

DINOSAUR TRAINING

**LOST SECRETS OF STRENGTH AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Brooks D. Kubik

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	2
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.....	3
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION	6
CHAPTER ONE: THE DINOSAUR ALTERNATIVE.....	7
CHAPTER TWO: PRODUCTIVE TRAINING.....	13
CHAPTER THREE: AN OUTLINE OF DINOSAUR TRAINING	17
CHAPTER FOUR: HARD WORK	26
CHAPTER FIVE: DINOSAUR EXERCISES	33
CHAPTER SIX: ABBREVIATED TRAINING.....	39
CHAPTER SEVEN: HEAVY WEIGHTS	43
CHAPTER EIGHT: POUNDAGE PROGRESSION.....	50
CHAPTER NINE: DEATH SETS	56
CHAPTER TEN: MULTIPLE SETS OF LOW REPS	59
CHAPTER ELEVEN: SINGLES.....	63
CHAPTER TWELVE: THICK BARS.....	67
CHAPTER THIRTEEN: GRIP WORK, PART ONE	70
CHAPTER FOURTEEN: GRIP WORK, PART TWO.....	76
CHAPTER FIFTEEN: LOGS, BARRELS AND HEAVY BAGS	84
CHAPTER SIXTEEN: POWER RACK TRAINING	91
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: A BASIC STRENGTH TRAINING PROGRAM	99
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: KEEP IT SIMPLE!	106
CHAPTER NINETEEN: CONCENTRATE!	115
CHAPTER TWENTY: MORE ON THE MENTAL ASPECTS OF TRAINING	122
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: DO IT FOR YOURSELF.....	132
CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: PERSISTENCE.....	135
CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: THE IRON WILL TO SUCCEED	139
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: FADS, FALLACIES AND PITFALLS	145
CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: JUST DO IT!	149
CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX: NO EXCUSES	152
CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS	156

INTRODUCTION

-- by *William F. Hinbern*, *World Famous Weight Training Authority*, author, collector and seller of *Strongman memorabilia*, books, courses, etc.

Here is the long-awaited strength training manual by Brooks Kubik – National Bench Press Champion and popular magazine writer for the blue bloods of the strength training world. Written for those of us who are interested in STRENGTH rather than the APPEARANCE of strength, here for the first time, he details in one volume many of the most result producing methods for not only packing on the beef but for developing truly useful slabs of muscle in the grand tradition of the oldtime strongmen. If you are looking for an alternative style of training for real honest-to-goodness strength, then this is the ticket!

Somehow in our quest for size and strength we in the Iron Game have lost direction. We float aimlessly like balloons, caught and carried by any vagrant breeze or “new” training system, always changing direction, always moving and never getting anywhere. The author grabs us by the ankles, pulls us back to earth, slaps us across the face like a cold shower, and gives us a refreshing insight, a redefined approach to training for massive, brute strength. He doesn't claim to have invented anything new; rather, he has rediscovered and unearthed the training methods of the old masters, our

forefathers in methodical, progressive resistance training.

Educational, inspirational, practical, this training manual is destined to be a classic strength training textbook and will find a hallowed place in the archives of every serious strength athlete.

If you are serious like me, you will order two copies. One to set on your strength library book shelf and one to use constantly as a source of inspiration till it's dog eared!

After digesting this huge iron pill, I now await my second dose. Volume two.

~*William F. Hinbern*

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Think like a man of action, act like a man of thought.

~Henri Bergson

The purpose of this preface is threefold. First, I want to introduce myself and tell you a little bit about my credentials for writing this book. I do so not to “blow my own horn,” but to offer evidence that I am not yet another of the detested and despicable race of armchair theoreticians who plague the weight training world and who multiply like the maggots they resemble. (You'll hear more about armchair “experts” throughout this book.) Second, I want to tell you why I wrote this book. Third, I want to publicly acknowledge and thank certain people who made this book a reality.

WHO I AM

I am a 38 year old weight lifter. I have been training for over 25 years. I LOVE weight training and the best that it represents, and I have always loved it. I have studied the art of weight training for most of my life. By the way, as a brief aside, that's exactly what productive weight training truly is: an ART...not a science. If anyone ever tries to sell you a book, course or exercise machine based on “scientific” weight training principles, hit him hard and quick and run like hell.

I stand 5'9” and weigh around 225 pounds. I am a former high school wrestler, and won numerous wrestling championships and awards. I lived in Illinois and Ohio when I wrestled. I placed third in the Ohio state collegiate style wrestling championships and won the Illinois state Greco-Roman style wrestling championships. I was a good wrestler in part because I trained hard with the weights. I would have been a much better wrestler if I had known then what I know now. The information in this book is of tremendous value to wrestlers, football players or anyone else who competes in combat sports. The book is about the development of FUNCTIONAL strength. If you are looking for a book for narcissistic pump artists and mirror athletes, look elsewhere.

After high school I went to college, then to law school. I now work as an attorney at a large Midwestern law firm. I'm like most of the guys who will read this book: someone keenly interested in weight training, but not someone who makes his living from the field. From age 33 to age 36 I competed in drug free powerlifting and bench press competition. I lifted in two different organizations. In one, I won three national championships in the bench press, set three American records in the bench press and also set several national meet records, competing in the 198 and 220 pound classes. I also won many state and regional titles and set numerous state and regional records. In the other organization. I won two national championships in the bench press, set over half a dozen American or national meet records, and set three world records in the 220 pound class. My best official lift was the one that won my fifth national championship: 407 pounds. Not too shabby for a middle-aged lawyer.

I also spent quite a bit of time working as an official at powerlifting and bench press meets for one organization, and was honored by being selected runner-up for “male referee of the year” on one occasion.

After winning five national championships in the bench press I decided to take a break from competition and turn to other matters—such as this book and other writing.

Although I do not compete in powerlifting or bench press meets at present, I continue to train regularly and am stronger today than I was when I competed. Some of my current lifts are detailed later on: I won't bore you by repeating those numbers here. Suffice it to say that your author really does train, really does lift heavy weights on a regular basis, has written many articles covering various facets of strength training, is NOT an armchair theorizer, has demonstrated on the lifting platform that his ideas work and has proven—at the highest levels of drug free competition – that he can hold his own with the best in the world. Your author is not a pencil neck, he is not a professional ghost writer who knows nothing about physical

training and he most assuredly is not an academic babbler with no hands-on training experience.

WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

I wrote this book because I love strength training. I wrote this book because I hate what has happened to the Iron Game over the past thirty or forty years. Most importantly, I wrote this book because there is a wealth of training information that is almost impossible to find on the written page. The majority of weight training books are for bodybuilders or pseudo-bodybuilders, not men who are interested in the development of sheer, raw power and tremendous functional strength. This book is an effort to even the score in that respect.

In addition, this book is an effort to make weight training interesting once again. I am tired of seeing the same old boring ideas presented in one look-alike weight training book after another. The Iron Game has been inundated with self-styled experts who really have nothing to offer when it comes to hardcore strength training. Many of the most valuable aspects of strength training have literally been lost—buried in the sands of time, forgotten, neglected and unused. Curiously, those hidden secrets are also the very things that make weight training enjoyable—the things that change it from an activity to an adventure. This book will liven up your training. Think of it as the strength training equivalent of the KAMA SUTRA.

The purpose of this book is to give YOU—and every serious weight training enthusiast who purchases it - a gold mine of LOST IDEAS that really work. Whoever you are, and however much you know about training, this book will include some new information and new ideas for you. And for those of you who have not been involved in the Iron Game for very long, or who have not studied anything other than “modern” training methods, this book will be a revelation.

This book is mental dynamite. It will blow your current training ideas to dust. It will expand your horizons in ways you cannot now even imagine. Have you ever lifted heavy barrels? What about heavy sandbags? Ever use thick bars for your upper body training? Do you do heavy singles? What about rack work? How about bottom position squats and bench presses? Heavy grip work? Pinch grip lifting? Round back lifting? The farmer's walk? Death sets? Two finger deadlifts? Lifting an anvil? Vertical bar lifts? Lever bars? Sledgehammers? This book covers all of those topics and more - much more.

PEOPLE WHO MADE THIS BOOK POSSIBLE

There are a number of people who made this book possible. The first is my wife of 16 years, Ginnie, who never (well, almost never) complained that I loved the keyboard more than I loved her. Thanks, darling.

The second is Bill Hinbern, a TRUE gentleman, and a man who embodies all of the best the Iron Game has to offer. Bill gave me many valuable tips about the practical aspects of publishing and marketing a weight training book. He also proofed and edited the manuscript, supplied much useful information, provided the photo used for the cover drawing and wrote the introduction. Thanks, Bill.

The third is my good friend, Mike Thompson, who has urged me for several years to tackle this project and who always provided encouragement and support. Mike is one of the finest writers in the field, one of the strongest men I have ever met, and has a keener eye for training technique than anyone I know. Thanks, Mike.

The fourth is Bob Whelan. Like Mike, Bob urged me to roll up my sleeves and knock out a book, and like Mike, he was always there when I needed a word of encouragement. Bob is one of the outstanding strength coaches in the world today. Thanks, Bob.

The fifth is Greg Pickett, one of the strongest cellar dwellers in the world, a terrific fan of the Iron Game, and one of the most gracious lifters I ever saw on a powerlifting platform. Greg was the third member of my “writer's support group” as I labored to finish this project, and like the others, he kept me focused and motivated. Thanks, Greg.

The sixth is Kim Wood, Cincinnati Bengal's Strength Coach, with whom I have had many conversations about serious strength training, and who offered numerous ideas that I have

incorporated into these pages. If you give heavy bags and barrels a try and are sore as the devil the next day, don't blame me, blame Kim. It was his idea. Thanks, Kim.

The seventh is Osmo Kiiha, who has supported my efforts by running excerpts from this book as articles in THE IRON MASTER and who has allowed me to advertise the book in THE IRON MASTER. Osmo is a lifter's lifter, a collector's collector and one of the most knowledgeable men in the field. Thanks, Osmo.

The eighth is Dr. Ken Leistner. For my money Dr. Leistner is one of the very best writers of all time in the Iron Game, and one of the men who has played a major role in promoting sane, sensible and productive training. Dr. Leistner gave me permission to include excerpts from his terrific newsletter, THE STEEL TIP, which ran from January, 1985 through December, 1987, and which is one of the best reference sources available on serious strength training. Dr. Leistner has inspired all of us over the years with his terrific articles in POWERLIFTING USA, MUSCULARDEVELOPMENT, IRONMAN, H.I.T. NEWSLETTER, MILO and other magazines. Thanks, Dr. Leistner.

The ninth is Dr. Randall J. Strossen, the author of SUPER SQUATS and IRONMIND®: STRONGERMINDS, STRONGERBODIES, the editor and publisher of John McCallum's KEYS TO PROGRESS, the editor and publisher of John Brookfield's terrific book, MASTERY OF HAND STRENGTH, the editor and publisher of MILO and the owner of IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES, INC. (hereinafter "IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES") which sells some of the best and most unique training equipment available today. Dr. Strossen has been very supportive and has given me much valuable advice in connection with this project. Thanks, Dr. Strossen.

The final person I need to thank is YOU. Thanks for having the desire to improve your knowledge of strength training, thanks for having the confidence in me to purchase this book sight unseen through the mail, and thanks for having the courage, determination, tenacity and strength of mind that it will take to implement the training ideas that I have detailed. Thanks, and best wishes for your training success!

LETS GET TO WORK!

That's a long enough preface for any book. Let's get to work! Turn to chapter one!

I never worry about action, but only about inaction.

~Sir Winston Churchill

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Society is always taken by surprise by any example of common sense.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

I initially planned to make DINOSAUR TRAINING a short (60 to 80 page) manual. I figured I would photocopy the little monster, spiral bind it and give it to friends or sell it to the 20 or 30 people in the world who might be interested in the thing. Then I realized my typewritten manuscript was already over 300 pages or so, and decided I would have to turn it into an honest to goodness book.

That idea almost fell by the wayside when no book printer would quote the job at anything less than 2,000 copies - a number of copies I thought I would never sell in a lifetime of trying. After all, how many people are truly interested in things as old fashioned as heavy iron, hard work, drug free strength training, thick bars, grip work, bags, barrels, and all the rest of what lies between these covers?

Bill Hinbern, Bob Whelan, Greg Pickett and Kim Wood finally convinced me to go ahead with the project, and after a year of writing, proofing and rewriting, DINOSAUR TRAINING was offered to an unsuspecting world.

What happened then was truly astonishing. The first edition of 3,300 copies sold out in about 18 months. The book was reviewed in MILO, THE IRON MASTER, HARD TRAINING, IRONMAN and other magazines, featured on the CYBERPUMP website, and was highly rated by some of the most knowledgeable men in the Game. IRONMIND ENTERPRISES and IRON MAN began retailing it. College and NFL strength coaches read it. The language of DINOSAUR TRAINING began to crop up everywhere you looked; references to "bunnies," "maggots," and "chrome and fern land" became almost commonplace. Those who sold thick bars experienced off the chart sales, and if anyone had had the foresight to sell bags or barrels, he would have made a killing.

All of this was very gratifying, of course, but what has meant the most have been the letters from readers. The notes I treasure most - and I save them all - are often scribbled on the backs of envelopes or other unlikely pieces of stationery. They come from Europe, Asia, Australia, Canada, Mexico and the United States. They share one common theme; they all say, if I may paraphrase, "Thanks for helping me recapture the CHALLENGE, EXCITEMENT and FUN of serious strength training!"

Those letters prompted two related ventures. The first is this second edition of DINOSAUR TRAINING, in revised and expanded form, offering what a number of readers requested in their letters: more training programs.

The second venture is a monthly newsletter called THE DINOSAUR FILES. I started THE FILES in August, 1997, and reader response has been tremendous. If you enjoy DINOSAUR TRAINING, you owe it to yourself to give THE FILES a try. (Order information is in the Appendix to this edition, together with other hard to find sources of valuable training information.)

Many readers have written to tell me that they made some of their best gains ever after reading DINOSAUR TRAINING and incorporating some of its ideas into their workouts. Believe me, guys, this stuff is more than ink on paper. It really works. Give it a try. The results will surprise you.

That's more than enough for one preface. Strap in and hang on for the ride of your life!

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

~Henry Adams

CHAPTER ONE: THE DINOSAUR ALTERNATIVE

The past is but the beginning of a beginning.

~H.G. Wells

*If fifty million people say a foolish thing, it
is still a foolish thing.*

~Anatole France

Weight training is a very simple activity. However, commercial interests, armchair theoreticians and well-intentioned but misguided “experts” have complicated things to the point where virtually no one knows how to train productively anymore. Instead of gyms filled with people taking productive, result-producing workouts, we see gyms throughout the world filled with members whose wild gyrations and frenzied flailing will not build an ounce of muscle or develop any greater level of strength than would be built by a slow game of checkers on a lazy summer day.

WHY DOESN'T ANYONE TRAIN HARD ANYMORE?

Consider the following. Properly performed barbell squats are one of the most productive exercises that anyone can do. But how many gyms are there where more than a small handful of members regularly squat hard and heavy?

Trap bar deadlifts are one of the very best exercises you can do. The trap bar - which runs less than \$ 150 - permits you to train deadlifts harder, safer and much more productively than does an ordinary bar. But how many gyms have a trap bar? How many trainees even know what a trap bar is? How many who lift weights are more concerned about purchasing the latest accessories - brand name shoes, designer label shirts and shorts, “sharp” looking workout gloves and a color coordinated sweatband or baseball cap - than they are about purchasing a trap bar?

If you are interested in building world class strength and power, exercise machines are almost always a total and complete waste of time. But how many gyms are jam-packed with “the latest” high tech training gizmos and chrome plated wonder machines? How many trainees devote virtually all of their energy (I can’t say “effort”) to pushing or pulling against the padded handles of the aforementioned miracle machines?

To develop the ultimate in rugged power and brutal, ferocious strength, you need to include plenty of thick handled barbell training - upper body exercises with a bar that measures 2” to 3” in diameter. But how many gyms offer such bars? How many modern trainees have ever even seen one? Thick handled barbells used to be one of the standard tools of the trade for any strongman worthy of the name. Nowadays virtually no one who lifts weights has ever even considered the possibility of using a thick handled barbell.

Maximum muscular size and strength throughout the entire body can only be developed if you devote tons of effort and gallons of sweat to specialized grip movements - primarily those that involve lifting, carrying and holding enormous poundages with various types of grips and using handles of different shapes and thicknesses. Who do you know who trains that way? How many readers can name even a single member of their gym who regularly practices pinch grip lifting, the farmer's walk, thick bar deadlifting or reverse curls with a 3” diameter bar?

Single rep training is one of the most effective ways to develop an outstanding degree of muscular size and strength. But how many people regularly do singles? How many use a program that consists of NOTHING BUT single reps – including warm ups?

Real results require real effort. You need to work so hard you almost pass out when you do a heavy set. You need to drive yourself to the point where, many times, you literally collapse after the set is over. You must train so hard that one heavy set can make you sore for days. You need to yell and shout and sweat and hurt when you train. But how many people train this way? How many people do you know who take a set of barbell curls and work the set until the bar literally drops out of their hands? How many people do you know who work a

set of squats or deadlifts to the point where they go down and stay down - sometimes for 10 or even 20 minutes? Compare the number of people who train THAT hard to the number of people who regularly spend two hours in the gym without breaking a sweat.

Let's get even more basic. To get bigger, stronger and better conditioned, you need to add weight to the bar whenever you can. Progressive poundages are the name of the game. If you are not adding weight to the bar on a regular basis, you are kidding yourself. But how many people actually try to increase their training poundages? How many members of your gym are content to waltz their way through the same workout, with the same exercises, sets, reps and poundages, year after year after year? I once belonged to a gym where one guy used the same poundages for 12 years. He got married and divorced at least three times during that period. He changed wives more often than he changed exercise poundages. Any of you who go to commercial gyms can doubtless identify half a dozen members who suffer from the same sort of passionate devotion to their exercise poundages.

THE AMAZING ANTICS OF MODERN TRAINEES

The reason why most modern training is non-productive is simple: most people who train with weights nowadays are not interested in serious results. Most people who lift weights do so for reasons that have nothing to do with developing ferocious muscular strength and raw, terrifying power. These are the type of members the modern gyms go out of their way to attract. In fact, they are really the only type of members the modern gyms are interested in having.

Most gyms want members who will be content to play around with aerobic exercises, machine movements and light, light poundages. They cater to members who use the gym for socializing or as a pick-up bar. The LAST thing they want is someone who is interested in serious training.

The typical gym is crammed with non-essential machines, most of which are less than half as functional as if they were designed by a baboon and assembled by an orangutan. The purpose of the machines is to entice members of the public into shelling out their cash to join the establishment and reap the "benefits" of training on what the instructors (who are nothing more than glorified sales-people) tell them are the "latest" and "most scientific and high tech" machines on the market. Ninety percent of the equipment in the average gym could be melted down or sold for scrap without diminishing the value of the place one iota.

What else takes up space in the typical gym? The typical instructor—a mindless goofball who doesn't have the faintest beginning of a glimmer of a shadow of a clue about what productive training is all about. My golden retrievers, Sam and Spenser, could do a better job of training gym members than does the average instructor, manager, or gym owner.

Ask the average instructor or gym owner to demonstrate the one arm deadlift. Ask him about breathing squats. See what he knows about Olympic lifting. Check out his form in the one arm snatch. Watch him try to clean and press bodyweight. Ask him about round back lifting, Joe Hise, the 5x5 system, rack work, Herman Goerner, heavy singles, Clyde Emrich, Indian clubs, the farmer's walk, the Roman column, hip belt squats, barrel lifting, or Arthur Saxon. You'd be amazed at what the guy DOESN'T know. As a group, modern weight training instructors and gym owners are clear proof that some people use the air hoses at gas stations to inflate their heads every day.

Then you have the typical gym member - who is usually young, spoiled, pampered and far more interested in looking pretty than in training hard. In fact, the average gym member would run in terror if you tried to make him train HARD on even a single set of a single exercise. A set of breathing squats would kill him. In fact, a hard set of curls or presses would be more than he could handle. Even WATCHING hard work would make him sick. He'd toss his cookies if he saw a dinosaur train!

Put them all together and you have an institution that promotes mass insanity instead of rational weight training. The idiot machines are designed to let people PRETEND they are lifting weights. The instructors prepare workout programs that let members PRETEND they are training. And the members are perfectly content to go right along with the whole scam.

Weight training today is NOT about getting bigger and stronger. Its entire emphasis is on developing a certain “vogue” look: people train for the sole and exclusive purpose of looking “buff”, “pumped”, “sculpted”, “toned” and “cut”. Everything they do is designed to gain peer approval. Nothing is designed to build the things that really count - the tendons, the ligaments, the skeletal structure, and the all-important but non-showy muscle groups that are the true keys to strength and power (such as the spinal erectors). Appearance is everything, function is nothing.

Modern day trainees base their training almost exclusively on public opinion. They forget that in weight training, as in everything else, public opinion is never to be trusted. Sir Robert Peel said it best: “Public opinion is a compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy and newspaper paragraphs.” Those words describe perfectly the training information available to modern trainees.

THE DINOSAUR ALTERNATIVE

Fortunately, there IS an alternative to the mixed up mess of modern weight training. I call it “the dinosaur alternative.” I chose that name after a friend, whose training ideas parallel my own, referred to the two of us as “dinosaurs.” He was right - that's exactly what we are. To the modern denizens of the chrome and fern pleasure palaces - to the little boys with the “buff and “sculpted” sun-tanned bodies that lack the power to squat with bodyweight for even one rep - to the arm-chair theorizers with their “modern” training systems - we are doubtless so old fashioned as to be objects of scorn and derision.

THE DINOSAUR CHALLENGE

That's perfectly fine. When all of the “modern” trainees can lie down on a flat bench and push a 400 pound barbell with a three inch bar from chest to arms length - and do it without a bench shirt, wrist wraps or drugs - then I'll worry about being old fashioned. When everyone in the chrome and fern crowd can do a strict curl with 160 pounds with that same three inch bar, then I'll think about going to chrome and fern land. When the buffers, pumpers, shapers, sculptors and toners can handle 250 pounds in the seated press with a three inch bar, 300 pounds in the two finger deadlift with a 2 1/2” bar and 500 pounds in the parallel squat (starting from the bottom, with the thighs parallel to the floor, with no super suit and no wraps), then I'll look into this “modern” training stuff. When the arm-chair brigade can walk 200 feet holding two 180 pound “steel suitcases” (one in each hand), clean and press a 220 pound sandbag or lift a 270 pound barrel to the shoulder, then I'll stop reading courses, books and magazines from the 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's, and check out the latest “modern” ideas. But until then, I'm happy to be a living fossil.

MANY WAYS TO BE A DINOSAUR

The rest of this book will detail the ins and outs of dinosaur training. However, let me make one thing perfectly clear. Dinosaur training is shorthand for the type of training I prefer to do in my basement gym. It is NOT a special system of training, the latest breakthrough, or the only way to train hard, heavy, seriously and productively. Anyone who trains hard and heavy on a regular basis is doing dinosaur training as I use the term.

Suppose you choose to do heavy, high rep squats to failure followed by heavy high rep stiff legged deadlifts, followed by heavy-medium rep bench presses, followed by heavy medium rep pulldowns followed by heavy high rep shrugs - a typical program for a devotee of “high intensity training.” Are you training like a dinosaur? Sure!

Suppose you do heavy power cleans for multiple sets of low reps. Are you training like a dinosaur? Sure!

Suppose you follow one of Bradley J. Steiner's basic three day a week total body training programs. Are you training like a dinosaur? Sure!

Suppose you follow the breathing squat program outlined by Dr. Strossen in SUPER SQUATS. Are you training like a dinosaur? Sure!

I use the term dinosaur training primarily to distinguish the way SERIOUS guys train from the nonsense that passes for training at most gyms and weight rooms around the world. There is no “one way” to train productively. There is no “one way” to train hard. There is no “one way” to be a dinosaur.

The way I look at it, there are dinosaurs and there is the rest of the world. If one dinosaur does heavy singles in his training and another does high rep sets with heavy poundages, that's fine. The two men have far more in common with one another than either has in common with the nattily attired, Evian water sipping yuppies at the local “spa.”

The common denominator for all guys who are serious about their training is very simple: THEY TRAIN HARD! They may use different equipment, do different exercises, use different set/rep schemes and so on, but the bottom line is always the same: HARD WORK!

If you need to fit dinosaur training into a simple formula, do this: label it as “GOOD OLD FASHIONED HARD WORK.” Period.

BACK TO OUR ROOTS

Dinosaur training is basic training the way it used to be done before steroids, arm-chair theorizers and commercial interests got things off track- It is like General Patton's philosophy of war: “simple, direct and brutal.” It is rugged, it is tough, and it is demanding. It also is incredibly result-producing. Dinosaur training will be very familiar to some readers, particularly those who are well versed in Iron Game history. It is not “modern” and it is not new. However, there are many aspects of dinosaur training that run the risk of being lost forever in the face of all the glitz and glamour systems publicized and followed by modern lifters. Some aspects of dinosaur training already have been lost or nearly lost, and that makes the job of pulling things back together enormously difficult. As Goethe said. “Everything has been thought of before, but the problem is to think of it again.”

Dinosaur training involves several inter-related principles. Fundamentally, it is a system of strength training. STRENGTH IS EVERYTHING IN DINOSAUR TRAINING. To be a dinosaur, you must literally become obsessed with the idea of adding more and more weight to the bar in every exercise you do. You must revel in the battle against heavier and heavier poundages. You must view the acquisition of raw, pulverizing power and brutal strength as your most important physical goal.

Dinosaurs believe that strength is developed by working with barbells, dumbbells, bags, beams and barrels. Forget about all of the pretty chrome plated machines at the local spa. They weren't necessary 50 years ago and they are not necessary today. More importantly, they are counterproductive.

Dinosaurs train incredibly hard. Many follow the “high intensity” training approach espoused by Dr. Ken Leistner and others. Some follow the time-tested and time-honored breathing squat program popularized by Hise, Berry, Rader, McCallum and more recently by Dr. Strossen in SUPER SQUATS. Others use multiple sets of low reps with heavy, heavy poundages. What all dinosaurs have in common is this: they squeeze every last drop of effort out of their bodies on every heavy set they do. They work so hard that to work harder would be impossible. They drive themselves far beyond the outer limits of mere effort. Their training sessions are barbaric, brutal, and homeric.

Some dinosaurs train so heavy that they use single reps in their training. That's right - they regularly and consistently, week after week, without any “conditioning” programs, “peaking” cycles or “periodization” use weights so heavy they can only do one rep. Hardly anyone trains that way anymore because the research scientists have “conclusively established,” that single reps do not build size or strength. Besides, none of the modern-day “champions” do singles! But wail a minute. Forget about the pencil neck with the slide rule, the pie-charts and the eight week study of half a dozen college freshmen. Forget about the “champion” who owes his size to a pill bottle and a hypodermic needle. Go back to our roots. Look at how guys did it before the days of steroids, science and bull crap. They did singles! There was a time - and it wasn't all that long ago, and it was well documented by contemporaneous accounts - when the biggest and strongest men in the world did lots and lots of heavy singles in their training.

How can the trainee of the 90's discount a training system that - a mere 50 or 60 years ago - produced scores of drug free supermen?

Dinosaurs train without wrist wraps, elbow wraps, knee wraps, super suits or bench shirts. Why? Because this type of "support gear" is intended to REMOVE stress from the joints and muscles you are trying to exercise. Our goal as dinosaurs is to impose as much stress as possible on our bodies. The body responds to stress by growing bigger and stronger. Why sabotage your training efforts by using artificial aids that make your training EASIER when your goal should be to make your training HARDER?

Dinosaurs make their exercises more difficult - and more productive - by training with thick handled barbells and dumbbells. A dinosaur will do all of his presses, curls, bench presses and grip/wrist/forearm work with thick handled barbells or dumbbells. He will use bars that are at least two full inches in diameter, and include even thicker bars for many movements—2 1/2" or even 3" diameter bars. An advanced dinosaur will develop the ability to do CURLS with a thick handled bar that most men could not even lift off the ground.

Dinosaurs believe in plenty of specialized work for the forearms, wrist and grip. And I'm not talking about a few high rep sets of wrist curls with a weight so light my grandmother would sneer at the bar! I'm not talking about rolling a piece of newspaper into a ball and squeezing it for ten seconds (an "exercise" touted in a recent publication for toners). I'm talking about RUGGED stuff - pinch gripping, two finger deadlifts, two finger chins, one finger lifts, thick bar deadlifts, thick bar power cleans, thick bar curls, thick bar reverse curls, vertical bar lifts, one arm deadlifts, bag and barrel lifting, sledge hammer stunts, nail bending and the farmer's walk. You can recognize a dinosaur by his forearms, wrists and hands - they are thick and hard. The hands of a dinosaur bear no resemblance whatsoever to the baby-soil hands of a "toner," a "shaper" or a "pumper."

Dinosaurs use the power rack to train their squats and bench presses from the bottom position. Normally, you start a squat or bench press from the top position and lower the bar to the bottom position. A much more demanding way to perform these movements is to begin from the bottom. In the bench press, a dinosaur begins with the bar resting on pins set so it brushes against the lifter's chest. From this position, the dinosaur drives the bar up and back to arm's length overhead. In the squat, a dinosaur carefully wedges himself under the bar (which rests on pins set at parallel or slightly above) and then drives up to the standing position. It is much, much more difficult to do your squats and benches in this fashion - which is precisely why dinosaurs do them this way.

Dinosaurs like to lift heavy, awkward objects – logs, barrels and heavy sand bags. Anvils are also great. Any big slab of stone - any enormous log - any heavy steel barrel - any heavy bag of sand or lead shot will be a dinosaur's delight. Why? Because lifting heavy, awkward objects builds muscle in ways that barbells cannot duplicate. If you don't believe this, take the strongest guy you know and see how he does at cleaning and pressing a 150 pound water filled barrel, or a 200 pound bag of sand. Ask him to shoulder a 200 pound barrel or a 250 pound bag of sand. Both of you will be astonished at how quickly and thoroughly a heavy bag or barrel can humble even a strong man.

Dinosaurs are very aggressive when they train. They battle the weights. They don't merely lift the bar, they murder it inch by inch. They view training as personal combat. "Me against the bar. No quarter asked, and none given." The rest of the world can combine their exercising with socializing, political debate, idle gossip, chit-chat, shooting the breeze, and trying to score with members of the opposite sex. Thai doesn't bother a dinosaur. Dinosaurs intuitively understand that the gym is the place for one thing and one thing only: ferocious, brutal, back-breaking, mind-numbing savage training.

Most dinosaurs train in home gyms. They are "cellar-dwellers" (or "garage gorillas") and proud of it. The idiocy of the modern gym scene is sheer torture for them. The modern mess causes them deep and unrelenting torment. They MUST stay away from the nonsense and the silliness or it will destroy them. They have to retreat to their subterranean hideaways and escape the madness of the modern muscle scene. But don't let any of that fool you. Contrary to what the gym chains would have you believe, the strongest people who train with weights are the ones who train in basic, almost primitive home training quarters. The average results

of the cellar-dwellers are so far ahead of the average results of the chrome and fern denizens that a comparison would be laughable. Don't think a dinosaur is a weakling because he trains at home – he might very well surprise you.

Dinosaurs don't follow the crowd. Period. Little boys need peer approval. Little boys need a constant barrage of ego pumping from Madison Avenue. Little boys need constant reassurance that they are “doing it right.” Modern trainees cannot do anything unless they do it with the rest of the crowd.

Dinosaurs do it with iron, sweat, blood, toil, and grim determination. It takes character, conviction, courage and strength of mind to lift heavy weights on a regular, sustained basis over a period of years. It takes the same qualities to turn your back on the type of training that everyone else does and train like a dinosaur. Dinosaurs don't NEED peer approval. If they seek any sort of approval, it is the approval they would receive from the MASTERS of the Iron Game if they were present at the dinosaur's training session: Harold Ansorge, Thomas Inch, Apollon, Arthur Saxon, John Y. Smith, Herman Goerner, Louis Cyr, Doug Hepburn, Bob Peoples, William Boone, George Hackenschmidt, Peary Rader, Joe Hise, John McCallum, John Davis, Norb Schemansky and dozens of others too numerous to mention.

Dinosaurs compete with the greats of the past. A dinosaur can tell you exactly how HIS squat compares to that of Milo Steinborn, exactly how HIS bench press compares to that of John Davis and exactly how HIS one arm deadlift compares to that of Thomas Inch.

In short, dinosaurs have the courage - and it DOES take courage - to say “no” to all of the modern bull crap that passes for training advice in today's computerized, televised, homogenized and lobotomized society.

DARE TO JOIN US

Dinosaurs do not fit into the world of modern weight training. We are fossils - relics from a bygone era. The glitz and glitter of the modern muscle scene is not for us. The politics (on stage and off stage, board room and bed room) that control bodybuilding contests hold no interest whatsoever for us. Drug bloated “champions” do nothing for us. We turn our backs on the modern mess. We go back to an earlier era - and a better one - an age when men had honest muscles, honestly developed. We leave the rest of the world to continue its insanity. We realize that our numbers are few, that our numbers will always be few, that very few kindred spirits will ever join us and that we can never be more than an island of sanity in a sea of nonsense. We are the dinosaurs. Dare to join our ranks.

*There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world:
and that is an idea whose time has come.*

~Victor Hugo

Difficulties mastered are opportunities won.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWO: PRODUCTIVE TRAINING

The knowledge of one's strength entails a real mastery over oneself; it breeds energy and courage, helps one over the most difficult tasks of life, and procures contentment and true enjoyment of living.

~George Hackenschmidt

Every person who engages in serious weight training should produce substantial increases in muscular size and strength. Weight training WORKS. It works for everyone. It works for me, it works for my training partners, it works for athletes seeking an edge in their chosen sport, it works for this year's Mr. Everything, it works for the latest powerlifting superstar and it will work for YOU.

If you lift weights in a serious manner you should EXPECT to get bigger and stronger. You should expect to achieve noticeable results quickly. You may not build 18" upper arms or develop the ability to squat 500 pounds and bench press 400 pounds overnight, but you should expect to be markedly bigger and stronger after your first year of serious training.

The problem is, most people produce little or nothing in the way of results from their training. Think about it for a second. How many people do you know who STARTED a weight training program but GAVE UP in a matter of weeks or months? How many people do you know who have trained for years without showing much in the way of results? How many people do you know who ever get beyond intermediate status? How many people who have trained for years are still hovering at a one rep max of 200 or 225 pounds in the bench press, the same poundage in the squat and only a little bit more in the deadlift (IF they squat and deadlift, which few people dare to do)?

Since the majority of people who lift weights achieve little or nothing in the way of results, people have come to believe that weight training does not work. As a variation of this theme, many people believe that weight training only works for a small percentage of "genetically gifted" individuals. Others believe that weight training only works for those who take anabolic steroids.

Anyone who tells you that weight training does not work - or that it only works for genetic supermen - or that it only works for those who take steroids - is WRONG.

WEIGHT TRAINING WORKS! IT WORKS FOR ANY ABLE-BODIED PERSON. You do not need to be some sort of genetic freak to produce results from weight training. Nor do you have to guzzle one anabolic concoction after another or pepper your butt with needle marks to assure a constant stream of chemicals coursing through your blood stream.

All you have to do is train PROPERLY. And that, my friend, brings us to the critical question of the day:

WHAT IS PROPER TRAINING?

I wish I could give you a training program and a simple set of guidelines and tell you that you had everything you needed to know to train properly. But I cannot. There is no single "best" way to train. There is no "best" program. There is no "best" set of training principles. There is no simple answer to the question of what constitutes proper training.

There are many variations of sensible, productive weight training. ALL of them build muscle and strength. ALL of them produce results. No one system of training is better than all of the other systems. However, proper training always involves common elements. These are hard work, abbreviated training programs, progression, good form, and motivation. These five elements are critical to the success of any training program you ever undertake.

Let me give a real life example of how different training philosophies can produce good results as long as the five critical elements are part of the program. Dr. Ken Leistner owns and operates THE IRON ISLAND GYM in New York City. This is one of the finest gyms in the world—possibly THE finest gym in the world. Dr. Leistner is one of the best known, most highly regarded coaches in the business. He has been VERY influential in the growth of

powerlifting, working as a judge and administrator for several of the governing bodies in the sport. He is a regular contributor to POWERLIFTING USA, MILO, and many other publications. He wrote and published THE STEEL TIP for three years in the mid 80's - and many who know the Iron Game inside-out believe that THE STEEL TIP was one of the very best training publications of all time. His knowledge of the Iron Game and his insights into productive weight training literally dwarf those of other so-called "experts."

And Dr. Leistner produces RESULTS - real results in the men and women he coaches. Results like state, regional and national championships in powerlifting...state, regional, national and world records in powerlifting...team championships...men who bench 400 pounds for REPS...men who squat and deadlift 500 pounds for REPS ... athletes who win all-state, all-conference, and all-American honors.

Now here's the interesting part. There are some areas where Dr. Leistner and I are in complete agreement with regard to our respective training philosophies. We both believe in hard work. We both believe in short, brief training sessions. We both believe that food supplements are vastly over-rated. We both believe you can make excellent gains without steroids. We both believe that mental toughness is critical to a lifter's success. We both believe that thick handled barbells and dumbbells are an important aspect of a serious training program...that heavy grip work is mandatory for all serious lifters... and that you can build incredible levels of strength and development by combining weight training exercises with the lifting of heavy, awkward, hard-to-manage objects such as beams, barrels, logs, sandbags or anvils.

But our respective approaches to heavy training also differ in some respects. For many exercises, Dr. Leistner prefers doing one incredibly hard set to absolute muscular exhaustion with as much weight as possible on the bar. Thus, his lifters may do one or two warm-up sets in the squat and then grind out a twenty rep "death set" with 400 pounds on the bar. The squats may be followed immediately by a set of high rep stiff legged deadlifts - say 15 or 20 reps with 330 to 350 pounds. The rest of the workout may consist of something like a single set apiece of bench presses, pulldowns, presses, shrugs, standing curls with a thick handled barbell, and a couple of heavy sets of grip work. A well-conditioned and highly motivated athlete may be able to finish the entire program in 20 to 30 minutes - after which he will lie on the floor in a pool of sweat for many, many minutes. And the lifter may very well lose his lunch halfway through the training session. (Dr. Leistner stocks his gym with strategically located "puke buckets.")

I prefer to do two or three exercises (other than grip or ab work) in any particular session, and I train each exercise for several sets of low reps. I usually do singles on all of my exercises - even the warm-ups. I start light and add weight on each set, working up to my top poundage for the day. I train very hard, but I don't train as hard as the guys at THE IRON ISLAND GYM. I sometimes hit the ground after a heavy set, but I usually stay down only a couple of minutes - and although keeping lunch down is sometimes a problem, I haven't had to invest in a bucket.

Does my approach work? It sure does. Lifting in the Submasters division (ages 33-40), I have won five national championships in the bench press in drug free powerlifting organizations, have set state, regional, national and American records in the bench press, and in one organization, set several world records in the bench press.

My training partners, Bruce Bullock and Ted Solinger, have gained enormously from heavy poundage, low rep work, and heavy singles. Bruce went from 195 to 265 in three years and Ted went from 145 to 195 in about two and a half years. Before they started training under my guidance, they were barely able to handle 95 pounds in the squat for five reps and one rep in the bench press! Ted is approaching a 300 pound bench press and a 400 pound squat - weights three or four times what he used to be able to handle. Bruce has moved his squat to over 450 pounds and his 3" bar bench press (starting from the chest) is up to 325. He also has moved his deadlift from 15 timid, tentative reps with 55 pounds to a single with 585 pounds. He can shoulder a 270 pound barrel - an object THREE times as heavy as his former poundage in the squat or deadlift.

So whose training philosophy is better? Who knows? Who cares? My approach works very well for me, and Dr. Leistner's approach works very well for him. Both approaches work

because they emphasize the essential elements of productive weight training: hard work, abbreviated training, progression, good form and motivation.

OTHER PRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS

Many other productive training systems have been implemented, taught and coached over the years. Peary Rader, the founder of IRON MAN magazine and its editor and publisher for 50 years, taught a remarkably productive training system based primarily on one exercise: the heavy, twenty-rep squat. John McCallum, who many regard as the best author ever in the Iron Game, advocated a similar approach for anyone who needed to pile on some serious muscle as quickly as possible. Dr. Randall J. Strossen, the editor and publisher of MILO, continues their tradition in his terrific book, SUPER SQUATS. Many who have tried the high rep squat have made incredible gains in a short period of time. The “breathing squat” system is different from my training approach, and different from Dr. Leistner's approach, but nevertheless remarkably effective.

One of the leading authors in the Iron Game for the last 30 years, Bradley J. Steiner, advocates a training approach quite similar to mine. In fact, I grew up devouring Steiner's books and articles, and in many ways regard him as the most important and influential instructor I ever had. Nevertheless, my current training ideas are not exactly the same as Steiner's ideas. And Steiner's ideas are in some respects different from those of Dr. Leistner, different from those of Rader, different from those of McCallum and different from those of Dr. Strossen. Nevertheless, Steiner's ideas WORK. This goes to show that no one system of training is the ONLY way to do it.

WHY DID I WRITE THIS BOOK?

If that's the case, then why did I write this book?

I wrote this book because the percentage of weight trainers who know how to get real results from their training is still - despite the efforts of Leistner, Rader, McCallum, Strossen, Steiner and others - ridiculously, pitifully and absurdly small. It is an uphill fight - a never ending battle - to spread the word about productive training. If this book helps only one man in the entire world to learn what productive training is all about, then writing it will have been a worthwhile endeavor.

I also wrote this book because the training system that I have developed over the years is in some respects unique and different from much of what you have seen or read about elsewhere. There are many things in this book that will be new and exciting to you - whoever you are, and however long you have been training.

I have presented my training ideas as a unified system. This is because I approach training as an integrated whole - everything fits in with everything else. Exercise selection, style of performance, form, technique, sets, reps, training pace, intensity, poundages, progression, exercise schedules, rest, recuperation - they all tie together. If I altered any of the elements of my training system, the results would be reduced significantly.

ONE MORE TIME

I do not mean to imply that my approach to training is the ONLY way to train, the BEST way to train, or that it is BETTER than other training systems. What I am offering you is ONE VARIATION OF PRODUCTIVE TRAINING - a very productive, very unique approach to sensible training, but NOT something that is packaged as “the last word,” “the final solution,” or “the only way to train.”

What if you disagree with one of the basic elements of my training philosophy? What if, for example, you prefer to do one hard, heavy set of high rep squats instead of the multiple sets of low reps that I prefer? NO PROBLEM!

TAKE THE ELEMENTS OF MY TRAINING SYSTEM THAT APPEAL TO YOU AND INTEGRATE THEM INTO YOUR OWN TRAINING. Take sandbags, for examples, I LOVE to lift heavy sandbags, I find that sandbag lifting builds a type of rugged, total body strength that is impossible to duplicate with other equipment. Your training approach may be

radically different from mine in many ways, but if you give the sandbags a try, adapting their use to your own set/rep preferences, you may find that you too love the things! If you do, then you will have gained at least one thing of value from this book - regardless of whether you disagree with 90% of the rest of its contents.

Remember, there are no secret systems, no magic answers and no one way of doing things. Strength training is an art, not a science. We are not dealing with mathematical formulas or chemical equations. We are dealing with human beings, flesh and blood, passion and prejudice, pride and emotion. What you have in this book is a tremendously productive training system. It is NOT the only way to train. No one can offer you “the only way to train.” Read, absorb, think, try, experience, evaluate and DRAW YOUR OWN CONCLUSIONS. Good luck, and good reading!

One cannot leap a chasm in two jumps.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER THREE: AN OUTLINE OF DINOSAUR TRAINING

.... *nobody wants to grow.*

~Johann W. von Goethe

It isn't that they can't see the solution.

It is that they can't see the problem.

~G.K. Chesterton

There are many different ways to become exceptionally strong. This book details the type of strength training that I enjoy the most and that has proven, over time, to be the most productive way for me to train. I call this system “dinosaur training.” A friend, whose training ideas parallel my own, once referred to the two of us as “dinosaurs.” He called us dinosaurs because our training contains many elements taken from the training programs of old time lifters and turn of the century strongmen. Neither of us has any interest in the latest fads or modern miracle systems. We prefer the old fashioned approach.

Dinosaur training is an integrated, unified system of physical training that incorporates twelve core elements. Those twelve elements are not unique to dinosaur training. However, the particular way in which they are linked together in dinosaur training has not been presented in any articles, courses or books with which I am familiar - and believe me, over the past 30 years or so, I have seen most of what has been written about the Iron Game.

This chapter will summarize, in an abbreviated format, the twelve core elements of dinosaur training. Subsequent chapters will examine each of the twelve core elements in greater detail.

ELEMENT NO. ONE: HARD WORK

The first and most important element of dinosaur training is HARD WORK. Nothing you read in this or any other book is going to do you a bit of good unless you have the courage, determination and tenacity to train HARD. You can go to the very best gym in the world, use the best equipment available, have the most enthusiastic and supportive of training partners, hire the world's foremost training authority as your personal trainer, follow the most perfect diet ever designed, take all of the leading supplements, and use the best training program ever devised - and it won't do anything for you unless you train HARD. Conversely, you can train in your basement or garage - or train outside - with nothing more than a couple of heavy sandbags or a heavy barrel to lift, and make enormous progress - IF YOU TRAIN HARD.

Let me give you an example of what I mean by hard work. We'll take the example from a real-life training session, on September 28, 1995. My training partners and I did four progressively heavier singles in the bench press, using a three inch bar to make the exercise more demanding. We did all of the bench presses for singles. We did each lift in the power rack, starting with the bar resting on pins set so that the bar brushed our chests as we got into position. Why did we do the exercise in this fashion? Because starting from the bottom makes the movement much harder! I worked up to 400 pounds for my final lift.

Next, we did bench press lockouts in the power rack, again using the three inch bar. We each did five singles with a top poundage. I used 475. We had just started to work the lockouts into our program, so we were building up the weight. I had used 465 the previous week, and planned to work up to 500 or more pounds in short order. (I topped out at 565 six weeks later.)

Were any of these lifts easy? No. Was the 400 pound full range movement easy? No. Were the lockouts with 475 easy? No. Each required deep, focused concentration, grit and grim determination. Even though we were not “training to failure,” as one would do with a set of multiple reps, we were working very, very hard. Each time we got under the bar it was a challenge. Each rep we made was a battle. Every time our arms reached the fully extended position with that enormous three inch bar balanced precariously across our palms, it was a victory.

But the bench work was nothing compared to what followed.

My training partners had purchased a great new toy for me to celebrate a recent birthday a 15 1/2 gallon beer keg! No, it wasn't full of beer. It was empty. We filled it with water. Used some bathroom scales to check the weight. Got it up to around 165 pounds.

To finish our workout, we took the barrel to the garage driveway in back of my house and tried some clean and presses. Now, I know what you're thinking - that a measly little 165 pound barrel wouldn't be much of a challenge to a man who just benched 400 pounds with a three inch bar. But you're forgetting that the barrel was not completely filled. The water MOVES as you try to lift it. The barrel actually rotates in your hands as the water shifts and churns. This is NOT the same as lifting a 165 pound barbell. It is more like lifting a 165 pound mountain lion.

I started by cleaning the barrel - or rather, I TRIED to clean the thing. It came up nice and smooth, but hit my chest and bounced off and forward at the top of the movement. I caught it on my knees, paused, took a deep breath and tried again. Same result. I tried again. This time I caught the thing long enough to wrestle it onto my right shoulder.

GREAT! Now the little monster was firmly balanced on my right deltoid. How was I going to press it? I tried to swing it back to the front - no luck. I tried again - no luck. So I heaved it up and back and rolled it across my shoulders and upper back. The water sloshed violently, pitching me forward. I almost went down to one knee, and just barely managed to avoid falling flat on my face. I stood up and tried to catch my breath.

By this time, I had been battling the barrel for at least 60 seconds. I was getting pretty tired.

I tried to press the thing off of my shoulders. It moved up, then rolled as the water shifted. The barrel came crashing down across my neck. I tried again. Same result. Another try - with every ounce of power I possessed. The barrel went up – up – then stalled with my arms at three quarters of the lockout position - I pushed as hard as possible - my face was bright red as I drove with every bit of power I possessed – the barrel would not move - I kept on pushing - it didn't budge - and suddenly the barrel rolled yet again, came crashing down and slammed into my chest.

