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Printable pdf version of this newsletter:
<http://davedraper.com/pdfs/irononline460.pdf>

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

1 - Draper here... Where Were You In The Day?

Each of us has a story to tell, whether we're 14 or 40, 18 or 80. Many are complicated but none is simple. Some are packed, not one is empty. Every one is worth telling but few are heard. Our story is our own. Do you have a favorite tale from your oft-vague life story, one that stirs you and retains its drama and emotion, its colors, scents and sounds?

Of course you do, if you think for a second. You're not sure anyone wants to hear it, yet you recall it and relive it from time to time. I, too, have such a favorite recollection from my dizzy life. Ordinary is its most outstanding feature. Life is largely composed of ordinary stories and somebody's got to tell them.

If you stood on the corner of 4th and Broadway in Santa Monica, California, 45 years ago and looked north toward Wilshire Boulevard in the early morning and spotted a big young dude with blond hair lumbering in your general direction, chances are it was me. If this guy had east coast stamped on his forehead and carried a motley gym bag and was clueless, you should bet on it.

Dum-dee-dum... "Hey mista... ya know weah da dungeon is?" You win... that's me. Who else would be searching for a dark, smelly subterranean dungeon at the crack of dawn within a short walk of the alluring Pacific palisades? Who else sounded like a Jersey hood on the run? It was June of 1963 when I arrived in LAX seeking muscle and might.

George Eifferman, later to become a good friend, picked me up at the budding LA airport, dropped me off at my temporary warehouse digs (couch is in the back... it's getting late... see ya bright and early) and gave me the low-down on the Muscle Beach Gym. He called it the Dungeon, said it was four blocks away and the door was always open. Make yourself at home.

Just as he described it, the door was one of a set of two: sky blue, very tall and dragged when you opened it. I was in, and there I stayed until the gym moved in '66.

One stepped in, dragged the door shut in chilly weather or at the night's end, and immediately descended 14 broad steps, turned right and descended another 8 in the opposite direction. You've arrived: A basement, no windows, little light, less cheer, tons of weight and gobs of atmosphere. Ready? About-face and walk 10 feet and turn 90 degrees left and walk 15 paces to the locker room, AKA the Trap.

Deteriorating 12 by 12 reddish-brown floor tiles shift and scrunch occasionally beneath your feet.

It was two weeks before I dared enter that particular dank inner sanctum. It required hardening of the heart, a gathering of courage, much risk and a little madness to step fully into the grimy trap and another week to chance the shower, and this only after observing my new friend, Mike Bondura (ex-Navy), penetrate the murky cubicle morning after morning and emerge alive, well and clean. 40-watt light bulbs have their advantages, failing to cast generous light and reveal the details of one's surroundings.

The place was large and a proper choice of locations after the original beach-version of Muscle Beach was required by the city councilmen and women to relocate the broad-shouldered nuisance "somewhere else, not upon our white sands for all to see." It was also dim and grim.

White gone gray covered the crumbling plaster walls and half a dozen strategically placed pillars the size of Roman columns held up the place. Other than three or four scattered 60-watt incandescents, the only light that illuminated the Dungeon, was a four-by-twenty-foot stretch of block-glass skylight inserted in the Broadway Ave. sidewalk above the far wall. The light was silver-white and harsh and abundant, but only when the California sun was high in the sky.

Beneath the skylight were arranged two 12' x 12' lifting platforms, grains of Muscle Beach sand still scrunched between layers of hard rubber mat. Drop a marble and it would roll to their centers, where heavy iron was dumped regularly and mercilessly for decades. The designated lifting areas no longer gathered crowds of admiring onlookers. Rather, you could sit upon a reclaimed section of discarded, over-stuffed movie-theater seats arranged at the now-subterranean platforms' edge and doze off. No one would notice, no one would care.

Pausing at the keyboard (computer, not piano) during my recollections, I plotted the length of the Dungeon counting 30 easy paces, or 75 feet, in my mind's eye. Who's gonna argue a foot or two or ten? And the width amounted to 25 paces, or 60 feet. The ample height of 15 feet floor to ceiling forgave the Dungeon its dungeon-ness, accenting the sense of space -- room to reach, to stretch, to expand, to groan and grow.

The temperature was always 68 degrees, no matter what time of day or year. And the smell was as consistent: foul with moldy mustiness and the tang of sweat, but well mixed with oxygen and clean ocean air. Sensory adjustments were painless and quick; you could see, breathe and feel, and in silence most anytime. Joy is found in strange places.

Opposite the front door and clinging to the wall at a 45-degree angle was a second staircase that opened to the rear parking lot. A narrow, thin-stepped contraption, it sagged in the middle and threatened to collapse should it be disturbed. Those who chose the dilapidated structure to enter or escape used it only once, knowing they had pushed their luck. Beneath the ill-stacked stairway was the small mystery room behind a crooked, time-stained yellow door.

