workshop weekends on topics that have my attention -- website work, book publishing, software, stuff like that.

Since the early '80s, I've been going to day-long or several-day conferences on weight training, including several trips to the big IDEA conferences, which formed much of my thinking, built on my enthusiasm and helped open my eyes to training methods I hadn't seen here in the gym.

Today I got wind of a new conference featuring many of our favorite musclebuilding authors and speakers, and get this, it's ONLINE! No travel fees, hotels, time away from home. Instead, the entire conference will be presented live online, as well as archived for later viewing. 102 hour-long sessions for a bargain price of \$99 if purchased during the early-bird discount window. Here are the rest of the details. I'm in!

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/personal-training-conference.php>

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IronOnline forum:

<http://www.davedraper.com/url/iol.php>

Dave's Q&A Blog:

<http://davedraper.com/dd/>

IronOnline blog:

<http://davedraper.com/blog/>

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

Dave's Bomber Blend whey protein powder:
<http://davedraper.com/url/blend.php>

Pearl/Draper seminar dvd:
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