I caught it on my upper thighs and tried to hold it up and off the ground so I could attempt to bring it to my shoulders for another try at the pressing portion of the lift - but the barrel shifted again, my exhausted fingers lost their meager hold and the barrel plummeted to the grass.

I dropped to one knee, totally spent, unable to stand, unable to bend over, unable to move. My head was swimming. The entire world danced in dizzying circles. My training partners were talking, but their voices sounded muffled and indistinct, as though they were speaking to me from the bottom of a deep, dark well.

“Nice set,” said Bruce.

Each of us attacked the barrel as hard and intensely as possible for four separate tries. Each attempt became a series of lifts - of interlocking battles, as we wrestled the barrel as high as possible and fought ferociously to try to drive it to arms' length overhead. The barrel won each and every time. It was too “live” to press. It was like lifting a blob of mercury.

On my final attempt I battled as hard as I could, and after a titanic struggle drove the barrel to a point just short of lockout - and then it rolled again and dropped from my hands onto the grass. Everything became a blur at that point. I remember turning towards Ted and trying to grab his shoulder to keep from falling down - but I missed and fell flat on my face on the edge of the driveway. I realized I was lying halfway into the street. I tried to crawl out of the street, but I couldn't move. I finally rolled over two or three times until I lay on the grass next to the driveway. I lay on my back, gasping for air. I still couldn't get up. I couldn't move. My entire upper body was numb. My golden retrievers, Sam and Spenser, watched the proceedings with tremendous interest. The dogs think my training partners and I lift weights solely to amuse them.

“Are you dead?” Bruce asked.

Well, I wasn't. But I WAS thoroughly exhausted. It was several minutes before I made it to an upright position and a couple of more minutes before I could stand and walk around. That was the end of the workout. Doing anything else at that point would have been impossible.

Were my training partners concerned? No, not at all. Why? Because that's how hard we train each and every time we train. It doesn't matter what we are doing - squats, deadlifts, barrel lifting, curls, grip work, presses or sandbag lifting - at least one of us always ends up in a crumpled heap on the basement floor. Usually it is all three of us. We drive our bodies to the point where further effort is impossible. Many would call it insanity. Dinosaurs call it **HARD WORK**. As an aside, let me note that there is a trick to pressing a water-filled barrel. We didn't know it at the time of the above-described workout. To press a water-filled barrel, tip it to one side so that one end of the barrel is several inches higher than the other. Keep it tipped as you press it. The water will shift to the lower end and stay there rather than sloshing about. I literally **PLAY** with the 165 pound barrel now that I know how to hold it.

ELEMENT NO. TWO: COMPOUND, BASIC EXERCISES

The second critical element of dinosaur training is the use of basic, compound (i.e., “multi-joint”) exercises. Examples of such movements would be squats, bench presses, deadlifts, power cleans, chins and dips, all of which are time-tested, time-proven movements that have developed tons of muscle over the years, and all of which exercise large masses of muscle in an integrated fashion.

In contrast to basic, compound exercises there are many “isolation” exercises that are intended to work a single muscle group or a single joint. Examples include lateral raises, front raises, bent-over laterals, leg extensions, leg curls, hack squats, sissy squats, hyperextensions, pec dec work, cable cross-overs, concentration curls, and triceps extensions (or triceps kickbacks, pushdowns or french presses).

You may have noticed that my September 28, 1995 training session only involved three exercises - the bench press, heavy bench press lockouts, and the clean and press with a water-filled barrel. That sort of program is typical of dinosaur training. You will never see a dinosaur wasting his time on isolation exercises. Dinosaurs train on basic, compound movements because those are the movements that build real strength. The isolation exercises are window-dressing. You can drop them out of your exercise programs and never regret it for a minute.

To put the matter in bold perspective, consider the advanced dinosaur who bench presses 400 pounds in the power rack, starting from the chest and pushing a three inch thick bar to arm's length. Can you imagine the upper body power and size that the dinosaur will possess? Compare that sort of size and power to the “development” displayed by the typical gym member who pumps his chest with five sets of high rep incline presses, five sets of cable cross-overs, five sets of flat bench flies, five sets of decline cable flies, and five sets on the pec dec machine. The latter may get a good pump during his training sessions, but which of the two is bigger? Which of the two is stronger? Do you think the muscle pumper could push even 200 pounds from chest to arm's length with a three inch bar? Which of the two would you rather have on your side in a football game, a tag team wrestling match, or a friendly neighborhood street fight?

Consider another point. Go back to our earlier discussion of hard work. How **HARD** is it to grind out a high rep set of cable crossovers with ten or fifteen pounds of resistance? How **HARD** is it to pump your pecs with some high rep flies - using 35 pound dumbbells? Who works **HARDER** - the guy who spends all afternoon pumping his pecs or the man who drives 400 pounds from chest to arm's length through an explosive combination of effort, desire, determination, will-power and ferocious muscular strength?

Dinosaurs train on basic, compound movements because training on the basics is the only way to train **HARD**. Isolation movements might give you a good pump or a good burn, but they are not going to hit you over the head and knock you to the floor the way a heavy set of squats or deadlifts will do. For those who have the courage and determination to train **HARD** - as opposed to those who merely **TALK** about hard training - compound exercises are the only way to go.

ELEMENT NO. THREE: ABBREVIATED TRAINING

The third critical element of dinosaur training is the use of short, infrequent abbreviated training programs. What is an abbreviated program? Go back and review the account of my training session with the bench presses and the barrel lifting. How many exercises did I do? Three. How many sets of each exercise did I do? Four for the first movement, five for the second movement and four for the final exercise. That's a total of thirteen sets. Some of my training sessions are a little bit longer, and some are a little bit shorter. The "range" would be eight to twenty sets, with at least half of those being warm-up sets.

How often do I train? It varies. Sometimes I train every other day. Sometimes I train three times a week. Sometimes I only train two times a week. It depends on the exercises I do and the demands of my job, as well as the school and work schedules of my training partners, and my wife's work schedule. We don't get too hung up about it. We don't worry about falling to pieces if we miss a training session - if you are building REAL muscle, an extra day of rest will not harm you. We just find a day when we can get together and kill some iron, and go down into the basement and do it. We rest a day or two, then get together and do it again.

We vary the exercises we do from one session to the next, never doing the same movements in two successive workouts. Again, we don't get hung up about doing particular exercises in a particular sequence or pattern. We have a total of about ten "core" exercises that we try to train at least once every ten or twelve days. and we have a variety of grip exercises that we work in by doing whatever grip exercises we feel like doing. We fit some of our off-the-wall stuff (sandbag or barrel lifting) into the sequence whenever time and energy permits. Over any ten or fourteen day period we manage to hammer every muscle in our bodies HARD, while still allowing plenty of time for rest and recovery.

In contrast, most people who lift weights are locked into pre-determined training schedules and usually go to the gym four to six days a week. The average gym member probably trains two or three times as often as we train, and probably does five times as many different exercises and ten times the total amount of work. But who trains heavier? Who trains harder? Who drives his body to the point of momentary exhaustion? Who ends up lying on the floor in a pool of sweat at the end of a workout?

Face the facts. You can train HARD or you can train LONG, but you cannot do BOTH. Working out HARD and working out for long, frequent training sessions are mutually exclusive. And since dinosaurs know that it is hard work that builds size and strength, they do whatever is necessary to allow them to train truly hard - and that means, the use of sensible, abbreviated training programs.

ELEMENT NO. FOUR: HEAVY POUNDAGES

The fourth essential element of dinosaur training is the use of heavy weights. By "heavy" I mean a poundage that makes you work HARD to hit your targeted number of reps. "Heavy" is a relative term. What it really means in the context of serious training is "as heavy as you can manage in good form." What is heavy to one man may be light to another. For a beginner, a heavy poundage in the bench press may be 95 pounds. For an advanced man, a heavy poundage in the bench press may be 350 or even 400 pounds. Both men are still satisfying the core element of dinosaur training because they are using what is, for each of them, a heavy poundage.

In time, however, the beginner will move his bench press from 95 to 300 pounds or more. He MUST work up to a weight that is heavy in anybody's book if he wishes to build much in the way of muscular size and strength. You do not become seriously big and strong by playing around with light weights. You can START with light poundages, but you had better plan to increase them enormously over your training career. If you sell yourself short on your poundage goals, you will achieve little or nothing from your training.

ANY average man has within himself the potential to work up to 300 pounds or more in the bench press, 400 pounds or more in the squat and 500 pounds or more in the deadlift. MANY can vastly exceed those numbers on one of the lifts, depending on body structure and inherent potential for the three lifts, and SOME can vastly exceed those numbers on each of the three

lifts. As Reg Park once noted. “Don't set any poundage as a target - don't think of any weight as being heavy - the sky is the limit.”

NEVER SELL YOURSELF SHORT! If you train HARD you can build more size and strength than you can possibly imagine. Don't for a minute think that “heavy” weights are something for other fellows to shoot for. They are not. They are within YOUR grasp. All it takes is time, patience, persistence, hard work and GALLONS OF SWEAT.

ELEMENT NO. FIVE: PROGRESSION

The fifth essential element of dinosaur training is PROGRESSION. What do I mean by progression? I am speaking primarily of poundage progression (although there are other aspects of progression, as well). I simply mean that it is IMPERATIVE to add weight to the bar whenever you are able to hit your repetition “target.” Once you can do five reps in the squat with 200 pounds, it does no good to continue to do five reps with that poundage. Instead, you must try to do more than you have done before - five reps with 205 pounds, for example. And after you manage five reps with 205, you must try five reps with even more weight. If your poundages fail to grow, you too will fail to grow. If your poundages stagnate, so will your progress. To get big and strong - I mean SERIOUSLY big and strong - you MUST add weight to the bar whenever you can do so.

Poundage progression is all about challenging your muscles every time you train. For a dinosaur, every workout is a challenge. Every workout is a chance to better your past performance: to lift more weight, to do more reps, to use better form, to train with greater focus and deeper concentration. If you are not improving you are either sliding backwards or standing still. A dinosaur strives for constant improvement. He is never satisfied to remain where he is.

ELEMENT NO. SIX: THE PROPER SET/REP SCHEME

The sixth critical element of dinosaur training is the proper set/rep scheme for any particular individual. No one set/rep scheme works best for every person who trains with weights. Some men do best on multiple sets of low reps (for example, five sets of five reps). Others do best on heavy singles. Still others do best on one all-out set of as many reps as possible. What works for me may or may not work for you. And what works for you may or may not work for your training buddies. When it comes to sets and reps, there is no universal answer that applies to everyone under the sun. Period.

Too many lifters blindly follow the dictates of someone else when it comes to sets and reps. Some do one set of 8 to 12 reps because they read a book or article that advocated such an approach. Others do sets of five reps because that's what their coach wants them to do. Still others do heavy doubles or triples because they train at a gym with a powerlifting champion and that's what he happens to do. Others do heavy singles because their training partner likes to do heavy singles.

All of the lifters in the foregoing examples are making the same mistake: they are following a set/rep scheme that works for someone else but may or may not work for them. When it comes to sets and reps, you need to determine what works best for YOU, not what works best for someone else whom you happen to respect or whose opinions seem to make sense to you. Be a MAN. Men think for themselves. Men make their own independent decisions. Use a set/rep scheme that WORKS FOR YOU - and have the courage to say “NO THANKS!” to any and all other proposed training schedules.

ELEMENT NO. SEVEN: THICK HANDLED BARBELLS

The seventh essential element of dinosaur training is the regular, almost exclusive use of thick handled barbells for virtually all of your upper body and grip exercises. Why use thick handled barbells? There are several reasons, but the primary reason relates to element number one of the dinosaur system: HARD WORK. Dinosaurs use thick handled barbells because a thick handled barbell makes any exercise you do enormously more difficult. No matter how

hard you train, you can train HARDER - and thus, more productively - by using thick handled barbells for all of your upper body exercises.

The turn-of-the-century strongmen regularly used thick handled barbells in their training and exhibitions. They developed staggering levels of strength. Consider the 370 pound bent press (a one arm overhead lift) of Arthur Saxon. Consider Hackenschmidt's one arm snatch with 197.5 pounds. Consider Herman Goerner's one arm deadlift with 727 pounds. What about Saxon's ability to lift a THREE HUNDRED pound sack of flour from the floor to overhead? How about Louis Cyr's ability to shoulder a four hundred pound barrel with ONE ARM? All of these men regularly used thick handled barbells and dumbbells, and all of them developed ferocious, mind-numbing body power. Maybe, just maybe, modern athletes have something to learn from the grand old dinosaurs of the past. And perhaps one of the things we can learn from the oldtimers is the importance of thick bar training.

ELEMENT NO. EIGHT: GRIP WORK

The eighth critical element of dinosaur training is its emphasis on lots and lots of serious, no nonsense heavy duty grip work. This is another area where the oldtimers reigned supreme. Heavy grip work used to be a regular part of any strongman's training program. Today, virtually no one does serious grip work. This is a tremendous mistake. When it comes to building FUNCTIONAL strength, grip work is absolutely essential.

Most guys don't even bother to train their forearms nowadays(!), and those that do usually do nothing more significant than a couple of high rep sets of wrist curls or reverse curls with little more than an empty barbell. Dinosaur style grip work is entirely different from the muscle pumper nonsense. It is based on lifting, holding and carrying heavy, awkwardly shaped objects - thick handled barbells and dumbbells – barrels – sandbags –logs - anvils, and similar items. It is high poundage, high intensity training. It is aimed at developing much more than a set of muscular forearms. It's goal is to develop the strength and power of the hands and fingers to their absolute maximum. The goal is to develop a grip that makes a vise seem weak by comparison!

ELEMENT NO. NINE: HEAVY, AWKWARD OBJECTS

The ninth critical element of dinosaur training is the regular use of heavy, awkward objects in your training. Dinosaurs do not limit themselves to barbells – not even the thick handled variety. They broaden their horizons. They expand the scope of their efforts. They tackle heavy, awkward, impossible to manage objects that can challenge their muscles in ways that a mere barbell cannot even begin to approach.

Once again we are indebted to the oldtimers for a long-forgotten but exceptionally effective method of training. Back in the old days, barbells and dumbbells were far more difficult to come by than they are today. Did that stop the oldtime lifters? Not for a second!

The oldtimers learned how to train with ordinary objects that were much easier to find than a barbell or dumbbell. Barrels and kegs of all weights and sizes were a popular training tool. So were bags of sand or bags of grain. Anvils were also popular. Heavy logs were a challenge. Even heavy rocks were used to build size and strength when weights were not available.

Curiously, the oldtimers developed greater strength by using barrels, kegs, sandbags, and similar objects than all but the very strongest of today's lifters are able to develop even with all the latest training equipment and modern “know-how.”

Think I'm kidding? Well, try this sometime: make yourself a 200 pound sandbag, then pick it up and lift the thing over your head. Go ahead - try it. Don't just sit there arguing with me and muttering about how old fashioned I am. Get off your butt, buy an old army surplus duffel bag, buy four 50 pound sandbags, make a 200 pound sandbag and try to lift the thing over your head.

After you have convinced yourself that it is physically impossible to lift a 200 pound bag of sand overhead, read the following account from Earle Liederman's classic text, SECRETS OF STRENGTH, published in 1925:

Power ... is not the exclusive prerogative of big men. No man proved that more conclusively than the veteran athlete, John Y. Smith, of Boston. Smith ... never weighed more than 168 pounds, yet he could do anything in the line of strength and power which could be accomplished by the natural giants. Although a dumbbell lifter by preference, he was one of those men who could lift or carry ANYTHING. It is told that once he passed some porters who were loading a truck with 200-pound bags of cement.

Smith ... stopped, and joked the men about the fuss they made over handling "little bags like those." Whereupon the men grew indignant and informed him that "it takes a man to handle these HEAVY bags" and invited him to take off his coat and see for himself if it was as easy as he thought. Without taking off his coat. Smith seized one of the bags, swung it to his shoulder, and then slowly pushed it to arms-length over his head. Having thus surprised the others, he then proceeded to amaze them by taking the bags, two at a time, one in each hand, and THROWING them into the truck, [pp. 48- 49].

How did the 168 pound Smith manage these amazing feats? I believe it is because he trained his entire life with heavy, cast-iron dumbbells, barrels, kegs, sandbags, bags of grain and other equally awkward and unwieldy objects. In doing so, he developed a degree of total body strength that would leave all but the strongest of modern champions languishing in the dust. Dinosaurs train on heavy, awkward objects because they know - as Smith knew - that nothing else can develop the human body to the absolute zenith of lifting efficiency.

ELEMENT NO. TEN: RACK WORK

The tenth critical element of dinosaur training is regular use of the power rack, particularly for squats and bench presses. Dinosaurs LIVE in the rack. A dinosaur can get a complete, result producing workout - indeed a body-numbing torture session - with nothing more exotic than a power rack, a barbell and enough heavy plates to make things interesting.

Dinosaurs use the power rack in many different ways. Two of the most common and most beneficial are the rack variations I used in my previously described workout on September 28, 1995: (1) bottom position work, and (2) top position "lock-outs."

Many lifters are familiar with "lockouts" but very few have any personal experience with bottom position rack work. Bottom position work involves starting each exercise from the "bottom" position of the movement rather than using the conventional starting position. For example, bottom position bench presses begin with the bar resting on pins placed so that the bar brushes the lifter's chest when he gets underneath it. Bottom position squats begin with the bar placed so that the lifter has to wedge himself underneath it to begin the exercise from the low position of the lift. As you might imagine, these are tremendously difficult ways of doing bench presses and squats - enormously harder than the regular style of performance. Of course, that is precisely why dinosaurs do their benches and squats in this fashion: bottom position work makes the exercises HARDER!

Dinosaurs also do lock-outs and top position work in the power rack - usually concentrating on squats, benches, military presses and deadlifts. Top position work with heavy poundages can build enormous strength into the tendons and ligaments. The increased tendon and ligament strength has a tremendous "carryover" effect that helps the lifter handle much heavier poundages in the regular, full range movement or in any athletic endeavor that tickles his fancy.

Bottom position work is a relatively new concept, but top position work (lock-outs and heavy supports) has been around for a long time. This is another training idea we can borrow from the oldtimers. The oldtimers did not have power racks, but they did do lots of heavy support work and limited range movements with enormous poundages. One of their most popular exercises was the harness lift, in which the exerciser straddled a huge barbell attached to his body by heavy chains and extra strong shoulder webbing. The athlete started the lift with his legs almost completely locked out, and positioned himself so that he could lift the weight off the floor by doing no more than straightening his legs an inch or so. The lift literally involved a one inch range of movement - with weights in the neighborhood of 1000 to 2000 pounds!

Another popular support feat featured in almost all of the old time strength exhibitions was the “Tomb of Hercules.” In this feat, the lifter would assume a crab-like position, balancing himself with the front of the body facing up and all of his weight on his hands and feet. A huge plank would be placed on his thighs and a heavy load placed on the plank. The object was not to lift the plank or move in any fashion, but rather, to support the plank and its load. The typical load was a group of men from the audience - say 12 to 20 of them, for a total weight of 2,000 pounds or more. Now you know why they called the stunt ‘The Tomb of Hercules!’”

Dinosaurs know that the oldtimers were onto something with their short range, limited motion lifts and their supporting feats. What were they doing? They were developing enormous levels of strength in their tendons and ligaments – literally building their bodies from the inside out. This is why so many of the oldtimers were able to lift such tremendous poundages even though their muscular size was LESS than that of typical modern-day champions. The oldtimers had developed REAL strength: tendon and ligament strength. A dinosaur uses partial movements in the power rack to develop precisely the same attribute.

ELEMENT NO. ELEVEN: CONCENTRATION

The eleventh essential element of dinosaur training is the regular use of deep, almost hypnotic focus when training. A dinosaur knows that his single greatest asset is the power of his mind. and he also knows that the power of the mind can only be channeled when a lifter trains in a state of total concentration.

To the uninitiated, a dinosaur involved in serious training is a terrifying sight. The dinosaur will train with total, complete, absolute focus. He will not know you are in the room when he is training. He will be oblivious to anything that is going on. His entire universe will be wrapped up in whatever exercise he is performing. Nothing else will exist for him. The only thing that exists for the dinosaur is the rep that he is doing.

Dinosaurs consciously cultivate their powers of concentration. They understand that the ability to concentrate is an acquired skill. You develop the ability over time. And you can always improve your powers of concentration. For a dinosaur, developing the ability to concentrate is fully as important - or MORE SO - as any other aspect of successful training.

ELEMENT NO. TWELVE: MENTAL TOUGHNESS

The twelfth essential element of dinosaur training is mental toughness. This element encompasses many critical attributes: desire, determination, perseverance, grit, courage and tenacity. These characteristics are sadly lacking among modern day exercisers, and they are virtually never cultivated as part of a training system. Dinosaur training consciously challenges a lifter's mental toughness. It does more than merely develop a strong body. It develops a strong PERSON.

Take the simple element of courage - the courage to be different from the rest of the world. How many weight training books teach you how to be “one of the crowd”? They all do, don't they? They ALL teach you to go to the gym and do exactly what everyone else is doing in exactly the same fashion for exactly the same number of sets and reps using exactly the same pieces of equipment. How many books challenge you to do something as radically different as thick bar bench presses...sandbag lifting...or barrel lifting? Why do you think that is? One reason is very simple: the authors and their publishers know darn well that a book that promotes “different” methods of training is not going to be anywhere near as popular as one that promotes a “do what everyone else is doing” system.

How many people have the COURAGE to do something that makes them stand out in a crowd - like train with heavy sandbags or heavy barrels? Not too many. But dinosaurs are interested in RESULTS, and if bags and barrels produce good results, then a dinosaur will use them no matter how many smirks or smiles light the banal faces of the rest of the gym crowd. A dinosaur has the courage to be different.

I could offer other examples of what I mean by mental toughness, but this will suffice for now. As you continue through this book you will see that mental toughness is a constant

theme that impacts all aspects of dinosaur training. It is the golden thread of truth. If you learn nothing else from this book, learn that lesson and learn it well.

Humankind cannot bear very much reality.

~T.S. Eliot

There is only one answer to defeat and that is victory.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER FOUR: HARD WORK

*Each morning puts a man on trial
and each evening passes judgment.*

-Roy L. Smith

Dinosaurs build muscle and strength the old fashioned way. They EARN it. Dinosaurs work HARD when they train. It is this characteristic, more than any other, that unites dinosaurs who otherwise disagree about various and sundry points of training. Hard work is also the one characteristic that, more than any other, distinguishes a dinosaur from the average guy who trains with weights. It is an undeniable fact that very few people actually train HARD when they lift weights. Most people who train put forth less effort than if they were pulling weeds in the back yard. In marked contrast, a dinosaur works so hard when he trains that the sight literally scares the average gym member.

WHY HARD WORK IS NECESSARY

Dinosaurs train hard because hard work is the only way to substantially increase your muscular size and strength. Nothing less than tremendously hard work will build muscle. Period. There is no “easy” way to build muscle and strength. There is no miracle system that builds big biceps and mind-boggling physical power without tons of effort and gallons of sweat. Nor will such a system ever be found. The only way to build the human body is, always has been, and always will be, through HARD WORK.

Why does hard work build muscle and strength? The answer lies in a scientific term called “over-compensation.” In simple terms, here is how over-compensation causes your body to get bigger and stronger as a result of hard training.

Start from the premise that your body must maintain a certain degree of muscular size and strength solely in order to allow you to perform the everyday tasks necessary for survival: things like walking, standing, holding a glass of water, eating, pounding the keys on a personal computer, turning the ignition key in your car, channel surfing with the television remote control, popping a beer lab, using an American Express Gold Card, and so on. These activities are vital to modern life but are hardly difficult or demanding. If you think about it, the average person can get through an entire day with very little in the way of hard physical effort. The body recognizes this, and being lazy by nature, grows only big enough and strong enough to safely make it from one day to the next. For a man of average height and small to medium bone structure, the amount of muscle necessary for day to day survival in the modern world will be minuscule. The average man will weigh in at all of 150 or 160 pounds, and his maximum in the squat, bench press and deadlift will be 100 to 150 pounds on each lift.

Now let's try an experiment. Let's take the average urban male, age 20 to 25, and send him to a lumber camp in the North Woods. We'll make it a particularly old-fashioned sort of lumber camp - one where they don't use trucks, chain saws or any sort of diesel or gasoline powered engines. Everything they do will be with simple, old fashioned tools—axes, saws, and peavey hooks. We'll also assume that our urban animal is forced to work outside with the biggest and strongest of the lumberjacks and that he is told he will be shot if he tries to quit or give up. He also is told he will be shot unless he stays at the camp for one full year.

What happens?

Our urbanite almost dies after the first ten or fifteen minutes of hard work at the lumber camp. By the end of the first hour he is convinced that he WILL die before the day is over. However, he somehow manages to make it through the entire workday. He is so tired he can barely stand. He almost crawls into his bunk bed.

The next morning he is so stiff and sore he can hardly move. The only thing that gets him up and out the door is the thought of the mean looking foreman with the extremely large hunting knife and the equally menacing sidearm. The thought of death is a tremendous motivator.

He goes out and takes up where he left off the day before- He chops, saws, lifts, pulls, pushes and digs. And he does this day after day. The weeks stretch into months. The months stretch into the entire year of his contract.

At that point, stand our man on the scales. What will you find? He will be anywhere from 20 to 40 pounds heavier than when he came to the lumber camp—all of it good, hard, solid muscle. His measurements will have increased enormously. He will have grown into and out of a couple of clothing sizes. And his strength will have increased by four to five times over what it was when he arrived in the North Woods.

What happened?

What happened is simple. The man's body responded to the incredible demands of his lumberjack work by growing larger and stronger as quickly as possible. The body did NOT like the way our hero felt after the end of his first hour of work- And it HATED the way he felt the next morning. It went into a panic. It realized that there were two choices available to it: (1) grow larger and stronger immediately, or (2) die.

That's when the survival instinct came into play. As I said, the thought of death is a tremendous motivator. The man's body had no choice other than to grow big and strong as quickly as possible. So it did. THAT'S an example of over-compensation.

You can achieve the same sort of transformation without going to the North Woods. You do it by working HARD when you train. You work so hard that your body perceives the situation as nothing less than a matter of life or death. You work so hard that you FOOL the body into believing that it MUST grow bigger and stronger or else it will die.

If you can curl 60 pounds for ten reps and that is ALL you ever try to do, you will not trigger the “alarm bell” that causes the body to grow bigger and stronger. Doing something you already can do is not enough to trigger growth. You must attempt the impossible. Shoot for TWELVE reps with 60 pounds. Or go for ten reps with 65 pounds. Do SOMETHING that is more difficult—more challenging and more demanding - than what you did the last time you did curls. Instead of settling for a comfortable set of ten reps with 60 pounds, do a set that comes close to killing you. Push the set until the bar literally falls out of your hands. Your goal is to grab the body's growth mechanism by the throat and shake it up and down. Do whatever is necessary to trigger the survival mechanism.

Apply the same principle to each and every exercise you do. Never rest on your laurels. Never be content with what you already have done. Push the limits of your performance. Surpass yourself. Constantly strive to improve your performance. Why? Because by doing so, you will insure that you are working hard - hard enough to trigger the internal alarm mechanism that causes growth.

WHAT HARD WORK REALLY IS

Ok, so I've convinced you that it is important to work hard when you train. That leads us to a fundamental question: what IS hard work in training?

Let me answer this question by giving some examples of what hard work is NOT.

Hard work is NOT doing lots of sets, lots of exercises and lots of reps.

Hard work is NOT using the latest computerized miracle machine that comes down the road.

Hard work is NOT doing an enormous amount of work, training for a long time in each session or training frequently.

Hard work is NOT going for a huge pump, a deep burn or any other similar sensation.

Hard work is NOT standing in front of a mirror and emitting high pitched squeals of pseudo-intensity while you handle a light poundage for less than half the number of reps you could do if you were serious about it.

Hard work is using the heaviest possible weight for the number of reps you set as your target, and then DOING those reps—every single one of them - in good form.

Let me repeat that. Hard work involves the use of the heaviest possible weight that you can handle for the number of reps you set as your target ... and actually DOING those reps ... and doing the reps in GOOD FORM.

AN EXAMPLE OF HARD WORK

Suppose you are doing the seated press. Let's say that at your present strength level you are able to do 120 pounds for one set of six reps. Begin by putting 80 pounds on the bar and do one set of six reps for a warm-up. This should be a fairly easy set, one that will not tire you out, but rather, will force a little bit of blood into the area, warm up the shoulder and elbow joints and generally "get you ready" for the heavier work that is to come.

Add 20 pounds to the bar (making a total of 100 pounds) and do a second set of six reps. This will be harder than the set with 80 pounds, of course, but it still will not be extremely fatiguing.

Now load the bar to 120 pounds. Shoot for six reps. Push the bar up as hard and forcefully as you can - lower the bar under control and at a moderate speed. Whatever you do, do not bounce the bar or cheat in any fashion to try to get your reps. Do NOT count the number of seconds required to raise or lower the bar. Counting is a distraction. Concentrate on moving the bar and forget about anything else.

When you do your set with 120 pounds, the first one or two reps will feel pretty light. The third and fourth reps will feel a little bit heavier, but still will not cause undue strain. The fifth rep will feel heavy. The sixth rep will feel VERY heavy. It may take several seconds to push the bar up over your head for the sixth rep - you may find yourself at the sticking point, with your arms halfway extended, and the elbows wobbling a little bit and your face turning bright red as you push the bar. If it requires a good, strong effort to get through the sixth rep, end the set at that point. On the other hand, if you are feeling particularly strong and if the sixth rep does not cause as much difficulty as it did in prior workouts, take a deep breath and then try for a seventh or even an eighth rep. Your goal is to work until the last rep is EXTREMELY hard to do, but nevertheless, possible, (BARELY possible!)

Take a four or five minute break, load the bar to 130 pounds, and try a final set of four or five reps. On this set, the bar will feel increasingly heavy on each of the reps, and you will have to use plenty of concentration and focus to complete the set. Again, your goal is to make the final rep - whether it is number four, number five or number six - a very, very difficult effort.

Having done the foregoing, you have completed four sets that perfectly illustrate what I mean when I refer to "hard work." You have taken a good, basic and result-producing exercise - the seated press - and over a period of 10 or 15 minutes you have done a total of four sets that pushed your shoulder, upper back and tricep muscles very close to a state of momentary exhaustion. You may not have gone to absolute failure, but you have worked much harder than 90% of the guys in your gym would even dream of working. You definitely have worked hard enough to break down your muscle fibers and trigger the "alarm" response referred to earlier. In short, you have triggered muscular growth.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF HARD WORK

Many who read this text will prefer to do one set to momentary muscular failure on any exercise they do. There's nothing at all wrong with that approach, of course - just as there is nothing wrong with the multiple set, low rep approach detailed in the previous example. Which approach you prefer is more a matter of individual temperament than anything else. Remember, there are many ways to develop muscular size and strength. No one training system has a monopoly on "BIG AND STRONG."

For those who prefer to do one set to failure, here is an example of hard work when using that sort of approach.

Take the example of a lifter who is going to try 15 reps with 400 pounds in the trap bar deadlift. He may take 135 for five reps for a quick warm-up, followed by 225 for three reps and 315 for one rep. Why so few reps? Because our man is focusing his entire effort on one brutally hard set with 400 pounds. His warm-up sets are limited to the minimum number of reps required to prepare him - physically and mentally - for that one all-out effort with 400 pounds on the bar.

Our man loads the bar to 400 pounds. He chawks his hands, lightens his lifting bell and focuses, concentrating deeply on the upcoming battle. His eyes are closed. His breathing slows and deepens. His entire body starts to expand perceptibly as the muscles begin to gear up for the impending task. A slight sheen of sweat appears on his brow.

He opens his eyes, steps forward, positions himself and takes several deep breaths.

Then he squats down, grasps the bar and PULLS.

The first rep moves up quickly. He lowers the bar until it barely brushes the floor, and without pausing drives up for a second rep.

The process is repeated for one rep after another. The bar begins to slow down after the first four or five reps. By the seventh rep it is starting to move slowly. The lifter is gasping for air. His face is tomato red. The veins stand out like cords across his entire upper body. Sweat pours down his body. He lowers the bar all the way to the floor before beginning the eighth rep, stands erect, breaths deeply three times, then squats down, grabs the handles and drives the bar up for the ninth rep. He slows almost to a halt as the bar begins to pass his knees - grunts in pain - and drives upward to a finish.

He lowers the bar, barely brushes the floor and starts back up without pausing. His arms, shoulders and upper back look like they were carved from granite as the steel-cord muscles stand out in stark relief, writhing furiously as he strains against the bar. He pulls - pulls - pulls and the rep is completed. He stands erect, holding the bar at arm's length, gasping for oxygen - then lowers the bar to the floor, stands all the way up and takes several enormous, gasping breaths.

Ten reps down - five more to go!

He squats down, grasps the handles and drives as hard as possible. Every muscle fiber in his body is pitted in an agonizing effort against the weight of the bar. He screams in pain as he pulls against a bar that simply won't move above his knees - screams and pulls - and suddenly the bar is above his knees, then to his lower thighs and finally he stands in the finish position.

Eleven down - four more to go.

He lowers the bar, touches the floor and pulls - pulls - and grinds out yet another agonizing rep. His chest feels like an anvil is pressing down on it, his lungs feel like they are filled with cotton candy, his head is swimming, his legs, back-hips, traps and forearms are on fire, and his stomach is churning.

He lowers the bar, starts up again and grinds to a halt several inches above the floor. He pulls - and nothing happens. The bar goes nowhere.

He drops the bar to the floor, and bends over in utter agony, hands on his knees, choking back the nausea and trying to control the pain that racks his entire body.

Twenty seconds later he pulls again - and somehow, utilizing strength from who knows where - makes the rep.

The bar hits the floor and the lifter goes down to one knee. He gasps in agony. Another rep is obviously impossible.

Thirty seconds later he makes another rep.

The bar rests on the floor. The lifter stands above it, swaying weakly. His face is pale and ashen. His shirt is drenched with sweat. You can tell he is finished.

But don't tell it to him.

Thirty-one seconds after completing the fourteenth rep, the lifter squats down, grabs the bar and pulls for number fifteen. The bar seems to be welded to the floor - and then, slowly, inch by inch, it begins to rise. The lifter's face has turned from pale to purple. The veins stand out like fire hoses. He screams in pain. The bar continues to move - but, oh, how very slowly! He pulls – pulls – pulls - and stands erect with the bar, shaking and quivering as he holds the massive poundage at arm's length. He lowers the bar to the floor, stumbles forward and falls flat on his face.

Five minutes pass before he finds the strength to roll over onto his back.

Ten more minutes pass before he can push himself to his hands and knees.

Two more minutes pass before he can stand and hobble slowly towards the drinking fountain. He has just completed a HARD set. What we have witnessed is yet another example of HARD WORK.

ONE MORE EXAMPLE OF HARD WORK

Remember what I said about different ways to skin a cat. Many serious lifters train on very heavy sets of low, low reps - sometimes as low as one rep per set. Are they working hard? You better believe it. Consider the following example.

Our lifter is training his arms. He plans to do five sets in the barbell curl, using a three inch thick bar to make the exercise harder and more demanding. He will do one rep per set, starting with a light poundage and adding weight on each set.

He sets the bar on pins positioned a little above knee height in the power rack. This allows him to reach down and take the bar in exactly the proper starting position for each rep.

He begins with 95 pounds - a very light poundage. Even though the weight is light and easy to manage, he concentrates deeply and intensely, carefully positions himself for the rep and maintains letter perfect form all the way up and all the way down.

He places the bar back on the pins, loads it to 115, rests a minute or two, chinks up and approaches the bar. Once again, he focuses all of his energy and attention on the task at hand, concentrating ferociously even though he is handling a warm-up poundage. Locked in an almost trance-like state, he performs another perfect rep.

The third set calls for 135 - an impressive poundage for a man using a three inch bar. Try it sometime.

Our lifter chinks up, tightens his lifting belt, approaches the bar, sets himself, flares his lats, locks his elbows into his sides, breathes deeply, grabs the bar as if he was trying to squeeze it in two, lifts it off of the pins, pauses briefly and curls it in perfect form. The same mental intensity and all-encompassing focus marks the lift. It is as though he were lifting in a different dimension. Only the bulging muscles and exploding veins in his upper body give a clue of how heavy the poundage really is.

Was it a maximum effort? No. Was it easy? No. The lifter is a bit winded after the effort, and a definite sheen of sweat is coating his torso, arms and face. His upper arms and forearms are beginning to swell with a deep-down, worked to the bone sort of thickening. It is not the typical pump that you see in a bodybuilder, but something much more subtle - and much more impressive.

He loads the bar to 155, goes off a little way and thinks about the upcoming set. He pictures the set over and over in his mind, watching as he approaches the bar, sets his feet, positions his body, flares his lats, digs in his elbows, breathes deeply, grasps the bar and begins the rep. He watches himself pull as hard as possible as the bar inches its way through the sticking point. He watches himself as his face turns purple and the veins stand out in bold relief across his arms and his entire upper body. He watches the bar inch on towards the finishing position - watches himself fight to maintain proper position - watches the sweat pour down his torso.

Listens to his grunt of effort and pain as he completes the rep. Feels the pain. Feels the effort. Relishes the victory as he conquers the weight.

Then he walks over to the bar and does exactly what he has visualized - a hard but perfect rep with 155.

Our man next loads the bar to 165 pounds. He rests a few minutes, then repeats the same sequence that he used before tackling the 155 pound effort. Concentration, visualization, rehearsal, arousal, approach to the bar - positioning, breathing, lat flare, grip - and then the set begins.

It is like grabbing a Cape Buffalo by the horns. The second he has the bar in his hands he can tell that he is in for an intense and brutal effort. The bar fights him every inch of the way. It is almost as though the bar grabs back the second he grasps it.

Maintaining perfect form, he curls the bar upward - hits the sticking point - slows down to a barely perceptible movement – fights – fights - grinds to a halt - hangs motionless for five full seconds, pulling as hard as possible - and suddenly, somehow, begins to move the bar upward again.

Suddenly the rep is completed. The bar hovers motionless in the finish position. The lifter lowers it to the pins, steps out of the rack and almost drops to the ground. He is totally drained. It will be several minutes before he could even consider doing anything else. His arms are numb from shoulder to fingertips. The deep-based swelling that began to develop during the warm-up sets is more pronounced than ever. It is as though his tendons and ligaments are pulsating with effort.

He won't do any additional arm work today. He doesn't need to. When you train hard, a little bit of work goes a long way.

PSEUDO-INTENSITY

Over the years, many writers have emphasized the importance of HARD WORK in your training. And most people accept - on an intellectual level - the premise that hard work is necessary to develop larger and stronger muscles. On the physical level, however, the vast majority of people just can't deliver what it takes to train HARD.

Go to any gym anywhere in the world and ask anyone you see if he believes in hard training. You KNOW what his answer will be: "Of course I do".

Ask him if he trains hard. What will the inevitable response be: "Damn right I do!"

Then watch one of his training sessions.

What will you see?

Unless you have encountered a very unusual individual, the self-proclaimed apostle of effort will handle 40 or 50 pounds less than his true maximum on any exercise he does, for only half the number of reps he could do if he was truly training hard. He'll stop when the weight starts to feel heavy. He'll quit when his muscles begin to burn. He won't push through the pain and discomfort. He'll play it safe.

If he sees that you are watching he may try a couple of patented tricks to make it appear (to the uninitiated) that he is training hard. The fake grunts and groans will come first. Then he will mimic hitting the sticking point, flexing mightily against an unmoving bar while supposedly giving it everything he has. He'll cheat his way through the hard reps to take the tension off of the muscles he is trying to work. He'll probably scream near the end of the set (particularly if he sees a good looking girl come by and he wants to impress her).

All of his theatrics will LOOK and SOUND impressive. But they no more amount to hard work than does a game of tiddley-winks.

You can train hard for real or you can pretend to train hard. Most people PRETEND to train hard. They always make it look good in case anyone is watching, but when it comes to the real thing - serious hard work - they get out of Dodge City as fast as they can.

There is an easy way to tell who is training hard and who is playing games. The hard trainer gets bigger and stronger from one session to the next. He puts more weight on the bar on a regular basis. He has to do so because he is increasing his strength, and the exercise will be too easy for him unless he increases the weight, the reps or both.

The pseudo trainer never gets any stronger. Consequently, he stays at the same weight, same reps and same level of development forever. He CAN'T add weight or reps because he never gets any stronger.

If you see someone who looks like he is training at a superhuman level of intensity, watch and see what happens to his training poundages over a month or two. If the weights remain constant, the odds are very good that what you are observing is an exhibition of pseudo intensity.

WHY PEOPLE FAIL

People who fail to get results from weight training usually have one thing in common: they don't train hard. Taking it easy is the single most common cause of failure in weight training. As Dr. Ken Leistner once stated (THE STEEL TIP, Volume 1, Number 10, October, 1985): Experience has taught me that the majority of trainees won't ever make the progress they envision for themselves because:

1. They will not train as hard as possible.
2. They do not believe that a program can be effective if it appears limited in the number of exercises.
3. They will not train as hard as possible.
4. They lack confidence in their ability to gain muscular strength and size.
5. They will not train as hard as possible.

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU! Train hard! Train for results! Dare to grow bigger and stronger! BE A MAN WHEN YOU GO TO THE GYM!

HOW TO WORK HARD

The way to really work hard when you train is to constantly challenge yourself. Challenge yourself to do more weight, more reps or to use better form and more focused concentration. Set goals - high goals. Work diligently toward their achievement.

Each of the foregoing examples of hard work illustrates this point. What was each lifter doing when he trained? He was trying to achieve a particular goal. The first lifter was shooting for certain poundages for a specified number of reps in the press. The second lifter was shooting for 15 reps in the trap bar deadlift with 400 pounds. The third lifter was shooting for a single rep with 170 pounds in the standing curl with a 3" bar. Each lifter had a predetermined goal and each lifter worked like the devil to achieve the goal.

ONE MORE TIME

Let me close this chapter by getting up on the soap box and saying YET AGAIN that hard work is the single most critical element of any truly productive training program. It doesn't matter if you use high reps or low reps...single sets or multiple sets...barbells or sandbags...Olympic lifts or power lifts... - If you are not training HARD then you are wasting your time.

No training system has a monopoly on good results. There are many ways to achieve outstanding results from weight training. But all of those ways involve HARD WORK. If you are unable or unwilling to work as hard as you possibly can then your results are going to be far, far less than what you desire. Weight training WORKS - but only if YOU work!

*New opinions are always suspected,
and usually opposed without any other reason,
but because they are not already common.*
~John Locke

CHAPTER FIVE: DINOSAUR EXERCISES

There is one cardinal rule: "Never Despair."

That word is forbidden.

~Sir Winston Churchill

*... do every act of your life as if it
were the last.*

~Marcus Aurelius

Dinosaurs do basic exercises. The basic exercises are squats, standing presses, power cleans, power snatches, high pulls, dumbbell cleans, standing dumbbell presses, push presses, jerks, one arm cleans, one arm snatches, barbell bent-over rowing, bent-legged deadlifts, bench presses in the power rack (starting at the bottom, with the bar resting on pins so it brushes your chest in the starting position), barbell curls, shrugs, bent-legged situps, leg raises, neck work, side bends and calf raises.

Dinosaurs also do lots of work for the forearms, grip and wrists. There are many good exercises for the forearms, grip and wrists. I'll cover a number of the better ones in detail in Chapters 13 and 14.

Dinosaurs also do special exercises for all around strength and power, such as log or barrel lifting, exercises with heavy sandbags, anvil lifting, etc. These are not conventional exercises, but I consider them to be basic movements because they work the entire body in an integrated fashion.

That's pretty much all a dinosaur will ever do or ever think about doing. As I said before, dinosaurs stick to the basics.

HOW MUSCLES GROW

Dinosaurs train on the basics because the basic exercises are the most productive. To understand why some exercises are more productive than others, you need to understand how muscles become bigger and stronger. Now don't run away – I am not about to start sounding like the latest textbook on exercise physiology. As a matter of fact, I have yet to read a "scientific" article or treatise that provides much in the way of useful information about the manner in which our bodies increase muscular size and strength. The most useful explanation, and the one upon which I will base this section, is taken from Bradley J. Steiner's wonderful book, *A COMPLETE GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE BARBELL TRAINING*, which was published nearly 20 years ago and which is still one of the best books ever written about sensible physical training.

In a nutshell, your muscles grow bigger and stronger when you systematically force them to do difficult tasks, such as knocking off six reps in a basic exercise with a weight you could only handle for five reps the week before. Working this hard causes your muscles to "break down." Then you rest a day or two, get lots of good nutrition, and give your muscles a chance to grow bigger and stronger than before.

Your muscles are made up of fibers - something that varies from person to person, but which remains constant for any one individual throughout his lifetime. To increase your size and strength, you need to increase the thickness of the individual fibers that make up your muscles. To do so, you must work the muscles with a weight heavy enough to make the last rep of any set almost impossible to do even when you are pushing or pulling as hard as you can.

Working your muscles this hard causes the body to send out a sort of internal warning: "Red light, red light! This guy is trying to kill us! What should we do?" Answer: "We'll grow a little bit bigger, and therefore stronger, so we can handle this insanity the next time he makes us go to the gym."

In very simple terms, your muscles grow bigger and stronger when you force them to work hard and heavy on basic exercise movements. You do NOT need to do lots of sets and reps. What you DO need to do, however, is push your muscles EXTREMELY HARD - all the way up to the point where you could work no harder. This will trigger the little “alarm bell” that tells the body to take steps to become a bit bigger and stronger so that the next time you go to the gym it won't be quite as hard. This is what I call the “break down, build back up” system of muscle building.

In short, remember these two points. First, your muscles grow bigger and stronger by being exposed to a heavy stress during your workouts; and second, “heavy stress” does not mean doing LOTS of exercise, but rather, doing a couple of good, HARD sets on heavy, basic movements that allow you to use the most weight that you are capable of handling to exercise any particular muscle group.

“PUMPING” EXERCISES

Hundreds of thousands, if indeed not millions, of words have been written about how to increase the size of your upper arms by “pumping” the muscles with blood through a rapid sequence of many sets of curling and triceps movements. The authors of the articles, courses and books advocating such an approach would have you believe that the size and strength of your upper arms is increased solely by the amount of blood that you force into the arms on a temporary basis during the course of a workout. This is simply not true, and it is the result of a basic misconception about how muscles increase in size and strength.

“Pump” is an artificial condition that merely mimics increased size - it has nothing to do with the development of muscular size and strength.

The “pumping” system of exercise does virtually nothing to build real muscle. This is why you see many devotees of the pumping style of training who look fairly impressive but who do not have the strength to back up their appearance. I have seen men who look terrific who can barely knock out six reps in the parallel dip - with no extra weight resistance! If their strength matched their appearance, these guys would have handled around 200 pounds extra weight for six to eight reps in the dip. They COULD have had it all - a body that not only looked strong, but was strong – but they ended up with bodies that merely looked good. Wouldn't you rather be big AND strong?

The problem with the pumping system is that it does not impose any actual stress on the muscles. Rather than pump away for set after set with light weights to achieve a congested feeling in the muscle you are exercising, you should train to break down your muscle fibers.

Muscle-pumpers may eventually end up with fairly big arms, pecs and lats, but they never really look impressive. As Dr. Ken Leistner noted in the March, 1987 issue of The Steel Tip (Volume 3, Number 3), they lack “the look of power.” Dr. Leistner stated:

“When you see an individual who has built his or her muscle tissue mass to an advanced degree, and has done it with basic, heavy exercises, they have a certain look about them. It is hard to describe in words, yet everyone knows it when they see it. Extremely developed bodybuilders often lack this “look,” having a high level of muscle tissue, and perhaps having very large muscular measurements. Still, they look, as my younger brother once noted, “like bodybuilders, like a bunch of body parts.” One who has predominantly utilized “the basics,” and is capable of using relatively heavy weights for moderately high repetitions, looks powerful and strong. Again, it is an almost indefinable, yet undeniable truth.”

One final point. Exercises have both “direct” and “indirect” effects. This means that when an exercise triggers muscular growth in one body part (direct effect) it also triggers muscular growth, albeit to a less degree, throughout the entire body (indirect effect). Squats and deadlifts have TREMENDOUS indirect effect. If you do squats and deadlifts, you will not merely trigger growth in your legs and lower back, you will literally grow all over.