Alone one morning, which was often the case, I managed to stir up some endorphins with a volley of PBNs supersettled with side-arm laterals. I dragged a slug of water from the corroded water fountain eight feet from the entry to the ominous mystery room. Feeling pumped and dangerous, I yanked the door open to expose broken wood furnishing, cracked ceramic toilet fixtures, lightless lampshades and framed pictures of someone's long-silent family -- all covered in deathlike dust, damp, moldy and thick as cotton. Spiders and rats (and spirits) retreated in startled wisps. Imprisoned for decades the dust and stink and blackness fought to escape its confines. I shut the door with lightening swiftness, not my place to release voiceless, yet hysterical captives from the past.

Most of the gym's equipment was handmade and clustered in one particular quarter of the cavernous basement. Overhead stood five stories of old hotel and rented rooms and aging occupants in total ignorance of the activities below. We could lift and win and lose and die and no one would care, especially those tipping shots of cheap booze in the saloon above the squat rack. Diluted whiskey and warm beer dripped from soggy plaster overhead to form a puddle beneath the nasty, oversized rack. One slip too many and you're an alcoholic.

I loved the dumbbells (10s to 150s) that sat on splintery 2 x 10s supported by milk crates -- when milk crates were milk crates. They were comprised of plates of every manufacturer collected by every musclehead in Southern California over 25 years, and they were welded together in handy heaps resembling... well... dumbbells. They rattled and pinched and made a monkey of ya one day and a strongman in time, if you persisted.

The benches were bulky and perilous and less attractive and were pieced together by the same guys who welded the dumbbells... and repaired the leaky pipes, hung the front door and decorated the mystery room.

There must have been a sale on sky-blue paint at the local hardware. The only color in the gym was the blue of the benches and the red splotch of their oilcloth coverings. Two movable flat benches, two bench presses, one incline bench, one steep-incline bench, one preacher curl and one beer-soaked squat rack -- what more could an authentic musclehead ask for, besides a pump and burn and a weekly unemployment check?

Other bare necessities included a chinning bar and a set of dipping bars made of galvanized pipe and covered with layers of chalk; an overhead pulley setup for free-swinging plate-loaded cable pulldowns and a long cable and pulley for seated lat rows -- these, the most primitive and effective back-builders in the world. Oh, yes, and one mobile hunk of mirror broken from a larger hunk served anyone who needed to see himself.

There was the homey touch, a couch in a serene area where no equipment but a crudely crafted Roman chair and a scored tumbling mat bursting at the seams were tastefully arranged. Ambiance and modern art. The couch was of the stained and contagious variety you'd hastily circumvent in any frightening alley. At the inside edge of the left front leg my training partner and I hid our chalk. Only we knew it was there.

That's about it. The rest of the place was strewn with Olympic bars of varying degrees of curvature and malfunction and plates that never bent or broke. Impression, imperfection and improvising were the Dungeon's foremost musclebuilding features.

Not to mention Zabo, Dick Dubois, Armand Tanny, Gene Shuey, Sam Martin, Peanuts West, Hugo Labra, Joe Gold, Artie Zeller, Chuck Collras, Chet Yorton, George Eifferman, Reg Lewis, Dick Sweet, Zeus and Thor...

Time to head for the Weight Room to inflate and ignite, pump and burn, soar and fly...

Go... Godspeed... Draper

2 - Dave's Q&A blog

Latest updates in Dave's Q&A blog:

- [Metabolic Diet](#)

- [Undermuscled and overfat](#)
- [Pain in the shoulder](#)
- [Resistance Band Training](#)

... 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>

3 - Laree, taking over with IronOnline news

You know by now I'm fully convinced most everyone who trains who has regular muscle and skeletal pain and those who get injured often in training, can make themselves feel better by a dedicated joint mobility program and by fixing relatively easy structural imbalances caused by one side being too tight and the other too weak.

Obviously we can't fix everything, but I'm 100% sure we can make things better. I'm also absolutely certain this past half-year's effort has halted any arthritis that may have been developing due to poorly moving joints. In fact, let me give you a hint here: That thoracic spine of yours that doesn't move very much is a nest for your growing arthritis. Get after it while you can!

Monday was Day One of my return to regular weight training after six months of corrective exercise rehab. Most of my forum pals can't fathom why I would consider taking that much time away from the gym, and truthfully if I'd have known in advance it would take that long, I wouldn't have done it. But still. Check out the chronic pains that I'd had for months, years or decades and note the use of past tense: these things are fixed.

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

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Dave's Q&A Blog:

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

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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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