Curls and presses, in contrast, have little or no indirect effect. “Pumping” movements like lateral raises, leg extensions, hack squats, flies and pec dec work, have virtually no indirect effect. This is one of many reasons why it is CRITICAL to include squats and deadlifts in your training programs, and why isolation movements are a waste of time.

THE ESSENTIAL EXERCISES

Every endeavor has what are called “the tools of the trade.” For people who are trying to grow bigger and stronger, heavy exercises are the “tool of the trade.” As in many other activities, there are an almost infinite number of different “tools” (i.e., exercises) that you might wish to try. If you are wise, however, you will limit the exercises you use to no more than a handful of basic movements - and this applies not only to beginners, but to the most advanced trainees. When you get right down to it, there are (1) only 20 or 30 useful exercises, (2) a number of other exercises that are useful for specialized grip training, rehabilitation work or in other special circumstances, and (3) an almost infinite number of “second rate” exercises, dangerous exercises or exercises that are totally unproductive. Developing a rational training program means that you restrict your efforts to only those exercises that are worth performing.

I refer to the important exercises as “the essential exercises,” a phrase I borrowed from Bradley J. Steiner. He wrote a four part series for Iron Man magazine almost 30 years ago, in which he listed what he considered to be the “essential” exercises. Strange as it may seem to those who believe in the wonders of modern technology (or who believe that anyone over the age of 20 was born in the dark ages), Steiner's list of “essential” exercises is virtually identical to my own list, compiled almost 30 years later. The “essential” exercises are the basic exercises - the ones that have been around for a long, long time and that have proven themselves to be superior developers of muscular mass and strength.

BUILDING DINOSAUR THIGHS

Dinosaurs do not do the sort of silly isolation exercises that dominate the training routines of virtually everyone else in today's sad and sorry world. You won't catch a dinosaur doing leg extensions, leg curls, hack machine squats, smith machine squats, lunges or sissy squats. Dinosaurs do squats. They sneer at almost any other “exercises” for the thighs. If dinosaurs ran the gyms, the leg extension machines and similar junk would be melted down and cast into plates, heavy dumbbells, steel beams, barrels or something else that built size and strength when you lifted it.

BUILDING A DINOSAUR'S CHEST

Dinosaurs don't “bomb” and “blitz” their chest with every exercise under the sun. They don't do flat bench flies, incline flies, decline flies, cable crossovers, pec deck, or some chrome-plated chest machine. Dinosaurs do heavy benches. Dinosaurs do their benches in the toughest and most difficult manner - by starting at the bottom, with the bar set on pins positioned so that the bar grazes the lifter's chest when he gets into position and prepares to press. In addition, dinosaurs do all or almost all of their bench pressing with a thick bar.

Heavy benching is all a dinosaur ever needs to do for his chest. Why? Because using a thick bar makes benching far, far more difficult than using an ordinary 1 1/16” bar. Why should a dinosaur who has built his upper body to the point where he can handle 400 pounds or more in a thick bar bench press - starting from the bottom position - want to “pump up” with flies or crossovers? The heavy bench press hits the entire torso - and hits it so well that any other chest exercise would be superfluous. On the other hand, the scrawny wannabe pumping away on the pec deck and cable crossovers can do those movements from now until Doomsday and he'll never build the strength and power to match the dinosaur's 400 pound thick bar bench press - nor will he ever match the dinosaur's massive torso development.

Some dinosaurs enjoy heavy dumbbell bench presses or heavy incline presses. If you like these exercises, feel free to work them into your program.

Your only problems in doing heavy dumbbell work will be (1) getting the weights into position, and (2) finding bells heavy enough if you train at a commercial gym. (If you train at home, you can buy the BIG BOY DUMBBELL BARS™ sold by IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES and load them to any poundage you want.) Talk to the gym owner about the latter problem. As far as the former goes, there is no answer other than two husky training partners to “spot” you on the dumbbell work.

Some dinosaurs like to do heavy dips with extra weight strapped around their bodies. Others avoid this exercise because it hurts their shoulders. If you like the exercise and it doesn't hurt you, feel free to work it hard and heavy.

BUILDING DINOSAUR DELTS

Dinosaurs train their shoulders with heavy presses. They do them seated or standing. They use heavy dumbbells or barbells. Some dinosaurs use thick handled barbells for almost all of their pressing movements. In addition, dinosaurs do presses with logs, barrels and heavy bags filled with sand or lead shot.

You'll never see a dinosaur doing any form of lateral raises, Arnold Presses, or using the latest chrome-plated delt machine to hit the market. Why should a dinosaur bother with such sissy movements when he can do a seated press with 250 pounds, on a 3" bar? What are lateral raises with 20 pound dumbbells going to do for a man who presses 250? And as for development, the 250 pound presser will have delts like cannon balls, and the wannabe who waves the little dumbbells up and down will have delts the size of number 11 lead shot.

BUILDING DINOSAUR ARMS

Dinosaurs build their triceps with heavy bench and overhead presses, and their biceps with heavy curls. They use a thick bar for most of their upper body work, including their curls. Dinosaurs can build 18" upper arms on as little as four or five SINGLES each WEEK. That's 18" of solid, functional, power-packed muscle, too, not 18" of drug inflated, "pumped up" cotton candy.

Dinosaurs train heavy on all movements, including the arms. I have handled over 400 pounds in the close grip bench press on a 3" bar (starting from the chest), over 170 pounds in the barbell curl with a 3" bar, over 180 pounds in the barbell curl with a 2 1/2" bar, and 185 for five reps in the barbell curl with a heavy duty "easy curl" bar.

Compare those numbers to the guys who do five or six sets of a dozen different arm exercises two or three times a week. Dinosaurs may not be modern, and they may not be scientific or high tech, but they are STRONG!

BUILDING A DINOSAUR BACK

Most guys who go to gyms never train their backs, or if they do, limit their efforts to pull-downs and cable rowing for the lats, and perhaps a set or two of hyperextensions or a set on some sort of low back machine. Dinosaurs work their entire backs, and work them HARD. If a dinosaur emphasizes any aspect of the back, it is the lower back.

Sure, he hits the lats and the traps, but his special emphasis is on those all-important columns of steel running up the spine.

For back work, dinosaurs do barbell bent-over rowing, power cleans, power snatches, high pulls, one arm cleans, one arm snatches, bent-legged deadlifts and stiff-legged deadlifts.

In addition, dinosaurs train their backs with barrel lifting, heavy sand bag lifting, and similar activities. (See Chapter 15.) Some dinosaurs even finish a heavy back session by going out and doing top position partial deadlifts with their car!

WHY DINOSAURS TRAIN ON THE BASICS

Dinosaurs train on the basics because the basics are the only exercises that build muscle and strength. If lateral raises built muscle and strength, dinosaurs would do them. However, they don't build anything, so dinosaurs ignore them. The same goes for cable crossovers, flies, concentration curls, leg extensions and every other isolation exercise ever invented. Heck, if playing the harmonica while standing on your head in a bucket of jello would build muscle, dinosaurs would do it. But if an exercise doesn't do the job, it doesn't exist as far as dinosaurs are concerned.

Dinosaur training is hard, brutal and demanding. A dinosaur can train so hard and heavy that 4 or 5 progressively heavier singles in ANY exercise are more than enough in any workout.

Take the most common and basic of all exercises: the good old barbell curl. Curls are easy, right? Too basic to build muscle, right? Too easy for an “advanced” man, right?

Yeah, right! A recent curling session saw me use a 3” bar for a total of only five singles, using 95, 115, 135, 155 and 175. The last one almost killed me. I nearly blacked out. My training partners thought I was a goner and were ready to let my golden retrievers, Sam and Spenser, drag me into the back yard and bury me. There was no way I could have done anything else for my upper arms in that workout – and no reason on earth why I would have wanted to do so. What would a couple of sets of concentration curls with a 35 pound dumbbell have done for me that the heavy curls had not already done better, faster and more thoroughly?

The isolation exercises used by so many trainees won't build an ounce of muscle or increase your strength by one iota. All they do is cut into your recovery ability, making it more difficult, and, in most cases, downright impossible, to recuperate from your heavy training sessions. They do nothing to promote the growth of muscular size and strength and everything to prevent it. So why do them?

AN EXPERIMENT FOR DOUBTERS

Some of you are probably wondering why I did not include your “pet” exercise or why I omitted the “favorite” arm exercise of this year's Mr. Everything. The reason is simple. It is my intention to give you straight-from-the-shoulder, honest advice. I am not interested in making myself appear smart by recommending several hundred different exercises. I recommend the basic exercises because they are the only ones worth doing. I have not mentioned the lateral raises, hack squats, tricep extensions, tricep pushdowns, leg curls, leg extensions, flies, and pec dec work so commonly seen in the workouts of most modern trainees because those exercises are potentially dangerous, thoroughly second rate. and virtually non-productive when compared to basic movements like squats, deadlifts, and bench presses.

If you don't believe me, then train for three months on a program that consists of nothing but leg extensions, leg curls, pec dec movements, concentration curls, and tricep kickbacks. Do as many sets of each movement as you wish, and train as often as you like. After that period of time, train for three months on a program where you do nothing but bench presses, squats, and pull downs on Monday and nothing but presses, deadlifts and curls on Thursday. Train just two days per week. Do each exercise for five sets of five reps - two progressively heavier warmup sets, and three sets with all the weight you can handle for five reps. Add weight whenever possible.

At the end of the second three month period you will be enormously bigger and stronger than when you started the program. The first program will be a waste of time while the second program will be very productive, solely because you have focused your attention on the important exercises. Think about it.

LATERALS, LEG EXTENSIONS AND LEMMINGS

I realize that “everyone” does lateral raises, leg extensions, leg curls, triceps extensions, cable crossovers and all the rest of the exercises I have condemned as utterly worthless. So what? If 10,000 lemmings jump into the ocean and drown, and you are lemming number 10,001, does it make your actions any less absurd if you say “everyone else is doing it”? I don't care what the rest of the world does. I am interested in results, not what is fashionable. Dinosaurs know that their training is radically different from what is the norm in almost all commercial gyms. They don't care that the way they do things is totally contrary to conventional wisdom. They are not concerned that they don't do all of the isolation exercises that most people think are an integral component of productive training. Dinosaurs just want to build muscle and strength, and they have realized that the basics are the way to achieve that goal. If you want to be a dinosaur, leave the isolation movements to the bunnies, the “toners,” the yups, and the wannabes. Dinosaurs stick to the basics!

The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner aspects of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.

~William James

Our future is in our hands. Our lives are what we choose to make them.

~Sir Winston Churchill

Raise your mental horizons — use the power of your mind to push you to handle poundages you once only dreamt about.

~Reg Park

CHAPTER SIX: ABBREVIATED TRAINING

It is a well-known fact that the majority of men today are relatively weak....

~George Hackenschmidt

Dinosaur training sessions are short, hard and infrequent. A typical session will consist of no more than twenty sets, with at least half of those sets being progressively heavier warm-ups. The average number of sets per workout would be between eight and fifteen. Some sessions will consist of only four or five sets. A typical week will see the dinosaur training only two or three times. That means the dinosaur trains his entire body with well under fifty sets PER WEEK. It also means the dinosaur will spend no more than three hours per week on his training. I refer to this type of training as “abbreviated training.”

TWO TYPES OF ABBREVIATED TRAINING

There are two basic ways to implement abbreviated training. One way is to work the entire body in each workout. For example, you might train on Monday and Thursday. On Monday you would do squats, benches, pulldowns and seated military presses. On Thursday you would do HAMMER STRENGTH® leg presses, stiff legged deadlifts, chins, dips and standing curls with a 2” bar. Thus, you are doing a total body workout every time you train, but you are doing different movements in each session and only working each particular exercise one time per week.

The second way to implement abbreviated training is to train each basic exercise only one time per week. and do only two or three basic exercises per session. For example, you might do squats and benches on Monday, followed by presses, pulldowns and dips on Wednesday, followed by deadlifts or cleans, shrugs and barrel lifting on Friday.

In either approach, the sets, reps and exercises are up to the discretion and personal preference of the lifter. Either system allows you to do high rep death marches with a heavy poundage ... to do five sets of five reps ... to do heavy singles ... to do rack work ... or anything else that strikes your fancy.

If you prefer to get more rest between training sessions, schedule your program over a ten day or two week period. For example, take two workouts over a ten day period instead of two workouts over a seven day period. Or train three times in two weeks rather than three times in one week. The variations are endless.

TRAINING PROGRAMS OVER THE YEARS

If you think about it, abbreviated training programs are really very similar to the types of training programs you read about in the muscle magazines of the 40's, 50's and early 60's. They are the types of programs that top Olympic lifters used to follow - the type of programs that turned men like Davis, Schemansky, Kono, and Emrich into supermen. Check out their programs as detailed in MILO and THE IRON MASTER (two of my favorite, and two of the best magazines ever published). There is nothing NEW about abbreviated training. It is the way guys USED to train. And it is the ways guys SHOULD train.

Up until the early or mid 1960s, most people trained on fairly sensible routines. They usually lifted three times a week. Even the supermen would rarely hit the weights more often than four times a week. And the routines were simple. Guys did squats, benches, deadlifts or stiff legged deadlifts, Olympic lifting, presses, rowing, curls and not much else. The biggest and strongest men in the world would limit their routines to a handful of basic exercises. And no one did set after set of any exercise. Three to five sets was plenty for most men - and anyone who did more was a lifter doing low rep strength and power training. The guys who trained for “muscles” usually did two or three sets of any particular movement with medium reps. If you did a supremely difficult exercise for high reps (for example, a set of 20 rep breathing squats with a heavy poundage) you only did one set!

Anabolic steroids changed all that. Steroids make it possible to train longer and more frequently. Thus, guys who use steroids can train longer and more frequently than guys who don't use steroids. The problem is, the guys who do not use drugs have been brainwashed into thinking that they cannot make good progress unless they follow the type of long, complex and frequent programs followed by the druggers. Actually, the reverse is true. A drug free athlete will find it virtually impossible to make progress if he emulates the druggers. Drug free training **MUST** be carefully limited in duration and frequency if it is to be productive.

Dinosaurs don't do drugs, but they are **VERY** interested in making gains.

Consequently, a dinosaur will use an abbreviated training program - the same sort of program that the biggest and strongest men in the world would use back in the days before bodybuilding and lifting became "chemical warfare."

ABBREVIATED TRAINING AND HARD WORK

Dinosaurs follow abbreviated training programs for one reason and one reason alone: dinosaurs train **HARD**. If you train hard, you cannot follow long and complex training programs, nor can you train very often. If you train **HARD**, you **MUST** reduce the number of exercises you do to the bare minimum. If you train **HARD**, you **MUST** reduce the number of sets you do to the lowest possible number. If you train **HARD**, you **MUST** limit the number of days per week that you train. In short, **TRULY HARD TRAINING MAKES ABBREVIATED TRAINING A NECESSITY.**

AN EXPERIMENT

Think I'm kidding? Think I'm overstating the case? Think I don't know what I'm talking about? Think I'm talking about training principles applicable only to bunny rabbits? Think that **YOU** are the man who is going to prove me wrong?

Fine - think what you like. You are perfectly free to believe that you can train hard and do lots of different exercises and do lots of sets of each exercise and go to the gym six days a week. There's no law against believing that.

But let's try an experiment before you conclude I don't know what I am talking about. Go to the gym. warm up thoroughly, and do a couple of progressively heavier warmup sets in the parallel squat. Then load the squat bar to the weight you normally handle for ten reps. Be sure the bar is in the power rack so you are protected if you get snick at the bottom, Don't actually **DO** any squats - just load the bar for now. The squats will come later.

Next, load another barbell to your regular ten rep weight in the stiff legged deadlift. If you don't do stiff legged deadlifts, load the bar to twenty pounds over your ten rep poundage for bent-over rows. If you don't do bent-over rows, load the bar to fifty pounds under your squat poundage.

After that, go to the bench press and load the bar to twenty or thirty pounds **UNDER** your best poundage for ten reps in the bench press. Ask a friend to be ready to spot you on the benches.

Now you are ready to do the experiment. Take the squat bar - the one that you have loaded to your ten rep poundage - and do **THIRTY REPS**. I don't care if you have to stop and catch your breath ... I don't care if you finish the set in rest pause fashion, grinding them out one rep at a time ... I don't care if you collapse during the set ... I don't care if you can't get up from the bottom position and have to crawl out, strip the weights and re-position and re-load the bar. I don't care if it takes you ten minutes to finish the set. I don't care if you vomit half way through the set. Just do the set. Thirty reps. Not fifteen, not twenty, not twenty-five, but **THIRTY**. Not one rep less. And each rep must be a complete movement - none of this sissy quarter squat or partial movement nonsense. Go down until the tops of the thighs are parallel to the floor on each and every rep - and if you don't go low enough, the rep doesn't count and you have to do it all over again.

When you finish the squats, stagger over to the deadlift bar. If you have to stop and puke, do it, but don't waste time. Grab the deadlift bar and knock off twenty reps in the stiff legged deadlift. Control the bar all the way up and all the way down. No halfway movements and no

bouncing the bar off of the floor. Once again, stop if you need to stop, but do whatever it takes to get all 20 reps.

After the deadlifts, go to the bench and grind out ten reps in the bench press. (Be sure you have a spotter!) Do the reps consecutively if possible. If your partner has to strip some weight off of the bar, that's fine. Just don't spend all day unloading the bar. If you have to stop to catch your breath, do so. But don't get off the bench until you do all ten reps.

Next, jump onto the chinning bar and do fifteen perfect chins. Do as many reps as possible in consecutive fashion and then grind the rest of the reps out in rest pause fashion.

To finish things up, grab a 150 pound sandbag and walk around the block with it. Hold it in a bearhug for the entire distance. If you have to stop and put it down to catch your breath, that's fine - but remember, every time you put the bag down makes one more time you have to lift it up again. If you don't have a sandbag, two 60 pound or 70 pound dumbbells will do nicely - just hold one in each hand and go for a walk with them.

After the sandbag or dumbbell walk, you are finished with the DINOSAUR portion of your training routine and are free to do any other exercises you think are necessary for a "well rounded" or "balanced" training program. You also are free to do as many sets of the other exercises as you wish. Heck, do two hundred exercises for ten sets each if you want.

Of course, if you have puked your guts up after the squats and passed out cold after the deadlifts, puked again after the benches and hit the ground for twenty minutes after the sandbag walk, you may not feel like doing any extra exercises. That's ok. Remember, we are doing an experiment. You are learning a very valuable training principle. You are learning exactly how little work you need to do if you are training HARD.

You may decide you don't want to do any more exercises. That's fine. Feel free to lie on the floor until the world stops spinning.

It may take thirty or forty minutes before you feel like getting up, going to the locker room and taking a shower. You may be so exhausted that you fall asleep under the shower jets. You may have difficulty driving or walking home. When you get home, you may feel like doing nothing other than lying down for a couple of hours. In short, you will feel like you have been run over by a Mack truck. That's fine. Remember, this is all part of the experiment.

When you wake up the next day you will feel incredibly sore. You may even have difficulty getting out of bed. That's fine. This is all part of the experiment.

Decide early whether you want to go to the gym the day after your first "experimental" workout. I would suggest that you stay away from the gym for a day or two, but I'm just an old fashioned know-nothing, so don't pay any attention to me. The latest issue of HUGELY HUMONGOUS ("the magazine for SERIOUS trainers!") says you should train six days a week at a bare minimum. So don't listen to me. Go to the gym - IF YOU WISH. It's your decision. However, in a spirit of fairness I should advise you that the rules of the experiment are very simple: you can do anything you want to do at the gym, PROVIDED that you begin every session with the five exercises you did on the previous day, performed for exactly the same reps, in exactly the same manner - except you will add five pounds to the bar on each exercise you do. So if you want to go to the gym and "pump those biceps," feel free to do so - AFTER you hit the squats, stiff legged deadlifts, bench presses, chins and sandbag carry.

If you think it might be a better idea to wait a day or two before your next workout, that's fine. You do whatever seems best under the circumstances. Remember, this is an experiment.

Follow the program outlined above every time you go to the gym. Make it the first thing you do. Go to the gym as often as you wish. Train two or three times a day if you think that doing so is necessary for "real" results. Do whatever seems to make sense.

But remember, do that same savage squat-dead lift-bench press-chin-sandbag combo every time you train. And add weight to the bar every time you do the combo - five pounds to each exercise every single time you train.

Do the experiment for a total of six weeks.

What will happen? What will happen is simple. You will learn IMMEDIATELY that HARD training necessities infrequent training sessions. You also will learn - IMMEDIATELY - that four or five HARD exercises are really all you want to handle - and all you CAN handle - in

any training session. You will learn that one hard set of a basic, heavy exercise (such as the squat) will drive you into the ground.

Most importantly, you will learn that dinosaurs train on abbreviated training programs because HARD WORK makes any other type of training schedule a physical impossibility.

HARD WORK VS. BUNNY TRAINING

Some people think dinosaurs train on abbreviated training programs because they are lazy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The guys who are lazy are the ones who spend hour after hour, day after day, in the gym but never even begin to approach anything resembling HARD WORK!

If you want to take it easy, go to the gym and spend thirty minutes pumping your biceps with high rep, slow motion curling movements with baby weights. Then sculpt your pecs for an hour with flies, cross overs and chrome plated pec dec units. As long as you use puny poundages and carefully avoid pushing to your max. you can hang out all afternoon, get a great pump, impress all the gym babes, guzzle lots of Evian water and generally confirm your Madison Avenue masculinity.

In contrast, you can do one heavy set of squats or deadlifts and DRIVE YOURSELF INTO THE FLOOR. Which will it be? Will you take the “long and easy” route? Or will you try something as radically different as training like a MAN?

LET'S START A REVOLUTION

We need to teach weight trainers to work HARD. Not the pseudo stuff. Not the artificial grimaces, grunts and groans, but what my friend Mike Thompson calls "THE REAL THING." Once lifters learn what hard work is really all about, and what it can do for a man, they will drop the all day idiot routines and the marathon training schedules like they were last week's garbage on a hot day in August. They will become dinosaurs: savage denizens of dungeon gyms who live for that extra rep, that extra pound of iron, and the feral thrill of bloody combat with an iron bar.

Do your own part to aid the revolution. Train hard. Train ferociously hard. Train as though your life depended on squeezing every last bit of effort from your body. Train so hard that a couple of hard exercises will knock you into next Tuesday. Train so hard that the mere idea of going to the gym on less than 48 or 72 hours rest is an absurdity. Train so hard that the four hour a day, six day a week crowd will barf in their water bottles when they see you in action. Strike a blow for dinosaurs. Strike a blow for men. Have the courage to train HARD. Have the courage to use an abbreviated program. Be a DINOSAUR!

My guess is that well over 80 percent of the human race goes through life without having a single original thought.

~H.L. Mencken

Let us finish the job in style. We can do it if we want, and it is well worth doing.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER SEVEN: HEAVY WEIGHTS

*My center is giving way, my right is pushed back,
situation excellent. I am attacking.*

~Ferdinand Foch

Dinosaurs train heavy. They train heavy because they are interested in strength. To build strength, you **MUST** lift heavy weights. If you don't intend to train heavy, you will **NEVER** build an appreciable level of muscular strength. If you train with bunny poundages, you will have a bunny's body. Period.

Everything I just wrote would have made perfect sense to a turn-of-the-century strength athlete. George Hackenschmidt would have nodded his head in approval.

Milo Steinborn would have agreed immediately. Arthur Saxon would have said. "Yes, that's exactly right." Thomas Inch would have said. "Spot on the money, lad."

If that's the case, why do so many modern trainees try to build strength with puny poundages? Why do so many modern training systems emphasize slow, time controlled movements, the virtual elimination of momentum, and "feeling" the movement all the way up and all the way down - training methods that make it impossible to use anything more than a pygmy poundage? Why do so many modern lifters think they are "HOT STUFF" because they can bench press 135 or handle 200 pounds on the leg press machine?

THE NAME OF THE GAME

The answer is simple. Modern lifters have forgotten that the name of the game is **WEIGHT** training. They have forgotten that the whole purpose of what they are doing is to elevate heavy poundages. They have confused "training for a pump" or "going for a burn" with serious weight training. And they have completely forgotten the inherent potential of the human body for muscular strength and power.

As with most of what is wrong in the Iron Game, the popular muscle media is to blame. The muscle media has systematically promoted and glorified bodybuilding for years. Strength training has been relegated to a back seat in almost every publication. The youngsters who were interested in weight training were taught to idolize certain "champions" because of the way they looked. Strength became an attribute of limited importance. A peaked bicep was worth its weight in gold. A six hundred pound squat was non-news. Forget that the beach boy with the peaked biceps couldn't lift his way out of a paper bag. It didn't matter. What mattered was the way he looked.

There was a time when a man was as strong as he looked - or stronger. Take Arthur Saxon, for example. The man only weighed 210 pounds. His chest measured about 46.5 inches. His upper arms were around 16.5 inches. Yet Saxon could lift a 300 pound sack of flour from the floor to overhead. If that doesn't sound like much, go to a hardware or garden supply store and buy six 50 pound bags of sand. Put the bags of sand into an old duffel bag - you can buy one for \$15 or so at an Army-Navy surplus store. Then lift the thing over your head. If you can lift the 300 pound sandbag overhead, stop reading right now. You don't need this book, because you are one of the strongest men on the face of the earth, and there is nothing I can possibly teach you. But if you **CANNOT** lift the 300 pound sandbag, sit down for a minute and ask yourself how Arthur Saxon could manage the feat - with 16.5 inch upper arms?

Saxon could lift the 300 pound sandbag because he **ALWAYS** trained heavy. The regular use of heavy poundages for a period of many, many years developed incredible strength in Saxon's tendons and ligaments. It also built solid, high tensile muscle tissue. Saxon was no pumped up amalgamation of pretty body parts, the way so many "champions" are today. He was a piece of moving steel, forged in the fires of effort and determination, tempered with oceans of sweat, until he was as hard or harder than the iron he lifted. He was so far removed from the modern day mirror athlete that any comparison would be ludicrous.

DINOSAURS TRAIN HEAVY

Dinosaurs train like Arthur Saxon. They train heavy. You will never catch a dinosaur pumping out reps with a puny poundage. You will never see a dinosaur waving light dumbbells around as if he was trying to fly. When a dinosaur trains, he uses the heaviest poundages he can handle. And he constantly tries to increase the weight on the bar.

HOW HEAVY IS HEAVY?

Dinosaurs know and understand the sort of poundages the human body can lift if it is properly trained. They are students of history. They can compare their efforts to those of the strongest and most powerful DRUG FREE athletes of all time. And they do so. A dinosaur doesn't compare himself to the efforts of those who take anabolic steroids. He KNOWS that a drug free lifter cannot compete with a drugger. What does he do instead? He compares himself to the Kings of Strength who flourished BEFORE steroids.

JOHN DAVIS: A BENCHMARK FOR DINOSAURS

For example, take John Davis. In his prime, Davis was arguably the strongest man in the world. In addition to being a 12 time United States Champion, six time World Champion and two time Olympic Champion in Olympic lifting, Davis was a tremendous all around strongman. His best training lifts were as follows (as reported in the April 1993 issue of THE IRON MASTER):

Clean and press - 375

Squat - 550 x 3, 525 x 8, 500 x 10

Deadlift - 705

Bench press - 425

One Hand Snatch - 215

Strict Curl - 215

Two Dumbbell Clean and Press - 284 (142 per hand)

Bent Press - 275

One Arm Strict Curl with Dumbbell - 103

Davis competed from 1937 through 1956, starting in the 181 pound class (at age 15) and growing into a full fledged heavyweight almost immediately. In his prime, he weighed 233 - the weight he was at when he broke the 400 pound barrier in the clean and jerk at the United States Senior Nationals on June 16 1951. (Davis lifted 402.2 pounds to become the first man in history to clean and jerk 400 or more pounds as an amateur in sanctioned competition. Charles Rigoulet had clean and jerked 400 pounds earlier, but did so as a professional, using a specially made, extra long globe barbell.)

Much of Davis' career predated anabolic steroids. According to THE IRON MASTER, Davis later reported that steroids were available and in use by other lifters before he left the platform, but he never used them because he was concerned about possible side effects. His career and lifting records bear this out - unlike many modern liners who go on the juice and register overnight wonder gains, Davis' ability remained remarkably consistent over his entire career. His 402 pound clean and jerk in 1950 was the highest clean and jerk he ever made. To accuse him of using steroids, one would have to assume that he made the 402 pound lift while on the juice (since it was his highest effort ever), which in turn means that he was using drugs in 1950 or earlier - which is highly unlikely. Dianabol did not come into common use among American lifters until 1962 or 1963 (and then it spread like wild fire). Thus, unlike so many later lifters, we can look at Davis' records with a large degree of assurance that they were legitimate, natural efforts by a drug free champion.

MEASURING YOUR BENCH PRESS

All of the foregoing points make John Davis an excellent benchmark for determining high but realistic strength goals for a natural athlete. Take the bench press, for example. If Davis weighed 233 when he benched 425, then he was handling 1.82 times his bodyweight in the

bench press. Equivalent weights for a 160, 180, 200 and 220 pound lifter would be 291, 328, 364 and 401 pounds respectively.

If you are of average height and average or above average bone structure, you should shoot to push your muscular bodyweight to between 180 and 220 pounds. If you weighed 180, the equivalent bench press compared to Davis' 425 pound effort at a 233 pound bodyweight would be 328. At 190, the Davis equivalency for the bench press would be 346. At 200, the equivalency would be 364. At 210, it would be 382. At 220, it would be 401.

These numbers can tell you how close you are to a world class bench press at any given bodyweight. Let's say you weigh 190 pounds and can bench press 305. Using the Davis equivalency, a world class lift would be 346. That puts you at 88% of a world class effort - not bad, but there's still plenty of room for improvement. At the very least, you ought to shoot to get within the 90% mark - a 311 pound lift.

Some of you may think that a 425 pound bench press at a bodyweight of 233 pounds is nothing special. Let me suggest that you are ignoring several critical points. First, Davis was an all around athlete and strong man, NOT a bench press specialist. He had ENORMOUS leg and hip development. Unlike many bench press enthusiasts, he was not a top heavy athlete wobbling around on a pair of bird legs. Many bench press specialists are a good 20 or 30 pounds under their top bodyweight if they trained their legs and hips as hard as they trained their upper body. Heck, I know of guys who can bench 350 and barely squat 225. A man with that sort of strength and size imbalance is obviously going to register a higher bench press on a pound for pound basis than an all around strong man who does lots of heavy leg exercises.

Second, Davis lifted without a bench shirt. A bench shirt adds 20 to 40 pounds to a lifter's top effort. A man who benches 425 without a shirt is going to hit 445 to 465 if he puts on a shirt. Thus, if you compare your efforts to those of John Davis, do it without a bench shirt. If you compare your best lift with a bench shirt to Davis' best effort, you'd have to add at least 20 pounds to Davis' 425 pound lift to make all things equal. That puts Davis at 445—which even today is one heck of a bench press for any drug free athlete, including a guy who does nothing but benches and other upper body exercises.

Third, Davis trained on a bench that lacked uprights. He would deadlift the bar, sit down, lie back, rock the bar to his chest, push it up to arms' length, do his set, then roll the bar to his legs, sit up, stand up and lower the bar to the floor. He doubtless would have benched more if he had used a bench with uprights.

MEASURING YOUR SQUAT

Let's look at the squat. Davis did 550 for 3, 525 for 8 and 500 for 10. That looks like a 570 to 600 pound single. Let's be VERY conservative. Call it 570. (By the way, photos show Davis using a high bar, heels elevated “Olympic” squatting style, and he probably could have handled much more in a “power squat.”) These lifts were done on different occasions between 1938 and 1941, and Davis' heaviest bodyweight at a lifting competition during that period was 220 pounds, so we'll use that weight for the equivalency instead of 233. A 570 squat at a bodyweight of 220 is 2.59 times the lifter's bodyweight. Equivalent lifts for men of different bodyweights would be as follows:

160 pound lifter—414 pound squat

180 pound lifter—466 pound squat

200 pound lifter—518 pound squat

220 pound lifter—570 pound squat

240 pound lifter—622 pound squat

260 pound lifter—673 pound squat

Using these numbers, you can determine how YOU compare to a world class strength athlete. Suppose you weigh 195 and can squat 415 pounds without a squat suit or knee wraps (we need to exclude wraps and a squat suit because Davis did not use them). If you multiply your bodyweight by Davis' squat to bodyweight ratio of 2.59, you get $195 \times 2.59 = 505$. Your 415 pound effort is 82% of the Davis standard adjusted for bodyweight. That means you are doing

WELL, but that there is still plenty of room for improvement. At the least, you would want to shoot for 90% of the 505 pound figure - 455 pounds.

MEASURING YOUR DEADLIFT

Now turn to the deadlift, where Davis handled a hefty 705 pounds (entirely as a result of his Olympic lifting, as he never specialized on the lift and in fact rarely used it in his training). Assuming a bodyweight of 233 pounds, the 705 pound lift is 3.03 times bodyweight. Equivalent performances at various bodyweights would be as follows:

160 pound lifter—484 pound deadlift

180 pound lifter—545 pound deadlift

200 pound lifter—606 pound deadlift

220 pound lifter—667 pound deadlift

340 pound lifter—727 pound deadlift

260 pound lifter—788 pound deadlift

These marks may seem pretty high for those of you who are not long armed, short torsoed deadlifting machines. Yes, these marks ARE high. But Davis had absolutely titanic back power from his many years of power cleans, power pulls and snatches. The marks are high because they are based on an athlete who specialized in Olympic lifting - and NOTHING a man does can build the type of back power that can be built through serious Olympic lifting.

MEASURING YOUR OVERHEAD STRENGTH

Getting back to John Davis and his best lifts, consider his clean and press of 375 pounds (a lift he performed in training). At an assumed bodyweight of 233 pounds, this is 1.61 times bodyweight - a PHENOMENAL feat of strength. (The immensity of the lift is demonstrated by the fact that Davis never achieved so high a mark in competition. His best clean and press in competition was 342, performed at a bodyweight of 221, for a rating of 1.55 times bodyweight.)

The equivalent clean and press for lifters at various bodyweights using both the 375 pound training lift and the 342 competition lift are as follows:

160 pound lifter—258 pound press/248 pound press

180 pound lifter—290 pound press/279 pound press

200 pound lifter—322 pound press/310 pound press

220 pound lifter—354 pound press/341 pound press

240 pound lifter—386 pound press/372 pound press

260 pound lifter—419 pound press/403 pound press

These will seem like “out of this world” marks to many of you, particularly to those who have done more bench and incline pressing than military pressing. Once again, you need to remember that Davis was an Olympic lifter, so he specialized on the clean and press. However, the marks do confirm that many modern lifters sell themselves far short on their overhead lifting.

This is due, of course, to the predominance of the bench press compared to overhead lifting. The bench press is essentially a post World War II lift. Many old timers never did it, or used it only rarely. The immortal John Grimek NEVER did bench presses. Up until about the beginning of the 1970's, men worked as hard on their overhead pressing as on their bench pressing. Many gym heroes of the era had huge shoulders from years of heavy pressing and behind the neck pressing. No matter what you could bench press, you were not considered “strong” unless you handled 225 or more on your overhead presses - for reps!

Then guys stopped working the overhead lifts as much or as hard and started to specialize on the bench press. As a result, there are many guys who can bench press the world but make only a modest showing on their overhead lifts. Compare most modern bench pressers to Davis' 425 pound bench press and 375 pound clean and press. The clean and press is 88% of the bench press. That means that a guy who benches 200 pounds should be able to clean and press 88% of that poundage, or 176 pounds. A guy who benches 300 pounds should be able to clean and press 264 pounds.

Other equivalent performances are as follows:

350 pound bench press—308 pound clean and press

375 pound bench press—330 pound clean and press

400 pound bench press—352 pound clean and press

425 pound bench press—375 pound clean and press

450 pound bench press—396 pound clean and press

475 pound bench press—418 pound clean and press

500 pound bench press—440 pound clean and press

I understand that Davis specialized on the clean and press and that most modern guys do the reverse - they specialize on the bench press. I understand that Davis was skilled in the clean portion of the lift and that no one other than a competitive Olympic lifter could be expected to demonstrate the same level of skill in the clean. Nevertheless, these numbers are far, far different than the ratios of clean and press to bench press that would be exhibited by most modern lifters. Even if you omit the clean and allow the modern lifter to take the bar off of the rack or a set of squat stands, he still will not come anywhere near the 88% figure that Davis achieved. Is that because Davis was a “technician” who knew how to Olympic press a heavy poundage that exceeded what he could military press? Perhaps. But let's allow the modern guy to do a push press or even an outright jerk press. He still won't demonstrate anywhere near the level of overhead strength compared to bench press strength that Davis achieved.

Face the facts. Perhaps more than in any other area (grip strength might be an exception), the modern weight trainee lags behind the oldtimers in overhead strength. Even strong modern athletes fall far short of the overhead ability of the strong oldtimers.

However, don't let this fact discourage you. If you bench press 350 pounds and can barely lift 225 overhead, don't despair. What you have done is identify AN UNTAPPED GROWTH AREA. If you are strong enough to bench press 350 pound, then you already know a good deal about the type of training that works best for you body. All you have to do is apply that knowledge to heavy overhead lifting. Did you use heavy bench press lockouts to develop benching power? Then why not try heavy lockouts in the military press to build your pressing power? Did bottom position rack work help your bench press? Why not do seated presses on a steep incline bench – set at an 80 degree angle - with the bench in the power rack and the bar positioned so you begin the press at the bottom (from the chest)? Did heavy dumbbell benches help your regular bench press? Why not try heavy dumbbell presses to aid your pressing strength?

If you already bench press a heavy poundage, there may be a limit to how much further you can go on that particular movement. But that doesn't mean that you cannot add quite a bit of weight to other movements that you have not fully exploited!

MEASURING YOUR CURLING STRENGTH

Let's look at John Davis' curling strength - which was truly world class. Osmo Kiiha has reported (in THE IRON MASTER) that Davis lifted 215 in the standing barbell curl at a bodyweight of only 193, which ranks as one of the all time best performances in the strict curl performed on a straight bar. The lift was 1.11 times Davis' bodyweight - a staggering feat. Equivalent performances at various bodyweights - for the STRICT curl, performed with a STRAIGHT bar—would be as follows:

160 pound lifter—178 pound curl

180 pound lifter—200 pound curl

200 pound lifter—222 pound curl

220 pound lifter—244 pound curl

240 pound lifter—266 pound curl

260 pound lifter—289 pound curl

MEASURING YOUR ALL-AROUND STRENGTH

Let's focus for a minute on all around strength measured in a number of different ways. To do so, we will combine Davis' best efforts in the three powerlifts, the clean and press (using his best competition effort) and the barbell curl. The total for the five lifts is 2,257 pounds (consisting of a 425 pound bench press, 570 pound squat, 705 pound deadlift, 342 pound clean and press and 215 pound curl). We know that some of these lifts were performed at a lighter bodyweight than 233 pounds, but to keep things simple we will use the 233 pound figure to compute the tonnage to bodyweight ratio for the five lifts. When we do the math, we find that Davis' total on the five lifts was 9.69 times his bodyweight.

Now let's compare a hypothetical modern day trainee who weighs 195 and can manage the following lifts: 335 pound bench press, 420 pound squat, 515 pound deadlift, 235 pound clean and press, and 175 pound curl. His total for the five lifts will be 1,681, or 8.62 times bodyweight. That's pretty good. Our hypothetical lifter can demonstrate 89% of Davis' all around strength and power after making adjustments for body weight.

Let's look at another hypothetical lifter - a bench press specialist. Let's assume the man weighs 245 and benches 435. He squats 450, deadlifts 505, clean and presses 159 and curls 185. His total on the five lifts is 1,825 pounds, or 7.45 times his bodyweight. That's not nearly as good as the first hypothetical lifter. It works out to being 77% of John Davis' overall strength and power after making the necessary adjustments for bodyweight.

Let's take a third hypothetical lifter - a modern muscle pumper who trains in chrome and fern land and impresses all of the gym bunnies with his poster-boy good looks, his sparkling smile, his golden tan and his shapely buffness. The young Adonis weighs 173, benches 185, squats 195, deadlifts 275, clean and presses 135 and curls 110. His total on the five lifts is 900 pounds, or a miserable 5.20 times his bodyweight. On a comparative basis (making allowances for the difference in bodyweights) the pretty boy is only 54% as strong as John Davis.

The pretty boy is a perfect example of the modern trainee - the type who doesn't train for strength, doesn't care about total body power, and is only interested in looking buff, sculpted, sleek and pumped. He might know all about supersets, trisets, pre-exhaustion, pumping, the latest supplements, the hottest bodybuilding gossip and EVERYTHING there is to know about male grooming products and designer gym apparel, but he hasn't the faintest idea of what real weight training is all about.

NEVER SELL YOURSELF SHORT

Even men who are far, FAR more serious about their training than the pretty boy sell themselves far short when it comes to poundage goals in their training. Too many men believe that 225 pounds is a good weight in the bench press. Too many men believe that 315 pounds is a good weight in the squat. Too many men believe that 350 pounds is a good mark in the deadlift. Too many men believe that pressing 120 or curling 105 is good.

The modern trainee has no idea of the phenomenal strength that can be developed by proper training. He has no clue of the latent potential that lies within the human body. He sells himself far short. He is content to gain a little strength and power because he has no idea of how much he could achieve if he put his heart and soul into the effort.

THE REALM OF THE DINOSAURS

Dinosaurs dwell in a far different world from that of most modern trainees. They live in a world where heavy poundages ARE EXPECTED of all lifters. Dinosaurs measure their strength against men like John Davis and other Iron Game Immortals.

They are well aware that heavy weights are well within the realm of possibility for any average man, and that enormously heavy weights are well within the grasp of many men. Dinosaurs train heavy. Dinosaurs think heavy. Dinosaurs remember what almost everyone else in the modern world seems to have forgotten: that what we are doing is WEIGHT training!

Take a look at your own training poundages. Re-evaluate where you stand and where you are going. Measure yourself against John Davis. Measure yourself against other great dinosaurs from the past. Be aggressive. Add weight to the bar. Don't be content with puny poundages merely because they are 50 pounds more than you could lift when you began training. Aim high. Work to handle weights so heavy they bend the bar on any exercise you do. TRAIN HEAVY! If you are a beginner or an intermediate, train with the heaviest poundages you can handle and make unceasing efforts to add weight to the bar. If you are an advanced man, then pile on the plates. Never train light. Never emphasize slow motion, time controlled repetitions with puny poundages. Never use chrome plated wonder machines loaded with absurdly light poundages. Never waste your time with isolation exercises that limit you to chrome and fern class poundages.

Train heavy. If you don't train heavy, you might as well give it up.

Go on. Make a commitment. Promise yourself that you WILL achieve tremendous strength. Determine once and for all that you will never settle for poundages any less than 90% of what John Davis could handle (adjusted for bodyweight). Now go out and train!

*The masses feel that it is easy to flee from reality,
when it is the most difficult thing in the world.*

~Jose Ortega y Gasset

*You will never get to the end of the journey if you stop to shy a
stone at every dog that barks.*

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER EIGHT: POUNDAGE PROGRESSION

You will have to do some real fighting at time

~Peary Rader

Dinosaurs understand that POUNDAGE PROGRESSION is the key to success in weight training. Absent poundage progression, nothing else matters. Even hard work fails to mean very much if you do not progressively add weight to the bar. Why? Because if you TRULY work HARD, you will grow stronger. And if you grow stronger, you need to add weight to the bar. If you don't add weight, your workout will start to become too EASY.

When you see it spelled out the way it appears in the preceding paragraph, it looks as simple as ABC. But guess what - the vast majority of people who train with weights never achieve much of anything because they fail to add weight to the bar whenever it is possible to do so.

GO TO ANY GYM...

Go to any gym, anywhere in the world, and take detailed notes of the sets, reps, exercises and exercise poundages that each of the regular members uses in each of his weekly workouts. Go back to the same gym one year later. What will you see? Almost without exception you will see the regular members using the same exercises, sets, reps and poundages that they were using the year before. NOTHING will have changed.

DINOSAURS ARE DIFFERENT

Dinosaurs are different. Dinosaurs see every workout as a challenge. Every time a dinosaur trains it is a new opportunity to surpass his previous best. Every time a dinosaur trains he goes to battle, and every time he goes to battle, he fights to WIN! The way to win when you train is to surpass your former best, and to do so over and over and over.

A dinosaur is NEVER satisfied with his existing level of strength and development. A dinosaur never decides that he is "big enough" or "strong enough" or that he can ease up and take things easy for awhile. A dinosaur is focused on forward progress. He always aims to surpass his previous efforts. He never rests on his laurels. He keeps going forward. He keeps adding weight to the bar. He is OBSESSED with adding weight to the bar.

Of course, an advanced dinosaur is not going to be able to add five or ten pounds to the bar every time he trains a particular lift. It just doesn't happen that way. You can progress rapidly and steadily when you are a beginner, but eventually, as you approach the level of an advanced man, the rate of progress slows down. This happens to everyone, so don't worry when it happens to you.

SHORT AND LONG TERM GOALS

Poundage progression is both a short term and a long term proposition. In my own case, I can remember reading about 400 pound bench presses when I was just a scrawny kid who wasn't even shaving. I determined at that time to develop the ability to bench press 400 pounds. That was a long term goal. At the time, I was barely capable of benching 65 pounds. My immediate short term goal was to get my bench up to the 100 pound mark.

All successful lifters can share similar stories - they set their sights on certain long term goals and then they broke the long term goals into a series of short term goals. Every time they went to the gym they were taking one more step on the road to training success. Every time they trained they were that much closer to their long term goals. And every time they trained they worked like heck to achieve their short term goals.

When you get right down to it, the secret to working HARD when you train is to fight like the devil to try to achieve a short term goal.

Confused?

Let me give you an example.

AN EXAMPLE

Let's assume your long term goal is to develop the largest pair of upper arms you could ever attain. How do you build those guns? Well, Arthur Jones had a helpful hint in NAUTILUS TRAINING BULLETIN NO. ONE. He wrote: "When you can curl 200 pounds for ten reps in perfect form, your upper arms will be as large as they need to be for any purpose associated with any sport just short of wrestling bears." Great!

Now you have a poundage goal - ten reps in the barbell curl with 200 pounds (in good form). This becomes your long range goal.

What about your short term goal?

Well, what are you curling right now?

Let's say you can curl 120 pounds for ten reps in perfect form. Great! Your short term goal will be 135 pounds for ten reps in the curl in perfect form.

Why did I pick 135 pounds?

Because the number lies into the plates on an Olympic barbell - 135 pounds means you are using a 45 pound Olympic bar with a 45 pound Olympic plate on each end. If you have a kilo bar and kilo plates, set a short term goal of 132 pounds - a 20 kilo bar (weighing 44 pounds) and a 20 kilo plate on each side.

What do you do when you go to the gym if your short term goal is 135 pounds for ten reps? Well, there are lots of things you can do. You can load the bar to 121 or 122 and try for ten reps. If you get them, add another pound or two the following week.

If you don't get ten reps, stay at the weight you are at until you make ten reps, then add weight the following week. However, very small poundage increases - one or two pounds - may allow you to get ten reps almost every time you train - week after week, all the way up to your short term goal of 135 pounds.

Alternatively, you could load the bar to 125 or even 130 pounds. At 125 pounds, you probably will only manage seven or eight reps. At 130 pounds, you probably will hit the wall after five or six reps. That's fine. Stay at the weight you have selected and come back the following week and go for ONE MORE REP. And GET that extra rep. Even if it almost kills you, GET THE EXTRA REP! This is where it all boils down to mental toughness. This is where you put it all on the line. This is where you become a man.

Sooner or later you will get to the point where you are doing 130 pounds for ten reps in perfect form. Then jump to 135 pounds and work your way up to ten reps. Or work your way up in one or two pound jumps - it doesn't matter. Eventually, you will make 135 pounds for ten perfect reps. You will have achieved your short term goal!

What do you do then?

Set a NEW short term goal - 150 pounds. Why 150? Because it is not too far down the road - only 15 pounds over your current maximum - and because it is a nice round number - and because it lies in nicely with your long term goal of 200 pound (since 150 pounds is exactly 75% of 200 pounds).

This is the way to grow. This is the way to work your way up, slowly and surely, to the achievement of a long term goal.

TWO APPROACHES TO POUNDAGE PROGRESSION

Which is better - the "slow cooking" system where you add only half a pound or a pound to the bar, or the more aggressive "throw on another nickel or another dime" approach?

From a physiological point of view, it probably doesn't matter. Like so many other aspects of productive training, it boils down to individual preferences and to the lifter's personality. It is an individual thing.

I own two sets of small plates - plates that run from 1/4 pound apiece to 2.2 pounds. I bought one set from MAV-RIK, and received the other set as a gift from John Szymanski, the owner of PIEDMONT DESIGN ASSOCIATES, who is one of the nicest guys in the business. Do I use them? Sure. Do I use them religiously? No. Do I use them to help me increase the poundage in some sort of systematic, predetermined manner? Heck no. I use them when I got 400 the week before but know in my heart that 405 is NOT going to go. In a situation like

that, I might very well toss an extra pound or two onto the bar - just to make sure that I have to work as hard as possible to get my reps (or to make the lift, if I am doing singles). I use the small plates to prevent loafing. I use them to keep me on my toes. I use them to add the razor's edge of difficulty to any set I do.

Other guys use small plates in a very systematic, controlled fashion. They go from 400 pounds to 401, then 402, then 403 and so on. I can't do that. I get bored when try to be so precise. I have to introduce an element of risk – more of a gamble - in order to keep my enthusiasm high, I have to work against weights so heavy that there is a real question of my ability to do the lift or to complete the required number of reps. I need the pressure of possible failure. Other guys do better if they take the pressure off by keeping their weight increases to one pound at a time. They like to approach the set with a very confident feelings “I got 200 pounds last week for five reps, and this is only one pound more, so I KNOW I can get five reps this week.” You doubtless will find that one of these two approaches works better for you. Remember, everyone is different. Everyone is a unique individual. One of the cardinal rules in training, as in life, is KNOW YOURSELF.

BEGINNERS AND INTERMEDIATES

For beginners and intermediates, poundage progression is a fairly simple thing. You simply work like heck and add weight as often as possible - which for most guys who are really busting their butts will be very often. Peary Rader often wrote about the poundage jumps he made when he started the breathing squat program that added nearly 100 pounds to his frame in about two years - he put ten pounds on the squat bar every week for weeks at a time. That's what can happen when a beginner with the right attitude goes to the gym and TRAINS.

ADVANCED MEN

Eventually, though, you reach the point where it is impossible to add weight to the bar on a regular basis, What do you do then?

You train at your top poundages for long, long periods of time, always working as hard as possible, and eventually, over time, the sheer regularity of your training efforts will make you stronger.

Let me repeat that - in slightly different terms. This is a CRITICAL point for advanced men. A 220 pound man who can bench press 405 pounds dinosaur style - with a 3” bar, in the rack, starting with the bar on the chest - is not going to be able to add weight to the bar on a regular, pre-planned basis no matter what he does, how hard he works, how determined he is or what supplements he uses. He is simply too close to being as strong as possible to be able to make dramatic and rapid gains. He needs to take things slowly. He needs to train hard and heavy on a regular basis. By so doing, he will eventually - over a period of years - go well beyond his 400 pound limit.

WHAT AN ADVANCED MAN MIGHT DO

Let's say our advanced man trains with heavy singles. His bench press program might consist of the following: 135 x 1, 225 x 1, 325 x 1 and 405 x 1. He can't jump to 410 in the next workout - he probably can't even jump to 406. Or if he does, he won't be able to maintain the pace more than a couple of sessions. What does he do?

He might decide to hit the same workout - topping out at 405 pounds – every week for the next three months. And he might augment his full range benches with power rack lockouts. On the lockouts, he might start with a 2” range of motion, work up in weight ten pounds per week for five or six weeks, and then increase the range of motion by 1/2” or so by putting some plywood or strong boards under the legs of his bench. After 3 months or so, he will have increased the range of motion on his lockouts by 1 1/2” to 2 1/2” - a substantial gain in tendon and ligament strength. As for the full range movement, the 405 will be FLYING from the bottom position to arm's length.

What does the lifter do then?

He goes up to 410 for his top set in the full range movement. And he continues the lockouts. The point is, he takes things very, very slowly. But look at the results by the end of the year, he may be handling 425 instead of 405 in the full range movement - a very significant increase for an advanced man. Two years of such work may see him handling 440 or so for the full range movement - and that sort of weight, on a 3" bar, starting from the chest, with no shirt and no wraps, is mind-boggling.

Exactly the same points apply to the squat, the deadlift and all other lifts a man might do.

A SECRET OF ADVANCED GAINS

Remember, once you get strong - really strong - you CANNOT add weight to the bar on a regular basis or progress in any sort of predetermined linear pattern. You MUST knuckle down to a long, long period of consistent, regular, heavy training.

Forget about the period ration or cycling programs. An advanced man needs to hit the iron HARD, using heavy poundages, on a regular basis-week after week. Back-cycling to 60% or 70% of your max and building back up is a waste of time. You are going nowhere. Most of your time is spent with poundages too light to test your abilities. You are taking it easy. You are babying yourself.

I like the idea of training cycles for novices and intermediates because their bodies are not used to training, they have tremendous untapped growth potential, and if they TRY, they CAN add weight to the bar on a regular basis. Cycling programs teach novices and intermediates to add weight whenever possible and to work HARD to be able to do so. Cycling programs keep novices and intermediates from falling into the deadly trap of long-term relationships with their training poundages. Most importantly, cycling programs build confidence in beginners and intermediates.

For advanced men, however, things are entirely different. Once you are advanced, you can kiss cycling programs goodbye forever. Settle into some regular, hard, heavy training, give yourself a couple of years, and you won't believe the results.

TYPICAL, NON-PRODUCTIVE TRAINING CYCLES

Here's a related point. Many advanced men compete in powerlifting, Olympic lifting, bench press or odd lift competitions. That's fine - competition is great. It's a terrific way to maintain your motivation. But too many men get tied into competition based training cycles, and actually reduce their overall results as a direct consequence.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Take a 25 year old powerlifter who competes at 198 and benches 365, squats 525 and deadlifts 555. Not bad numbers, but there is plenty of room for improvement over the years. The lifter competes about four times per year and does a twelve week cycle between contests. After each contest, he takes two weeks off, then goes back to the gym to begin the third week of his training cycle by hitting 50% of his one rep max for three sets of ten reps on each lift. That's three sets of ten reps with 187.5 in the bench, 262.5 in the squat and 277.5 in the deadlift. Not exactly a heavy training session - and remember, our man took a two week lay-off after the last contest, so he hasn't trained heavy for three weeks now.

The lifter has his next contest in nine weeks. In the fourth week of his cycle, he handles 55% of his one rep max for three sets of ten reps. Again, this is hardly a heavy session - making a total of four easy weeks for our lifter.

The following week sees him at two sets of eight reps with 60% of his one rep max.

The next week he does two sets of eight reps with 65% of his one rep max.

In the following week (week number seven), he handles 70% of his one rep max for two sets of six reps. That's 255.5 on the bench, 367.5 on the squat and 388.5 on the deadlift. Still not heavy weights for our man - not even for two sets of six reps. However, he knows he is on course, after all, he is following exactly the type of program that gets written up in issue after issue of the various magazines. In addition, he now can start wearing his powerlifting gear - the magazine articles say to do so at this stage of the game - so he wears his old squat suit with the straps down and tells people the squat suit is mandatory for "heavy" training.

In week eight, our man does 75% of his one rep max for two sets of six reps. He adds an old set of knee wraps for his squats and uses a loose bench shirt for his benches. He also wraps his wrists for the benches.

In week nine, our man does 80% of his one rep max for two sets of four reps. In the bench, he uses 292 pounds. He uses 420 in the squat and 444 in the deadlift. He lifts the straps on his squat suit at this point, switches to a tighter bench shirt, uses a stronger pair of knee wraps and changes to a tougher and tighter set of wrist wraps.

In week ten, the lifter does one set of four reps with 85% of his one rep max. He uses 310 in the bench press - the first time in the entire cycle that he has handled over 300 pounds in the bench. He struggles mightily to get the weight, doing touch and go reps that would never pass in competition and actually bounces the last rep off his chest. He handles 446 in the squat, using a new and much tighter squat suit, and cuts each rep short an inch or two above parallel. He does 472 in the deadlift, using the new squat suit, and bounces the bar off the floor to get his reps. He also uses wrist straps to hold on to the bar - one of the really big guys at the gym swears by wrist straps, and our man wants to be sure to do everything right. After all, the state meet is coming up in three weeks.

Week number eleven sees our man using 90% of his one rep max for one set of two reps. He uses a brand new set of support gear for each lift - the strongest and tightest he can buy. It takes three other guys to get him into his squat suit and two guys to squeeze him into his bench shirt. What weights does he handle? Try 328.5 in the bench, 472.5 in the squat and 499.5 in the deadlift. His form is lousy, the reps are ragged, his first reps are questionable and none of his second reps would be passed in competition. He has to lift his butt two inches off the bench to get the second rep of his bench presses. He wonders if he needs to buy a new bench shirt.

In week twelve - the final week before the state meet - our man tries 95% of his one rep max on each lift, wearing full armor, including a set of squat briefs. His goal is to do one rep with 95%. In the bench, he tries 347 and makes it after a hard struggle - but he has to lift his butt off the bench to get the rep. In the squat, he handles 499 but stops four inches above parallel. In the deadlift, he tries 527 but misses the lift. He blames it on an uneven lifting platform.

What will our man do at the meet?

What does it matter?

For the past twelve weeks, our lifter has been fooling himself. He has been following the standard sort of program that you see in all of the magazines all of the time, but he has been doing NOTHING to increase his strength and power. Changing from “straps down” to “straps up” or from a loose fitting bench shirt to a tighter one is NOT the way to increase your functional strength. It looks good on paper, and it makes a good magazine article, but it does nothing to build strength.

Dr. Ken Leistner made the point succinctly but emphatically in the April, 1987 issue of THE STEEL TIP (Volume 3, Number 4): “The entire cycling phenomenon has been very destructive, causing lifters to spend large portions of the training season undertraining, and then bringing them up to or beyond the brink of injury immediately prior to contest time.”

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE TRADITIONAL “CYCLE”

Now let's observe a second lifter who does things differently. Suppose that our lifter had decided to compete only once per year, and had taken a one week lay-off after his last contest and then tried something like the following. In the bench press, he used the power rack and a 3” bar to make the movement as tough as possible, and worked up to 90% of his one rep max (328.5 pounds). Let's assume he lifted that weight with no shirt and no wraps. Let's also assume that our man did bottom position squats in the power rack, with no knee wraps and no squat suit, and worked up to 420 pounds - 80% of his one rep max in the regular style of performance. Also assume that our man hit 90% of his top weight in the deadlift (499.5 pounds, rounded off to an even 500 pounds) for a single, with no suit and no wraps.

Now assume that our lifter uses those weights week after week for a long, long time, adding five pounds to the bar whenever possible (perhaps every four to eight weeks), staying

completely away from wraps or support gear of any sort (other than a lifting belt), and augmenting his program with lots of heavy grip work, heavy overhead pressing, weighted chins, heavy crunches, neck work with a headstrap, barrel and sandbag lifting.

Assume our lifter also does the regular competition style bench press and squat - without support gear - for three or four singles with 85% to 90% of his one rep max every couple of weeks, just to stay in the groove and maintain his technique.

Now assume the two lifters meet in competition after one year of training.

Which of the two will win?

Which of the two will be stronger?

Which of the two will set new personal records on every lift?

Which of the two has used the past twelve months PRODUCTIVELY?

Which of the two has been wasting his time?

TIME. PATIENCE AND UNDERSTANDING

Dinosaurs know that training time is extremely valuable. No training session can be wasted by a man who is determined to succeed. To get to the top, you need to make every set - every rep - count. You cannot afford to cycle up and cycle down and go in a circle and get nowhere. You must keep your eye on the mark. You must train HEAVY on a regular and consistent basis.

Strength develops over time. It is an accumulative process. One hard set is not going to turn you into Hercules. One good session won't cut it. It isn't enough to train like hell ONCE IN A WHILE. You must do it on a regular basis.

There is one thing that all dinosaurs know and love: the joy of adding weight to the bar. A dinosaur lives for that extra pound or those extra five pounds of iron. To be a dinosaur you must focus constantly and continually on adding weight to the bar. You must never be content with your current poundages. Three hundred pounds is good, but 305 is better. Heavier is always better - and for a dinosaur, it is always possible.

*Watching a man working out properly is almost frightening -
and it is enlightening to some people....*

~Arthur Jones

CHAPTER NINE: DEATH SETS

March or die!

~Title of famous film about
the French Foreign Legion

In my own training I do best on low reps - usually single reps for most exercises. But many dinosaurs do best on higher reps, particularly for leg and lower back work. Doing a high rep set of squats or deadlifts with a heavy poundage is one of the toughest, most demanding, most painful and most brutal things you can do. It is a training principle that has built tons of muscle and it is a training principle that has been endorsed by many of the most knowledgeable and influential writers who ever graced the Game. Dr. Ken Leistner, Peary Rader, Dr. Randall J. Strossen, John McCallum, Mark Berry, Joe Hise, Arthur Jones, and Bradley J. Steiner all have written at length about the almost uncanny ability of heavy, high rep leg and back work to transform a bag of bones into a human gorilla.

Some of these writers (Rader, Berry, Hise, McCallum, Strossen, and Steiner) emphasize the use of deep breathing in conjunction with heavy leg and back work - coining the term, "the breathing squat." Others (Leistner and Jones) simply urge you to bust your butt and let your breathing take care of itself, working on the assumption that you will be breathing like a steam engine after the first four or five reps in any event, provided, of course, that you are using a heavy poundage.

All of these writers emphasize **HARD WORK** when you do high reps in leg and back movements.

And that brings us to the most critical point of this chapter. Listen up. Pay attention.

HARD WORK IS THE KEY

There is an overwhelming amount of documented evidence extending from the present all the way back to the 1930's that clearly establishes the fact that one or two heavy sets of high rep squats or deadlifts can transform an average man into a superman with virtually no additional exercise. It has happened so many times that one would be a fool to dispute the issue. Heavy, high rep squats and deadlifts **WORK**. They build enormous levels of strength and can add many, many pounds of muscle to your body.

But - and this is a **BIG** but - the heavy, high rep work only works if you give it your all. A half way effort won't cut it. Going "hard" won't do the trick. Not even a 90% or a 95% effort will get the job done. To make heavy, high rep squats and deadlifts work for you, you have to attack the bar as if your very life depended on it. Nothing less will do.

DOERS AND DREAMERS

There are many men who have tried high rep squats or deadlifts and made remarkable gains. There are just as many (or more) who tried the system and didn't get a thing out of it.

What is the difference between the two groups?

The answer is simple. The guys who got results from the program were the guys who worked **HARD**. The guys who didn't get results were the guys who were content to give something less than a maximum effort.

LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

I sometimes receive letters from men who have read my articles, who complain that they tried a "twenty rep squat routine" but didn't gain much muscle and only got fat. All of them blame the program. Each of them tells me - in his own way, but always with the same sort of perverse pride in having failed - that the twenty rep squat program simply does not work. Some of them have it all figured out - the exact biological, physical and mechanical reasons for the program's failure. Others hint that the program only works for "the genetically gifted",

“easy gainers” or “those who use steroids.” Some claim the twenty rep squat injured them. They say the program is dangerous. Others claim it is simply “too old fashioned.”

Then they mention the weight they were using: 120 pounds ... or 135 pounds ... possibly 150 pounds ... or even 185 pounds for a couple of the bigger guys.

And that tells the whole story right there.

Men, a single set of high rep squats or deadlifts done once or twice a week is DEFINITELY going to make you grow bigger and stronger - but ONLY if it is a HARD set with a HEAVY poundage.

One hundred twenty pounds is not a heavy poundage. One hundred thirty-five pounds is not a heavy poundage. Don't kid yourself. This is a beginner's weight. I used to train a 115 pound female powerlifter who would warmup with 135 in the squat.

One hundred fifty pounds is not a heavy weight. I don't care if it sounds impressive to the guys and gals at chrome and fern land. Advanced dinosaurs CURL this weight. Some men can curl 150 pounds on a 3” bar. Others can REVERSE CURL the poundage.

Even 185 pounds is a light poundage in the squat - even if you are doing a 20 rep “death march.”

THE SECRET: HARD. HARD WORK

To get results from heavy, high rep work, you need to train HARD. You can only train hard if you use heavy poundages and if you constantly try to add weight to the bar.

You MUST go over 300 pounds for 20 reps before you can expect to see very much in the way of results. Shoot for 20 reps with 350 or more. Once you get up to that kind of poundage, the high rep squat WILL have transformed you.

DON'T KID YOURSELF

Anyone who claims to be working hard on the squat but who is handling 120, 135, 150 or 185 for 20 reps is only kidding himself. Sure, that may be the type of weight you use when you start the program, but you need to add weight to the bar regularly and frequently. You need to push yourself over 200 pounds as quickly as possible. You need to move into dinosaur territory.

Don't blame the program if you don't get results. That's like getting mad at the messenger when he delivers bad news. Remember the famous line from JULIUS CAESAR: “The fault ... lies not in our stars, but in ourselves...”. If heavy high rep squats have not worked for you - or if heavy high rep deadlifts have failed to produce results - you probably were not working them at maximum intensity. When you train these moves HARD, you WILL grow. Nothing else is even possible.

TRAIN WITH AGGRESSION

Heavy, high rep squats or deadlifts are murder. You need to approach these movements as aggressively as possible. You cannot be timid. You cannot be quiet. You cannot intellectualize the set. You have to stop being a civilized man and become a wild animal for the duration of the set. You have to attack the set the way a ravenous lion attacks its prey - with total unrestrained ferocity and with absolute focus.

GROW OR DIE

Heavy, high rep sets work because they trigger the GROW OR DIE mechanism. Remember the story about the college kid who goes to the lumber camp in the North Woods. He had two choices: (1) grow, or (2) die. When you do heavy, high rep squats or deadlifts, you have to work so hard that your body is faced with the same two choices.

This is why heavy, high rep work is so difficult. Do you think your body is going to make it easy for you to work it to the point where it must either grow larger and stronger or die? Heck, no! The body always wants you to maintain a little bit of reserve - a cushion, if you will. It never wants you to push to the point of complete collapse. So it sends all kinds of signals intended to make you stop before you truly work to your limit: pain, fatigue, nausea,

dizziness, bursting lungs, lactic acid, burning muscles, loss of motor control. Your body would be perfectly happy to let you puke your guts out or fall flat on the floor in a faint if only you would stop your set of heavy squats short of a maximum effort. YOUR BODY WANTS YOU TO GIVE IN BEFORE YOU GO ALL OUT! YOUR BODY WANTS YOU TO STOP BEFORE YOU HIT 100%! And it will do almost anything to you to make you quit.

Heavy, high rep training becomes a battle of wills between YOU and your BODY. To get any benefit from heavy, high rep training, you must grasp this critical point. Moreover, you must resolve - right now! - that you will never give in to the desire to terminate a set of heavy squats or deadlifts short of true muscular failure.

In every high rep set performed with a heavy poundage there can be only one winner. Resolve NOW that that winner will be YOU!

The same is true of every set you perform to failure if you do multiple reps and go to failure on every set. Going “almost” to failure just won't do the trick. You have to work each set so hard your eyeballs are ready to pop out of your head. You cannot let up for even a single rep. You need to go all the way up to the wall and then go THROUGH it or OVER it. This is the type of effort that makes heavy, high rep training work. This is the type of effort that builds men. This is the type of effort that builds DINOSAURS.

WHY IT WORKS FOR A DINOSAUR

Dr. Ken Leistner has promoted this sort of heavy, high intensity workout for many years with terrific results. Arthur Jones has promoted similar types of heavy, hard sessions since 1969 or 1970. and many who followed his guidance obtained great results. The heavy, high rep breathing squat has been working wonders ever since the 1930's, when Mark Berry, Joseph Hise and Peary Rader popularized it. It was still working wonders when John McCallum wrote about it in the 1960's and early 1970's, and it is working wonders TODAY for anyone who purchases Dr. Strossen's wonderful book, SUPER SQUATS, and has the courage, determination and guts to give the program an honest try. Why do these programs work?

They work because the dinosaurs who tried the programs were MEN. They worked HARD. They gave the programs their ALL. They squatted until another rep was impossible. They deadlifted until the bar fell out of their hands. They pushed to total failure and then beyond.

If you have never tried heavy, high rep work you need to do so. It can make you enormously bigger and stronger than you are today. But remember, it will only work if YOU work. Be a man. Be a dinosaur. Train hard. Train tough. Hang in there when it gets difficult. Fight against the signals your body sends in a desperate attempt to make you stop. Kick the heck out of your muscles, then get out of the gym, rest, eat, sleep and GROW.

The strongest of all warriors are these two:

Time and Patience.

~Leo Tolstoy

CHAPTER TEN: MULTIPLE SETS OF LOW REPS

Men can do all things if they will.

~Leon Battista Alberti

Many dinosaurs use multiple sets of low reps, and quite a few train on heavy singles (as discussed in Chapter 11). They do so because low reps allow a lifter to train as heavy as possible. Dinosaurs are interested in building strength. The best way to build strength is to use heavy weights. Training with heavy weights works the muscles, ligaments and tendons, all of which must be maximally developed if you wish to be truly strong. It is not enough to build muscular strength. Building the strength of the ligaments and tendons is just as important for a serious power seeker. This is where most modern training goes wrong, and it is where the old-timers reigned supreme.

THE NEGLECTED ELEMENT IN MODERN TRAINING

Modern weight training programs pay almost no attention to the development of the tendons and ligaments. Their only emphasis is on working the muscles. If you train hard on a program that works the muscles but ignores the tendons and ligaments, you may grow bigger and stronger, but you will not grow anywhere near as big and strong as you would if you trained the muscles, tendons and ligaments as a unit.

The old-timers trained with low reps and heavy singles and as a result, developed enormously strong tendons and ligaments. I am speaking of men like Goerner, Cyr, Steinborn, Hackenschmidt, Saxon, John Y. Smith, and Thomas Inch. These men were not as large or as massively developed as today's top bodybuilders or lifters. The modern guys admittedly have larger muscles (although not as much larger as many would have you believe). But even with smaller muscles and less massive bodies, the old-timers could do things that would defy the efforts of almost any modern "strong-man." Check out some of the feats of the old-time, pre-steroid monsters. Do you know of any modern "champion" who can handle the kind of poundages the old-timers regularly lifted with ease?

THEN AND NOW: THE CHAMPIONS

Herman Goerner deadlifted 727 pounds with ONE HAND. What do you think this year's top bodybuilder could handle?

Louis Cyr could shoulder a 400 pound wooden barrel with ONE ARM. Can ANY CURRENT powerlifting sensation match that?

Thomas inch had an "unliftable" dumbbell - one that had a very narrow but 2 1/2" thick handle and weighed 172 pounds. For 50 years, Inch challenged all comers to lift the unliftable dumbbell. Thousands tried. None succeeded. Inch could lift the dumbbell OVERHEAD with one hand, and did so regularly well into his 60's. Show me a modern champion who could even deadlift the "unliftable" dumbbell.

Arthur Saxon could bent press 370 pounds, a record that has stood for nearly a century. Show me any modern day champion in any iron sport who can match that – or even come close. The 210 pound Saxon also could lift a 300 pound sack of flour overhead. Show me ANY modern day "superstar" who can top that.

George Hackenschmidt could snatch 197,5 pounds with one arm. Try it sometime, then tell me how many modern guys can top that lift. Ask this year's Mr. Everything to give it a try. He probably couldn't handle HALF of Hackenschmidt's best.

Milo Steinborn could place a 550 pound barbell on his shoulders UNASSISTED and then squat five reps with the weight. After the squats, he would return the bar to the platform - UNASSISTED!

What's the matter with the current crop of champions? If they are bigger than Saxon, Goerner, Inch and company, they ought to be capable of lifting far, far more.

But in fact, they lift far less. The reason is simple. The old-timers trained their tendons and ligaments as well as their muscles. The modern guys devote their attention exclusively to their muscles.

THEN AND NOW: AVERAGE RESULTS

The comparison between the old and the new way of training is even more extreme when one looks at the AVERAGE lifter and his results. There was a time when quite a few men who lifted weights could lift 200 pounds over head any day of the week. Smaller men could at least clean and jerk the weight, while larger men would snatch or press the poundage. Many men could bent press the poundage. It was sort of an accepted “mark of manhood” to be able to lift 200 pounds over your head. If you couldn't manage that little feat, then brother, you were NOT a barbell man!

Now let's look at the average lifter in the 1990's. How many men do you know who can lift 200 pounds overhead? Think about it for a second. How many guys do you know who can clean and press - or clean and jerk - 200 pounds? What's the percentage of guys at your gym who can put 200 pounds overhead in any fashion?

Unless you train at a really special gym, the answer is going to be “I only know a couple of guys who can do that.” and percentage-wise, you're talking about well under one percent.

If a large percentage of trainees could put 200 pounds overhead 50 years ago, and one percent or less of modern trainees can match that feat, then something is decidedly wrong. After having 50 years to improve our equipment and training methods, we ought to have a much HIGHER percentage of men who are capable of lifting 200 pounds overhead. Instead, the percentage is LOWER than in the past. What's wrong?

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEAVY WEIGHTS

What is wrong is the entire package of “modern” training. All we have done for the past 50 years is forget how to train effectively. We have forgotten the critical importance of training the tendons and ligaments. We have forgotten the beneficial effect of HEAVY poundages. We have created “modern” and “scientific” training systems that let people “exercise” with light poundages. We have lost our roots. We have lost what made men like Goerner, Saxon and Inch supremely strong.

HEAVY weights are the name of the game. Never forget that. You need to train with heavy weights because doing so is the only way to build the strength of your tendons and ligaments along with your muscles. The old-timers knew this, trained heavy and became enormously powerful. The modern guys are totally clueless.

Dinosaurs train with heavy weights because they understand that it is necessary to use heavy poundages to build your tendons and ligaments. Unless you are a very rare, very gifted, very determined, highly motivated and well-coached individual, heavy weights cannot be lifted for high reps. Consequently, most dinosaurs train with low reps - in many cases, as low as one rep per set. Most dinosaurs will rarely do more than five reps in any set.

GEORGE HACKENSCHMIDT'S ADVICE

What I am saying in this chapter may sound “new” but it is not. In fact, it is horribly old-fashioned. I am hardly the only man who ever wrote or talked about the importance of heavy weights. Far from it. The critical importance of heavy poundages used to be commonly recognized. The really strong and well-developed oldtimers all agreed on this point. For example, at page 71 of his autobiography and training manual, THE WAY TO LIVE, the Russian Lion, George Hackenschmidt, noted:

“Some trainers recommend ... the training of all muscle groups with one and the same (light) weight and believe they are able to obtain the same effect by frequent repetitions.

My experience has taught me that this is wrong, for the muscles of men or animals who are distinguished for certain feats of endurance are by no means over-developed. A long-distance runner or long-distance cyclist always has comparatively thin legs, as have a racehorse, stag,

and greyhound. Nature does not act without aim and purpose. Hence there is a great difference between feats of endurance and feats of strength.”

Continuing this line of thought. “Hack” added:

!

“One must consider that, although it is quite possible to enlarge muscles by certain light, prolonged exercise, at the same time the development of the sinews may be neglected, and it is the sinews which transport the action of the muscles to the bone frame. The sinews can only be exercised and strengthened by correspondingly heavy muscle work.”

Hackenschmidt was absolutely correct. His observation was 100% valid. It is astonishing - and troubling - that so obvious a point has become lost in less than seventy years. How could we have gone from a world where the importance of heavy weights in one's training was universally recognized - a world fit for dinosaurs – to a world where the “experts” tell us to use light poundages, move as slowly as possible and “feel” the weight all the way up and all the way down - a world for bunnies; how could we have done this?

HOFFMAN'S COMMENTS ON SAXON

Bob Hoffman mentioned the importance of heavy weights in his famous book about the oldtimers, MIGHTY MEN OF OLD. Referring to Arthur Saxon's incredible feats of strength at a bodyweight of only 210 pounds. Hoffman wrote the following words - words which everyone who trains with weights should MEMORIZE:

“To many of the giants of the past Saxon's incredible power and strength were a mystery. How could this man, slightly over 200 pounds in bodyweight, lift seemingly beyond the capabilities of the human body? Was he like a thoroughbred race horse whose muscles are of a finer quality? Did he have some secret, something not known to his fellow men? Hardly; what made Saxon was his training method and it was no secret Saxon spent a lot of time strengthening his tendons. He knew his public performances required a lot of energy and his theory was that light exercises were only tiring and made him no stronger. Consequently he practiced stunts which threw heavy work on the full length of the muscles and the tendons. He would do each stunt only a few times and alternate with brief periods of rest so as to prevent himself from tiring. As a result, Saxon was never what you would call a beautifully developed man, but his rugged and sinewy physique reflected his terrific strength, strength the like of which the world has never seen since.”

SAXON ON SAXON

If you want to hear it straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak, consider what Arthur Saxon said about the development of tendon and ligament strength. In an advertisement for barbells and training courses by the Saxon brothers (a terrific collector's item I received from Osmo Kiiha, the publisher and editor of THE IRON MASTER – thanks, Osmo), there appears a section titled “BONE AND SINEW - The Real Secret of Developing Muscle and Strength.” This section reads as follows:

“No matter how large a muscle may be, if it lacks the coordinating power of sinew the muscle is useless. It is like cutting a ship adrift from its anchor. It is the power of the sinews to sustain the pull caused by muscle contraction that really makes great strength possible. Every man of great strength possesses thick, cordy sinews.”

The text continues by comparing Saxon's incredible strength to that of other, much larger men - the same point noted by Hoffman:

“There are other men much bigger than Saxon, but in physical strength they cannot compare with him. His sinews and ligaments especially at the wrist, elbow and knee are heavy cables of surprising thickness. This condition is noticeable on all men who have acquired their great power the Saxon way. The bones become more capable of supporting tremendous loads - the muscle and sinew adhesion to the bone is extremely pronounced.”

This section of the Saxon advertisement concludes by stating - and these words are as true today as they were then: *“It is vitally important to know that the system under which you train will not only build muscle and power, but will thicken the bones and ligaments and give greater sinew adhesion space onto the bones.”*

WARMUPS

When you train hard and heavy with low reps. you can and should do several warmup sets. Use low reps on your warm-ups as well as on your “working” sets. If you “rep out” on the warmup sets. you will make it impossible to work as heavy as possible on your working sets. On any set, including your warm-ups, do no more than five reps. On many exercises, you can warm up with progressively heavier single reps. In my own case, I usually do three or four progressively heavier singles before hitting my top poundages on all of my lifts. Single reps may not sound like enough to “warm you up,” but they work fine for me.

THE 5X5 SYSTEM

The “5 x 5” system is one of the classic methods of training for muscular size and strength. It was used by Reg Park, and has been promoted by McCallum and Steiner. Let's use a set of squats to illustrate the “5x5” system. Let's assume you can handle 300 pounds for five reps in the squat. Do a warmup with 200 pounds for five reps. Rest a few minutes, load the bar to 250 and do a second warmup set of five reps.

Rest a few more minutes and load the bar to 300 pounds for your first “working” set. Do five reps. Even if you can do MORE than five, stop when you have done five reps. Then rest a few minutes.

Now do another set of five reps with 300. Again, stop at five reps even if you could do more. Rest awhile, then tackle your third and final working set. Again, go for five reps. Again, stop at five if you are able to get all five reps,

If you get five reps on all three of your working sets, add weight the next time you do your squats. Try 305 or 310 for the working sets. However, if you did NOT get five reps on all three working sets, stay at 300 pounds until you are able to do so. If you cannot get a total of at least 12 reps on the three working sets, the weight is too heavy and you should drop twenty pounds or so from the bar.

As you get bigger and stronger, you may find that you cannot recover from three working sets. In that case, try three progressively heavier warmup sets and only two working sets. Once you are really strong, you probably will find that you do best on three or four progressively heavier warmup sets and only ONE working set.

Some of you will do better on fewer reps. Some of you should try five sets of three reps or five sets of two reps. Many of you will do best on heavy singles - which are discussed in detail in the following chapter. The only way to determine what works best for you is by trial and error.

Whatever you do, though, don't get locked into the modern mind-set that believes that muscle-pumping, time controlled reps, supersets, “going for the burn” or using exotic machinery is the most important aspect of one's training program. The single most important thing to do is to train as heavy as possible and constantly strive to add more and more weight to the bar. Unless you become obsessed with putting weight on the bar, you are spinning your wheels in the sands of time.

To train like a dinosaur, use the 5 x 5 system or any other rational training system that permits you to train with heavy weights. If you feel you are tough enough, use Dr. Ken Leistner's approach - one set to failure with medium to high reps and HEAVY poundage. Leave the high rep, BABY weight nonsense to the chrome and fern crowd.

Leave the pumping, supersetting, and pre-exhaustion systems to the pretty boys, the buffers, the toners and the shapers. Train heavy. Train VERY heavy. Do several progressively heavier warmup sets and one to three working sets on any exercise you do. Go back to our roots. Train the way they did when MEN trained with weights.

Let us train our minds to desire what the situation demands.

~Seneca

The farther backward you can look, the farther forward you can see.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER ELEVEN: SINGLES

*Great spirits have always found violent
opposition from mediocrities.*

~Albert Einstein

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter. It addresses a topic that will drive some of you wild with rage and indignation. Some of you will laugh. Others will toss the book in the nearest waste-basket. Some of you will be intrigued. Some of you will nod your heads and say “Yep - that's right!”

Once again, as in the previous chapter, I am offering something from the past – a training system that used to be used by quite a few exceptionally strong and muscular men, but one that has fallen into almost total disrepute. To some of you this chapter will run counter to every thing you believe in. That's perfectly fine. One of the purposes of this book is to help you stretch the limits of your imagination. Remember, what seems like outright insanity to one generation may appear to be self-evident truth to another.

As I noted in Chapter 2, there are many readers who prefer to train on the one set to failure system. To those readers, this chapter will offer a training concept – heavy singles - that goes against everything they have learned and everything they believe. That's fine. If you have no interest in heavy singles, skip this chapter. There are plenty of other elements of dinosaur training that you can adopt and put to good use in your own training. For example, did you ever try a set of military presses to failure with a 120 or 150 pound sandbag or a 100 pound barrel? If not, take a look at Chapter 15.

For those of you who are ready to boo, jeer or simply consider the idea of single rep training, read on!

ONE REP AT A TIME

Many dinosaurs do heavy singles. Why? Because they have discovered that for many men, singles build more muscle and strength than sets of multiple repetitions. Yeah, I KNOW that singles are contrary to modern wisdom and conventional training protocols. I KNOW that all of the modern experts say that single reps are dangerous and non-productive, I KNOW that all the modern “champs” say to train with light weights and concentrate on “feeling” the movement. I KNOW that no one at the House of Chrome and Ferns ever does a single rep in anything. And I KNOW that we have all kinds of wonderful “scientific” training systems that regard heavy singles as worthless, dangerous, insane and ridiculously old fashioned.

I also know that heavy singles made me bigger and stronger than any other combination of sets and reps I ever tried. I know that they have worked extremely well for my training partners. I know that they allowed my good friend, Greg Pickett, to push his upper arms to 18” of rock-hard muscle at a height of 5'6”. All of the experts who can give you a dozen scientific reasons why singles do not build muscle or strength will have to explain why they work so well for me, my training partners and Greg.

THE WAY MEN USED TO TRAIN

The “experts” are WRONG when they say singles don't work. For many men, singles build muscle and strength like you wouldn't believe. Forty or fifty years ago - BEFORE the steroid era - quite a number of folks did singles and they got really big and strong on them.

In those days, the biggest and strongest men in the world were Olympic weight lifters. Top lifters like Tommy Kono, John Davis, Steve Stanko and Mahmoud Namdjou could win world titles in lifting AND enter bodybuilding competition and do terrifically well - Kono won the Mr. World title. Davis placed third in the Mr. America and won “Best Back.” Stanko won the Mr. Universe title and Namdjou won his height class in the Mr. Universe contest. And the heavyweight lifters (men like Norb Schemansky, Jim Bradford and John Davis) were so much bigger and stronger than any bodybuilders (with the notable exception of Reg Park, who

himself trained like a lifter) that it wasn't even funny. If singles are so terrible, why did the lifters thrive on them?

I CAN'T SELL SINGLES

If you still are not convinced, consider this: singles are not something that I or anyone else can sell to you. It won't make any difference to me whether you do singles or sets of ten reps or sets of 100 reps. My bank balance stays the same no matter how many reps you choose to do. So why am I so “bullish” on singles? Why am I pushing them when it would be twenty times easier to go along with conventional wisdom and tell you to do one set of 8 to 12 reps, or 3 sets of 6 to 8 reps, or 5 sets of 10 reps?

I am urging you to try singles because they WORK for many men. Period. There is no other reason beyond my simple, selfish desire to help you grow as big and strong as you can get. Lifting weights is my hobby, not my vocation. I work as a lawyer. I'm not trying to make a name for myself by preaching the gospel of singles - or any other gospel of sets and reps. I am not involved in academic debate or the world of research journals, and I am not trying to attack, defend, or justify any research studies. I am simply trying to tell you what works best for me and why I believe it may work best for you.

WHY SINGLES WORK

Why do singles work so well? I think there are several reasons. First, you are using a HEAVY weight. I believe that there is some sort of connection between the amount of weight on the bar and the overall effects of any particular exercise. Somehow, a heavy weight does more than merely trigger growth in the target area that you are trying to develop with whatever exercise you are doing.

A heavy weight stimulates increases in muscular size and strength throughout the body. This may be because you are overloading the tendons and ligaments whenever you use a really heavy poundage, or it may be because the heavy poundage forces more involvement by the nervous system (i.e., the nervous system has to recruit more muscle fibers to lift the heavy weight). I don't know exactly what happens physiologically. I DO know that singles work better for me than any other training system I have ever tried - and believe me, I have tried them all.

Singles require good form and white hot concentration. You can screw around a little bit and get away with it when you are doing reps, but with a heavy weight on the bar, you either use perfect form and intense concentration, or you miss the lift. It's as simple as that. Thus, singles reinforce two VERY important elements of a serious training program: good form and intense concentration on the task at hand.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT SINGLES

I like to train each lift I do with four or five progressively heavier singles. In the rack squat for example, I set the bar so I am at the bottom position of a parallel squat when I squeeze under the bar, and then I drive the bar up to complete each lift. I typically do 135 x 1, 225 x 1, 315 x 1, 405 x 1 and 500 x 1. The last two singles are tough; the final one is downright brutal. Those five singles are all I do. At that point, I move to another exercise.

Some lifters prefer a different approach. Some men will use the same sequence of progressively heavier warmup sets, but do five singles with their top weight. For example, a lifter might do parallel squats with 135x1, 225 x 1, 315 x 1, 405 x 1 and 460 x five singles, with two to five minutes rest between each lift. Some men use a lighter weight and do even more singles - ten or even twenty on occasion. I use this system once in awhile, but most of the time I stick to only one heavy single on any given lift. I tend to go stale if I do multiple singles with a heavy poundage.

I know just what you're going to say, “Do you mean to tell me you do FIVE singles in a workout and then stop! How can a short little workout like that build any muscle?” Well, I'm glad you asked. The answer is simple; I work those five little sets so hard that they damn near kill me. My last single in any given exercise on any given day is always brutally hard. I'm not

talking about “difficult.” I’m not talking about “uncomfortable.” I’m talking about something far harder than merely “very tough.” I’m talking about ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE. It takes a TREMENDOUS effort to make the lift. The final single is so intense and demanding that it would be impossible to repeat the exercise with any sort of appreciable weight.

A WORD OF CAUTION

Singles may sound easy to the uninitiated, but let me assure you. they are SAVAGE. The pencil necks, the armchair academics, the theorists, the slide rule honchos, the guys who always wear padded gloves at the gym, the guys who wouldn’t be caught dead without a fancy sports watch or a pair of \$200 Cross-Trainers, the wannabes, the drug babies, the shapers, the toners, the body sculptors and the rest of the gang at the House of Chrome and Ferns would die if you made them do heavy singles.

Singles are so tough that you need to work into them carefully and gradually. Start by switching from your current set/rep scheme to the 5 x 5 system. The 5x5 system calls for two progressively heavier sets of 5 reps, followed by three sets of five reps with your “working” weight. For example, let’s say you can bench press 250 or so for five reps. To use the 5 x 5 system, you would do five reps with 160 pounds for your first (warmup) set. Then do your second set of five reps with 200 pounds, followed by three sets of five reps with 240 pounds. When you can handle your working weight (240 pounds in this example) for three sets of five reps, add five pounds to each set and build up to three sets of five reps with the new working weight. Using the previous example, you could move up to 165 x 5, 205 x 5 and then shoot for three sets of five reps with 245. If you cannot get three sets of five with 245, that’s ok - just slay at that poundage until you can get five reps on each of the three working sets.

After three to six months on the 5 x 5 system, change to the 5/4/3/2/1 system. This calls for two or three progressively heavier warmup sets (doing five reps per set), followed by one set of five reps for your first working set. Then add a little bit of weight (five or ten pounds) and try for four reps. Add a bit more and try for three reps. Add more and try for two reps. Add more and do a single. It might look like this: 160 x 5, 200 x 5 (these are warmup sets), 240 x 5 (the first “working” set), 250 x 4, 260 x 3, 270 x 2 and 280 x 1. Stay on the 5/4/3/2/1 system for three to six months, then try an actual single rep system.

The reason you do the “break-in” work with the 5 x 5 and 5/4/3/2/1 systems is to gradually adapt to the heavy stress imposed by low rep, heavy poundage training. If you have been doing medium to high reps, you need this break-in period to avoid hurting yourself. No matter how well conditioned you THINK you are, your body just isn’t ready for the extreme stress of single rep training. You must give your muscles, tendons and ligaments a fair chance to adapt to single rep work. THIS IS CRITICAL! Whatever you do, do NOT skip the 5x5 and 5/4/3/2/1 phases and jump directly into single reps. You are asking for trouble if you do.

Let me repeat that warning. And pay attention! DO NOT think you can “condition” yourself for heavy singles by doing high or medium rep sets. You must reduce the number of reps slowly and gradually, in a systematic, controlled fashion, or you are almost certain to hurt yourself. Remember, singles work not only the muscle fibers, but the tendons and ligaments as well, and it takes time to condition the tendons and ligaments to handle really heavy poundages. Time after time I see guys who train hard, but with high or medium reps, foolishly try to jump into heavy singles without having the proper foundation. In every case, they injure themselves. DON’T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU!

Go back and re-read the previous paragraph. Memorize it. Sear it into your brain cells. And follow my advice, guys! You only have one body in this lifetime. Don’t injure it by being foolish.

SENSIBLE SINGLES

When you are ready to do the single rep program, do three or four progressively heavier warmup sets of one to five reps each, followed by one single with 70% of your one rep max, one single with 80% of your one rep max, and one single with 90% of your one rep max.

Then stop! Do no more than three singles to begin with: one at 70%, one at 80% and one at 90%.

Try to add 1 to 2 pounds per week and gradually work your way up to the point where you are approaching your former one rep max. At that point, settle into a long series of training sessions where you hit your top weight or something very close to it every time you train any particular exercise. Plan to do this for several months at a bare minimum. It takes a long period of steady, consistent training to realize the full benefits of single rep work. This is because the singles are building not only your muscles, but your tendons and ligaments as well, and tendons and ligaments don't grow as quickly as muscles do.

As I stated, plan to train with heavy weights week after week for a long, long time. Forget about “periodization” programs, conditioning phases or anything similar. Forget about programs where you take ten or twelve weeks to work up to a single rep effort, then drop down and take another ten or twelve weeks to get back to another single rep effort. Get to the point where you are training hard and heavy on a consistent basis for a long, long time, and then watch what happens to your body. You won't believe the results. A couple of years of heavy singles will TRANSFORM your body.

Man is a rope connecting animal and superman - a rope over a precipice ... What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal.

~Friedrich Nietzsche

What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place to live in after we are gone?

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWELVE: THICK BARS

*Anyone who has begun to think,
places some portion of the world in jeopardy,
~John Dewey*

Advanced dinosaurs train with thick handled barbells and dumbbells. A regular barbell or dumbbell is 1" or 1 1/16" in diameter. Dinosaurs use barbells and dumbbells that are 2", 2 1/2" or even 3" in diameter. Why? Because using a thick handled bar is one of the very best things you can do to develop maximum muscular size and strength. The turn of the century strongmen - many of whom were enormously stronger than the vast majority of our modern "champions" - were well acquainted with the incredible effect of thick bar work. They thrived on it. The thick bar work allowed them to develop levels of upper body power virtually incomprehensible to those who train only with regular bars.

WHY THICK BARS WORK

Thick bars develop levels of muscular size and strength that cannot be duplicated with any other equipment. Thick bars are very difficult to control. Compared to an Olympic barbell, a bar with a 2" or 3" diameter seems like a log. Can you imagine bench pressing, pressing, or curling a telephone pole? That's what it feels like when you use a thick handled barbell. You cannot rely on style, form, riming, or technique to complete the lift. You have to do it with sheer strength. To paraphrase Dr. Ken Leistner, "all you can do is lie back and push" when you bench with a thick handled bar. That's one reason why thick bar work is so effective. It imposes a tremendous burden on the muscles, tendons and ligaments - a far, far greater burden than a regular barbell imposes.

THE MIND-MUSCLE CONNECTION

A second reason why thick bar work is so beneficial is that the bar forces you to involve your forearms, hands, wrists and fingers to a far greater degree than does a conventional bar. This in turn causes a stronger mind-muscle link, which inevitably leads to greater gains in muscular size and strength. Have I lost you? Stay with me, I will explain everything.

What do I mean when I talk about a "mind-muscle link?" I mean the connection between your brain and your nervous system. Whenever you lift a weight, the lift begins with the brain consciously directing the muscles to push or pull in a particular direction. The message from the brain is carried to the muscles via the nervous system. When the muscles receive the message, they respond by pushing or pulling in the manner directed by the brain. That's the mind-muscle link; the connection between the brain, the nervous system and the muscles.

Messages from the brain to the muscles are transmitted by nerve impulses. The strength of each individual nerve impulse, the total number of nerve impulses, and the frequency with which nerve impulses are transmitted from brain to muscle is one of the most critical factors in the amount of force you can exert in any given lift. I have no research studies to cite and no way to "prove" that my opinion is correct, but I firmly believe that using thick bars in your training causes an increase in the strength of individual nerve impulses, the total number of nerve impulses and the frequency of transmission of nerve impulses.

As I noted above, thick bars are terribly awkward and extremely difficult to handle. You have to adjust the bar's path constantly as you lift it or else you will get hopelessly out of the groove almost immediately. There has to be constant feedback between the brain and the muscles. I believe that the necessity of constant feedback causes a stronger mind-muscle link. and I believe that this is one very important reason why thick bar work is so incredibly productive.

THE FEAR FACTOR

Another reason why thick bar work may trigger heightened involvement of the nervous system is that the bars look so imposing and formidable that you automatically push or pull much harder than you could do with a normal bar. This sounds crazy, but think about it for a minute. Many years ago, the Harvard psychologist, William James, noted that a man will squeeze harder on a dynamometer device if a red light is flashing as he squeezes. Other colors did not produce the same effect, and some colors caused test subjects to squeeze LESS hard on the dynamometer no matter how hard they tried. James theorized that this was because red is a color associated with danger (after all, red is the color of fire, blood and war). Compared to blue, white, green or brown, red is a “hot” color. If a colored light can cause a man to exert more muscular force in a given movement, surely a bar two or three times thicker than normal can cause a similar reaction.

Remember, fear is a great motivator. The great heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Dempsey, fought like a caged animal and literally destroyed his opponent whenever he faced a substantially larger adversary - but often fought like a mere mortal when confronted with an opponent his own size. Dempsey demolished the hulking Jess Willard, who was much taller and close to 100 pounds heavier than Dempsey. However, Dempsey had a terrible time with Edward Carpentier, a man smaller than he, and lost twice - his only defeats - to Gene Tunney, who was roughly his own size. Some believe that Dempsey was at his savage best when motivated by the fear of facing a much larger opponent. I believe that to be the case, and I also believe that the mere sight of a steel bar that looks like a telephone pole will trigger an extra bit of adrenaline in any lifter. In other words, using a thick bar is a little like having your own personal coach shouting at you to “PUSH” harder on each rep you do.

GREAT FOR THE GRIP

Thick bars are terrific for strengthening the forearms, wrists, thumbs and fingers. An exercise you do with a thick bar automatically becomes a test of hand and finger strength. Pulling movements are almost impossible with a thick bar, curling movements are incredibly rugged, and even pressing exercises are downright nasty when you do them with a thick bar. As a dinosaur, you will be doing plenty of specialized grip work, but be aware that you will work your grip savagely by simply using a thick bar instead of a regular bar for your upper body movements.

THICK BARS AND SPINELESS WIMPS

There is yet another important thing about thick bars. Wimps, yups and wannabe's won't go near them. Muscle pumpers and drug babies wouldn't touch a thick bar on a bet. The chrome and fern crowd would rather give up their Evian water and celery sticks than try to lift a thick handled bar. You may think I'm kidding, but I'm deadly serious about this. Before I started training in the sanity of my basement gym, I took my 3” bar to the gym where I trained, and I was always amused by the reaction.

Some guys literally ran away whenever they saw the thing. They were very obviously intimidated by the large, thick mass of iron. They always went over and found solace in the chrome plated dumbbells the gym owner had purchased from a women's spa that went out of business. The only guys whoever wanted to use the thing were Ted Solinger and Bruce Bullock, who later became my training partners in my home gym. In other words, the thick handled bar was a great way to tell who was serious about training and who was content to “sculpt” and “shape” and do meaningless movements with chrome plated baby weights.

If I ever open a gym, I will stock it with thick handled barbells and dumbbells. Doing so would be a great way to discourage the wimps and yups and talkers from joining the gym. One look at the thick handled bars and the twinkle crowd would run for cover. So would the muscle pumpers - they would immediately realize that lifting a bar like that required STRENGTH, and pumpers as a group are about as strong as undernourished kittens. The only guys who would go to a gym that featured lots and lots of thick bars would be the kind of

guys who were interested in strength, power and physical challenges. Come to think of it, the gym would cater to dinosaurs and nobody else. Not a bad idea!

HOW TO USE THICK BARS

Use thick bars for all of your upper body exercises. Always use a power rack for thick bar bench presses, and set the bottom pins to catch the weight in case the bar slips. NEVER do thick bar benches outside the power rack!

Use your head when you begin to incorporate thick bar work. Drop the poundages at first. You will NOT be able to handle your regular poundages when you first begin thick bar movements. The first time I tried thick bar benches, all I could handle was 365 pounds - and it almost killed me. With a regular bar, I was handling 405-410 at the time.

A three inch bar is too thick for some lifters to curl. If the bar is too thick for you, your elbows will let you know! Be alert to this, and do not hesitate to drop from a 3" to a 2" bar if your elbows protest.

HOW TO OBTAIN A THICK BAR

IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES sells a beautiful 2" bar sized for Olympic plates. It is called APOLLON'S AXLE™, after the great oldtime strongman, Apollon, who regularly lifted a 2" railroad axle as part of his strength show.

You also can make your own thick bar. Let's assume you have an old 7' Olympic bar. Simply wrap heavy tape around the inside of the bar, then slide a 5' length of heavy steel pipe over the bar, leaving room for the plates on each rotating sleeve. Of course, once you convert the bar, you won't be able to change it back.

Another option is to buy several sizes of steel pipe and hire a welder to weld them together for you.

This all may sound like lots of work and unnecessary expense, but it's not. Buying or making a thick bar - or several of them - is one of the very best investments you can make. Thick bars are one of the KEYS to strength and power. Buy or make one, use it, and learn for yourself one of the true secrets of strength and power.

*Any man more right than his neighbors
constitutes a majority of one.*

~Henry David Thoreau

Nourish your hopes, but do not overlook realities.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: GRIP WORK, PART ONE

*It requires a very unusual mind
to make an analysis of the obvious.*
~Alfred North Whitehead

Dinosaurs do grip work - lots and lots of serious, old fashioned, heavy grip work. I'm not talking about sissy stuff like pumping out a high rep set of wrist curls or reverse curls with a weight as light as a medium sized bag of potato chips. I'm talking about brutal, rugged, incredibly painful, high stress, heavy poundage grip work. Things like heavy one arm deadlifts ... deadlifts with 2" and 3" barbells and dumbbells ... single rep wrist curls with a 3" bar and an enormous poundage ... single rep reverse curls with a 2" or 3" bar and as much weight as you can handle ... pinch gripping with heavy poundages ... or the farmer's walk with an enormous pair of dumbbells. Stuff that separates the men from the boys. Stuff that would make the twinkle crowd puke in a corner. Stuff that makes anything they do in chrome and fern land look like a slow motion game of tiddley-winks.

WHY DO GRIP WORK?

Why do dinosaurs do heavy grip work? There are several reasons. First, dinosaurs thrive on thick bar work, but you can't use thick bars for heavy weights in your upper body exercises unless you have one heck of a grip. We all know that lots of guys have weak wrists, and benching 150 or 200 pounds with an ordinary bar almost kills them - even when they are using wrist wraps for extra support and protection. A guy with wrists like that wouldn't be able to do anything with a thick bar. His wrists would snap like match-sticks if he tried to bench even 100 pounds with a 3" bar. But some advanced dinosaurs can handle 400 pounds or more in the thick bar bench press or do bench press lockouts with nearly 600 pounds on a 3" bar. Imagine doing a thick bar bench press with 400 pounds - and no wrist wraps - and you'll understand how strong a dinosaur's wrists, thumbs and fingers have to be just to allow him to survive a workout. Then imagine doing thick bar bench press lockouts with 550 to 600 pounds - and no wrist wraps. Get the picture? For dinosaurs, serious, heavy duty grip work is a necessity.

THE FEEL OF IRON

Dinosaurs also do heavy grip work because it is ferocious, primitive and barbaric. There is some kind of primal instinct that responds in a special way to holding a thick piece of heavy iron in your hands. I call it the "warrior instinct." I believe that serious lifters share a primal link with long dead ancestors who spent their days battling with swords, axes, spears and daggers. To a primitive warrior, the feel of an iron weapon **MUST HAVE BEEN** very special: it must have made him feel supremely powerful and almost invincible. The iron must have had an almost magic, mystical sensation.

Something of that same feeling still remains, imbedded as a deep-rooted tribal heritage in serious lifters - what Carl Jung would call an archetypal memory. You tap into that heritage when you do specialized grip work with heavy iron. By the way, this is one reason why dinosaurs don't like chrome: we instinctively prefer iron and steel. A guy who likes the look and feel of unpolished iron and steel is a good candidate for dinosaur training. A guy who thinks chrome looks and feels better is never going to be a dinosaur.

Think I'm overdoing things? Think I'm romanticizing? Well, do this. Get yourself a copy of the July, 1995 issue of MILO (Volume 3. No. 2) and read Dr. Ken Leistner's article at page 45: "The Really Big Wheels," where Dr. Leistner tells about his friend, Hugh Cassidy (the first World's Superheavy weight Powerlifting Champion), turning an old set of enormous iron railcar wheels into a 1,474 pound barbell. Near the beginning of the article Dr. Leistner notes: "*Both Fitz [Hugh] and I have a love of metal, and in truth, that is one of the great attractions of lifting weights. If they were made of wood, it might not be as much fun for either of us.*"

By the way, Hugh Cassidy trained in his garage, on the most basic of programs, using the most basic of equipment, when he won the World Championship. Never underestimate what a dinosaur can accomplish in a home gym.

FORM OVER SUBSTANCE

Dinosaurs also train the grip because grip work is the epitome of “substance over form.” Most weight trainers ignore the grip because a world class grip doesn't look as impressive as big biceps, bulging pecs or huge, striated thighs. Face it - no matter how much grip work you do, you will never develop hands, fingers, and wrists so large that they will make you stand out in a crowd. You can build fingers like steel claws and the average person would never know it to look at you. Since looks are all that are important to most modern trainees (and what an indictment of modern training THAT is!), it is little wonder that they ignore the grip.

ENHANCING THE MIND-MUSCLE LINK

Another reason why dinosaurs do heavy grip work is that grip work enhances the mind-muscle link. The link between the brain and the hands is far greater than the link between the brain and almost any other part of the body. (You get ONE guess about the other part of the body that has a super strong link to the brain, and if you can't guess, think dirty FOR A SECOND AND THE ANSWER WILL COME TO YOU!) Anatomy and physiology books often include drawings of the human body with the various body parts portrayed as having a size relative to the number of nerve endings in them, and on these charts, the hands are shown as dwarfing the rest of the body.

Think of all the things the human hand can do: play the piano, scramble an egg, hold a barbell, rock a baby, write a letter or break a brick with a karate chop. Think of all the different ways you can move your hands and fingers. Look at all the joints in the hands. How many joints do you have in your legs? How many different ways can you move your legs? Compare that to the things you can do with the hands and fingers.

When you train your hands, you are training the body part that is best connected to the brain. I cannot prove this, but I believe that when you train your hands you increase the link between the mind and the grip muscles, and I also believe that this increase “carries over” in some unknown way to heighten the link between the brain and all other body parts and muscle groups. In other words, by training your grip you get stronger and better coordinated throughout the entire body because you automatically increase the link between the brain and the entire body.

Dr. Ken Leistner has noted this point in connection with a discussion of grip strength, powerlifting and, specifically, the use of lifting straps to help a man hold onto a heavy barbell. (THE STEEL TIP, Volume 1, Number 2, February, 1985.) In Dr. Leistner's opinion, the lifting straps were COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE because they caused a diminished mind-muscle link as a result of taking the hands out of the movement. He wrote:

“When I reached the point where I was using 350 pounds for 15 reps in the stiff legged deadlift while standing on an elevated surface, I used straps, rationalizing their use by telling myself that I wanted to give my low back and hamstrings a good workout without being limited by a lack of hand strength. When I made the decision to forego the use of straps and persevere until I could handle heavy weights without them, I surpassed previous bests. In fact, the entire exercise became much more intense and my overall gains in strength and muscular size were quite unexpected. Perhaps my level of concentration was higher because I was so intent on maintaining my grip on the barbell. As neuroanatomists know, the area of the brain that exerts control over the hand muscles has a much higher representation relative to actual muscle size than other muscle groups. Although it is strictly conjecture, perhaps intense forearm/hand work heightens neural stimulation for all muscles worked during a particular movement. My experience has shown that taking the time and energy to directly stimulate the forearm musculature leads to increased ability to handle heavy weights in many exercises.”

FOOTBALL, WRESTLING AND OTHER FORMS OF COMBAT

Dinosaurs who play contact sports or who are interested in self defense do grip work because a powerful grip and thick, strong hands and fingers are a tremendous asset in physical combat. Imagine the advantage that a CRUSHING grip will give to a wrestler or a football player. Train your grip the right way and you can develop so much power that you will literally terrify an opponent when you grab him. And if you ever have a need to defend yourself, remember this: you can hit much harder and with far greater force if you have thick, heavy hands. Making your hands and fingers hard, heavy and solid lets you deliver one heck of a blow.

HOW TO DO IT

So how do you go about developing your grip? You do it by training the forearms and grip progressively, beginning with some of the less demanding grip movements and gradually - as your muscles, tendons and ligaments grow tougher - working up to the more advanced movements. Plan on taking about one year to build up to the advanced exercises.

Basic movements for serious grip training include: (1) thick bar deadlifts with an overhand grip, for reps or singles, (2) thick bar curls and reverse curls, for reps or singles, (3) thick bar reverse curls, for reps or singles, (4) “power holds” with a thick bar, (5) pinch grip work - for singles and holds, (6) serious work squeezing a rubber ball, (6) using a heavy duty plate loading grip machine for reps, singles or holds, (7) hammer curls with thick handled dumbbells (for reps or singles), (8) timed hangs from a chinning bar - or, better yet, from a 2” or 2 1/2” chinning bar, (9) using a CAPTAINS OF CRUSH gripper, and (10) using a TITAN'S TELEGRAPH KEY™.

THICK BAR DEADLIFTS

Thick bar deadlifts with an OVERHAND grip (NOT a reversed grip!) are a very simple but enormously effective exercise for the forearms and grip. David P. Willoughby, who wrote for IRONMAN for decades and who made an in-depth study of the upper limits of human strength, once noted that the simple act of doing deadlifts and curls with a bar that measured at least 2” in diameter was the very best exercise a man could do for his forearms and grip. I think Willoughby may very well have been correct about this. Give thick bar deadlifts a try and you'll see why.

A 2” or 2 1/2” bar will be about right for most guys, although a man with extremely large hands might be able to use a 3” bar. If you can handle 250 pounds for one rep with a 2 1/2” diameter bar, you are not doing badly. If you can handle 300 pounds on that bar, you are developing a darn good grip and will have forearm development to match. On a 3” bar, work up to 250 pounds for a single rep and you'll be the proud possessor of one of the strongest grips in town - no matter where you live!

IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES sells ROLLING THUNDER™, a revolving handle for one arm thick bar deadlifts. This is a great training tool. The one arm movement is a bit different from the two arm version and usually allows you to use more weight on a proportionate basis than does the two arm lift. Work up to 200 pounds with the 2 1/2” handle and you'll have a dam good grip.

CURLS AND REVERSE CURLS

Thick bar curls and reverse curls are easy to visualize. After all, everyone knows how to do curls and reverse curls. However, you will find that doing these exercises with a thick bar is a “whole new ball game” compared to the standard movement with the traditional 1” or 1 1/16” bar.

Thick bar curls and reverse curls are great for the biceps, but in addition, they build incredibly rugged forearms and wrists. As noted above, Willoughby thought the regular barbell curl with a thick handled bar was one of the very best grip exercises a man could do. (By the way, I understand that Willoughby could reverse curl close to bodyweight in his prime as a national champion in Olympic style lifting. A man with that sort of power deserves a little respect,

even if he did lift before the days of metabolic optimizers, herbal concoctions and branch chain amino acids!)

Another oldtimer who felt the same way was Alan Calvert, one of the “fathers” of modern weight training. He particularly liked thick bar reverse curls. In his classic text published in 1924, *SUPER-STRENGTH*, Calvert wrote:

“One of the greatest tests of forearm strength is to curl a thick bar with the over-grip. Once I bought a round steel bar, about 3 1/2 feet long, and 2 1/2 inches thick, which weighed 65 lbs ... Lots of lifters who could do a back-hand curl easily with a thin-handled 100-lb. barbell utterly failed to do the same thing with the thick 65 lb. bar. In order to curl the bar successfully, it was necessary to have tremendous gripping power in the hands and great strength in the muscles on the outside of the forearm ...”

Shoot for poundages like 150 in the curl (with either a 2” or 3” bar) and 100 to 120 pounds in the reverse curl with either a 2” or 3” bar. To show you how tough these are, consider this: I have done 185 pounds for five reps in good form in the standing barbell curl with a heavy duty Eleiko easy curl bar, but my top weight in the standing barbell curl for only ONE rep is around 160 pounds when I use a 3” bar and 170 pounds with a 2 1/2” bar. Similarly, I can reverse curl 150 or more with a regular Olympic bar, but 90 or 100 will slop me with a thick bar.

POWER HOLDS

Power holds are simple to do. Use a power rack and position your thick bar so it is an inch or two above the knees, then deadlift it, stand up with the weight and HOLD it for as long as you can. Of course, you use an overhand grip on this - a reverse grip with one hand facing forward and the other hand facing backwards (the way a powerlifter typically holds a bar for a maximum deadlift) would be way too easy. Be sure to hold the bar rather than leaning back and resting the weight on your upper thighs.

And don't use a grip that lets you jam your thumbs against the thighs to keep you from letting go - keep the hands on the outside of the thighs and use the strength of your hands and fingers alone to hold the bar. Try to work up to 200 pounds for one minute or more, using a 2 1/2” bar.

PINCH GRIPPING

Pinch gripping is a great exercise for the forearms and grip. The best way to do pinch gripping is with a homemade pinch grip board. You can make one very simply by using a 2 x 8 board that is between 3' and 5' long. Hang a barbell from the board with chains or rope, then pick it up with an overhand pinch grip. using both hands at the same time. Do singles or timed holds: both are very effective. Try to build up to where you can do 180 or 200 pounds for one rep, or hold 120 pounds for one minute.

You also can do these one arm at a time. IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES sells a very nice one hand pinch grip handle. Check it out.

SQUEEZING A RUBBER BALL

Serious work with a rubber ball can be a crippler. I like to do the 10-60 system. Take a rubber ball and squeeze it as hard as possible for 10 seconds, then repeat with the other hand. Rest 30 seconds, then repeat the process with each hand, but hold for 20 seconds this time. Rest 30 seconds, then repeat - but this time, squeeze the ball for 30 seconds with each hand. Continue in that fashion for a 40 second hold, a 50 second hold and a 60 second hold with each hand.

PLATE LOADING GRIP MACHINES

A plate loading grip machine is a great tool for grip training. It can be used for reps, singles or timed holds. One can work up to BIG poundages on a heavy duty two-handled version. Kim Wood has told me about visiting a gym in Chicago and seeing a grip machine loaded several feet high with 25 pound plates. Kim was told that Joe James, a former NCAA heavyweight

wrestling champion, had been using the machine. Imagine wrestling a man with a grip like that! Ouch!

HAMMER CURLS

Hammer curls with thick handled dumbbells will put the finishing touches on the forearms and wrists. They work the forearms from a different angle than most other basic movements. Try using 2" or 2 1/2" dumbbell handles - you can make these yourself out of heavy steel pipe, cut to fit over your regular set of 1" dumbbell rods. If you want a treat, order your thick handled dumbbells from IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES. They make two models of thick handled dumbbells. One is for regular plates and the other for Olympic plates. Work up to 60 or 70 pound dumbbells for 5 reps in good form in the hammer curl, and your forearms will ache beyond belief.

You also can try hammer curls with a Olympic barbell. Or do a hammer curl and one arm press. The leverage imposed by curling a 7' bar makes the exercise a real killer. Kim Wood told me about this exercise, so if you like it, drop Kim a note.

CAPTAINS OF CRUSH™ GRIPPERS

I never had any use for steel spring grippers until I encountered my first pair of CAPTAINS OF CRUSH™ GRIPPERS sold by IRONMINU® ENTERPRISES. There are five models to choose from. The first is the Trainer model. It requires 95 pounds of pressure to close.

The No. 1 model defies the efforts of most strong men who try to close it-It takes 140 pounds of pressure to close the No. 1 gripper.

The No. 2 is even tougher - it requires a whopping 195 pounds pressure to close. This is a bear. Even a man with a STRONG grip will have trouble with this baby.

The No. 3 is a monster. It requires 280 pounds pressure to close. To date, less than half a dozen men have closed the No. 3 gripper under certified conditions.

The No. 4 model was made as a sort of joke. It requires 365 pounds pressure to close. However at least one super strong grip-master, John Brookfield, has managed to close the beast with his strongest hand, while holding the gripper steady with his other hand. (By the way, John has authored a terrific book, MASTERY OF HAND STRENGTH, which is available through IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES. Do yourself a big favor and order a copy TODAY!)

These little babies are inexpensive, well-built, and loads of fun. If you are new to grip work, start with the trainer and work your way up the ladder. Eventually you will want to own and use at least the Trainer and the No. 1 model - and for most dinosaurs, the No. 2 model is within reach if you are willing to work hard. Once you can close the No. 2. you will want to buy the No. 3 just to give it a try. However, the No. 4 is another story, I'm not saying skip it, but I am saying that only a Tyrannosaurus Rex is going to be able to do much with it.

The nice thing about these grippers is that they are STRONG. You can build STRENGTH with them by doing low reps, just as if you were doing low reps with a heavyweight in any standard barbell exercise. These grippers are totally different from the lightweight grippers that you can close 50 times or more in succession. Give them a try.

The CAPTAINS OF CRUSH grippers are so tough that you need to be extra careful when you use them, especially if you work up to the No. 2 or No. 3. They really work your hands and you will get painfully sore if you overdo things. Equally important, you will LOSE strength if you try to use them too often. These grippers are not made to be used every day in casual fashion. Treat them with the same sort of respect commonly reserved for squats and deadlifts. Once or twice a week - for a couple of sets of low reps - is plenty!

TITAN'S TELEGRAPH KEY™

This is another unique piece of equipment sold by IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES, and it is a beauty. This is one of Greg Pickett's favorite pieces of equipment, and I recently purchased one at Greg's urging. Boy, am I glad I did it! TITAN'S TELEGRAPH KEY is just the ticket for building dinosaur power into the thumb and fingers.

TITAN'S TELEGRAPH KEY™ is a plate loading lever machine. It looks like a very small, desk-size see-saw. You put it on a desk or table, load one end with 20 or 30 pounds, and push down on the other end. You can use one hand or two hands. You can work each finger by itself or work any combination of fingers. You can squeeze the unit “pinch grip” style, work the fingers in a scissoring motion, or simply press down with one or two fingers to elevate the weight. You can do reps, singles or timed holds. The little monster has endless possibilities. One thing is certain, however – it builds TREMENDOUS finger strength. This is an excellent tool and comes with my highest recommendation.

A BEGINNING PROGRAM FOR FUTURE GRIP-MASTERS

When you start training your forearms and grip, pick three or four of the basic movements and do one of them in each of your exercise sessions. For example, you might choose to do thick bar deadlifts for singles one day, hammer curls another day, thick bar curls a third day, and pinch grip holds the next time you train. It's a good idea to mix up the type of movements you do, working different parts of the forearms and hands, using different pieces of equipment, and using different rep schemes. But always be sure that the sequence includes at least one heavy movement (like the thick bar deadlift) that you do for singles. The heavy singles will thicken your tendons and ligaments like nothing else.

GLOVES, PADS. STRAPS AND HOOKS

It probably goes without saying, but I'll mention it anyway: dinosaurs do NOT wear those goofy little fingerless gloves when they train, nor do they pad their bars with sponges or use straps or hooks to hold onto the bar. Dinosaurs don't worry about developing rough, calloused hands. If it is a major life goal to have hands as soft as a baby's behind, forget about dinosaur training.

One of my training partners, Ted Solinger, was looking for a job recently, and because he has a degree in a relatively narrow field, he was having a tough time. So he visited an executive placement agency here in Louisville. During his first interview with the career counselors, he shook hands with one of them and she was horrified by his calluses. “You'll have to do something immediately to soften those hands and make them feel smooth and gentle,” she told him. “No one will ever hire you if they think you have done manual labor, and that's exactly how your hands feel!” Needless to say, Ted let THAT piece of “good advice” sail in one ear and right out the other. What a world we live in! What have we come to when having thick, hard muscled, heavy hands is some sort of liability?

But that's enough of a digression. In the next chapter, I'll tell you more about dinosaur training for the forearms and grip.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: GRIP WORK, PART TWO

*Is not life a hundred times too short
for us to bore ourselves?*
~Friedrich Nietzsche

ADVANCED GRIP EXERCISES

Advanced training for the forearms and grip involves (1) additional work on the basic grip movements, (2) increasing use of single rep training, (3) lever bar movements for the forearms and wrists, (4) one and two finger lifts to develop maximum power in the fingers, (5) training the farmer's walk with heavy, heavy dumbbells, (6) vertical bar lifts, (7) one arm deadlifts, (8) wrist curls with thick handled barbells, (9) the regular use of barrels, beams, kegs, rocks, logs, heavy bags and other awkward, unwieldy objects in your training routines, and (10) working the forearms and grip with two to four different exercises in every training session. One of the goals of advanced grip training is to develop the hands, fingers, forearms and wrists from all possible angles.

The basic exercises for the forearms and grip are an important stepping stone to the advanced movements. Several advanced movements are so difficult that you would probably do nothing but hurt yourself if you jumped right into them with no preliminary training. One and two finger deadlifts are a good example. Once you have toughened your hands, fingers and forearms with plenty of thick bar deadlifts and similar movements, you can try tackling one and two finger deadlifts, and as long as you use a reasonable degree of caution, the new movement will work wonders for you. If you were to run out and try the one or two finger deadlift without first devoting regular attention to the basic grip movements, you probably would do nothing but pull the tendons in your fingers. The same is true of the thick bar wrist curl or lever lifts - you need to train on the basics for a reasonable period of time and work your way up to these ultra-demanding movements.

CONTINUED USE OF BASIC GRIP EXERCISES

Let's review each of the foregoing points, starting with the continued use of the basic movements. Even as an advanced "grip master" you need to work hard on the basic exercises for the forearms and grip. Why? Because the basics help you build - and continue to build - the underlying base of strength and power which you then can hone to a razor's edge with various specialized movements (such as one or two finger deadlifts, lever bar work, etc.). If you stopped doing the basic grip movements, you would have a hard time continuing to build significant levels of size and strength into the fingers, forearms and wrists. Keep doing the basics, but as you become advanced, start to augment them with the more specialized movements.

SINGLES FOR GRIP WORK

Why use single reps for advanced grip work? Because singles (1) let you use the heaviest possible weight on the bar, and (2) have the greatest possible effect on your tendons and ligaments. Grip strength is to a large degree connected to the strength of the tendons and ligaments. If you want to develop hands like iron claws, you need to train much more than your muscles - you need to train your tendons and ligaments. Singles are the way to train the tendons and ligaments. They also place enormous demands on your muscles, so rest assured that you will develop PLENTY of muscle with single reps.

In my own case, the regular use of single rep grip training has increased the size of my wrists from 7 1/2" to over 8" in a period of about 1 1/2 years. And this was done at the ripe old age of 37, long past the time when one would expect to see a significant increase in the skeletal structure, particularly for a man who could bench press over 400 pounds BEFORE becoming a "grip fanatic."

What caused the increase in wrist size? Most of it was due to an increase in the size of the tendons and ligaments that pass over the wrist. I also increased the size of my forearms substantially during this period, as a result of virtually nothing but heavy singles. Yet there are hundreds of self proclaimed “experts” who would be quick to tell you that the only way to increase the size of the forearms is to pump them up with many, many sets of high reps performed with light poundages!

LEVER BAR MOVEMENTS

Lever bar movements are an essential part of advanced grip training because they hit your wrists harder than anything else you can do. To understand the concept, think of a heavy sledge-hammer. Imagine that you laid the hammer on the floor, then grabbed it as far down on the handle as possible (i.e., as far away from the iron hammer head as possible) - with only one hand - and tried to raise it overhead with your arm held as straight as possible and the hammer held in line with the forearm. Can you imagine how difficult that would be? The leverage would turn the 8 pound hammer head into an enormous poundage. Indeed, most people would not be able to budge the hammer if they tried to lift it in the manner I have described.

You can use an actual sledge-hammer if you wish, or you can make a lever bar out of any strong bar or pipe. Try one that is about two feet long - and if possible, use a thick handled bar. My training partners and I use a lever bar with a 2” handle, and it is sheer bloody torture to handle - even with only ten pounds of plates at the end. (To “load” your lever bar, you use heavy-duty collars to attach a five or ten pound plate to one end of the bar.)

Once you have your lever bar put together the possibilities for its use are endless. You can do the type of one arm leverage lift I described earlier, or you can curl the bar and then press it out to an “arms extended” position. You can swing it overhead, then lower it slowly to an arms extended position. You can do reps or singles. You can try holding the bar in the extended position for as long as possible. You can lift the bar with the palms up, down or anywhere in-between. You can hold the bar out and bend the wrist so you lever the bar back to your shoulder, then lever it out to the extended position again (bending only at the wrist, not at the elbow - a hard movement with any amount of weight on the bar). You can do wrist curls to all points of the compass. You can rotate the bar in circles clockwise or counterclockwise. Use your imagination - find something you enjoy that makes your forearms burn like the fires of Hell and your wrists feel like they are about to snap.

ONE AND TWO FINGER LIFTS

One and two finger lifts are critical tools in the development of maximum possible crushing power in the hands. There are two excellent ways to train one and two finger movements. The first is to do deadlifts where you use a reversed grip - one hand facing away from the body and the other facing toward the body and use only the first finger on each hand, the second finger on each hand, or the first two fingers on each hand. You can do these with a regular, 2” or 2 1/2” bar. If you have enormous hands and very strong fingers, you can try a 3” bar, but only a huge handed Hercules could handle much weight in that fashion.

One and two finger deadlifts are a very brutal exercise. They HURT! All of the stress is concentrated on a couple of fingers, and the pain is really intense. This is why you need to train the basic grip movements before tackling this exercise. Also, the one and two finger deadlifts are tremendously taxing – so much so, that you should do them no more often than every ten or fourteen days. If you overwork these babies, you may pull a tendon in one of your fingers for sure, and that sort of injury will set your grip training back by at least a couple of months.

Once you get used to the movement, you will find you can handle a pretty substantial poundage in one and two fingered deadlifts. I like to do two fingered deadlifts using the first two fingers of each hand with a 2 1/2” bar, and I have worked up to 300 pounds in this fashion, as has my training partner, Bruce Bullock, who has huge hands and enormously long and strong fingers.

The one and two finger deadlifts are an important exercise because they activate certain deep-lying tendons and muscles in the forearm - areas that cannot be trained very well with more conventional movements. You will notice that a session of one or two finger deadlifts leaves you with a deep, “worked to the bone” feeling in the center of the forearm. This is because you have hit an area that you are not able to train with other movements.

I said that there were two ways to train one and two finger lifts. The most common method is what I have just described – one and two finger deadlifts. But there is another way, and I heartily recommend it to any and all dinosaurs. IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES sells a terrific little goodie called EAGLE LOOPS™. These are heavy duty straps made out of nylon webbing. The straps attach to the bar, leaving four “loops” - one for each finger - to use to lift the bar. You can train all four fingers together or you can train three fingers, two fingers or one finger at a time. I like to train two finger deadlifts with the EAGLE LOOPS™, using the first two fingers of each hand. This is an incredibly painful movement, but one that will turn your fingers into steel claws in short order. You can handle BIG weights in this movement – Bruce Bullock and I both do two finger deadlifts with 450 pounds with the EAGLE LOOPS™.

Another fun thing to do with the EAGLE LOOPS™ is any sort of chinning exercise you happen to favor. Hanging by your fingers while you are chinning is a great exercise and will turn your hands into iron hooks. Again, you can train all four fingers at a time, or any combination of fingers. The EAGLE LOOPS™ are a GREAT tool for developing barbaric finger strength. They belong in any dinosaur's basement gym.

THE FARMER'S WALK

The farmer's walk is a terrific movement for advanced men - and if your grip is strong enough to handle a heavy poundage, the exercise will become an excellent total body movement. It really works you from head to toe when you use heavy weights. How do you do the exercise? It's simple. You just pick up two HEAVY dumbbells, one in each hand, and WALK with them. Go as far or as long as possible. Some men have developed the ability to handle 100 pound dumbbells and walk for several hundred yards with them - or walk for up to four minutes if they time the movement instead of going for distance.

My training partners and I use a pair of 180 pound steel I-beams with heavy iron handles welded onto them - a pair of “toys” designed by Dr. Ken Leistner and given by him to Kim Wood, who later gave them to me. Walking with these monsters is no easy task! Here is a contemporaneous account of the first time we decided to “go for broke” with the “steel suitcases.”

* * * * *

February 26, 1995

Hail to the Dinosaurs:

We had a great workout yesterday. Ted had been to a wild bachelor's party the night before - there were 40 guys, two hookers, a fistfight that sent one guy to the hospital and untold quantities of booze ... Ted drank only 1/4 as much as the rest of the guys and still threw up four times ... he got to train his grip by pulling one drunk guy off of another one ... they had gotten into a fight (probably over the hookers) and the big one had the little one locked into some kind of death grip strangle hold, and Ted saved the little guy's life by loosening the death grip finger by finger ... all in all, one wild party ... God, I am glad I am too OLD for that sort of “fun”!

Anyhow. Ted was hung over and hurting and got 375 in the trap bar dead lift, then missed 406 miserably – as in, couldn't even budge the bar. He looked pretty blue. Sam and Spenser (my golden retrievers) watched carefully for signs of his demise. We have a standing deal that they get to bury anyone who dies in THE DUNGEON

“Do you want to do anything else?” I asked.

“Yeah—ok—maybe something for the grip,” said Ted.

I turned to Bruce and whispered “How would you like to take the steel suitcases for a walk?”
“Cool,” he answered.

Ted saw us pick up the steel suitcases (one each) and start up the stairs with them.

“Where are you going?” he asked. He looked really pale.

“Outside. Come on.”

We lugged the monstrous 180 pound I-beams up the stairs, across the yard and through the back gate, then put them down. They stood defiantly on our west sidewalk.

“Now what?” asked Ted.

“We pick them up and carry them for as far as possible. Both at the same time, of course. You go first.”

Ted turned blue. He knew he was in for it. Bruce calmly chalked his hands, waiting patiently for HIS turn, Sam and Spenser sat by the gate, grinning in anticipation.

Ted deadlifted the things and took a staggering step forward - then another - then his eyes bulged out of his head, his lips curled in a scream of pain that stuck in his throat, and he lurched forward one – two – three – five - ten more steps until the suitcases crashed to the ground and he stood there gasping and wheezing, his fingers clenched and immobile like the granite claws of a grinning gargoyle. He had managed 15 or 20 feet.

“What a workout,” he gasped.

Sam and Spenser grinned and cheered. The sounds of pain, torture and agony are music to their ears. Spenser was already digging a hole to bury Ted. Bruce walked over, set himself, picked the monsters up (the suitcases, not Sam and Spenser) and took off down the sidewalk. He strode purposefully but deliberately until he reached the north end of our property, carefully turned, reversed direction, and made it back to where Ted had deposited the suitcases. He lowered them to the ground and crashed to his knees.

“That's incredible,” he gasped.

“Fun, isn't it?” I asked.

“It's – so - incredible ... when you finally put them down - it's like this huge weight is suddenly taken off of your back ... you feel like you could fly....”

The poor guy was hallucinating, which was hardly surprising. After all, he had carried the things 90 or 100 feet.

Ted lay moaning in the grass. Bruce was still down on one knee. Sam and Spenser licked their chops. The neighbors hid inside their houses and drew the blinds.

I chalked up, tightened my belt, got set and pulled the monsters off the ground - then walked off with them. The load was incredible - pressing down like a ton – my arms were screaming, my traps and upper back were in agony, my heart was going a mile a minute, my fingers were numb, my thumbs felt like they were being flayed, my hips and low back were shouting in protest and my legs and feet were operating entirely on their own, with no conscious link to my brain.

Somehow I made it to the far property line to the south - about 100 feet. I was ready to die.

I put the suitcases down. Instantly there was a “lighter than air” feeling - the same rush that Bruce had gaspingly described.

“Dig a hole for dad,” said Sam.

Spenser started digging.

“I'm gonna be sick,” moaned Ted.

“Do your next set first,” I told him.

He picked them up and stumbled down the sidewalk. Twenty – thirty – forty - he probably made fifty feet this time, then collapsed in a heap.

Bruce went next. He made 120 or 130 feet.

Then I went again. I managed the whole length of the property line. How far? Who knows. We paced it off later - it was around 150 feet.

Sam and Spenser continued to grin.

All told, we each lugged the things as far as possible 5 times. I managed the entire property line on each of my last four carries, Bruce managed just a bit less and Ted managed 50 feet or so each of his final four tries.

When it was over. we were DEAD. As in totally fried.

“What do those work?” asked Ted.

“Everything,” I answered.

“They trigger the GROW OR DIE response.” said Brace. “You either grow bigger and stronger or you die, one or the other. The suitcases don't care which it is.”

* * * * *

A month or two later we did something even crazier. We took the steel suitcases for a half mile walk. Ted took them first, and carried the monsters as far as possible. Then Bruce took them as far as he could go. Then I followed suit. We alternated back and fourth until we had carried the things back and fourth along the sidewalk on the side of my house - a distance we had paced and computed to equal at least 880 yards (half a mile) if we walked it 20 times. By the time we were done, Bruce and Ted had cut their hands to ribbons and mine were about one lift away from breaking open. We were covered in sweat and had trouble even standing up. It took around an hour before any of us felt like moving. Our workouts for the next week or so were slow and sluggish - but then we all made BIG jumps on various movements. The incredible training session worked us so hard that it took around 10 days to fully recover, but once we did, we came back stronger than ever.

NOW A WORD OF CAUTION! (Pay attention). Walking with steel suitcases is DANGEROUS. So is walking with heavy dumbbells. A much safer alternative - and one that works just as well - is to make two heavy sandbags, attach heavy rope or heavy straps for “handles” and use those for the farmer's walk. If you drop a 200 pound dumbbell or a 180 pound steel suitcase on your foot, you are in SERIOUS trouble. Drop a 200 pound sandbag on your foot and you'll be sore, but you won't be maimed. Sore is part of life, maimed is a problem. Give the sandbags serious consideration.

VERTICAL BAR LIFTS

Vertical bar lifts are a great exercise for the grip, the fingers, the wrists and the forearms. They are simple to do. You need to use a bar that has a heavy duty collar attached to one end (or a collar or cross piece welded on). You can use a regular size bar or a thick handled bar. I use a 2” bar for this movement. Simply load the bar in a vertical position, then stand over it with your feet to the sides and well out of the way, and do a one arm “deadlift” with the bar. Brace the non-lifting arm against the thigh or knee to avoid twisting your lower back.

You'll find that this one really works you hard, because the bar has a tendency to rotate as you lift it. You need a very strong wrist to counter the rotation as you lift the bar. Do either timed holds or singles. Bruce and I have handled 200 pounds in this movement with a 2” bar.

ONE ARM DEADLIFTS

One arm deadlifts are another terrific movement for the grip. Like the farmer's walk, they become a total body movement once you get up to a substantial poundage. Three hundred pounds will work the entire body quite thoroughly. In fact, your traps and lats will get more work from this movement than from almost anything else you can do. (The traps and lats act as stabilizers on the one arm deadlift. If you think handling a 150 pound dumbbell in the one arm row is tough, you won't believe what 300 or 400 pounds feels like when you hold it in one hand and the lats have to work like the devil to “lock” the upper back and hold everything in the proper position.)

I like to do one arm deadlifts with a cambered bar. A straight bar is extremely hard to balance. You can handle quite a bit more weight with a cambered bar, and thus, get a much better workout. You also can make a special short bar (3' or 4' long) with a kettle-bell handle attached in the center. This is inexpensive and very effective. If you prefer a cambered bar, try one of the BUFFALO BARS™ sold by IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES. These are terrific bars.

To perform the one arm deadlift, straddle the bar. Assume a deadlift position and brace the non-lifting hand on the knee. Grab the bar in the center - you'll probably have to measure and

mark the exact center - and get “tight.” You have to be very careful to avoid wrenching the lower back when you do one arm lifts, and if you don't stay “tight” through the entire movement, you are inviting an injury. To complete the lift, simply drive up as though you were doing a deadlift, raising the bar until it is just above your knees. Pause for a second, then lower the bar.

Only raise the bar to a height just above your knees! If you go higher, you completely straighten the non-lifting hand and it no longer braces against the knee - thereby exposing your lower back to injury.

Only do singles on the one arm deadlift. Balance and positioning are so critical to this movement that you have to do singles. If you tried to do multiple reps you would not be able to find the correct starting position after the first rep and you would probably twist your back and hurt yourself.

As I noted in the previous chapter, you also can do one arm deadlifts with special handles. IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES has a beauty of a deadlift handle called ROLLING THUNDER™. It is much easier to do one arm deadlifts with a handle than with a barbell, because you don't have to worry about balance. Also, with a deadlift handle you can get into thick handled movements. The ROLLING THUNDER handle will give your grip a real workout. However, you won't work the lats and upper back as hard as with the barbell version. The best bet is to include BOTH variations in your arsenal of exercises.

How high you go on the one arm deadlift is up to you. If you have a strong grip, lots of motivation and plenty of good old fashioned courage, you can go pretty high. With a barbell, three hundred pounds is just the starting point for a strong man. Four hundred is definitely within reach if you work hard, particularly if you use the kettlebell handle.

Another variation of the one arm deadlift is to use a barbell and do the exercise standing to the side of the bar (as if you were lifting a suitcase). This is TOUGH! Balance is extremely tricky. I learned about this exercise from Osmo Kiiha, who said that anyone who could handle 200 pounds in this movement on a regular Olympic bar was doing pretty well. Osmo says that Edward Aston, a tremendously strong English lifter at the turn of the century, once lifted a 250 pound bar in each hand in this fashion and then WALKED around a large pool table with the weights. What a tremendous feat! (By the way, Bill Hinbern is preparing a reprint of an old grip course by Aston, as well as old grip courses by George F. Jowett and Thomas Inch - all of which sound like long lost treasure to THIS dinosaur.)

THICK BAR WRIST CURLS

Wrist curls with a thick handled bar are a good movement for advanced men. I absolutely loathe the high rep, baby weight nonsense most guys do when they train wrist curls. Heavy, thick bar singles in the wrist curl are an entirely different story. They are a devastating movement for the wrists and forearms. In fact, they hit the wrist so hard that you need to treat them with EXTREME caution. I list them as an advanced movement so that you can build a good base with other grip exercises before giving them a try. Once you get into them, though, you can start working up to some significant poundages.

SOME SPECIAL GOODIES

Advanced grip work for dinosaurs involves plenty of heavy, awkwardly shaped objects, such as beams, heavy bags, barrels and logs. No matter how hard you train your grip, you need to add some heavy bags, barrels, logs or what have you to your workouts. It doesn't really matter what you use, what it weighs or what you do with it. Anything you do with a heavy bag, barrel, or log is going to work your grip in ways that nothing else can even approach.

In his classic course, MOLDING A MIGHTY GRIP, George F. Jowett stated, “As I have remarked in this book, barrel lifting was very popular with the old-time strength athletes.” He added: “For developing the fingers, hands, wrists and arms, there is nothing any better.” “Apart from this,” Jowett added “barrel lifting is great for general body building.” Jowett concluded his discussion of barrel lifting with the following words:

“In conclusion, let me say. do not neglect any of these exercises or omit them from your training schedule. They will repay you more quickly than any other form of grip exercise, with the exception of block weight and kettle bell juggling, which is nothing more or less than a contributory variation of what I have explained here. Barrel stunting is beyond a doubt the supreme test of your grip strength. It will build it for you to a marvelous degree. The power of your fingers, the force power of the thumb, the strength of the hands, wrists and forearms will increase almost from your first practice period. You will indeed get that grip of steel which we all so much admire and desire. Practice on these exercises will develop the forearm muscles which would not respond to any other form of exercise. From shoulder to finger tips you will be the proud owner of a mighty arm and will have in each hand the vice-like crushing grip of a steel bear-trap. It is not impossible. It is simply up to you - now you have been shown how...”

So get yourself an old 15.5 gallon barrel or a beer keg. Fill it with water, sand, lead shot or anything you like. A 15.5 gallon barrel or beer keg will weigh around 165 pounds when filled with water, 210 pounds when filled with sand, and 270 pounds when you fill it first with sand and then add as much water as possible. Start with 120-160 pounds. Be conservative - this is going to be MUCH more challenging than you imagine. Then lift the thing. Clean it if you can. Press it if you are able. Deadlift it. Walk with it. Curl it. Wrestle it. Bearhug the monster. Do singles or do reps. Anything you do with that big animal is going to work the devil out of your fingers, wrists and forearms. And you don't need to go real heavy either. Handling a 100 pound barrel or keg is no easy task. A 150-pounder is murder.

A man who can bench press 400 pounds or more is going to find it EXTREMELY difficult to clean and press a 150 pound barrel. I speak from personal experience in this regard. The first time I ever lifted a barrel was at Dick Connors' great gym in Evansville, Indiana - THE PIT. I had finished a bench press session where I worked up to 435 pounds from the chest for a single rep (using a bench shirt - something I used to use but no longer use or recommend). Then I tackled the 150 pound barrel, and, at Dick's urging, tried three reps in the clean and press, doing the reps consecutively (i.e., without lowering the barrel to the floor between reps), I managed two and a half, missing the clean on rep number three, and I was gasping for air like I had completed a ten mile run with a large anvil strapped on my back. The barrel was less than half of what I had bench pressed a few minutes earlier, but it almost killed me. Barrel lifting is brutal!

Sandbags are as bad as barrels. Again, you don't need a huge poundage. 100 pounds will work the heck out of even a strong dinosaur, and 150 pounds will humble almost anyone. If you can lift a 200 pound sandbag overhead, you are pretty good. If you can lift a 250 pound bag to your shoulder, you are pretty strong. Do whatever seems to be the thing to do. With a lighter bag, try some upright rowing, high pulls, cleans, snatches or curls. With a heavier bag, wrestle the thing to your shoulders and push it over head, or just bearhug it and walk as far as you can before you drop. Bearhugging a heavy bag is a very unique exercise - you have to crush the bag against your chest (using the biceps and the chest muscles in a way you never duplicate with regular equipment) - and you have to fight the downward pull of the weight with your shoulders and back - and your grip is working overtime just to hold onto the thing.

Another “fun” thing to do is to pick up a heavy bag and carry it with the arms hanging straight down (as though you were in the completed position of a deadlift). With 100 or 150 pounds, this becomes a very difficult movement almost immediately, and after 50 feet or so your fingers and forearms will be screaming for mercy.

For grip work, sandbag curls reign supreme. If you think you have strong arms, try curling a 100 to 130 pound sandbag. You won't believe the difference between curling a 130 pound barbell and a 130 pound bag of sand.

You also can do a static “hold” in the top position or mid-point of a “curl” with a sandbag, a log, a barrel or any similar object. In the August, 1986 issue of THE STEEL TIP (Volume 2, Number 8) Dr. Ken Leistner described a terrific biceps and forearm blaster using a 90 pound anvil:

“To really give that finishing touch to the flexors of the forearms, we use our ninety pound anvil and bring it to a half or three quarter curl position. The trainee then holds that

contraction for thirty seconds, trying to squeeze the anvil higher and higher as his strength wanes and gravity threatens to bring the anvil onto his feet. Three “sets” of this are done, although each subsequent hold is done at a lower position than the preceding one, an unavoidable consequence of fatigue.”

My training partners and I use sandbags, barrels or one of our 180 pound I-beams to do this exercise, and believe me, it is a tremendously tough movement - one that would make being drawn and quartered seem like an act of charity by comparison. Don't blame me if this one almost kills you, blame Dr. Leistner.

INCREASING THE NUMBER OF GRIP MOVEMENTS

The final way in which advanced grip work differs from basic grip work is that you do two, three or even four grip movements in every training session you do. When you are starting on grip work, this amount of training would be way too much. For an advanced grip man, however, it is mandatory. Why? Because you are training so many different facets of the fingers, hands, wrists and forearms. The specialized movements that an advanced man needs to do - such as one and two finger deadlifts - have to be done together with the basic movements that work more of the total forearm - such as deadlifting with a thick bar or doing thick bar power holds.

In practice, you will do one type of deadlifting movement, one specialized movement for the wrists or fingers, a curling movement (regular curls, reverse curls or hammer curls) and one other movement of your choice. You can do different movements every time you train. The idea is to develop maximum possible strength in every single finger, in your thumbs, in your wrists, and throughout your forearms - so that you are ferociously strong at crushing and gripping movements, at curling movements, at timed holds, at leverage bar movements and at every other exercise you would ever do for the forearms, wrists and grip.

Think of all the different ways you can move your fingers – up, down, left, right, clockwise, counterclockwise. Now do the same for your wrists - they too move up, down, left, right, clockwise and counterclockwise. Next, consider your thumb. How does your thumb move? It moves up, down, left, right, clockwise and counterclockwise. What about forearms? How many different ways can you hold your forearms when you do curls - supinated, pronated, gooseneck, thumbs up. How many different sized handles can you use when you train your gripping muscles? You can do pinch grip work with weights attached to a silver dollar or you can use a handle 3” thick, and you can work the entire range in-between. You can do singles, reps or timed holds on virtually any grip exercise. There is an almost infinite variety of exercises you can do for your forearms, wrists, hands and fingers. Including three or four of them in each training session is NOT going to overdo it.

Arthur Jones once noted (and I am paraphrasing him, but this is pretty close): “If all of the muscles of the hands, fingers and forearms were developed to their maximum potential, the strength of the hands and fingers would literally defy belief.” For dinosaurs, that idea is a motto to train by. Your goal as a dinosaur is very simple: train your hands, forearms, wrists and grip incredibly hard for a number of years – develop all of the muscle groups to their absolute maximum - and build a grip that will literally stun anyone you meet. Turn your hands into steel pincers. Develop a grip like a vise. Build the strength of your hands, fingers, forearms and wrists to the point where they defy the imagination.

I invent nothing. I rediscover.

~August Rodin

There is no purpose in living when there is nothing to do.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: LOGS, BARRELS AND HEAVY BAGS

That which does not destroy me makes me stronger.

~Friedrich Nietzsche

Dinosaurs know that heavy barbells, effective as they are, are only the starting point when it comes to serious, heavy duty training equipment. To become a true dinosaur you must do more than lift a nicely balanced Olympic barbell. You even have to go further than handling a non-revolving thick handled bar. You have to expand your training to include logs, barrels and heavy bags. (Especially heavy barrels and bags.)

Wait a minute - don't run away.

You read it correctly. I DID say you need to train with logs, barrels and heavy bags. And you DO! Nothing else will give you the type of deep down strength and power that you will develop by lifting large, bulky, odd shaped, awkward and difficult to manage heavy objects. A barbell cannot approach a heavy barrel or a heavy sandbag when it comes to developing the type of rugged power that is required in any form of physical combat or contact sport. It is too easy to control a barbell. You need to supplement your barbell work with heavy objects that cannot be controlled no matter how you try - objects that by their very nature never fall into any sort of lifting groove. Objects you have to manhandle by sheer power. Things you have to wrestle off the ground and up to your shoulders.

HOW TO BUILD REAL STRENGTH

No one can doubt that barbells build tremendous strength and power. Nevertheless, there is an extra edge to be gained from lifting heavy, awkward objects. Doing so builds all around strength and power, and as Hackenschmidt once noted, “real strength is all around strength.” An excellent analysis of this point appears in a letter to the editor published in the “Reader's Round-Up” of the April-May, 1955 issue of IRON MAN (Vol. 14. No. 6). The author was famous strongman John Wooten, who described his training program in detail and then commented on the tremendous strength of arm wrestling champion and strongman, Mac Batchelor. Study this letter well: it contains the essence of dinosaur training:

“... I started out on a strength routine, really piling on the poundage in the following exercises: (1) Two hands deadlift, favorite exercise of Goerner; (2) Walk with weight, favorite exercise of Milo of Crotona; (3) Carry bar in dead lift position, favorite exercise of Arthur Giroux; (4) Bent Presses, favorite exercise of Saxon; (5) Reverse Continental and jerk from behind neck, favorite exercise of Saxon. I usually did several sets of bench presses before my routine. I believe that these and similar exercises build REAL strength, and not just the ability to lift barbells ...”

“You wrote in the last IRON MAN about whether Mac could put down the arms of the “old timers.” Well, Mac is an old timer himself, only living today, and that's why he can handle the modern weightlifters. You just don't build real hand and forearm power doing the three lifts or bodybuilding. Mac lifts barrels, bends, twists things and does all the old time feats which are not popular today.”

A similar philosophy is espoused in a terrific little course on barrel lifting authored by Steve Justa and sold by Ironmind. It's a dandy.

In his course, Justa asks “what is the hardest kind of weight to lift?” His answer is “an awkward bulk weight is hardest.” Why? Because “it places extreme stress on the muscles from the severest angles which criss-cross the frame and automatically ties in all the big powerful muscles the fastest and stimulates all the small stabilizer muscles at the same time.” That simple statement is worth its weight in gold. It gives you something priceless: a forgotten key to strength and power.

If you still think I'm nuts, go back to chapter 14 and re-read George F. Jowett's opinion about the value of barrel lifting. Then consider Dr. Leistner's opinion:

“It would be very beneficial for any competitive athlete to obtain an anvil, or a keg that could be filled to various levels with scrap iron, nuts, bolts, or anything else you want to fill it with. Lifting it in various positions will greatly add to one's upper and lower body strength. ... Mr. Steve Justa ... sells a barrel lifting course ... that is absolutely fantastic. It isn't fancy, but it provides the reader with an organized routine for lifting barrels or kegs in a way that will build tremendous bodily power. His is the stuff that real strength training is about, the type of truly hard, “bust butt” regimen that could boost the power of any lifter or athlete, I highly recommend it ...” [THE STEEL TIP, Vol. 1, No. 12, December, 1985.]

AN EXPERIMENT

There is an easy way to prove to yourself the special benefits of lifting heavy, awkward, bulky objects. Do this. Train extra hard for a couple of months with barbells and dumbbells. Get into really good shape. Whip yourself into top-notch condition. When you think you are ready, go out and buy two Army surplus duffel bags. They ought to run around \$15.00 each, so don't try to weasel out of things by saying the experiment is too expensive. Most guys pay that much every week for a worthless can of metabolic optimizer or a bottle of idiot herbs.

Then buy six 50 pound bags of sand. The total for the sand will be around \$20.00. Once again, cost is not going to be used as an excuse - right?!

Empty three of the bags of sand into one of the duffel bags, so you end up with a 150 pound sandbag. Empty two of the bags in the other duffel bag. Save the third bag of sand for the next part of the experiment. Do some stretching and light calisthenics, then clean and press the 100 pound sandbag. Just do it once. Rest awhile, then clean and press the 150 pound bag. If you can't lift it, go back to the 100 pound bag. Do a total of five singles in the clean and press with either the 150 or the 100 pound bag. If 100 pounds is too light, but 150 is too heavy, toss a 25 pound plate into the 100 pound bag and try 125 pounds. (Be sure you bury it in the center of the sand so it won't slide as you lift the bag.)

Then bear hug the 150 pound bag and walk as far as you can with it. Keep going until it literally falls out of your hands. And work HARD! I want you to keep moving until the bag falls out of your hands or you fall face forward on the sidewalk, whichever occurs first. Rest a few minutes, and then repeat the exercise. Do this a total of five times.

Go back to your 100 pound sandbag and deadlift it off the ground, then, holding the bag by the sides with the thumbs up, do a “hammer” curl. If you can do reps, do as many reps as possible. If you cannot do reps, do five singles.

Now load the 100 pound sandbag to 150 pounds. Pick up BOTH of the 150 pound sandbags as though they were suitcases and walk with them - one in each hand. (Army surplus duffel bags usually come with thick canvas handles; if yours do not, use rope to make “handles”). Don't drag them. CARRY THEM! Walk as far as possible with your 150 pound “suitcases.” If 150 is too much for you, try 100 pounds in each bag. Alternatively, hold one bag in the finish position of the deadlift and walk as far as possible with it. Repeat this for a total of five times. And go a good distance each time - no wimping out on me, ok?

Next, try deadlifting one of the 150 pound sandbags for one set of as many reps as possible. Do the reps continuously for as long as you can, then put the bag down and use a brief pause between reps to force out more and more reps. Try to do a total of at least 50 reps. Be sure to use good lifting form and bend the legs, keeping the hips low and the back flat. You don't want to hurt yourself on these babies, and believe me, it's easy to do if you neglect good lifting mechanics.

To finish your workout, lift the 150 pound sandbag and walk as far as possible with the bag on your right shoulder. Rest a minute or two, then lift it onto the left shoulder and make the return trip. And make each effort a long, hard hike - this is your last exercise, so MAKE IT COUNT!

The foregoing workout may well take over two hours to complete, particularly if you train with a partner or two and you “compete” to see who can go the furthest or do the most reps. Don't try to rush through the session - make it a strength session, not a conditioning session. You'll get plenty of conditioning in any event, but train at a reasonable pace so you can make

a hard, serious, intense effort strength-wise on each and every set you do. We want to work your muscles, ligaments and tendons as hard as possible.

By the way, don't make the mistake of eating a heavy meal before the sandbag workout. In fact, don't eat anything for a couple of hours before the session. This is a TOUGH schedule. Try it on anything approaching a full stomach and you'll be tossing your cookies after only one or two tries at "bear hug and walk."

Think I'm kidding? Guys, very few men will be able to make it through the entire schedule I listed above. Most guys will be wiped out before they are halfway through. That's fine - it's part of the educational process. Remember, this is an experiment. We're trying to teach you something.

THE NEXT DAY

Regardless of whether you make it all the way through the scheduled workout or only part of the way, the results the next morning will astonish you. Remember how you thought you were "in shape?" Remember how you thought you were in rugged, well-honed condition? Then how can one hard session with the sandbags make you so horribly sore that you have trouble getting out of bed? Why are your arms and traps aching as though you had spent the entire day doing cleans, curls and upright rows? Why are your lats as sore and swollen as though you had done five dozen sets of chins? Why do your fingers refuse to function normally? Why is your stomach so sore? Your lower back? Your hips? Your legs? Why do you feel like you've been flattened by a steam-roller? Why are you stiff and sore in all kinds of places that "never" got stiff and sore from your regular training sessions?

STABILIZERS: THE KEY TO TOTAL STRENGTH

Congratulations. You have demonstrated the remarkable benefits of training with heavy bags or any similar objects. You feel as sore as you do because the bags worked your body in ways you could not approach with a barbell alone. You got into muscle areas you normally don't work. You worked the heck out of the "stabilizers."

What are stabilizers? They are small muscle groups that work isometrically to hold your body in a certain position while other muscle groups are causing movement to occur. The upper and lower back, the waist and the hips are tied together by intricate patterns of interlocking stabilizers. You can't work these muscle groups to their maximum with ordinary exercises - you need to activate them by training with heavy, awkward objects.

To understand what stabilizers are, picture the following. Imagine that you are standing underneath a goalpost on a football field. Suspended from the goalpost is a thick rope, and attached to the rope is a heavy sandbag that weighs 200 pounds. Put your hands on the bag and slowly move forward so that the rope is extended taut, at an angle, and the bag is at chest height. Lean into the bag a little and do a standing incline press with it. You will find that the movement is incredibly difficult. Why? Because you not only have to lift the bag, but in addition, you have to use your body to create the incline bench! You have to brace yourself as solidly and tightly as possible in order to approximate the type of support the bench would provide. If you relax for just a fraction of a second, or if you get just a fraction of an inch out of position, the sandbag will knock you flat on your butt. What muscles provide the support and "bracing" for this movement? The stabilizers.

The stabilizers are extremely important for athletes and those who are involved in hand-to-hand combat. A wrestling opponent or an opposing lineman doesn't stand still and let you toss him around like you toss a barbell around. He works against you. He makes you move from awkward angles and unbalanced positions. He makes you push or pull with your arms extended at different lengths. He makes you twist and pull instead of simply pulling. He makes you drop and push up instead of pushing forward. He makes you drive from an uneven stance, rise with a rounded back and work simultaneously in multiple planes of motion. And everything you push or pull against will be unbalanced and uneven, fluid and dynamic.

A barbell won't approximate a football or wrestling opponent. A 150 pound sandbag comes much closer. What's a 150 pound barbell press? Nothing, right? A warmup weight - one you

could do with your eyes closed and repeat all night or until boredom got the better of you. Heck, many dinosaurs can do strict curls with 150 pounds! But take that same 150 pounds and package it as a loosely packed bag of sand or a barrel 2/3 full of water and things are entirely different. You cannot merely “lift” the bag of sand. You have to press it together to keep it from shifting. And even then, the thing still won't balance worth a darn. The bag of sand is almost as uncooperative as a human opponent. Compared to a bag of sand, a barbell virtually lifts itself. And the barrel is even worse, A partially filled barrel is almost impossible to balance. It moves like quicksilver. Compared to a barbell, a partially filled barrel is ALIVE. Sandbags, barrels and similar objects - large, heavy, awkward, unbalanced objects - are terrific for the grip, forearms, wrists and fingers. They give your hands a tremendous workout just from trying to hold onto them. If all you ever did for your grip was lift heavy barrels or heavy sandbags once or twice a week, you would develop ferocious crushing power in no time at all. Together with the grip movements detailed in chapters 13 and 14, lifting heavy objects will help you develop a grip that is literally herculean. (Remember what George F. Jowett said about barrel lifting!)

ROUND BACK LIFTING

One of the reasons why lifting bags and barrels is so productive is that you lift these objects with a round back. Why is that important? Because round back lifting is one of the lost secrets of total strength.

One of the very few modern writers to even mention round back lifting is John P. Jesse. On page 82 of his classic text, *WRESTLING PHYSICAL CONDITIONING ENCYCLOPEDIA*, Jesse discusses various forms of progressive resistance exercise used by old time Indian wrestlers: the use of heavy sandbags, circular stone dumbbells, heavy stone balls to lift to the shoulders and stone “wheels” to hang from the neck while the exerciser ran, climbed stairs or did deep knee bends. Jesse noted:

“The important point for the reader to note is that all these forms of strength training were done with a round back with emphasis ... placed on development of great strength in the lower back and side muscles. None of them were carried out with the straight back lifting philosophy of today which assumes that round back lifting will bring on back problems. How often does anyone observe a wrestler in competition lift or turn an opponent over with a straight back? [pp, 82-83]”

On pages 203-04 of the same text, Jesse added the following commentary:

“Sandbags, rice bales, sacks loaded with hemp or copra; heavy stones and war clubs were used for the development of strength by wrestlers of many nations for several hundred years, long before the invention of the iron barbell. The heavier sandbags, rice bales, stones and sacks of hemp or copra weighing 80 to over 200 pounds were used to develop strength in the lower back, hip and leg muscles.

The use of heavy sandbags and their large circumference forces the lifter to do his lifting with a round back instead of the traditional straight backlifting with a barbell. It is this type of lifting that truly develops a strong back...”

Jesse's insight is a keen one. To prove its validity, all you have to do is spend a couple of months using heavy sandbags and heavy barrels as a regular part of your heavy training. You will find that the bags and barrels substantially increase your back strength, with a resulting carry-over to all conventional barbell movements and all athletic endeavors.

If you are an athlete - particularly a wrestler or football player - round back lifting will build your back in exactly the manner it needs to be developed to battle a human opponent on the mat or on the playing field.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Working with bags, barrels, logs, beams and similar objects builds an incredible ruggedness throughout the entire physique. Your entire body becomes more athletic, better balanced, more coordinated, and far, far stronger. Your back and grip in particular will receive extreme benefit. Your body will be totally different from that of a narcissistic pump artist or sun-

bronzed toner. Your body will become fully functional from head to toe. You will be a lifting machine in the purest, most all-encompassing sense.

Don't pass up the opportunity to create a body that is radically different from the type of body that you can develop with barbells alone. Don't skip the bags, barrels, logs and beams just because using them in your training seems radically different from conventional training. Don't worry about anything others might say or think. Leave the rest of the world to go on its own merry way – it always does in any event. Training with bags, barrels, logs and beams can help you add the finishing touches to the powerful, superbly muscled physique that you will develop from dinosaur training. It will make you **STRONG** in ways that those who merely “lift weights” will never comprehend.

HOW TO USE BAGS, BEAMS AND BARRELS

How do you incorporate bags, barrels, beams and logs into your training program? The easiest way is to go out and buy the Army surplus duffel bags and the sand that I described earlier, and finish one or two training sessions each week with some sort of sandbag lifting. You can use sandbags in innumerable ways. Do the farmer's walk with two heavy sandbags, one in each hand. Bear-hug a big bag of sand and carry it as far as possible. Deadlift and carry it at arms length for as long as possible. Use one bag at a time and carry it as far as possible using only one hand. Fix up a heavy step and do step-ups while holding a bag of sand. Do curls with a sandbag. Do deadlifts. Do cleans and presses. Lift the bag up to your shoulder. Walk or run with a bag on your shoulders. Do high pulls. Try to shoulder a 100 or 150 pound sandbag with one arm. Throw them for height. Throw them for distance. Lift them. Carry them. Everything you do with them is valuable.

One of the best exercises with a heavy sandbag is the “clean” and press. The reason I emphasize the word “clean” is because you can get a good workout by cleaning the sandbag and then pressing it, and you can get just as good a workout by “wrestling” the bag to your shoulders and then pressing it.

By the way, there is a bit of “technique” to cleaning a sandbag. To clean a heavy sandbag, you need to pull it as high as possible. The center of the bag at the widest point (right where the bottom runs into the sides) has to reach chin height. When it does, snap the wrists hard and let go of the bag - then catch the bottom of the bag and push IN and UP at the same time. If you don't push IN, the bag will flop to the sides and you will have a horrible time getting it into position for the press.

Pressing a heavy sandbag can be a very effective total body exercise. On one occasion, Bruce Bullock finished a session by doing as many presses as possible with a 100 pound sandbag. After five or six reps his entire body was shaking from the strain, and the shaking increased from rep to rep until it looked like he was a top heavy palm tree in the middle of a hurricane. His face was bright red and he was gasping in agony - he couldn't breathe - his hands were turning white - and we figured he was a goner. But Bruce kept at it and knocked off a total of ten reps before he collapsed. The next time he tried it he got FIFTEEN REPS. Several days later, he put ten pounds on his all time best in the bench press.

Another very effective movement is the sandbag curl. Just grab a heavy sandbag by the sides and curl it in the best form you can manage. The leverage in the sandbag curl is much greater than in a barbell curl or a dumbbell curl. A man who can curl 150 or 160 pounds with a thick handled barbell will find that a 100 pound sandbag is tough to handle, and a 120 or 125 pound bag is about his limit. To make the movement tougher, hold the bag lower. The lower your hands are, the tougher the leverage at the top of the movement. Also, “digging in” to get a good grip becomes extra difficult when you grab the bag at the bottom where it is tightly packed with no loose material.

When you do sandbag lifting, be careful to use good biomechanics. It is very easy to pull the bag up the stronger side of the body or twist to the stronger side when you are lifting a heavy bag, and this can lead to a pulled muscle. The lower back, the sides and the abs are particularly vulnerable to strain if you use poor lifting form to handle a sandbag.

Similar points apply to lifting barrels or anything else that tickles your fancy. Just play around with a barrel and productive exercises will more or less come to you automatically. Deadlifts. Curls. Cleans. Presses. Squats with a barrel pressed overhead. Bear-hug and walk. The list is endless. One of my favorite barrel exercises is lifting a barrel to the shoulder. Another is running with a barrel on the shoulders. Give barrel lifting a try, and you'll soon develop your own favorite exercise.

BAGS OR BARRELS?

Heavy bags are probably the most practical way of getting into this type of training. They are cheaper than almost anything else you can find, and far, far safer. Barrels, beams, logs and anvils pose a real risk of serious injury to your toes and feet. If you drop a heavy barrel on your foot, you are in a heap of hurting. If you drop a heavy sandbag, all you will injure is your pride.

Much as I enjoy lifting barrels and beams in my own training, I have to admit that sandbags are far safer. I suggest that any dinosaur give the sandbags a try. Whether you go on to barrels and other more dangerous training tools is up to you. However, if you are a gym owner or if you coach an athletic team, it might be wise to stick to sandbags, due to the safety factor alone.

But whatever you choose to do, and whatever you choose to use, you will get bigger and stronger than you ever dreamed possible by training regularly with heavy, hard to manage objects. Nothing else will qualify you for true dinosaur status. And besides - the guys and gals at chrome and fern land would run for cover if they saw you manhandling a 150 pound barrel or a 200 pound bag of sand. Anything that gets THAT kind of reaction from the toners, shapers, pumpers and other pseudo weight trainers has GOT to be good!

OTHER TOTAL BODY BLASTERS

If you don't have access to bags or barrels but you want to try some special work to build enormous all-around total body strength, consider the following “finisher” used by Dr. Ken Leistner and reported in the December, 1985 issue of THE STEEL TIP:

“After completing my set of squat starts, I would immediately return to the squat rack. I would take whatever poundage I had used for my initial set of twenty repetitions in the full squat, and support the barbell across my upper back and trapezius. I would then go for a stroll, walking sideways out of the garage or loft entrance due to the length of the bar. I would walk up and down the street (my neighbors had become accustomed to seeing me push cars, lift strange implements, and walk with a loaded barbell in my quest to become strong), or around the top floor of the family iron shop. I would walk until fatigued, being very careful not to stumble. I would then return the bar to the squat racks and pick up a heavy dumbbell in each hand. Most often, I would use the casted York 100 or 105 pounders that I had - huge things that resembled cannonballs. I would then walk up and down a flight of stairs, 23 steps and one landing each way, repeating this until I could not walk comfortably, if at all, or until I could not hold the dumbbells.

I can remember the feeling that my spine was being compressed as I walked around with the loaded bar on my shoulders, only to believe that my arms would be torn from the sockets as I trudged up and down the stairs, thighs trembling beneath me, buttock muscles cramping with every step. I would remain sore for days at a time, and found that the second workout of the week, usually done three days after the first, would serve to alleviate the persistent aching in my thighs, hips, and low back.”

Or try another little “goodie” reported in THE STEEL TIP (Vol. 1, No. 2, February, 1985). This one involves no special equipment and can be done at home, so you have no excuse not to give it a try:

“I used to entertain my neighbors twice a week when preparing for a major lifting meet or the opening of football practice. After the completion of my weight training routine, I would have someone steer the family car, while I pushed it around the block a few times. Two or three trips was more than enough, especially if my driver increased the resistance by riding the

brake a bit. I would keep my body low, get a good forward lean and drive with the hips and thighs. I honestly believe that this adjunctive work added many pounds to my squatting ability and to my leg drive. I used this little “secret” for many years, and everyone who did it with me noted marked improvement in lower body strength. I do know that my time in the 40 improved appreciably once I started my car pushing bouts, and that my squat demonstrated a lot more power out of the bottom position. Don't overdo it at first ... you'll be surprised at the soreness you'll encounter...”

MEET THE CHALLENGE

Barbells and dumbbells are great. To a dinosaur, they are worth their weight in gold. But you can augment and enhance these basic tools by lifting, carrying, pushing, or walking with heavy, awkward objects. Bags, barrels, kegs, beams, logs, anvils, and yes, even the family car, can make you incredibly strong. Don't get locked into conventional exercises and conventional equipment. Be a dinosaur. Expand your horizons!

It requires ages to destroy a popular opinion.

~Voltaire

We have not journeyed across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies because we are made of sugar candy.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: POWER RACK TRAINING

*This is a system that was much used by the old timers
but has been neglected in recent years by modern lifters...
It is very valuable and not to be minimized as to its importance.*
~Peary Rader

Dinosaurs live in the power rack. Aside from the barbell, the most important training tool in a dinosaur's bag of tricks is the power rack. A power rack (1) permits a dinosaur to train alone in perfect safety, (2) permits a dinosaur to overload his muscles and train far heavier than would otherwise be possible, (3) allows a dinosaur to inject variety and a change of pace into his routine while still using basic exercises such as the squat, bench press and deadlift, (4) allows a dinosaur to do "bottom position" squats and bench presses, two of the most result-producing movements a man can do, and (5) doubles as a great place to hang laundry in the wintertime. (You married guys will understand the importance of number five; the single guys will just have to wait until they are married to learn how domesticated a dinosaur can become.)

Seriously - if a dinosaur was limited to a barbell and ONE other piece of training equipment he would choose the power rack without even thinking twice about it. The power rack is simply essential to the development of maximum muscular strength and power. You can build superhuman strength without a lot of things, but you cannot do it without a power rack. The rack is a necessity for any man who is interested in reaching his physical potential.

THE SAFETY FACTOR

For anyone who trains alone, the rack can be a lifesaver. Training alone without a rack is like driving a car with old, piebald tires that you know can blow on you at any minute ... down a rock strewn, pot-holed highway covered with oil and sprinkled with bits of broken glass and large nails ... in the mountains ... in the fog ... with worn-out brakes. Think I'm exaggerating? Ask the fellows who DIED as the result of getting stuck under a heavy bench press bar while training alone, it happens to two or three guys every year - some of them advanced lifters who certainly should have known better. And it's not a pretty way to die. Think about it for a second - being strangled to death slowly by a heavy barbell. Hanging would be easier and quicker.

BASIC BENEFITS OF RACK WORK

Aside from the safety factor, there are two basic benefits of power rack work. First, power rack training allows you to overload your muscles by handling enormous poundages in the extended or "close to lock out" position of a lift. This training principle was used extensively by the oldtimers, and it was one of the secrets of their incredible strength and power. They used the principle without having the rack available. Modern-day dinosaurs have it much easier because we can use the power rack when we utilize the overload principle. Being alive in the modern world is not ALL bad!

The second basic benefit of rack work is that it allows you to do bottom position squats and benches. In other words, it allows you to start your squats from the bottom position, with the bar set on pins positioned in such a way that you have to wedge yourself under the bar to get into position. At the start of the lift your thighs will be parallel to the floor or an inch or two above parallel. It requires MAN-SIZED effort to start a heavy squat from this position. Training heavy squats from the bottom position will give you new insights into the meaning of HARD WORK, CONCENTRATION, INTENSITY, MENTAL TOUGHNESS, DETERMINATION and EFFORT. It also will build your back, hips and thighs like nothing you ever imagined.

In the May, 1985 issue of THE STEEL TIP (Vol. 1, No. 5), Dr. Ken Leistner reported "a very interesting conversation ... with Professor Don Corrigan of Purdue University ... the former

head coach of The Boilermaker wrestling team, and ... a scholar/expert in exercise physiology.” Professor Corrigan stated “I’d really like to see them start the squat from the bottom position, not the top. Then we’d see who the really strong squatters were....” Think about it!

You also can train bench presses from the bottom position. Simply set the pins so the bar is positioned at a height where it grazes or barely grazes your chest and start each rep from a dead stop at that position. Talk about HARD work! The bottom position start turns the ordinary bench press into pure, unadulterated torture. The first time you try it you will feel like your chest and shoulders are being torn apart by wild horses. Stay with it, however, and you will develop incredible thickness and power throughout the entire torso.

ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY

Power rack training is so demanding and severe that even an advanced lifter who has loads of heavy lifting under his belt should break into rack work in an organized, sensible manner. Don't just run down to your basement, load the squat bar to 400 or 500 pounds and try some bottom position rack squats. Use your head. You have an entire lifetime in which to build power and strength. Don't be foolish. Don't rush things.

LOW REPS

I believe that rack work is best performed for low reps or singles. I never suggest going over five reps on rack exercises. That means that you need to be used to doing low reps before you should even consider a rack program. In other words, before you even ATTEMPT to train on the rack, you need to take your regular out-of-the-rack exercises and train them with low reps for awhile. In essence, you are PREPARING your body for the ultra-heavy demands that will be imposed by the rack.

REDUCE REPS SLOWLY AND INTELLIGENTLY

Reduce your reps slowly and systematically. If you have been using higher reps, start to reduce them gradually, and eventually get down to no more than five reps per set. If you have been training for most of your career with more than five reps per set, take at least three months to gradually work your way into five rep sets and the heavier poundages that the low number of reps will allow you to handle. Don't try to speed things up by cutting the process short - it won't work that way. You need to strengthen your tendons and ligaments and that requires time. Keep things slow and steady.

After a few months of five rep sets, try dropping the reps again. Use the 5/4/3/2/1 system - several progressively heavier warmup sets of five reps, then one set of five with your top weight for five reps. Rest a couple of minutes, add ten pounds to the bar, and do a set of four reps. Rest a few minutes, add ten pounds to the bar, and do a set of three reps. Repeat the process for a double and then for a single. Stay on the 5/4/3/2/1 system for at least three months. Again, don't try to rush things. You cannot shorten the process. It requires TIME to build the type of tendon and ligament strength that successful rack work requires.

If you already have developed the ability to do heavy poundage, low rep training on a regular basis, you don't need any special work before giving the rack a try.

BREAK-IN TRAINING IS A MUST

Regardless of what type of training you have been doing in the past, and regardless of how strong, experienced or motivated you are, start fairly light and break in gradually when you begin your rack work. If you go too heavy too fast you run the risk of a serious injury. You also are inviting muscular soreness so extreme that it may literally incapacitate you for days.

HOW TO START A RACK PROGRAM

The best way to start a rack program is to use the rack for bottom position squats and benches, and do those exercises AFTER you have completed a regular, heavy session of the same exercise performed in the normal fashion. This will allow you to train fairly light on the rack

movements while not causing any loss in size or strength during the initial “break in” period. It also allows you to maintain proper form for the regular style of performance. (If you do not do squats and benches in the normal style, any rack work you do will make you STRONGER but you may not be able to demonstrate the additional strength in the regular movement because you will be awkward and “out of the groove” on heavy attempts. Of course, you can regain your form in short order, but it is much easier to combine the regular movement with the rack movement if you wish to retain the ability to squat and bench with heavy poundages in the normal style of the movement.)

A SAMPLE SCHEDULE

If you do both the regular style of exercise and the bottom position movement in the rack, you will be training quite heavily. Be sure to control the total amount of work you do. Keep the sets and reps to a minimum and be sure to follow an abbreviated routine. Don't overdo things. Too much exercise at this stage of the game will be a disaster. A good schedule would be something like the following:

MONDAY

1. Parallel squat (regular style) - 5 x 5 (four progressively heavier warmup sets and one heavy set).
2. Bottom position squats in the rack - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
3. Barbell curls with a 2” bar - same sets/reps as squats.
4. Grip work - two exercises, two to three sets per exercise.
5. Bent legged situps with heavy dumbbell on chest - one set, 15 to 25 reps.

THURSDAY

1. Deadlifts, trap bar deadlifts, dumbbell deadlifts, power cleans or power pulls (normal style) - same sets/reps as squats.
2. Bench press (regular style) - same sets/reps as squats.
3. Bottom position bench press in rack - preferably with a 3” diameter bar – five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
4. Chins, pulldowns, barbell or one arm dumbbell rowing - four progressively heavier sets of five reps, working up to a top poundage for five reps.
5. Grip work - two or three exercises, two or three sets each.
6. Leg raises with weight attached to feet - one set of 15 to 25 reps.

Alternatively, you could do squats on Monday, benches on Wednesday and deadlifts or another back exercise on Friday, working the other exercises in as time and energy dictate. This is the approach I prefer, but many other guys do better on two sessions per week. Give both a try and decide which works best for you. An example of a three day per week program would be as follows:

MONDAY

1. Parallel Squat (regular style) - Three progressively heavier warmup sets (five reps per set), followed by 5/4/3/2/1 (as described in text in this chapter).
2. Bottom position rack squats - five progressively heavier sets of three reps, working up to a tough but not maximum poundage.
3. Standing barbell curls - using a 2” or 3” bar - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy poundage.
4. Grip work - one exercise, three to four sets.
5. Bent legged situps - as described in preceding two day per week program.

WEDNESDAY

1. Bench press (regular style) - same as squats on Monday.

2. Rack bench press - preferably using a 3" diameter bar - 5/4/3/2/1, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
3. Pulldowns or chins - four progressively heavier sets of five reps.
4. Carry heavy sandbag as far as possible - four times, with three to five minutes between carries (if possible, work with a training partner and compete against each other).

FRIDAY

1. Deadlift, trap bar deadlift, power cleans, power pulls or dumbbell deadlift (normal style) - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
2. Clean and press heavy barrel - five single rep attempts, resting two to three minutes between attempts. If a barrel is not available, use a heavy sandbag.
3. The farmer's walk with heavy dumbbells, beams, logs, sandbags or barrels - four times, for as far as possible on each effort (compete against your training partner if possible).

MORE ADVANCED RACK PROGRAMS

After three to six months on the initial rack program, reverse the order of the rack work and the regular movement on the squat and the bench press. In addition, add partial deadlifts to the program to be sure that you are working your pulling muscles as heavily as the thighs and the torso. Drop the regular movement when you add the partial deadlift - having two types of heavy pulling movements in the program would be too much, particularly since you hit the low back and hips quite hard with the squat and bottom position squat. Use the power rack or heavy blocks to position the bar (or the trap bar) at knee height. Start with modest poundages, then begin to add weight as you get used to the movement. Once the poundages start to get up there, the partial movement will do for the pulling muscles what the bottom position squats and benches are doing for the rest of the body.

A three day per week sample program would be as follows:

MONDAY

1. Bottom position rack squat - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
2. Parallel squat (regular style) - five progressively heavier triples, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage for three reps.
3. Grip work - three exercises, four progressively heavier sets on each.
4. Bent legged situps with heavy dumbbell on chest - one set of 15 to 25 reps.

WEDNESDAY

1. Bottom position bench press in power rack - preferably with a 3" diameter bar - same as bottom position power rack squats on Monday of this program.
2. Bench press - regular style - same as parallel squats (regular style) on Monday of this program.
3. Chins or pulldowns - four progressively heavier sets of five reps.
4. Grip work - two exercises - four progressively heavier sets each.

FRIDAY

1. Deadlift from the knees (using a regular or trap bar) - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
2. Standing barbell press - five progressively heavier sets of three to five reps.
3. Sandbag curl - four sets of five reps - same weight for each set.
4. Farmer's Walk - four times, for as long as possible.
5. Bearhug and walk with heavy sandbag or barrel as far as possible - two times.

An alternative three day per week rack program at this stage of the game would put the squat on one day, the bench press and deadlift on another day, and leave one day for sandbag and barrel lifting exclusively; this is a VERY rugged program, but one that is very good for athletes, particularly football players and wrestlers:

MONDAY

1. Bottom position rack squat - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
2. Parallel squat (regular style) - four progressively heavier sets of five reps, working up to a top poundage for five reps.
3. Neck exercises with headstrap - four sets.
4. Grip work - two exercises, doing four progressively heavier sets on each movement.

WEDNESDAY

1. Clean and press with heavy sandbag - five singles - same weight for each lift or use progressively heavier poundages.
2. Lift heavy barrel to the shoulder - alternate shoulders - do four lifts to the left shoulder and four lifts to the right shoulder ... treat these as singles, i.e., one lift to right shoulder is one single, rest, then lift the barrel to left shoulder, rest, etc.
3. Sandbag curls - two sets of five reps with maximum weight for five reps.
4. Lift heavy sandbag or barrel to shoulder and run or walk with it for as far as possible - two times per shoulder. Go up a hill or up steps if possible.
5. Bearhug heavy sandbag or heavy barrel and walk as far as possible with it - two times.
6. Lift heavy sandbag, hold it at arm's length, and walk as far as possible – two times.
7. Lift heavy barrel by the chines and hold for as long as possible - two times.

FRIDAY

1. Deadlift from knees (use regular or trap bar) - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
2. Power rack bench press - preferably with a 3" bar - five progressively heavier singles, working up to a heavy but not maximum poundage.
3. Bench press (regular style) - four progressively heavier sets of five reps, working up to a maximum poundage for five reps.
4. Leg raises - one set of 15 to 25 reps with extra weight attached to feet.
5. Grip work - two exercises, each done for four progressively heavier sets.

EVEN MORE ADVANCED RACK PROGRAMS

After you have trained on one of the preceding programs for three months or so, expand your rack work by combining regular bench presses, bottom position benches and heavy bench press lockouts. On the squat, combine regular, bottom position and heavy 1/4 squats. For deadlifts, combine the full range movement, deadlifts from the knees and heavy top position deadlifts (i.e., a "top position" or "lockout" movement where you move the bar no more than two or three inches to complete the movement).

"Wait a minute!" you say. "I'll burn out in two weeks if I try to do all that work! No one can possibly do that many heavy movements and do anything other than overtrain!"

Whoa!

Wait a minute.

Hold your horses.

Cool the jets. Call in the dogs. Uncircle the wagons. Lower the guns.

Give me a minute to explain what I want you to do.

Try this: train six times every two weeks, and train different movements every time you train.

That permits you to include a reasonable number of different movements without the risk of overdoing things.

For example, you might try the following program:

MONDAY

1. Bottom position rack squats - five progressively heavier singles.
2. 1/4 squats - five progressively heavier singles.
3. Standing curls with 2" bar - four progressively heavier singles.

4. Grip work - one exercise - five progressively heavier sets.

WEDNESDAY

1. Bottom position bench presses - four progressively heavier singles.
2. Bench press lockouts - four progressively heavier singles.
3. Barbell rowing, pulldowns or chins - four progressively heavier sets of five reps.
4. Bent legged situps with heavy dumbbell on chest - one set of 15 to 25 reps.

FRIDAY

1. Deadlift or trap bar deadlift - regular style only - four progressively heavier warmup sets of five reps, then two sets of five reps with top weight for five reps.
2. Bearhug heavy barrel or sandbag and walk as far as possible with it – four times. (Alternatively, find a set course of about 1/2 mile and do the course no matter how long it takes or how many times you have to stop and rest.)

MONDAY—WEEK TWO

1. Parallel squat - regular style - five progressively heavier sets of five reps.
2. Grip work - two exercises, four progressively heavier sets each.
3. Leg raises with extra weight attached to feet - one set of 15 to 25 reps.

WEDNESDAY—WEEK TWO

1. Standing or seated press - use barbells or dumbbells for the seated version - use barbells, dumbbells, sandbags or barrels for the standing version - five progressively heavier singles OR four progressively heavier sets of five reps.
2. Deadlifts from the knees - using trap or regular bar - five progressively heavier singles.
3. Heavy deadlift lockouts - using trap or regular bar – five progressively heavier singles.
4. Hold heavy barrel by chins for as long as possible, or, hold heavy sandbag off the ground at arm's length for as long as possible - four times. Alternatively, do the farmer's walk with heavy dumbbells - four times for as far as possible.

FRIDAY—WEEK TWO

1. Bench press (regular style) - five progressively heavier sets of five reps, three reps or singles.
2. Chins or pulldowns - four progressively heavier sets of five reps.
3. Headstrap exercises for the neck - four sets.
4. Bent legged situps with heavy dumbbell on chest - one set of 15 to 25 reps.
5. Grip work - two exercises, four progressively heavier sets.

After three months or so on this routine, where do you go (other than to the clothing store to buy new clothes, since you will have grown out of everything your own)?

There are several possibilities. The rack has an infinite number of uses. The variations are endless.

WORK ON YOUR OVERHEAD STRENGTH

I would suggest that the lifter who reaches this stage start to do heavy overhead press lockouts in the rack. The overhead press lockout was one of the favorite movements of many oldtimers. William Boone, Paul Anderson and John Grimek all used it with great success. Peary Rader raved about the movement in old issues of IRON MAN, and Harry Paschall praised it to the high heavens in his BOSCO hooks. Grimek grew so powerful on this movement that he was able to handle 800 to 1000 pounds.

Think about that for a second. Here's a guy who flourished decades before dianabol, Nautilus machines, food supplements or computerized biomechanics, and he is lifting FOUR TIMES HIS BODYWEIGHT in the lockout position of the military press. What a powerhouse! How many modern trainees - even the serious guys- could do a quarter squat with 1,000 pounds? Not too darn many. How many could do a bench press lockout with 1,000 pounds? Not too

many. But here's John Grimek, lifting in the 1930s, doing overhead press lockouts with 800 to 1,000 pounds.

Far too many modern trainees are thoroughly second rate when it comes to overhead work. Don't be one of the guys who can bench press a ton but handles nothing more than marshmallow poundages on your overhead work. Use the power rack to build enormous overhead strength into your shoulder girdle.

SLOW COOKING, POWER RACK STYLE

Another thing you should try once you are well grounded in rack work is an old trick of William Boone and Paul Anderson. This works great on the deadlift, the squat, the overhead press or the bench press, and is one of the best systems of rack work ever devised. To illustrate the system, we will use the bench press.

Let's say you are doing bottom position benches, regular benches and lockouts on a two week training cycle (as detailed in the last exercise schedule). All you have to do is concentrate on your lockouts a little bit more. Do them once a week, and do five singles with your top poundage. Start with a less than maximum poundage - perhaps 50 pounds under your estimated max for five singles. Add ten pounds to the bar every week for five or six weeks.

When you have increased the weight by 50 or 60 pounds and are still able to get five singles, slip a 5/8" board under the legs of your bench – thereby increasing the range of motion by 5/8". Drop the poundage to whatever you can handle for five singles, and stay at that height for five or six weeks, adding weight to the bar whenever possible. The idea is to end the second five week phase of the program using at least as heavy a weight as you were using at the end of the first phase of the program.

At that point, put another 5/8" piece of wood under the bench and increase the range of motion by another 5/8". Once again, reduce the weight if you must in order to get five singles. As before, add weight whenever possible for a period of five to six weeks. Try to end the third five week phase of the program using the same poundage you were using at the end of the first five weeks.

What do you do then?

You guessed it - you slip another 5/8" board under your bench and increase the range of motion while trying to continue to use as heavy a weight as possible. Build the poundages up as high as possible at the new height, then use another 5/8" piece of wood to increase the range of movement yet another time.

Continue in this fashion until you are between two inches and four inches above the chest. At that point, you will be ENORMOUSLY stronger when benching from the chest.

What do you do then? Why not repeat the entire process? This is NOT a short term miracle program. This can become a major part of your regular training for the rest of your life.

Imagine how strong you would become if you were to use the aforementioned system on the squat, the bench press, the deadlift and the overhead press - all at the same time - for a period of four or five years. Up and down, up and down - over and over - constantly pushing the tendons and ligaments to ever increasing levels of strength - hitting the muscles as hard as possible at all ranges of motion on each lift. A man who trained in this fashion would become a Hercules.

How would you set up a training program that incorporated this principle? Try the following two week schedule:

MONDAY

1. Parallel squat - five progressively heavier sets of five reps.
2. 1/4 squat - 3 to 4 progressively heavier singles, then five singles with top poundage. (Increase range of motion every 5-6 weeks.)
3. Military press lockouts - five progressively heavier singles. (Increase height every 5-6 weeks.)
4. Farmer's walk - four times, as far as possible.

WEDNESDAY

1. Bottom position power rack bench press - five progressively heavier singles.
2. Pulldowns, chins or barbell row - four progressively heavier sets of five reps.
3. Grip work - 3 or 4 exercises, three or four sets each.
4. Bent legged situps - one set of 15 to 25 crunches with heavy dumbbell on chest.

FRIDAY

1. Top position deadlift or trap bar deadlift, five progressively heavier singles - increase height every five-six weeks.
2. Barrel lift to the shoulder - four or five times to each shoulder.
3. Bearhug heavy sandbag, barrel or anvil and walk as far as possible with it – four times.

MONDAY

1. Bottom position squat - five progressively heavier singles.
2. 1/4 squat - five progressively heavier singles. (Increase range of motion every 5-6 weeks).
3. Standing barbell curl with 2" or 3" bar - four progressively heavier sets of five reps; alternatively, four or five progressively heavier singles.
4. Shoulder heavy sandbag or barrel and walk or run as far as possible with it. Repeat for a total of four times, or simply go for a set distance - 1/4 to 1/2 mile. If doing a set distance, alternate shoulders so you do roughly the same amount of work with the barrel on the left shoulder as on the right.

THURSDAY

1. Regular bench press - five progressively heavier sets of five reps.
2. Bench press lockouts - five singles with your top poundage (increase range of motion every 5-6 weeks).
3. Top position deadlift or trap bar deadlift - same as in Friday of week one.
4. Grip work - two exercises, four sets each.
5. Bent legged situps - one set of 15 to 25 reps with heavy dumbbell on chest.

*Few people are capable of expressing with equanimity
opinions which differ from the prejudices
of their social environment.*

~Albert Einstein

We live in an age of great events and little men.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: A BASIC STRENGTH TRAINING PROGRAM

The era of procrastination, of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays is coming to its close.

~Sir Winston Churchill

This chapter details an effective, result-producing program for any man who wishes to increase his total body strength enormously. The program combines many of the most result producing methods of developing enormous strength: bottom position rack work, heavy lockouts, heavy dumbbell work, heavy grip work, sandbag and barrel lifting, heavy singles, and the 5 x 5 system.

These are training secrets of the old-timers. These methods have built tons of muscle for generations of strength athletes. They have built more world records than all the steroids ever bottled. These methods work. And if YOU work, then they will work for YOU!

Make no mistake about it. This program will build tremendous strength from head to toe for any advanced man who gives it an honest effort. It will allow him to turn every inch of his body into moving steel: to transform himself from a strong man to a super strongman. Don't be satisfied with anything less. In 1924, a man named Alan Calvert published one of the very best books ever written on the subject of sensible training.

Its title: SUPER STRENGTH! THAT was the goal of those who trained in the '20s. That should be YOUR goal!

Getting there won't be easy. Developing super strength is a hard, hard task. It is no job for the weak-kneed or the faint-hearted. It requires courage, determination, tenacity, perseverance, drive and motivation. In a word, it takes guts! Advanced strength training will be the hardest work you ever do in your life. It also can be the most enjoyable - and the most rewarding.

The program calls for four different training schedules. Train two times per week and complete the four schedule course over a two week period. Each program is hard and heavy, so you will need the extra rest days that are possible with two time per week training.

The first training day of each week concentrates on the legs, hips and lower back; the second focuses on the upper body. Train your grip and trunk on each day.

SESSION NO. 1

Begin with a light, brief aerobic warmup. Do something relatively easy and undemanding: stair-stepping, rope skipping or stationary cycling. Try two to five minutes. Don't overdo things - save your energy for the weight work to follow.

After the warmup, do one set of eight to ten reps in the clean and press, using a light to medium poundage and a 2" bar. Power cleans with a 2" bar are a tough exercise. Using them at the beginning of the schedule lets you combine a good all-around warmup with a bit of extra grip work - and grip work is CRITICAL for any man seeking to develop super strength.

BOTTOM POSITION SQUATS:

Now go to the power rack. Set the pins so the bar is low enough that when you get under it, the tops of your thighs will be parallel to the floor or 2" above parallel. Do five progressively heavier singles in the bottom position squat. Start light and work up in big jumps, finishing with a weight that is around 90% or 95% of your one rep max. Don't get hung up on the exact percentages - just start light and work up to a weight that makes you bust your butt. For example, if your max is 400 pounds, you might do 135 x 1, 225 x 1, 315 x 1, 350 x 1 and 385 x 1. Don't use knee wraps or a squat suit - they make the exercise easier. "Easier" is something you definitely do not want. To achieve super strength, you need to make your exercises HARDER. Use a belt if you wish, but leave the knee wraps and power-suits to the other guys.

The bottom position squat dates back to a German Hercules named Henry “Milo” Steinborn. In the 20s, Steinborn was one of the best built and strongest men in the world, a champion athlete and a record holder in many lifts. He could clean and jerk 375 pounds at a bodyweight of around 200 pounds. He one arm snatched close to 200 pounds. He was Alan Calvert's favorite lifter. He was a colossus of power.

Steinborn is directly responsible for introducing the heavy, flat-footed squat to the weight training world. Prior to Steinborn, men did light squats on their toes. That worked the thighs fairly well, but never really taxed the all-important hips and lower back. Steinborn changed things.

Steinborn did HEAVY squats. He did them without a squat rack. He lifted 550 pounds by up-ending the bar, squatting beneath it, letting the bar roll onto his shoulders, then standing erect with the weight. In other words, he started the squat from the bottom position. As I said, he was the first man in recorded history to do bottom position squats. And he became an Iron Game Immortal.

QUARTER SQUATS

After the bottom position squats, do three sets of three reps in the 1/4 squat. Start with a weight at least 100 pounds under your max for 3 reps, and add weight on each ensuing set. For example, if you can handle 600 pounds for three reps, you might do 500 x 3, 550 x 3 and 600 x 3.

Heavy quarter squats are a great power builder. Paul Anderson did them in the 1950s. He won an Olympic gold medal in weightlifting, and may have been the strongest man who ever lived. Give them a try.

DUMBBELL DEADLIFTS

Next, do dumbbell deadlifts for five sets of five reps. If you don't have heavy dumbbells, do barbell deadlifts or trap bar deadlifts. Do five sets of five reps. The first four sets are progressively heavier warm-ups. The final set should be a maximum effort. For example, if you can handle 200 pound bells for five reps, you might do 100 x 5, 125 x 5, 150 x 5, 175 x 5 and 200 x 5.

Deadlifts are, always have been, and always will be one of the best strength and power builders there is. Work them HARD!

THE SANDBAG CARRY

Next, take a 100 to 150 pound sandbag and carry it for 1/4 to 1/2 a mile. Carry it any way you want - in a bear-hug, on one shoulder, across the upper back (like a squat bar). It doesn't matter which way you choose - the weight of the bag will catch up to you sooner or later!

Afterwards, though, you'll be able to enjoy the sense of satisfaction that accompanies the achievement of a difficult and challenging goal. You'll also enjoy knowing that you are one of the very few weight trainers left in the world who has the courage to train HARD!

Make no mistake about it - the sandbag carry is one of the most demanding exercises a man can do. It is a cruel and merciless movement. The sandbag carry will develop tremendous muscular endurance, metabolic conditioning, and mental toughness. It also will give you one heck of a cardiovascular workout.

Old-time strong men used to be able to carry heavy loads for long distances. Why? Because they had FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH. The sandbag carry is a terrific way to develop muscles that can do more than merely look good. For an athlete, it's one of the best strength builders ever invented.

GRIP WORK

After the sandbag walk, train your grip. Start with the pliers lift. Get two STRONG pieces of webbing about 12” long. They should be 1” wide. Loop the webbing under a deadlift bar, with each piece of webbing positioned where you would grip the bar. Take two strong pliers and use one in each hand to hold onto the webbing. Then deadlift the bar. Your fingers and hands will get a tremendous workout because you will have to exert maximum pressure to

keep the pliers closed as you do the lift. When you hit the top position, hold the bar for a count of ten, then return the weight to the floor and repeat the movement. Do one set of 15 to 20 reps.

After the pliers lift, do three sets of reverse curls with a 2" or 3" bar. Use strict form. Use a weight that makes it impossible to do more than 8 or 10 reps, and do as many as possible on each set.

Arthur Dandurand, a legendary French-Canadian powerhouse, could reverse curl weights that came close to body weight. His forearms had to be seen to be believed.

For the final grip exercise, do pinch grip work. Take a 25 to 50 pound smooth-sided plate with no rim or a small rim, and hold it with one hand in a pinch grip for as long as possible. If you can't find smooth-sided rimless plates, use two 25 pound Olympic plates, turned so they are facing one another with the smooth side out. Have someone time you so you really make a strong effort on this movement. Repeat the exercise with the other hand.

Pinch gripping is one of the few exercises that works the thumbs. The thumb is CRITICAL for overall grip strength. If you only train your fingers, you only train half your grip. Some of the old-timers - Herman Goerner and Arthur Saxon, for example - had TREMENDOUS pinch grip strength.

BENT LEGGED SITUPS

Finish the day with bent legged sit-ups, holding a barbell plate behind your head. Do one set of 15 to 25 reps. Yes, I DID say sit-ups. I know that crunches are the "in" thing nowadays, but for REAL ab strength, you need to do bent-legged sit-ups and leg raises with weight attached to your feet.

Alan Calvert explained the secret of abdominal development in SUPER STRENGTH. At page 42 he noted that it is quite possible to build the abdominal muscles through isolation exercises - i.e. crunches. But Calvert cautioned against the isolation approach. He wrote:

"It is possible to develop the abdominal muscles in a certain way without bringing out much development on the front of the thigh. In my opinion, that is a foolish way to develop any set of muscles. Muscles are not just for appearance, but for use; and if your front-thighs and abdominal muscles are exercised in concert, they will be much better developed and very much stronger than if you attempt to develop the abdominal muscles alone. Occasionally you see a man who, by the so-called "muscle-spinning" process, has acquired quite fine development of many individual muscles; but it is very rarely that such men have anything more than the average strength ... Muscles developed in this way have some size and some shape, but practically no power and absolutely no coordination. The Germans used to have a complicated word describing this condition. When translated, it meant "A-man-who-is-like-a-shop-keeper-who-has-all-his-goods-in-the-window-and-nothing-on-the-shelves-in-his-store.""

SESSION NO. 2

Start the day with the same sort of light aerobic warmup you used in the first session, followed by 8 to 10 reps in the clean and press with a 2" bar.

THE DUMBBELL CLEAN AND PRESS

Load up a pair of heavy dumbbells and clean them, then do five reps in the simultaneous dumbbell press. Do NOT do the reps in alternate arm fashion. That's the EASY way of doing the exercise. Push both bells up overhead at the same time.

Do a total of five sets. Make the first two sets progressively heavier warm-ups. For the final three sets, use as much weight as possible. Modern trainees usually lag far behind the old-timers when it comes to overhead strength, and dumbbell pressing can cure that situation in a hurry. Heavy dumbbell work is a terrific training tool for an advanced man looking to inject a bit of variety into his training sessions. The dumbbells are far more awkward and difficult to control than is a barbell, and with a heavy poundage, you will get an extremely intense workout.

A famous picture shows John Davis, the first amateur Olympic lifter to clean and jerk 400 pounds, holding two 140-pound dumbbells in the “press” position after cleaning them to his shoulders. Davis is casually looking over at the photographer as if he were holding a ham sandwich in one hand and a Miller Lite in the other!

Do the dumbbell presses while standing instead of seated in order to develop the trunk. The “stabilizers” in the trunk and torso area have to work extremely hard when you handle heavy weights while doing any form of overhead lifting. A strong trunk is one of the keys to total body strength, and heavy overhead presses done while standing provide excellent stimulation for the trunk muscles.

Yeah, I know that most “modern authorities” say to do your presses while seated in order to avoid back strain. But I don't buy it. The way to avoid back strain is to TRAIN YOUR LOWER BACK, NOT PAMPER IT. Be a man when you train. Stand on your feet. Do standing presses. Leave the seated stuff for the bunny rabbits, the geeksters, the pencil-necks and the wannabes.

THE BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW

After the presses do barbell bent-over rowing. Four sets of six reps. Start light and work up in weight. Do these with the legs bent a little and the back flat. Pull the bar close to the thighs and up to the lower abdomen, NOT to the chest. Performed in this fashion, the barbell bent-over row is the BEST exercise for the upper back.

FLOOR PRESS LOCKOUTS

Next, do floor presses in the power rack, setting the pins so you move the bar approximately four inches on each rep. Essentially, you will be doing heavy bench press lockouts. Use a 3” bar for these. The thick handled bar makes the exercise harder and more intense, and helps to develop the forearm, hands, thumbs and wrists while you are working the upper torso with the lockouts. You may wonder how a pushing movement can work the hands and thumbs, but give the thick bar a try with a heavy poundage and you'll understand exactly what I am describing.

On the floor presses, do four progressively heavier singles and a total of three singles with your top weight. For example, you might do 315 x 1, 405 x 1, 455 x 1, 475 x 1 and 495 x 3 singles.

That's right, do SINGLES. The old-timers did lots of heavy singles. For strength building, single reps are tremendously effective.

THE ONE ARM CURL AND PRESS

For your next exercise, blast the entire arm from shoulder to fingertips with the one arm barbell curl and press. This is a new exercise. I learned it from Kim Wood. Here's how to do it. Imagine you did a one arm hammer curl and at the conclusion of the curl, pressed the weight overhead with one arm. No sweat, right? But now imagine you do the same exercise with a five foot exercise bar with ten or fifteen pounds on each end.

Think about it for a minute. Compared to a 12” or 18” dumbbell, the torque created by the five foot bar will be enormous. As you perform the curl you will have three and a half feet of iron working against your muscles from two different directions. Balancing the little monster is next to impossible - let alone lifting it. Find a weight that practically kills you after five or six reps - then do two sets per arm for as many reps as possible.

THE SANDBAG CLEAN AND PRESS

After the curl and press combo, clean a heavy sandbag and press it overhead as many times as possible. Lifting a heavy sandbag is far more difficult than handling the same amount of weight on a barbell. Compared to a barbell, a sandbag seems like a wildcat. Pressing a 120 to 150 pound sandbag for ten or fifteen reps will “cook” your entire upper body! Many of the old-timers were world beaters when it came to lifting heavy bags of sand, flour or cement.

THE TURKISH GET-UP

Next, use the sandbag to work your trunk muscles. Lie on your back, roll the sandbag onto your chest, then press it to arm's length over your chest (as though you were doing a bench press) and then **STAND UP WITH THE SANDBAG** without letting it touch the ground!

How do you do this? Well, you transfer the bag (carefully!) to one arm, turn to the side, brace the free hand against the ground, draw up your knees and push with the free hand. The old-timers referred to this exercise as the Turkish get-up. Some of them - Otto Arco, for example - could do the Turkish get-up with a barbell or dumbbell heavier than their own body weight.

Alternatively, lower the bag to the upper thighs, sit up, curl (or roll) the bag to the shoulders, get your legs underneath you and stand up with it. Other ways may occur to you as you try the exercise. The point is, any way you do it, moving from your back to your feet with a heavy sandbag in your hands is going to work the trunk muscles hard and heavy.

How many times do you do the sandbag exercise? It depends on the weight of the bag. With a light or medium heavy bag, do reps - perhaps shooting for a certain number of reps in a specified period of time, such as one or two minutes. With a heavier bag, you might stick to a couple of single rep efforts.

GRIP WORK

After the sandbag exercise, do some grip work. Start by looping a two inch thick rope over your chinning bar. (If you can't find 2" thick rope, use a large, extra strong bath towel rolled up into a rope, and covered with heavy duct tape.) Hold the ends in each hand and do as many chins as possible. When you cannot do any more chins, hang. Hang until you fall off. (Try to land on your feet when you hit the floor.) Do one set.

Next, loop your pieces of webbing over the chin bar, hold the webbing with the pliers and hang from the chin bar by the pliers. Do chins from that position if possible - if not, just hang until you fall off. Do one set.

For the third grip exercise of the day, use a lever bar or heavy sledge hammer. You want something with a handle of 24" to 30", with five to eight pounds at the end. Lay the bar or hammer on the floor, kneel down and try to lift it off the floor and up to a position where it is extended at arm's length, parallel to the floor. Use one hand, holding the handle as far away from the weighted end as possible.

Do singles at first (assuming you can even lift the bar in this fashion - if you cannot, use a lighter or shorter leverage bar and work up), then do reps as you get stronger. Alternatively, use two hands and hold the bar at the end, like a baseball or cricket bat, and do the exercise that way. This works the heck out of the forearms and wrists.

SESSION NO. 3

PARTIAL DEADLIFTS

Use the same warmup sequence used on the other days, then do six progressively heavier sets of three reps in the partial deadlift. Pull the bar from roughly knee height. Use blocks or a power rack to position the bar if you train with a straight bar. If you use a trap bar, position the bar on sturdy blocks to raise it to the correct height. Do four progressively heavier warmup sets and two sets with your top poundage. For example, you might do 135 x 3, 225 x 3, 315 x 3, 405 x 3 and 495 x 2 x 3.

Work your deadlifts very, very hard. The deadlifts develop rugged total body strength, including, above all, the hips and lower back. The hips and lower back are critical areas for a dinosaur. Harry Paschall used to hammer on this point in his writing. In his outstanding book, **THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRENGTH** (now available in a reprinted edition through Bill Hinbern), Paschall wrote:

"The training of a man who is seeking strength will be considerably different from that of a man who is merely molding a shapely physique. In the latter case, a great deal of attention is paid to individual muscles and to the front of the body (possibly because the front is the

portion you can see readily in the mirror). The strength athlete is more concerned with the back of his body, because this is where power originates” [p. 54; emphasis in original].

“Unless a man has a strong lower back,” Paschall added, “he may as well give up all notion of being a strong man.” (THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRENGTH, p. 54.) “All the power that is used by a runner, a jumper, a boxer or a football player is delivered with his lower back and loins” (Id.). “I cannot stress too strongly the importance of directing a great deal of your exercise toward the lower back.” (Id.). Paschall concluded with the following words - words that make a mockery of modern “sit on your butt, lie on your back, never stand on your feet, never train your lower back” training systems:

“Simply as a stimulant to vibrant health and vigor, exercise for the lower back is the most essential and rewarding labor any man can undertake, but for the strong man it is imperative that he consciously cultivate development of this region to the Nth power.” [THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRENGTH, p.56.]

THE PARALLEL SQUAT

After the deadlifts, do five sets of five reps in the parallel squat, performed in the normal style rather than the bottom position movement used in the first session. Do four progressively heavier warmup sets and one set of five reps with your top poundage. Work hard. The squat is a builder of supermen.

Why do squats first and deadlifts second in session one, and the reverse in session three? To work the two exercises equally. The second movement will always take a bit of a back seat to the first. If you always did deadlifts first, your squat would suffer and vice-versa.

Also, notice that in session one you train the squat in the rack, including a heavy partial movement, and the deadlift gets full range work - while the reverse is true in session three. This adds balance and variety to your program.

THE FARMER'S WALK

To finish the day, do the farmer's walk with a pair of heavy dumbbells. Do five sets of 100 to 200 feet if you use heavy bells. With medium heavy bells, try to do 1/4 of a mile, resting only when it is absolutely necessary to do so and for as short a period as possible. This one will work your entire body, including the grip, and if you do the exercise the right way, you won't have anything left for any other exercises.

SESSION NO. 4

Use the same aerobic warmup used on the other days, followed by one set of power cleans and presses with a 2” bar.

DUMBBELL BENCH PRESSES

Start your weight work with five sets of dumbbell bench presses or incline dumbbell presses. Do two progressively heavier warmup sets and three sets with your top weight. Do five or six reps per set.

THICK BAR CHINS

Next, do five sets of as many chins as possible, hanging from a two inch rope looped over the chin bar. If you can do more than ten reps in the first set, add a bit of weight. These will provide a great deal of exercise from the lats, while also working the biceps, forearms and grip extremely hard.

Alternatively, do your chins from a two inch bar. Thick bar chins are sheer, bloody torture.

STANDING PRESSES FROM FOREHEAD TO LOCKOUT

For the third exercise of the day, do standing presses in the rack, starting with the bar at the top of the head and pushing to a lockout position. Notice what we are doing. In session two, you did a full range pressing movement with dumbbells, and later in the workout did a partial

bench pressing movement with a barbell. In session four, you start the day with a full range bench press movement with dumbbells and later in the session do a partial pressing movement with a barbell. This approach incorporates the best of several different tools and results in much better overall balance in the muscular structures of the shoulder girdle.

THE GET UP (AGAIN)

After the partial presses, practice the “get up” with a heavy sandbag - the same movement used in session three. Follow this with two sets of hanging leg raises - doing as many reps as possible per set - one set (per side) of side-bends - and one set of bent knee sit-ups holding a barbell plate behind your head.

GRIP WORK

Finish the day with pinch gripping, following the protocol detailed in session one. However, do three timed holds per arm. Work as hard as possible on each timed hold - actually try to better your performance from one set to the next. You probably won't be able to do so, but TRY! The pinch grip work is all the grip work needed on this day, as the chins with the 2” rope (or 2” bar) will hit your grip extremely hard.

THE WRAP-UP

You now have at your disposal an excellent, highly varied, well balanced training routine that can bring amazing strength gains. Try this program, and you will discover an entire new world of endeavor. You also will build an exceptionally strong body, layered with functional, steel-hard muscle from head to toe - a body that can push, pull, shift or move things - a body trained to destroy an opponent in a football, rugby or wrestling match - a body that is as strong as it looks (or stronger) - and a body that leaves the pumpers, buffers, toners, sculptors and “scientific” trainees gasping in amazement. In short, you will build a dinosaur's body.

*Few men grow to manhood without at some time during their
early life passing through a period where their
greatest desire is to be a strong man...*

Bob Hoffman

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Sport, like art, advances in various spheres to a point where technique replaces imagination and natural instinct. When that happens there has to be a return to basic principle.

Alan Rose (quoted by Reg Park in “Strength & Bulk Training/or Weight Lifters & Bodybuilders”)

Strength training is a very simple activity. There are several different ways to do it; here's the approach that I prefer. My approach is not the only way to train, but it is a GOOD way to train. It is simple, basic, uncomplicated, easy to learn, and it doesn't require fancy equipment, training partners, or a coach. You can use it at a commercial gym or at home. It's not foolproof, but for most guys, it is very, very effective.

Train very hard on a small number of basic exercises and add weight to the bar whenever it is possible to do so. Train two or three days per week. Do squats, deadlifts, power cleans, power pulls, power snatches, barbell bent-over rowing, bench presses, standing presses, push presses, grip work and a modest amount of auxiliary work for the abs, neck, biceps and (if you wish) the calves. Include some “lugging and loading” sessions where you lift and carry heavy awkward objects (sandbags, anvils, beams, barrels, logs, etc.) Walk with a heavy barbell on your shoulders or a pair of heavy dumbbells in your hands. Stand on your feet as much as possible when you train.

Do three or four exercises per session and mix them up from session to session. Do five sets of five reps on each basic exercise and one or two sets of 8 to 20 reps on the auxiliary movements. Do higher reps on squats if you prefer to do so; one set of 20 with all the weight you can handle is a time-tested builder of MEN! If you prefer, do heavy singles on virtually everything, as many serious lifters, myself included, like to do. Try singles, reps and timed holds on the grip work.

Get lots of rest and sleep. Eat plenty of good, nutritious food and take a high quality multi-vitamin mineral tablet with breakfast.

When you train, be aggressive - ATTACK the barbell. Work real hard. Concentrate when you lift. Be confident. Believe that you will succeed and you will.

The previous paragraphs distill most of what is important in weight training. They summarize the type of strength training programs detailed in Bob Hoffman's numerous books, the wonderful Milo and York training courses, Alan Calvert's SUPER STRENGTH, George F. Jowett's THE KEY TO MIGHT AND MUSCLE, Mark Berry's PHYSICAL TRAINING SIMPLIFIED, Dr. Randall J. Strossen's SUPER SQUATS, Bradley J. Steiner's A COMPLETE GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE BARBELL TRAINING, John McCallum's KEYS TO PROGRESS, Harry Paschall's “BOSCO” books, Peary Rader's MASTER BODYBUILDING AND WEIGHT GAINING SYSTEM, Paul Kelso's POWERLIFTING BASICS, TEXAS STYLE, Jim Witt's ABC'S OF POWERLIFTING, Doug Hepburn's training courses, Reg Park's STRENGTH AND BULK TRAINING course, and just about every other decent book, course or article ever printed on the topic of strength and power training.

IT'S NOT THAT COMPLICATED!

Now think about it for a second. If I can take the best books, articles, and courses ever written and summarize their basic message in a couple of brief paragraphs, then this strength training stuff can't be too darn complicated.

And it isn't. Sure, you can go out of your way to make strength training sound like a complicated activity, and there are plenty of guys who do so - including most of the guys who write about the topic. But in reality, strength training is not a complex endeavor. As Kim Wood has told me many times, “Strength training isn't rocket science.” And he's right! Strength training is a simple, uncomplicated activity. It's hard to do, of course, but it's not hard to learn WHAT to do. If you were to read any one of the books listed above, you'd have

a darn good understanding of the basic requirements for building muscular strength. In fact, you'd know more about the topic of productive strength training than 99,9% of all the people who train with weights the world over.

Which brings us to the following question: IF STRENGTH TRAINING IS SO SIMPLE, WHY DO SO MANY PEOPLE FAIL TO GET RESULTS?

Good question, eh?

Here's the answer: PRODUCTIVE TRAINING SEEMS TOO SIMPLE TO WORK, SO PEOPLE IGNORE THE PRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS AND LOOK FOR COMPLEX SYSTEMS THAT DON'T DELIVER.

I wish I had a nickel for every article ever published that featured some sort of high-tech, insanely complicated training system that promises to turn you into Hercules in a matter of weeks - usually without sweating, almost always without heavy training and INVARIABLY without hard work. These are the articles that appeal to the muddled masses of myopic mullets that keep the exercise industry alive and well. These are the articles that attract the pseudo-trainers, the talkers and the wannabes.

MEN AND MULLETS

A training article is a mirror that reflects a man's soul. If a MAN sees an article that promises to transform the human body WITH NO EFFORT in six short weeks, he tosses the article into the nearest waste basket. If a MULLET reads the article, he figures he is onto something really good, follows the article to the letter and never gains an ounce.

MEN read training articles that are basic, direct and uncomplicated. Mullets read articles that detail training programs so Byzantine that Wood's rocket scientist couldn't begin to understand them.

MEN read articles that emphasize the importance of heavy weights, hard work, concentration, progression and intensity. The rest of the world doesn't like these articles. Face it. The majority of those who lift weights prefer the fluff stuff: articles that allow the reader to pretend he can grow bigger and stronger without heavy training, hard work or sweat.

Most guys really don't want to get bigger and stronger. Gelling bigger and stronger is hard work. It requires effort. It's so much easier to READ about training than it is to TRAIN! And just look at the type of nonsense the armchair brigade loves to read: the endless, look alike articles about tri-sets, super sets, compound sets, pre-exhaustion, marathon pumping/blasting/blitzing routines, the two time per day split routine, the three time per day split, the "three days on, one day off" split routine, the four day per week split, the six day per week split, exotic isolation movements, sophisticated "space age" training equipment, bio-rhythms, computers, slow motion reps, time controlled reps, "sculpting," "shaping," "toning," body resistance training, plyometrics, secret training systems from Eastern Europe, periodization, and insanely complicated training cycles, all of it packaged with pretty pictures of pretty "champions" and all of it presented with a staggering array of numbers, charts, graphs, and a vocabulary that seemingly includes every seven syllable word ever invented and a number of similar monstrosities coined especially for use in the article at hand.

The guys who read about "enhancing the metabolic bio-enervation factors," "preliminary and post-exertional non-specific nutritional fortification of resistive developmental reprogramming, or "coaxing systemic growth through non-specific applied intensity factors" are not truly interested in building size and strength. And the guys who write that sort of drivel have no idea what real training is all about.

If YOU enjoy that sort of claptrap, stop reading now. This book is NOT for you. On the other hand, if you would like to drop a heavy dumbbell on the head of any clown who generates that sort of neurotic idiocy, keep reading. You're my kind of reader.

Do you want to get bigger and stronger? I mean, REALLY big and REALLY strong?

Then do this: stop trying to make your training complicated. Forget about this theory and that theory. Don't over-analyze the situation. Quit wasting time on arid intellectual debates. Leave the theorizing for the rest of the world.

THE PROGRAM

Go to the gym and train.

Follow this program. It's about as basic as it comes. You might not understand everything about the program, and it might be at odds with some of the pet theories you have been reading about - in fact, it probably is. The point is, however, that the program will trigger BIG GAINS in any lifter who gives it a try.

Train two days per week. Allow three to four days between training sessions. Monday and Thursday is good, Tuesday and Friday is fine. Wednesday and Saturday is also fine. If you wish, forget about the calendar week and simply train every third or fourth day.

You will use two different training programs, one on day one and the other on day two. The two sessions allow you to divide your exercises so each session is fairly brief and you can apply maximum focus, intensity and effort to each exercise you do.

Start the program with medium heavy weights on each exercise and take a couple of weeks to work up to the top weight you can handle on each movement for the required number of reps. At that point, try to add weight to the bar whenever it is possible to do so. Constantly strive to increase your training poundages. Remember, we are doing something called "weight training." WEIGHT is important. In fact, it is critical. You MUST add weight to the bar over and over and over. To become a weight training success, you need to push your training poundages to VERY high levels.

CONCEIVE. BELIEVE. ACHIEVE!

How heavy? Heavier than you ever imagined! Never sell yourself short when it comes to training poundages.

Last year I lifted 300 pounds with the first two fingers of my right hand, using a finger ring purchased from IRONMIND ENTERPRISES. A week before that I lifted 200 pounds with the middle finger of the right hand. The other day I did a 700-pound hand and thigh lift using only the first two fingers of each hand. How did I do it? I did it because I refused to set limits on what I could lift. I never DOUBTED what I could do. I BELIEVED I could train my fingers to handle big weights, and as a result, I did.

If you BELIEVE in yourself you can accomplish incredible things. All it takes is belief. Give yourself a chance. Don't give up before you get started. I've probably been training for longer than many readers have been alive, and I speak from YEARS of experience when I say that you CAN and WILL achieve your training goals. I KNOW you can do it. Let my belief become your belief. See your ultimate success as a foregone conclusion. Believe you can - and you will!

HARRY PASCHALL'S OPINION

One of the all-time greatest writers in the history of the Iron Game, Harry Paschall, nailed this point to the wall. He wrote:

"Just to dream you can lift 300 pounds is no sign you can do it. You must build the necessary cords and sinews and muscle fibers to handle such a weight, or you may be in for a rude awakening. However, the weight trainer who consistently dreams a dream and works and exercises to achieve it, is quite apt to accomplish just about as much as he sets his subconscious mind to do.

It is, therefore, important to the seeker-of-strength that he lift the horizon of his dreams to make sure they are high enough. If you are content to dream of a 200-pound lift, then quite likely that is as far as your inner urge will carry you. If you dream 300 pounds, then that, too, is a very real possibility. If you lift your sights and dream of 400 pounds, you have a very good chance of making it.

Let us have bigger and better dreams, for they will lead us to bigger and better men." [THE DEVELOPMENT OF STRENGTH, p. 69,]

Having said THAT, here's the training program: simple, basic and uncomplicated. Nothing fancy. The sort of stuff the other guys would never DREAM of doing because it doesn't seem to be sufficiently scientific. The sort of stuff the arm-chair experts never tell you about. The

sort of stuff MEN do. The sort of stuff the old-timers used to do. Stuff that involves basic equipment, basic exercises and good old fashioned hard work. The sort of stuff that builds strength, power and muscular size.

DAY ONE

Start your training session with several minutes of light calisthenics, rope skipping, jogging in place or similar cardiovascular work. This is to get you warmed up and ready for the heavy stuff that is to follow.

PARALLEL SQUATS

Your first exercise will be the most important of the entire week: the barbell squat. Do four sets of five reps. Start light and add weight on each set, working up to your top weight for five reps. The idea is to do three progressively heavier warm up sets followed by one set that almost kills you. Of course, the final set is the one that is going to trigger gains in muscular strength and size.

Why do the warmup sets? Why not jump straight into the heavy set and go for broke? There are several reasons. First, the warmup sets help to reduce the risk of injury. Second, the warmup sets help you develop and maintain good exercise form. Third, the warmup sets allow you to practice concentration, visualization and all of the other mental skills so fundamental to training success.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, the warm-ups teach you the success habit. What do I mean? Think about it. It is much easier to tackle an all-out set with a goal of five reps AFTER you already have done several sets of five reps with lighter poundages. Why is it easier? Because you have developed a pattern of successful five rep sets. The final set is merely part of the pattern.

Another way of looking at the final set of five reps is by comparing the weight to the poundage handled on the third set. Let's say I am doing squats and I decide to do five reps with 405 pounds. Mentally, that sounds like a daunting task. "FIVE (!) reps with FOUR HUNDRED AND FIVE (!) pounds ... wow, that sounds heavy!" But if I already have done 135 for five reps, 225 for five reps, and 315 for five reps, then all I am doing is taking the same standard weight jump of 90 pounds per set and doing my final set of five reps. Phrased in those terms, the set sounds challenging but not impossible. Thus, the lighter sets serve an important purpose: they allow me to approach the final set with the CONFIDENCE that is required to move a heavy poundage.

GO HARD AND HEAVY ON YOUR SQUATS! The squat is greatest builder of men in the history of the Iron Game. Squats are the single best exercise you can do. Squats will literally TRANSFORM your body. Attack your squats like a CHARGING GRIZZLY. Work them hard ... EXCRUCIATINGLY HARD. Give them everything you have - then give them some more. You won't believe the results.

STANDING BARBELL PRESSES

After the squats, do four sets of five reps in the standing barbell press. Use the same progression as on the squats: three progressively heavier sets of five reps followed by one all-out set of five reps with every ounce of weight you can handle.

The standing barbell press is a tremendous exercise, and one that has fallen into neglect over the past 20 years. That's a shame, because the standing press is one of the best exercises a man can do. The beauty of the standing press is that you must keep the entire body hard, tight and controlled as you press the weight. You don't simply flop down on a bench, but rather, you BECOME the bench. This works me heck out of the all important stabilizers throughout the upper and lower back, the sides, and the waist. In addition, of course, you work your shoulders, traps and triceps into the ground. Treat the standing press as a very important, very critical exercise. It will pay enormous dividends in muscular size and strength.

BARBELL BENT-OVER ROWING

Next, do barbell bent-over rowing. Same sets and reps, same poundage progression. Kill yourself on the final set of five reps. The barbell bent-over row has gotten lots of bad press in recent years, and as a result, many now believe it is a dangerous exercise. I disagree. I think the barbell bent-over row is one of the very best upper body exercises a man can do, and I'm not alone in that belief. Peary Rader, Bradley J. Steiner, Dr. Randall J. Strossen, John McCallum and Reg Park have said the same thing. Sure, the exercise is TOUGH – but that's one reason why it is so effective. Seated cable rows may be more comfortable than heavy barbell rowing, but they are virtually ineffective when compared to the real thing. Push your barbell rowing (if I can say that about a PULLING moment!), and push it hard.

Of course, you need to do the exercise the right way. Pull the bar to your lower abdomen, not to your chest. Slide it right up your legs. Keep the knees bent and the back flat. And if your back is too weak to do the exercise without rounding, then TRAIN YOUR LOWER BACK!

The “soft and gentle” crowd claims the bent over row can hurt your lower back. They also urge you to avoid Olympic lifting. Terrific combination! If you can't do bent-over rowing because of a weak lower back, the BEST thing you can do is a couple of months of serious back building with Olympic-style pulling movements. Once you can clean, pull and snatch big weights, you'll darn well be able to handle similar poundages in rowing. And you never would have had the problem in the first place if you had included Olympic movements in your training from Day One.

Back to the program!

THE FARMER'S WALK

For your fourth exercise, do the farmer's walk with a pair of heavy dumbbells. Do one set. Walk for time or for distance. Go as far or as long as possible. Keep going until the bells fall out of your exhausted fingers. This is a terrific movement for grip strength, and when you handle heavy weights, it becomes a terrific exercise for the entire body as well as a tremendous conditioner. Dr. Ken Leistner (owner of the Iron Island Gym) and Dick Conner (owner of The Pit) both love this exercise, and between the two of them, they have developed THOUSANDS of weight training successes. Give the movement a try, work it hard, stick with it for awhile, and you will see why the Farmer's Walk ranks as one of the best all-around movements there is.

THE WRAP-UP

After the Farmer's Walk, do two sets of 8-15 reps in the bent legged situp. Hold a plate behind your head. Strong abs are of VITAL importance for any would-be powerhouse, and the bent legged situp is one of the best ways to strengthen the mid-section. Work them hard and serious.

Finish the day with one or two sets of any auxiliary movements you wish to employ: barbell or dumbbell curls, neck work with a head strap, or calf raises. If you feel like skipping the auxiliary moves, that's fine. Be careful not to overdo the auxiliary stuff - a total of one to three auxiliary exercises for no more than two or three sets each is ALL you should do. You don't want the secondary stuff to detract from your efforts on the big movements.

DAY TWO

Begin with the same overall warmup you used in day one.

HEAVY BACK WORK

Next, do a heavy pulling movement - i.e., a heavy back movement. Do regular deadlifts or stiff legged deadlifts, using an Olympic barbell, a Trap Bar or heavy dumbbells. If you prefer, do power cleans, power pulls or power snatches instead of the deadlifts. For my money, the cleans, pulls or snatches are the best back builders a man can do. Give them a try and see for yourself.

For the deadlifts, do four sets of five reps - same as on day one. For the cleans, pulls or snatches, do four sets of five reps if you like, or, if you prefer lower reps due to the more technical nature of the lifts, use triples or doubles and add an extra warmup set. For example, you might try five progressively heavier sets of three reps in the power clean, power pull or power snatch, with the final set being the “go for broke” set.

Heavy pulling movements are CRITICAL for anyone interested in developing the maximum in total body power. Your lower back is a vital zone. Turn it into a POWER zone. Develop a lower back that looks like a pair of boa constrictors are crawling up your spine. Far too many lifters ignore their lower back. This is ALWAYS a mistake. The lower back may not show up like a nicely pumped biceps when you throw a pose in front of the mirror or flex the old body to impress the pretty girls at the beach, but it is far and away the most important area of a man's physique. Make up your mind – NOW - to get very, very strong on your pulling movements.

Far too many modern trainees focus almost exclusively on the upper lats and virtually ignore the lower back in their training. This is a SERIOUS mistake. It also is one that misguided trainees have been making for many years. In 1924, Alan Calvert noted (at p. 57 of SUPER STRENGTH):

“It is easier to build muscles across the upper back than on almost any other part of the body. So most men who take up exercise show results there more quickly than in their arms and much sooner than in their legs. Again, upper-back exercises are so easy, and cause such little fatigue, that the beginner is tempted to spend all his time at such exercises. Many a man has had a reputation as a “Strong Man” because he shows up well when he has his picture taken in this pose; whereas, if he had a full-length back view taken, it would reveal that the lower part of his back, his haunches and his legs, showed no more development than that of the average 16-year-old boy. Understand me, upper-back development is important, but not nearly as important as development in the lower part of the back.” [Emphasis in original].

BENCH PRESSES

After the back work, do bench presses. Use barbells or dumbbells. If you wish, use the power rack and position the bar so that you begin each set from a dead stop at the chest (with the bar resting on pins set so it grazes the chest at the start of each rep). Four sets of five reps - you know the drill.

Bench presses are one of the most productive movements a man can do. WORK THEM HARD! Trying to develop maximum muscular size and strength without bench pressing is almost impossible. Bench hard, bench heavy and GROW STRONG!

If you'd like a little change of pace, try floor presses. What are floor presses? Floor presses are bench presses the way the old-timers used to do them - lying on the floor. Do them in a power rack, with the pins set so you can slide under the bar, lift it, set it back down and wiggle out from underneath.

The floor press is a BRUTAL exercise. It is totally strict - no bounce, no arch, no cheat. You also don't get the benefit of a lat thrust the way you do in regular benches. I rate it as about ten percent tougher than bench presses. And TOUGHER is BETTER in my book!

THE SANDBAG CARRY

Follow the bench press (or floor press) with the sandbag carry. Make yourself a sturdy sandbag of 100 to 150 pounds, grab it in a bear-hug and WALK with the monster as far as possible. Set a course and follow the course - a quarter mile on a track, around a football field, around a parking lot, around the block, down the street for two blocks and then back ... anything that forces you to work as hard as possible and brings you to total collapse by the end of the course.

I have a good friend, Bob Whelan, who is a strength coach in Washington, D.C. You may have read Bob Whelan's articles about the sandbag carry. Bob loves this exercise. He loves it so much that he lets his clients call to cuss me out for suggesting he have them do it. Problem is, he makes them call after they do the exercise, and by that point, they are so thoroughly destroyed that all they can do is gasp and sputter. I get an average of one such call per month.

It's better than a personal 900 number service. Try the sandbag walk - I mean, REALLY try it - and you'll understand what I am talking about.

If the weather is lousy, substitute a little goodie I learned from Kim Wood. Stay inside with your sandbag. Pick it up and place it on a sturdy platform that's about 4' or 5' high. (The back of a pick-up truck works well, as does a loading dock; or build a solid platform out of 2 x 4's.) Lower the monster to the ground.

Repeat 100 times.

Collapse.

ABS AND EXTRAS

After the sandbag walk, do two sets (per side) of heavy side-bends. Remember, the center of the body is the center of a man's power - and that includes the sides just as much as the lower back and the abs. Don't treat your side-bends as a waist-reducing, shaping or cosmetizing movement. Treat them as a **SERIOUS**, no-nonsense, dinosaur-style strength builder. And remember this: the old-timers had tremendously strong waists, including the sides. If you don't believe me, try doing a side press or bent press with 150 or 200 pounds. The average guy who tries this will crumple like jelly - and his sides will crumple first. But men like John Y. Smith, Thomas Inch and Edward Aston could bent press up to 300 pounds, and Arthur Saxon could handle close to 400 pounds in the bent press. Maybe, just maybe, modern lifters have something to learn from these Iron Game Immortals.

After the side-bends, do any auxiliary exercises that appeal to you—or skip them. You may very well want to skip them. The sandbag walk is a **FINISHER**. You won't have much gas in your tank after you finish this one, and the side bends might take everything you have left after the sandbag walk.

That's the entire program.

THE SCHEDULE

When you schedule it out, it looks like this:

DAY ONE

1. Squat 4x5
2. Standing Press 4x5
3. Bent-over Barbell Row 4x5
4. Farmer's Walk (one time)
5. Bent-legged situps 2x8-15
6. Auxiliary work for neck, biceps or calves (optional)

DAY TWO

1. Bent-legged Deadlift, Stiff-legged Deadlift, Power Clean, Power Pull, or Power Snatch 4 x 5 (or 5 x 3 for cleans, pulls or snatches)
2. Bench Press (barbell or dumbbell) (or floor press) 4x5
3. Sandbag Walk (one time)
4. Side-bends 2x8-15
5. Auxiliary work as on Day One (optional)

Sounds simple, doesn't it? That's because it **IS** simple.

Hard? Just try it.

WILL IT WORK?

Is this program **TOO SIMPLE** to work? Wouldn't a more complicated, “scientific” program produce better results?

Well, consider this. Let's assume we have a guy who trains on this program for ten or twelve weeks, takes a one week lay-off, then trains it again for ten or twelve weeks, rests for a week,

then repeats the process a couple of more times. All in all, he trains on the program (with a couple of one week lay-offs every three or four months) for two or three full years. He works hard, always tries to add weight to the bar, gets plenty of rest and sleep, and shovels down plenty of good, solid food - steaks, chops, potatoes, rice, pasta, ground beef, turkey, chicken, fish (especially tuna fish), fresh green vegetables, fresh fruits and fruit juices, bread, cheese and milk.

Our hypothetical trainee might weigh 145 pounds at 5'9" when he begins the program, and he might handle weights as light as 50 or 60 pounds in the squat, bench press and deadlift. He might not be able to lift a 100 pound sandbag, let alone walk with it.

What results would I expect after two or three years of training on this program? I'd expect our 145 pound trainee to weigh at least 185 pounds, all of it solid muscle, and I would expect him to be handling close to 300 pounds for five reps in the bench press, about 350 pounds for five reps in the squat and something like 400 pounds for five reps in the deadlift. He'll also be a very well-rounded strength athlete if he includes some Olympic pulling movements, works extra hard on his overhead presses and trains his grip like a fanatic. Not too many gyms have guys who are well rounded enough to post good numbers in the bench, squat, and deadlift, and ALSO be able to do things like heavy overhead presses, power cleans and power snatches with impressive weights, bag and barrel lifting and unusual feats of grip strength. That sort of overall "balance" is well worth aiming for - and this program will help you obtain it.

GENETICS: THE MODERN ALIBI

Some of you may think that results like this are only possible for the genetic elite of the training world. You're wrong. You've been brainwashed. You've been reading too much modern day nonsense from the gentle blasters, the soft and gentle crowd and the crybaby brigade.

Far too much has been written in recent years about "genetic limitations." Some writers seem to LOVE to tell you that you are doomed to a life of muscleless mediocrity. "Measure your wrists," they say. "If your wrists are less than seven and one-half inches, you'll be a midget no matter how hard you try! But that's OK - there's nothing wrong with being a midget!"

BULL!

Guys, the worst mistake you can ever make is listening to any arm-chair academic who tries to tell you that you'll never be big and strong because you don't have "the right genetics." Far too many men have built ENORMOUS levels of muscular size and strength EVEN though they had small bones or were otherwise prime candidates for the genetic junk pile.

The guys who whine and moan about "poor genetics" are simply looking for an excuse. And the writers who cater to them are simply telling them what they want to hear.

If you want to make REAL progress you need to make a conscious effort to avoid negative people. Start by avoiding the "genetics are everything" crowd. Leave them to wallow in the meatless broth of their vegetable-based, bunny rabbit, self-pity. Be a dinosaur. Cultivate a MAN'S approach. Be TOUGH. Expect to succeed. You will!

GIVE IT A TRY!

There are other training programs that can deliver similar results, but you can only train on one program at a time, so why not give THIS program a try? Test it for three or four months. Make it an honest test. Give your all to every top poundage set you do. Let intensity, aggression, focus and determination become your watchwords. Try to make each training session better than the one before. After a couple of months, take a look at your training poundages and your physique. You won't believe how well you have gained.

Remember, the best programs are the time-tested, basic programs that stress HARD WORK on a limited number of the most productive exercises. Productive training is simple. The more complex your training programs become, the less likely they are to deliver what counts: RESULTS!

Now, GO OUT AND TRAIN!

Perserverance, patience and determination will be repaid in untold wealth, health, strength, self-reliance and fortitude.

George F. Jowett

Act well at the moment, and you have performed a good action to all eternity.

~Johann Kasper Lavater

CHAPTER NINETEEN: CONCENTRATE!

Ideas shape the course of history.

~John Maynard Keynes

Dinosaurs know that the mental aspects of training are what ultimately determine how successful you are. Of all of the mental aspects of training, the art of concentration is perhaps the most important. As George Hackenschmidt noted many years ago, “Without concentration of thought, you are courting failure.” I was reminded of this one day when I was still training at a commercial gym. The story is true; the names have been changed to protect the guilty.

THE BUNNY TRAINERS

At the gym one day, I saw Joe Wannabe breezing a “heavy” workout. He and his training partners were working chest and back. I was finishing up with 30 minutes on the stationary bicycle, so I was able to watch and listen to the whole thing.

They began their workout with bench presses. While they were loading the bar for their first set they got into some kind of political debate. I couldn't quite follow it, except someone was saying the President ought to be impeached. Joe got on the bench, took the bar and knocked off a quick ten reps. He continued to argue the impeachment issue during his set.

Joe's training partners each did a set, and then added 20 pounds to the bar for a total poundage of 155. Joe said he needed to “psyche up” for this set. He sat on the bench, scowling ferociously and sucking in huge breaths of air.

Kim Hotbody, the resident gym bunny that year, wiggled past him. She looks terrific in workout gear, but I always wondered why she wears high heels to the gym. I also wondered how long it takes to put on her makeup before each training session. Joe paused for a second, following her fulsome form with longing eyes.

Still staring in her direction, he lay back on the bench, took the bar and ground out a ragged set of seven reps.

“Damn,” he said, as he sat up. “That sure felt heavy – I was hoping to get 10 or 12.”

His eyes anxiously scanned the room, located Kim, and settled into a continuing gaze of ardent admiration.

“How many did you get last time?” asked one of his training partners.

“Huh?” Joe responded. “I dunno. Maybe 9 or 10. But I think we were using 150. I don't have time to keep track of things like that.”

Each of the training partners grunted out a set of five or six reps. They loaded the bar to 175 for their final set. “I'm not getting much of a pump.” Joe complained.

“Maybe we should have supersetted with flyes or cable-crossovers.”

“Let's do a tri-set of dips, incline flyes and pec dec work.”

“Maybe we ought to do our bench presses with a wide grip, lowering the bar to the neck,” suggested the other training partner, “I heard that's how they do it out on the west coast.”

“Let's do some triple-drop agony sets on the pec blaster machine.” said Joe. “We can even do negative resistance on the last set”

The trio ambled over to the pec blaster unit, conveniently located next to a glute-buster that Kim was using (high heels and all).

“Do you think the President should be impeached?” Joe asked Kim as he began his first agony set.

THE MORAL OF THE STORY

Just in case you were wondering, Joe and his buddies are NOT being offered as examples of the proper way to train. Their shenanigans, however, offer a perfect illustration of one of the most common problems of trainees the world over: lack of concentration during one's training sessions. Joe and his buddies are wasting every second that they spend in the gym. Why? Because they are not concentrating on the task at hand.

When you go to the gym, you go there to TRAIN. You don't go there to socialize. You don't go there to ogle the gym bunnies. You don't go there to talk politics. You don't go there to show everyone how hot you look in \$200 worth of designer gym apparel.

When you perform any set of any exercise you are doing something that has a very specific, particular purpose. If you are doing a warmup set then the purpose of your exertions is to prepare yourself, mentally and physically, for the heavier set or sets that are to follow. You also are priming the motor pathways of the nervous system to allow your body to work in perfect form once you begin to pile weight on the bar. If you are doing a heavy set, your goal is to meet or exceed the number of reps that you have targeted to achieve with that particular poundage in that particular training session.

You are NOT merely performing four sets of eight or five sets of five simply because that is what is scheduled in your training program. Every set has a definite purpose and when you perform a set the achievement of its purpose should be the sole focus of your attention.

Each rep also has its own unique purpose. Remember, if set is nothing but a series of reps. In any set of multiple reps, the initial reps - the relatively easy ones - must be completed in perfect form to help you maintain that all-critical form during the final rep or reps of the set - the ones where the bar feels like it is going to drive you through the floor and it takes every bit of determination that you possess to meet the targeted number of reps while maintaining proper form. The final reps - the incredibly hard ones - serve a different purpose: that of triggering increases in muscular size and strength.

Whenever you go to the gym you must go with a sense of purpose. You must know exactly what you plan to do. The exercises, weights, sets and reps - all must be selected in advance. Everything you do must be pre-determined. The purpose of going to the gym is to perform the exercises, sets and reps that you are scheduled to do.

Dr. Ken Leistner hit the nail on the head in an article titled "Purposeful Training" (THE STEEL TIP, Vol. I, No. 6, June, 1985). He wrote:

"Training has to be purposeful to be effective. Every rep and every set has to count for something ... Training must lead to the attainment of a goal.

... Each movement in the program should serve to get you closer to the goal you have set before you.

All of this requires concentration. If there is any sort of training "secret" that I can offer you, it is this: the secret of concentration. Developing the ability to concentrate when you go to the gym is one of the keys to success for a serious lifter. If you develop this ability, you are guaranteed to succeed. If you fail to develop this ability, then your results will be far, far less than you desire."

And don't think this is some sort of mumbo-jumbo or the brainchild of an arm-chair theorizer. In my own case, the ability to train or compete in a state of deep, focused, almost hypnotic intensity - a state of total concentration - has led me to five National Championships and over a dozen National, American or World records in the Submasters Division in drug-free powerlifting competition. This stuff really works - more than anything else I know. Parts of what follows may seem a little strange or esoteric, but the system WORKS.

Fortunately, the ability to concentrate is not an innate gift. Anyone who is able to read this book can develop the ability to concentrate during his training sessions. All it requires is desire, concentrated effort and the implementation of a systematic approach to concentration. The system I use and teach involves the ten elements detailed below. If you study these elements and work hard to implement them in your training then you will develop the ability to concentrate like a master within 15 to 20 workouts. This may sound like a lot of work with little in the way of tangible rewards, but let me assure you that developing the ability to concentrate will do more for your progress than anything money could buy, and that includes all the designer supplements, the gimmicky new training devices, the latest exercise machines and all the super-duper training programs ever invented.

GOALS

The ability to concentrate begins with the formation of clearly defined training goals. You **MUST** determine exactly what it is that you wish to achieve from your training. Your goals should be stated as clearly and specifically as possible. Do not merely decide, “I want to get stronger.” Those are general goals, not specific goals. Instead of deciding you want to “get stronger,” decide that you want to develop the ability to bench 300 pounds, squat 400 pounds and deadlift 500 pounds, all for one rep in good form with no training aids other than a lifting belt.

The goals detailed in the previous paragraph are long term goals. Long term goals are critically important to your training success. Equally important, however, are short term goals. An example of a short term goal is the desire to add 20 pounds to your maximum bench press over the next three months.

Goals are an aid to concentration because they focus your attention on what you are trying to achieve. It is much easier to develop the ability to concentrate on your training if you go to the gym with a definite idea of your short term and long term goals. If you go to the gym with nothing more than a general idea that you want to get bigger or stronger, there is a much greater tendency for the mind to wander. Your mind is like a locomotive engine. It needs a track to run upon or else it will roam helter-skelter across the countryside. Your long term and short term goals are the track upon which your mental engine must run.

YOUR TRAINING JOURNAL

One of Joe Wannabe's many mistakes was failing to keep attaining journal, (Did you notice how he could not remember what weight he used for his bench presses or how many reps he performed in his previous workout?) Joe needs to keep a training journal, and so do YOU. I mean each and every one of you. Developing the ability to concentrate during your training sessions without keeping a training journal is a little like cooking bacon and eggs without having any eggs.

Your training journal ties in to your short term goals. Before you go to the gym, you need to review exactly what you did during your previous training session. This tells you what you are capable of doing the next time you visit the gym. Your short term goal will be to exceed what you accomplished in the previous training session. If you handled 200 pounds for three sets of five reps in the bench press when you trained your chest last Monday, your goal will be to add five pounds to the bar and still perform three sets of five reps. If you only get four reps on your final set, then the goal in your next training session will be to stay at that weight but get five reps in all three sets. So it goes for each and every exercise you do.

Your training diary also allows you to compete with yourself from year to year. Here is an example. I do power rack bench presses from all sorts of different heights. I also do them with two different grips: my regular (medium) grip and a narrow grip. Obviously, I cannot do all heights and all grips during the course of any one workout. What I typically do is work one style for awhile and then switch to another style. This means, for example, that it may be six months or more between training sessions when I do “close grip bench presses beginning with the bar at chest height.” Given the passage of so much time, I have no way of remembering what weights I used the last time I did the exercise in that fashion or how my progress went. Using the training journal allows me to compete with myself by attempting to match my previous efforts rep for rep and pound for pound. Without a training diary to guide me, I would have no way of remembering my previous best in this style of performance and no clear idea what weights and reps to shoot for.

PRE-TRAINING FOCUS

To be most effective, your concentration needs to begin at least 20 to 30 minutes before you even set foot in the gym. If you decide to concentrate on your workout only after you reach the gym, you are selling yourself short. The better approach is to start thinking about your workout long before you arrive at the gym. Take your training diary, review it, and write out the exercises, reps and sets that you are scheduled to perform during the coming training

session. Think about your workout. If you drive to the gym, turn off your car radio or change to a music channel - you don't need to be distracted by some moronic talk show or babbling newscaster. If you can, drive over by yourself. No need to be impolite, but conversation at this stage of the game is against doctor's orders.

As you travel to the gym mentally review the exercises, poundages, sets and reps that you will perform during your training session. Pretend you have a movie projector running in the center of your imagination. The feature is your upcoming workout. Picture the gym, the equipment, the loaded bars, and, as the star of the film, your very own self. Watch yourself perform the sets and reps scheduled for this training session. Focus on the little things - the details. Imagine the way the bar feels when you grip it in your hands. Smell the sweat, stale air and liniment, imagine the way your abs push against your training belt as you tighten it for that heavy set of squats. Feel the sweat trickling down your face as you grind your way through a heavy set of deadlifts.

By the time you get to the gym, you will have experienced your training session several times. You will know exactly what to do and how to do it. There will be no questions in your mind because you will have reviewed a video history of what is about to transpire. You will feel an enormous sense of confidence. You won't wonder whether you will be able to hit three sets of five with 300 pounds in the squat - you've already seen yourself manage the feat several times.

For those of you who train at home, the principle is exactly the same. All you need is 20 or 30 minutes without distraction in order to mentally rehearse your training session. If family or friends are too distracting at your house, walk around the block and do your visualization that way. This also serves as a mild aerobic warmup. If it is the middle of winter and there is a foot of snow on the ground, go to your training quarters and do 20 or 30 minutes of light aerobic work or stretching before you hit the weights. Use this time primarily as an opportunity to mentally rehearse the upcoming battle with the iron.

WARMUP SETS

By now, you know that in my own training I favor training systems that involve several progressively heavier warmup sets prior to the performance of the one or two heavy sets of any particular exercise. For example, I recommend the 5x5 training system, where you do two progressively heavier warmup sets of five reps and then do three sets of five with your top weight. One of the reasons I favor this training system is that it allows you to develop the ability to concentrate to the maximum degree. You do this by practicing the art of concentration during your warmup sets.

Using a maximum weight for a given number of reps in any set is incredibly taxing. It is painful work. The sheer weight of the bar alone can be a distraction. So can the pain. If you tend to forget about concentration during your warmup sets and then try to concentrate "out of the blue" when the weight is at its heaviest and distraction is greatest, you are doing yourself a grave disservice.

A far better approach is to use intense, focused concentration on each rep of every set that you perform, including the warmup sets. Remember, concentration and proper exercise form go hand in hand. You need to concentrate on what you are doing in order to maintain proper form. If you perform your warmup sets in letter perfect form, it is much easier to maintain your form when there is a maximum weight on the bar. The same is true of the art of concentration. If you concentrate as you perform your warmup sets, maintaining your concentration and focus during a heavy set is much, much easier.

My mentor, Bradley J. Steiner, often wrote about the importance of concentration in training. He sometimes said you need to "think into your muscles" as you perform a particular exercise. Other times he said you need to "become the muscle" that you are exercising. This concept is difficult to describe, but you really need to give it a try. Trial and error will teach you what we mean. But you need to do this on every set that you perform. You can develop the ability to "become your biceps" much more easily when you are doing a warmup set with 80 pounds than when you are gutting out five reps with 120 pounds. As in most other

endeavors, the principle of repetition is critical to your success. The more often you concentrate the better you will become at it. Any set performed without maximum focus and intense mental concentration is a wasted opportunity to further develop your powers of concentration. In contrast, any set that you perform with maximum focus, even if it is a warmup set, will be a significant step on the road to training success.

THE NO TALKING RULE

Those of you with a training partner need to impose the “no talking rule.” This rule applies to anybody who is beginning to concentrate or focus upon an upcoming set. The rule is simply this: any lifter who is beginning to focus on an upcoming set needs to be given the opportunity to do so in complete silence. If the training partners know from experience that a word or two of encouragement is beneficial, then words of encouragement are permitted. Other than this, the training partners are not allowed to talk to the lifter, and in NO circumstances are the training partners allowed to stand around “shooting the breeze.” Talking about politics, girls, movies, or any other idle topic of childish chatter is strictly forbidden. The gym is a serious place. It does not have to be a silent place, but it needs to be treated as “sacred ground.” The chitchat belongs in other venues.

Any training partner who ever talks to you during the middle of a set, even a warmup set, has ruined an opportunity for you to advance a step on the road to self-actualization. Tell him, directly, plainly and bluntly, not to do it again. If he persists, find another training partner. I'm sorry if this seems unsociable, but weight training is not a social endeavor, it is a serious endeavor, and you need to surround yourself with serious people. So-called “friends” who can't keep quiet during a training session will poison your progress and bring a halt to any hope of impressive gains.

MORE MENTAL REHEARSAL

We have addressed the need for mental rehearsal immediately before your workout. You also should use an abbreviated form of this technique immediately before each set that you perform. Take at least 30 seconds before you begin your set (including warm-ups!) and go off by yourself - close your eyes - breathe deeply and rhythmically - shut out all sounds and all distractions - and visualize the performance of the coming set.

Begin with a mental image of yourself as you approach the bar. Watch yourself get into position. Experience the feelings, smells, noises and sensations as you perform the set. Always perform the same number of reps that you will perform in real life. Pause between reps, just as you would in real life. Make the sequence as authentic and realistic as possible.

As you become better and better at this technique you can fine tune it to increase your ability to concentrate. One way to do this is to employ what I call the “tunnel vision” technique. Begin your mental movie by watching yourself stand at one end of a long, narrow corridor. The barbell is at the other end of the corridor. Nothing else exists in the entire universe. There is only you, the corridor and the barbell. As you walk toward the barbell the walls of the corridor narrow, mimicking the focus with which you will bring your concentration to a level of pinpoint intensity. As you grasp the bar, the walls of the tunnel close in, fold into themselves and disappear. There is nothing left but you and the bar. Now begin the set.

Strange as it seems, this technique will work wonders for your ability to eliminate distractions and concentrate entirely, exclusively and totally on whatever exercise you are doing when it is actually time to begin your set. This is particularly true if you do your mental rehearsal 10 or 20 feet away from the bar, so that the second the movie goes off you can begin walking towards the bar - mimicking the movie sequence where you are walking down the isolated corridor.

PRE-SET ACTIVATORS: “SWITCHING IT ON”

Another little trick that sounds strange but works wonders is what I refer to as a “pre-set activator.” Imagine that your powers of concentration can be switched on or off exactly the same as you switch on a light when you enter a room. Your pre-set activator is the mental

equivalent of flipping the switch to the “on” position. It can be any sort of physical or verbal command that you wish to use. You can say (either silently or out loud) “go” or “on.” You can clap your hands. You can do something a little more ritualistic if you wish: slap your left shoulder, slap your right shoulder, clap your hands, and say “go.” You can cross yourself if you are religious. I like to tap my forehead with my right hand - always three times. Don't ask me why I do this. I just do. It has no purpose at all other than serving as my personal means of “switching on” the power of concentration. Once the switch goes on, you could fire a gun in the air and I wouldn't hear it.

For best results, combine the “switching it on” technique with your pre-set visualization. Include whatever it is you do as a pre-set activator in the beginning sequence of your mental movie. This sounds a little crazy, but it is a terrific way of enhancing the remarkable benefits of both of these subtle performance enhancers.

FOCUSED CONCENTRATION DURING THE SET

Immediately alter your pre-set activator, begin to move towards the bar. Look directly at the bar. It is critical that your gaze be focused directly on the bar to the total exclusion of anything and everything else in the world. The entire universe should boil down to a single point of reference: the barbell. Visually, things should be exactly the same as if you were indeed in a long, narrow corridor with bare walls, striding purposefully toward the barbell.

When you reach the bar, close your eyes, summon all of your determination, focus and mental energy, take a deep breath, assume the correct position for whatever exercise it is that you are doing, and then begin your set. At this point, it doesn't matter if your eyes are open or shut. In either case, you really should not be able to see anything at all. If you are looking in a mirror, it should be as though you are not actually watching yourself, but rather, as though you are standing outside of your body watching it go through the motions of the particular exercise you are doing. If you do not use a mirror, you should be blind to your surroundings.

Your entire focus should be on the performance of the exercise. Pay attention to your body's feedback. Your muscles constantly send signals to you. Are you on target as you perform each rep? Are you “in the groove”? Your body knows, even if you do not. Listen to your body!

You should count reps, but should do so almost automatically, without diverting your attention from the performance of the reps. As you approach the end of the set and the reps get harder and harder, your brain should be flashing an urgent signal over and over: PUSH, PUSH. PUSH. PUSH! It is exactly the same as if there was a physical link between your determination to complete the required number of reps in a set and the muscles that are moving the bar. You want the link between your determination and your muscles to be crowded with messages telling the muscles to give it all that they have. As you reach the sticking point of the final rep of the set your mind should literally bombard the muscles with repeated messages urging the bar upward.

TAKING IT REP BY REP

If you are doing multiple reps in a set, break each one down and make it stand entirely on its own as far as your concentration goes. Don't worry about performing the next rep. The next rep will always take care of itself. Focus entirely on the rep that you are actually performing. As I mentioned earlier, try to “become” your muscles. Tie yourself to the rep so tight and close that there is nothing in the world but you and the rep. As my friend Bob Whelan puts it, “Be here now!”

Far too many people rush their reps in order to complete a set as quickly as possible. This is exactly the opposite of what you should do. You should make each rep as productive as possible. For all practical purposes, each rep becomes an entire workout unto itself. This doesn't mean that you raise and lower at some artificially predetermined rate of speed. It does mean that you give each rep your absolute, undivided attention. Remember, no matter what you do you never will have an opportunity to again perform that repetition. You only have

one opportunity to do it right. Take advantage of that opportunity. Make the most of it. Perform each rep as though it were the last that you would ever perform.

THE SUCCESS HABIT

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the importance of performing all of your sets, including your warmup sets, with the same focused concentration with which you would approach your hardest, heaviest set of the day. This is an example of what I refer to as the proper use of the “success habit.” If you are able to successfully concentrate on the performance of the lighter, warmup sets, then you dramatically increase your ability to concentrate properly during the performance of your heaviest, hardest set.

For some lifters, cycling programs enhance this process. During the first portion of a training cycle, a lifter usually uses weights that are well within his existing capabilities. Over time, he gradually builds up to weights that require a maximum effort. During the building up process the lifter is always able to meet the number of reps targeted for any particular exercise in any particular training session. He also should be able to give each set the concentration and focus that I have described throughout this chapter. All of this will develop a significant sense of self-confidence. When he gets to the more difficult stage of his training cycle, the lifter will approach each heavy set with a firm belief in his ability to meet or exceed the targeted number of reps for that particular exercise on that particular day. He also will have full confidence in his ability to give undivided focus to each rep.

If you use cycles, make the most of your next training cycle. Work at developing not only your physical abilities throughout the course of the cycle but, in addition, your mental abilities. In the final analysis, it is the latter that will determine your training success.

*Don't accuse nature, she has fulfilled her task;
you must fulfill yours.*

~John Milton (a favorite
quotation of George Hackenschmidt)

*Remember the story of the Spanish prisoner. For many years
he was confined in a dungeon... One day it occurred to him to
push to door of his cell. It was open; and it had never been
locked.*

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWENTY: MORE ON THE MENTAL ASPECTS OF TRAINING

It is never too late to give up your prejudices.

~Henry David Thoreau

The material in this chapter and the previous chapter, is among the most important in this book. Pay careful attention to these chapters. Those of you who do will reap far greater benefits from dinosaur training than your less patient brethren who ignore or skim this chapter and concentrate only on the sections detailing exercises or methods of training.

Most people think that strength training is a purely physical endeavor. Nothing could be further from the truth. Training to develop maximum size and strength depends as much on the mind and spirit as on the body. In fact, of the two - the mind or the body - the mind is by far the most important. Bradley J. Steiner was absolutely correct when he noted: "The biggest fool on earth is the man who scoffs at the invincible power of the human spirit."

If you don't believe this, consider something as simple as going to the gym for your regularly scheduled training sessions. Believe it or not, many people who train with weights don't make it to the gym on a regular basis.

Face it, guys, hard physical training is incredibly demanding. It is, in every sense of the word, a true "grind." The vast majority of people who start weight training programs soon quit. They give up. They can't take it. They lack the tenacity, guts, determination and desire that are the trademarks of a champion.

You will be unusual indeed if you do not find that there are occasions when going out with your friends, keeping a date with your girlfriend, or just staying at home and being lazy seem far more desirable than going to the gym for yet one more battle with the iron. It is at times like these that the proper mental attitude is the only thing that will see you through. If you do not have a burning desire to succeed, a clear picture of the goals you wish to achieve, and an unshaken belief that you WILL achieve those goals, you probably will go out drinking beer with your friends instead of going to the gym. As Steiner noted: "You can make it to the top without a lot of things - but there never yet was a man who made it without the RESOLVE to do so"

Steiner also said "Persistence is the watch word. No matter what, keep at your training." These two sentences are among the most important ever written about productive training. Go back and read them again. Write them on a piece of paper and carry it with you. Read it once a day. BURN THOSE WORDS INTO YOUR BEING.

Every champion in every sport has had moments when he really didn't want to do any more training. The ones who go to the gym under those circumstances are the ones who end up being champions. The ones who give in to the temptation to skip a scheduled training session are the ones who either fall by the wayside completely or live their lives in the middle ranks of the mediocre. Which group you will fall into depends entirely on the strength of your mind and the power of your spirit. As IRON MAN and MILO author, Anthony Ditillo, once noted: "It takes more than just picture gazing in magazines..."

BURNING DESIRE

Experience is not what happens to a man;

it is what a man does with what happens to him.

~Aldous Huxley

Unless you are one of the lucky few who is naturally gifted for rapid development of muscular size and strength, building a truly strong and muscular body will take years of steady effort. Take my own case, for example. It took me more than twenty years of training before I hit my lifetime goal of 400 pounds in the bench press. (Part of the reason it took so long was that I started training at such a young age - ten or eleven years old - far too young to

build very much in the way of muscular size or strength. But even if I had started training in my 20's it would have taken quite a number of years to reach that 400 pound lift.) The only way I achieved my goal was by developing, cultivating, and nurturing a burning desire to bench press 400 pounds.

It is not enough to merely “want” to be big and strong, just the way you “want” to have a new car or you “want” the latest CD or tape released by your favorite recording artist. What I'm talking about is wanting something with all of your heart and soul. I am talking about a burning desire to achieve your goals, a desire strong enough to carry you through any adversity, no matter how great or how prolonged.

What I am talking about is a burning desire to succeed that is so strong and intense you will NEVER miss a workout simply because it might be more fun to go out with your friends or stay home and watch TV. I am talking about a burning desire that will see you giving your maximum effort on EVERY scheduled workout day that calls for such intensity. I am talking about a burning desire that will keep you going to the gym week after week, month after month, and YEAR after YEAR until you achieve your goals.

I am talking about a vision of future success and a burning desire to make that vision a reality. Read the biographies of great men and you will see what I am talking about. I am talking about approaching your training goals with the same type of drive, intensity and sense of purpose that motivated men like Sir Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower and General George S. Patton. These are men who never gave up no matter what stood in their way. Each had a vision - a dream - a goal. Nothing could keep them from that goal. You see the same thing over and over in the lives of men who have “made a difference.”

Bradley J. Steiner, who guided my training for years via his books and his wonderful articles in IRON MAN, MUSCULAR DEVELOPMENT and STRENGTH AND HEALTH, constantly emphasized the importance of the mental aspects of physical training. In his 1974 treatise, A COMPLETE GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE BARBELL TRAINING, Steiner described the one attribute shared by all self-made strong men throughout history:

“INDOMITABLE IRON WILL and an almost terrifying burning DETERMINATION to build himself up. A drive from within to be better and better, and still better. A drive to face and crash through any barriers that may appear.”

I was 17 when I purchased Steiner's wonderful book and read those inspiring words. They have guided my training ever since. Read them, absorb them, and make them a part of your very being,

Before moving to the next section let's talk about one related point. Your burning desire for success must be related to an ACHIEVABLE goal. All the desire in the world will do nothing but bring you frustration and heartbreak if you have set your heart and soul on achieving something that is, for you, physically impossible. Hence the importance of realistic training goals. If your goal in life is to bench press 400 pounds, and your frame is simply not sturdy enough and your natural potential not great enough to allow you to make such a lift, then you are not approaching things from a very rational perspective.

If you are in your 20's or younger and have not done much serious training, you may find it difficult to assess your ultimate potential for strength and power. In that case, shoot to achieve a 300 pound bench press, 400 pound squat, and 500 pound deadlift. These are goals that ANY average fellow who gets an early start in his training and who works HARD and INTELLIGENTLY can eventually achieve. Only when you achieve those goals should you turn your sights toward higher numbers.

One final point and then I'll move on. This is directed particularly at you younger guys. While a burning desire for success is crucial to the achievement of your training goals, it must not be allowed to interfere with other worthwhile aspects of your life: school, for instance. I am NOT suggesting that you give up everything else and devote your entire life to weight training. That would be foolish and idiotic.

Anyone who thinks that lifting weights is more important than going to school, nurturing meaningful social and family relationships, and working as hard as possible at one's job or career is crazy. The guys who devote their lives to nothing but training are the guys who wake

up some time in their 30's or 40's and find that they have completely missed out on everything else in life. They are bums - self-made derelicts. Whatever you do, do NOT become so totally absorbed in your lifting that you give up on everything else in life.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

*Concentrate your mind upon the idea
of acquiring health and strength.*

~George Hackenschmidt

The next mental attribute that you need to develop and cultivate is self-confidence. You need to believe that you WILL succeed and that you WILL reach your training goals, whatever they may be. This is particularly important if you are starting with a poor foundation, if you have never trained before or if you are an intermediate or advanced lifter who has been at a plateau or sticking point for a number of years.

No matter who you are, no matter what shape you are in at present, no matter what good or bad things may have happened to you in the past in connection with your training endeavors, remember this: you have in your hands a comprehensive, detailed guide to an excellent training system. I have worked long and hard to make this book as complete and beneficial to you as possible. It integrates my own twenty-five years of personal experiences with training advice from the best writers, coaches and teachers who ever graced the physical culture world: men like Kim Wood, Bradley J. Steiner, Dr. Ken Leistner, William F. Hinbern, Charles Smith, David P. Willoughby, Harry Paschall, Dr. Randall J. Strossen, Dick Conner, Osmo Kiiha, Earle E. Liederman, George Hackenschmidt, Anthony Ditillo, Charles Ross, Alan Calvert, Mark Berry, Joseph C. Hise, George F. Jowett, Doug Hepburn, John Grimek, Bob Hoffman, Dennis Weiss, Vic Boff, Charles Teegarden, David Horne, John Brookfield, Thomas Inch, Reg Park, Roger Eells, Mike Thompson, Matt Furey and John McCallum. I have trained with, competed against, judged and exchanged training ideas with many, many top competitors and coaches, including national and world bench press and powerlifting champions. This book combines all of the BEST from everyone who ever taught me anything. This is NOT a cheap training course that will work for some guys but not for most.

All that is required is that YOU give forth an honest effort on the training programs that I have outlined. I have provided the information and know-how. YOU need to provide the hard work. If you do, you may rest assured that you WILL achieve your training goals.

Believe in yourself. Believe that you, like many others before you, will build your muscular size and strength to levels most men can not even imagine. Don't look at your training as a temporary experiment – something you are trying just to “see if it works.” Think of your training as something that is absolutely, without fail, going to produce the results that you desire.

There may be many people you know who will ridicule your training efforts and scoff at the idea that you will ever develop much muscular size and strength. (This may be particularly true for teenagers, but it really applies to trainees of all ages.) The same sort of thing even applies to advanced and intermediate trainers - a fellow who has reached an advanced level of training may have a personal goal of setting a state, regional or even national record in lifting. If he does, the odds are pretty good that the other fellows in the gym will tell him that he is “just dreaming.” Don't listen to negative influences like that. Disregard the doubters and doom-savers. Ignore the “wannabe's” who don't believe they really CAN be. As long as your training goals are realistic, you WILL achieve them. Others have done so, and there is no reason - NO REASON ON EARTH - why you will not be able to do the very same thing.

I would not have gone to the time and effort of putting this book together if I thought that most fellows who read it were going to end up by being disappointed. I don't expect you to fail in your training program, so why should YOU carry a burden of anticipated failure? If you think that you will fail, you will. Ruthlessly eliminate any and all thoughts of failure from your mind. Tell yourself that you WILL succeed. Tell yourself that you WILL achieve the

strength and size that you desire. Tell yourself that you WILL achieve your training goals. Approach your training with this type of attitude, and your success is guaranteed.

POWER TALKING AND AUTO SUGGESTION

Keep progressing and growing and striving,
After all, that's what life is all about.

~Bradley J. Steiner

I can hear you now. “Burning desire,” you say. “Self-confidence. That's easy for HIM to say - he already benches over 400 pounds. I can only bench 150 pounds. A mere 180 would bury me! What good is self-confidence if you don't HAVE any confidence!?”

Whoa! Cool it, guys. There IS an answer: power talking and autosuggestion.

Psychologists are well aware that if you hear something enough times you eventually come to believe it. This is the basic secret of all types of propaganda – no matter how wild or crazy, if something is said often enough the people who hear it tend to believe it. As a political tool, propaganda has a well-deserved bad name. But the same basic principle is one that you can and should use in your own training, and one that can bring you exceptional results. It is not a complicated process and does not require a degree in psychology. All you have to do is learn to talk to yourself.

I know this sounds crazy, but I literally mean what I just said: you need to learn to talk to yourself. Here's how to do it. On your way to the gym, review the approaching workout. Think about the weights, sets, and reps that you plan to use in each of your exercises. Rehearse the entire workout in your mind. Convince yourself that you will handle the scheduled weights for the scheduled number of sets and reps.

Your mental dialogue might go something like this (if you are an advanced lifter preparing for bench presses): “135 x 5, warmup. Easy weight. No sweat. 225, five reps. No sweat. Easy weight. Baby weight. Lightweight, 275. Five reps. No sweat. Easy. 315. Working weight. Three reps. Easy. Easy. You can do it. You KNOW you can do it. Second set. 315. Three reps. You can do it. You've done it before. You KNOW you can do it. Third set. 315. Three reps. This is the one. This is it. Get this one. You want this one. You need this one. Do it, man, DO IT”

When you get to the gym and start to go through your workout, keep up the same pattern (silently, please!) before each set. Tell yourself you are going to make the required number of reps. Tell yourself the bar will feel light. Tell yourself the weight is easy for you to handle. Get mad at the bar. Tell yourself you are going to destroy it - drive it through the ceiling - kill it inch by inch - murder it pound by pound - whatever it takes to get your juices flowing.

I have seen plenty of terrific lifters use variations of this technique over the years. As a judge at state, regional and national powerlifting and bench press competitions, I have seen “power talking” taken to such an advanced level that it almost resembles an art form. The number of top lifters who “talk to the bar” as they approach the platform and set themselves for position is astonishing. Curiously, the best lifters require and receive little in the way of shouted encouragement from the sidelines. They do it all themselves. Novices are the ones who need and receive encouragement from their buddies - largely because they haven't learned to supply it themselves. If this technique works for state, regional and national champions and record holders, it can work for YOU!

In strength training, as in other areas of life, there are plenty of guys who do nothing but talk. Words without deeds are one thing. But remember this - deeds without words, words spoken to yourself, are difficult to accomplish. Give “power talking” a try. You will find it is one of the most effective training tools that you have ever tried.

VISUALIZATION

Constantly see yourself in your mind's eye doing MORE than you currently do.

~Bradley J. Steiner

Closely related to power talking is a technique called visualization. Visualization is a mental rehearsal system where you create a “home movie” that you silently play inside your head on your way over to the gym, while you are changing in the locker room, and immediately before each and every set. Don't be modest - make yourself the star of the movie. The movie should begin by showing a lifter approaching the bar. The lifter is YOU! You should approach the bar carefully - set yourself up exactly as if you were preparing to try a maximum weight in an important competition. Pay attention to the details, they always matter.

A pre-bench press “movie” illustrates these points. Watch yourself take the bar off the racks. See yourself lower it slowly and under control. Watch, as you pause at the chest, pause, pause, pause - wait for the “press” command - there it is! – now EXPLODE the weight upward. See yourself drive the bar “through the ceiling” as hard and fast as you can.

With practice, you will develop the ability to create a very vivid mental image of each exercise that you are about to do. When you have developed this ability you will have yet another highly useful weapon in your arsenal of training tools - one you should use in each and every workout you take, and one that can help propel you to greater heights than you ever believed possible.

POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Never flinch, never weary, never despair.

~Sir Winston Churchill

Power talking and visualization are techniques that can be used both at the gym and at home. Supplement these techniques with yet another means of positive feedback. Buy some 3 x 5 note cards. Pick out some inspiring slogans and mottos - ones that really appeal to you. Stuff like:

- A WINNER NEVER QUILTS AND A QUITTER NEVER WINS!
- GO FOR THE GOLD!
- NO RETREAT. NO SURRENDER!
- YOU CAN DO IT!
- YOU CAN IF YOU THINK YOU CAN!
- POWER, POWER, POWER!
- 400 POUNDS!

If you don't like any of these, get a couple of books on positive mental altitude, auto-suggestion or power-talking. They are usually full of good, inspiring slogans. Write your favorite slogans on the cards - one per card - and post the cards where you are bound to see them every day - on the mirror where you shave in the morning, on the refrigerator door, on your desk at work, or on the dashboard of your car.

Do the same with your training goals. Let's say your goal at the present time is to hit 300 pounds in the bench press. Get out the 3 x 5 cards, write 300 in big numbers on a couple of cards and post the cards in the same places mentioned above. Every time you see one of the cards, tell yourself that you CAN and WILL achieve your goal. By so doing, you will maintain a constant barrage of positive imagery that will DESTROY any feelings of uncertainty, doubt, fear, or failure. You will continually be telling yourself that you CAN and you WILL achieve the goal you so ardently desire.

You often see a variation of this technique at powerlifting meets, where a lifter will use chalk or a magic marker to write on his shin, lifting suit, wrist wraps or forearms the amount of a particular poundage that he is planning to lift at the meet. The guys who do this are not merely expressing a goal, but rather, are documenting something that has - in their mind's eye

- already happened. They are not HOPING to lift the weight that is written on their shin or on their wrist bands - they feel as if they have already done so.

These techniques, like some of the others, may seem childish or trivial at first. Or these may seem too simple to do much good. But give them a try and in a very short period of time you will learn - possibly to your surprise - that they DO WORK. And remember this. These suggestions are not merely my ideas. They are training tools that men like Bradley J. Steiner and John McCallum have recommended for years. Why do those of us who write about sensible and rational physical training continue to promote these ideas? We do so because they work. We do so because they are one of the critical elements of an effective training program.

Remember, the odds are good that we will never meet in person. Unless you drop me a note and let me know about your progress, I will have no idea how well you do by following the training principles detailed in this book. For all intents and purposes it will not affect my life in any way if you choose to follow these mental training techniques or if you disregard them. I am not selling you hypnotherapy tapes and I do not stand to gain or lose a penny by recommending that you try these principles. So why am I doing it? Why am I so insistent on the mental aspects of training? The answer is this: I WANT YOU TO SUCCEED. And to help you succeed, I am giving you every possible training tool of which I am aware.

Now it's up to you. Don't disregard these training suggestions. Use them. Modify them to suit your own personality and your own way of approaching things. But integrate them into your training program and you may rest assured that you will reap tremendous benefits.

THE TRAINING DIARY

It is better to have an ambitious plan than none at all.

~Sir Winston Churchill

In an earlier section I described how you should mentally review your coming workout as you are traveling to the gym. This presupposes that you know what exercises, weights, sets, and reps are scheduled for any particular day, which in turn naturally leads to keeping a training diary.

Keeping a training diary is one of the most IMPORTANT things that you can do. Its primary importance is related to the mental aspects of training. Write down the sets, reps, and weights that you want to hit at your training session BEFORE you go to the gym. Look back at what you accomplished the week before and what you accomplished the week before that. PLAN what you want to do before you go to the gym to do it. Go to the gym with a clear, detailed and vivid picture of what you intend to accomplish that day. This simple procedure, all by itself, will start to get you “psyched up” for a great workout.

In addition, keeping a training diary provides an invaluable way of monitoring your progress from month-to-month and year-to-year. It allows you to go back and determine exactly what principles and programs have worked best for you over the years. Were you to try to reconstruct this information by memory alone, there would be no way of doing it.

So start keeping a training diary. Record each and every workout that you do. Save your diaries after all the pages are filled. Go back and look at them from time to time. Doubtless, you will learn much valuable information by reviewing what programs have worked best for you over the years. Remember, training success requires self-knowledge, and self-knowledge depends upon maintaining a careful record of each and every training session. A training diary is one of the most important tools for getting the most from your training. If you haven't done so before, start keeping one, and start TODAY.

CONCENTRATION

*If you must train at a commercial gym,
let no one interfere with your routine.
If you have to, go into a corner by yourself..
Once you begin to train,
let nothing interfere with your concentration.*
~Anthony Ditillo

When you are actually performing an exercise it is imperative that you concentrate on the exercise movement to the total exclusion of everything else in the world. (Go back and reread that sentence.) As Steiner aptly noted: “Distraction is as great a cause of failure to a serious physical culturist as it would be to a surgeon in the operating room”

But how many guys CONCENTRATE when they train? Gyms are full of guys who try to talk to their buddies while they are in the middle of a set of squats, bench presses or curls. These are the same guys who have 11” arms or can only bench 130 after five years of “training.” (They also are the guys who seem to know everything there is to know about the drug-bloated “stars” of the Iron Game. Guys who can tell you Mr. Galactic's shoe size but don't have a clue about how to train themselves productively. In a word. “wannabes.”)

If you watch a dinosaur working out the one thing that will stand out in your mind is the way he shuts out the world when he is doing a set. It is almost as though there is a transformation to another plane of existence. The dinosaur's entire being focuses down to one thing: the proper completion of each rep in the set. There are no artificial facial contortions, no grunts or curses as the going gets tough, and no other signs of “pseudo-intensity” of the sort so commonly seen nowadays in training facilities around the world. THE DINOSAUR'S ENTIRE LIFE IS BOUND UP IN THE PROPER COMPLETION OF THE NUMBER OF REPETITIONS SCHEDULED FOR HIS SET, EVERYTHING ELSE IS IRRELEVANT. NOTHING ELSE MATTERS.

The difference between the 150 pound wannabes and the 220 pound dinosaur is this: the dinosaur has learned the art of concentration. When he trains, he trains with a mental focus that doubles or even triples the benefit he receives from each and every rep he performs. If you want to become an advanced dinosaur, you MUST learn to concentrate during your workouts. In Steiner's words: “For the duration of a workout you absolutely must focus exclusively on your training.”

As detailed in Chapter 19, concentration is an acquired skill. At the beginning, you may need to practice exercises at home in order to learn how to concentrate. No, these are not weight training exercises, they are concentration exercises. These exercises require you to stand, sit or lie in a comfortable position, in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and where there are no external distractions. A quiet, dark room or one with low lighting is ideal. Once there, you will need something on which to focus your attention - something on which to concentrate. If you are in a dark room, a light or candle can be used. A piece of paper with a large dot in the center will work. Virtually anything that allows you to look at it to the total exclusion of anything else will do the trick.

Set a clock or timer for a 10 minute period and devote 10 minutes to concentrating on nothing but the “focal point” that you have selected. Simply look at it. At first, you will find that your gaze wavers and that you move your eyes to other things. Don't fight this, and don't feel bad about it. It is perfectly natural. When it happens, gently but firmly bring your gaze back to the selected object.

Focus your mind, as you focus your eyes, on the object. Let it absorb your being. Let it exclude all other thoughts. If another thought intrudes, gently take it and toss it out of your mind.

As you do these things, breathe slowly and regularly through the nose. You will feel a sensation of relaxation throughout your entire body. It will seem as though all of your bodily processes, including your breathing, have slowed to a marked degree. You will not be able to

help noticing this, but don't let it become a distraction. Continue to concentrate on the selected object.

As you develop your ability to concentrate, combine it with visualization. Instead of focusing on a candle or a dot on the wall, focus on a mental image (visually projected onto the wall) that shows you achieving the success that you desire. Concentrate on this picture and on nothing else.

After practicing this exercise 10 minutes a day for several weeks, integrate your concentration into your workouts. Do this by using the loaded bar as the focal point of your concentration. Before you approach the bar to begin your set, concentrate on the bar, and block everything else in the universe out of your mind. The only thing that will exist for you is the bar. Nothing else.

Continue this focused concentration as you approach the bar and as you place your body into position to begin the lift. By so doing, you will start each and every set in a deeply focused state that has eliminated from your mind everything other than the need to push or pull the bar for the required number of repetitions. Maintain that focus until the set is completely over and you have placed the bar back on the rack or the floor.

It may take 10 or 20 workouts, but eventually you will develop the ability to block everything out of your mind other than the paramount need of completing the scheduled number of reps in your set. When you reach this level of focus and concentration, you will have taken an ENORMOUS step toward the achievement of your training goals.

PSYCHING UP

The key to hard work... is concentration. Make up your mind, NOW, to go after your goal of a fine physique and physical power with burning, and with unswerving DETERMINATION!

~Bradley J. Steiner

After you have mastered the preceding skills, the icing on the cake will be the ability to “psyche up” immediately before a heavy set. Psyching up is something that should be reserved only for truly hard sets with your top poundages - sets where you are pushing yourself to the maximum. For anything else, it is a case of over-kill. Something like shooting pigeons with a cannon.

“Psyching up” is easy if you have mastered the techniques described in the preceding sections. The powertalking, autosuggestion, visualization, and concentration techniques discussed in the preceding sections will bring you very close to a “psyched up” condition. The only thing you need to add is a shot of adrenaline triggered by treating the set as a life or death confrontation between you and the bar.

I have a simple but very effective psyching technique that I use on my heavy sets. It works both at the gym and in competition. I'm going to describe it for you, but remember: this is BIG MEDICINE. Save it for truly heavy lifting. Over-use the technique and you'll go stale almost immediately. “Psyching up” can wear you out just as much as the physical aspects of heavy training. Be warned.

Let's take the bench press as an example. As I approach the bar I begin to concentrate on the bar and the bar alone. As discussed in the preceding section on concentration, I focus my entire self – body, mind, spirit and being - on the bar. Nothing else in the universe exists for me at that moment. There is ONLY the bar.

At that point, I begin to slow my breathing. Then I take a long breath, and mentally prepare to go to war. Life and death. No prisoners. Storm the beaches. I usually growl at the bar. That's right. I GROWL. I get mad at the bar. I create a situation where it's a battle of strength and will between myself and the bar. It's like the classic scene in the westerns where the two gunfighters face each other - in that final, long-awaited confrontation - for several agonizing seconds, that seem like hours - and then they draw. It's like two prize fighters staring each

other in the eye immediately before they come to blows. And I tell the bar - sometimes silently and sometimes out loud - which one of us is going to win.

Then I take a deep breath, summon all my power, and ATTACK the bar.

Sounds crazy, doesn't it?' But believe me, it works. It is effective. It is absolutely vital to unleashing a burst of maximum strength. It is the type of thing that every champion lifter throughout the world does as a matter of course in competition. As a wise old powerlifter once told me. "GRAB THE BAR LIKE YOU REALLY MEAN IT AND SHOW IT WHO'S THE BOSS!"

Everybody psyches up a little bit differently. Some are loud and some are quiet. Learning what works best for you will require some trial and error. Have patience. Keep at it. Whatever else you do, you need to find a way to unleash your inner strength. When you learn to do this, you will develop a level of explosive power that is frightening to the uninitiated.

One final point about psyching up. Some people are afraid that if they psyche up they somehow will lose touch with their surroundings and actually HURT their performance rather than HELP it. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is hard to explain, but I know from experience that it is very possible to maintain both an extreme level of arousal through a "psyche up" system and at the same time maintain full awareness of your surroundings. You will find that you can reach a state where you are extremely psyched up, step back into the ordinary world for a second, and step right back into your psyched up slate with no difficulty. I often had to do this in bench press contests, I would approach the bar in a state of extreme arousal and then have to stop for a second and explain to the lift-off man exactly how I want the bar handed to me. If I tried to give my instructions while I was in a totally psyched up slate I ended up growling incomprehensible gibberish, I found I was able to approach the bench in an extremely psyched state, tell the lift-off man how I wanted the bar handed to me, and immediately go back into a state of extreme arousal. Similarly, you may find that without losing your psyche you are able to check the plates on the bar to be sure that they are loaded correctly or check the bar to see if it is loaded correctly.

CHARACTER

No matter how intense your desire is for muscles... you can easily devote four or five hours a week to the hardest training imaginable, and still live a full, normal life with regard to marriage, intellectual pursuits, friends and a career. See that you do this.

~Bradley J. Steiner

There is still one critical, as yet undiscussed mental attribute of a dinosaur. This is that rarest of traits - character. There are plenty of guys who run around their gyms and lift huge weights or flex enormous arms, but who do not deserve a shred of respect. You know the type of guys I mean. The druggers. The muscle-blasters. The prima donnas. The sweat-hogs. The narcissistic but insecure bullies, living under the mistaken belief that the entire universe revolves around them 24 hours a day. They are self-centered children, not men, and certainly not dinosaurs.

As Anthony Ditillo noted many years ago:

"There are too many lifters and bodybuilders today who have nothing to offer anyone but the ability to either lift up a heavy weight or flex a large arm muscle. These men are only half alive; they live in only a physical world. They have neglected the intellectual sides of the lives. They have neglected to feed their spiritual appetites. They are a very sad breed of men."

Dr. Ken Leistner made a similar point in THE STEEL TIP (Vol. 3, No. 3, March, 1987):

"[O]ne is better off working hard and briefly, leaving time not only for proper recuperation, but for family interaction and other pursuits. If one were to attend a powerlifting contest or a convention of university and professional level strength coaches, they would immediately be struck by the fact that everyone in attendance is obsessed with training or knows nothing else. Life is meant to be full and enjoyable and the attainment of strength and a well conditioned

and developed physique can and should be an integral part of one's life. However, it is neither desirable nor necessary to give up a family or social life in order to do so, nor ignore literature, music, art, or any of the other things that one feels enjoyment and fulfillment from."

A dinosaur understands what Steiner, Ditillo and Leistner are talking about. He demonstrates that understanding in his life and in his lifting.

A dinosaur is a man with character. He makes a point of giving back to the Game more than he has received from it. He has time for others. He listens and responds - enthusiastically and in detail - to the training questions from the novices and intermediates. He helps other people whenever he can. He supports sensible, drug-free training in as many ways as possible.

I know from personal experience that the top competitors in drug-free powerlifting exemplify the personality characteristics that we are describing in this section. These men are fierce competitors on the lifting platform but the best of friends when off it. They are not the kind of guys who come up with "excuses" if their performance falls below their expectations. They do not "bad mouth" the competition. They don't yell at judges or referees, they don't curse officials, and they don't concoct lurid tales of political gamesmanship if things don't go their way. They are the most supportive bunch of competitors that could be imagined in any field of endeavor.

One interesting thing about the top lifters is they always seem to be the guys who voluntarily help out at powerlifting and bench press competitions. These are the guys who not only lift but also serve as judges, spotters or loaders. They are the guys who step in and help back spot when someone is trying a 700 pound squat and three spotters are not enough. I recall the 1993 NASA National Masters and Submasters Powerlifting and Bench Press Championships, where the lifters who judged, spotted and loaded, had they been entered as a team, would have walked away with the team trophy without even breaking a sweat. The same is true at many major competitions, and it is something to which beginners and intermediates should pay particular attention. If you think about it, you will soon come to realize why the best lifters in competition are the most helpful and why they are the ones who tend to "give back" to the sport. When you realize why that is the case, you will have learned an important lesson - one of the most important that I have to offer.

Go ahead - right now - take a minute and think about what you just read. What am I trying to say? I have given you an extremely important piece of information. USE IT!

Here's a related point. You don't have to be a lifting champion to be a man with character. If you develop the characteristics of a champion then it doesn't matter if your top bench press is 200, 300, or 400 pounds. A true champion is a man who has time for others. A true champion is a man who helps the Iron Game. A true champion is a man who makes a difference in the lives of others - not someone who has no concern for anyone else in the world.

I'll get off of the soapbox now. If what I have said strikes a responsive chord, then you don't need to hear any more. Just remember, words without deeds are useless. All the good intentions in the world don't amount to a hill of beans unless you carry through on them. As Blake wrote, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions."

It is not enough to merely wish to be an inspiration to others and to serve as an ambassador of sensible physical training - you actually have to live the role. Give yourself five minutes of self-analysis (go on, do it right now!) and see whether or not you have met that challenge. It's a challenge that I am making to everyone who reads this book, and it's the one single test I am most interested in seeing each and every one of you pass with flying colors.

Aim to be all that you can be. Carry the hard lessons of self-conquest and discipline that you learn in your training into every facet of your life.

~Bradley J. Steiner

It is one thing to see the forward path and another to be able to take it.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE: DO IT FOR YOURSELF

*It is the duty of the free man to live for
his own self and not for others.*

~Friedrich Neitzche

John Davis is one of my favorite dinosaurs from the past. The man was one of the greatest strength athletes of all time. He won the United States National Championship in Olympic lifting an incredible twelve times, won the World Championship six times, and was Olympic champion in two Olympics - and this was in a career interrupted by World War II. Absent the war, Davis doubtless would have won THREE Olympic gold medals.

Davis was the first man in history to clean and jerk 400 pounds in official competition, breaking that awesome barrier with a 402.2 pound lift on June 16, 1951, in Los Angeles, California. He was undefeated in international competition from October 23, 1938 to August 30, 1953, when the Canadian giant, Doug Hepburn, dethroned him as world champion in Stockholm, Sweden.

Davis was one of only three or four men in the history of the world (historians dispute the number) to lift the enormous Apollon Wheels overhead, accomplishing the amazing feat on September 13, 1949. The Apollon Wheels were a huge set of railcar wheels. They weighed 366 pounds and were connected with an axle 1.93 inches in diameter. The wheels and axle were frozen, rusty and bent - nothing revolved. For all practical purposes, the wheel were a solid iron barbell with a 2" handle. On September 13, 1949, Davis CLEAN AND JERKED the wheels! Most strong men would be lucky to deadlift them! I've seen the tape of that lift and it's one of the most inspiring feats of strength you can imagine. What Davis did on that day in post-war France, nearly 50 years ago, ranks as one of the all-time greatest feats of strength in history.

HOW AND WHERE DAVIS TRAINED

Now check this out: Davis trained in the most primitive of training quarters - ALL BY HIMSELF - even during the years when he was World and Olympic Champion and a legitimate claimant to the title of "World's Strongest Man." In the April, 1993 issue of THE IRON MASTER, Osmo Kiiha notes (on page 11): *"For many years Davis trained alone in the basement of a neighborhood church, on an old exercise set. Of course, he also made the rounds to the local clubs to train but the bulk of his training was done alone in the basement."*

Can you imagine the sight of the greatest lifter and arguably the strongest man of his generation, hitting the iron like clockwork, cleaning, pressing, squatting, and benching weights that only a handful of other men could even approach, and doing all of it alone in the basement of a neighborhood church, using an old exercise bar instead of an Olympic barbell?

Davis had no spotters, no coaches, no supporters, no fans, no training partners. He had only the most basic of equipment. For all practical purposes, he trained in a dungeon.

Davis' training program was as basic as his equipment. He did cleans, snatches, presses, squats, bench presses and virtually nothing else. He trained four times per week. His workouts lasted 90 minutes to two hours. He trained his cleans, snatches and presses with a series of progressively heavier warmup sets (dropping the reps in a 6/6/3/3/1/1 pattern, followed by eight sets of two reps with his working poundage. He did five sets of three reps on the bench press and five sets of five reps on the squat. Pretty basic stuff.

THE QUESTION

So here's the question: how did Davis build the strongest body of his generation by training five exercises on an abbreviated program with an old exercise bar in a corner of the basement in a neighborhood church, working all by himself, alone with the iron, without any coaching, guidance or assistance of any sort?

THE ANSWER

Here's the answer. Davis was a MAN. He had guts, courage, pride, tenacity, willpower and a burning desire to excel at his chosen sport. He didn't need mirrors to pump his ego as he pumped his body. He didn't need gym bunnies wiggling up to tell him how "buff" he was looking. He didn't need an entourage to support his efforts. He was able to do everything he needed to do entirely on his own, using only the strength of spirit that came from within.

Nowadays, guys are into making excuses, "I can't get big because I have lousy leverages." "I can't squat because I have bad knees." "I can't deadlift because I have a bad back." "I don't train heavy because I don't want to hurt myself - and besides, I just want to look good." "I can't get a good workout because my gym doesn't have the latest equipment," "I don't use drugs, so of course all I can do is pump and tone." "I can't afford the supplements I need." "I haven't been eating too well," "It's too cold." "I couldn't get all the sleep I needed last night." "I had to study for finals." "My shoulders are sore." "My stomach hurts." "My wife is mad at me," "My boss yelled at me," "Work was extra tough." "My knee wraps are too tight," "My squat suit is too loose," "The bar is bent." "The floor is uneven," "Capricorn is in Virgo." "I cut myself shaving." "I had a rough day at work - I can't concentrate today." "I had a fight with my girlfriend - I can't train today." Do any of those sound familiar? How many times have you heard one or more variations of these time-honored chestnuts?

JOHN DAVIS DIDN'T MAKE EXCUSES. HE WAS A MAN. MEN DON'T MAKE EXCUSES!

The great thing about John Davis is that he was into training for himself, not for other people. He trained because he WANTED to train. He trained because it was his passion. He trained because he had a deep, burning need to elevate more and even more weight in his chosen sport of Olympic lifting. He wasn't training for the glory. He wasn't chasing medals or trophies, and he certainly wasn't in it for the money. He did it because there was a part of him that HAD to do it.

Davis never came up with excuses to skip workouts or have a lackluster training session. What he did with a barbell was far too important for excuses. Davis simply went out and DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE.

Most guys who lift weights nowadays have absolutely no idea of the type of drive and determination that kept John Davis hitting the iron day after day, week after week, in that lonely corner of the church basement. Most guys would last about one workout if they had to train by themselves. Most guys would give up after two weeks if they were forced to stick to five exercises performed on an old exercise bar. Most guys would never be able to train without a constant barrage of ego-pumping from friends and fellow gym mates.

If you want to be a dinosaur, you need to be able to do what John Davis was able to do. You need to use your inner strength to keep you motivated. **YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR TRAINING AN INTERNAL THING INSTEAD OF AN EXTERNAL THING - SOMETHING YOU DO FOR YOURSELF INSTEAD OF SOMETHING YOU DO FOR OTHERS.** If you can't do it for yourself, you eventually will not do it at all - and what you do when you go to the gym will be a far cry from the type of effort you would give if you were doing it for yourself.

A TROUBLING ASPECT OF MODERN TRAINING

One of the most troubling facets of modern training is that it is almost entirely directed at training for others rather than training for yourself. Why do most guys train nowadays? They train to LOOK better. They don't train to be strong, they train to look "buff." They want to shape – tone – cut – rip – sculpt - and define. Why? Not because they have a burning desire to be shaped, toned, cut, ripped, sculpted or defined, but because they want to look a certain way in order to gain temporary admiration from others. They simply want to attract favorable attention. The only reason they train is so that other people will compliment them on the way they look.

If you think about it, training in order to look pleasing to others is an essentially feminine endeavor, it certainly is not a masculine undertaking. How do women attract a man? Through

their appearance. How does a man attract a woman? Historically, men attracted women not by the way they looked but by the things they did. A prime example would be a Neanderthal warrior who could kill and skin a cave-bear. He may not have been much to look at, but a woman would have wanted HIM for a mate, not some pretty boy who would run and hide if he saw his own shadow.

Weight trainers today are far too caught up in their personal appearance. It was different fifty or sixty years ago. Back then, guys tended to train simply to get stronger. Sure, they got bigger, and they always looked better as a result of their training, but the gains in appearance were viewed as a natural by-product of training for strength. You trained for strength and you ended up looking better as a byproduct of your strength training. You didn't train to look better. What's more, people who looked strong but couldn't back it up were viewed as sissies by the rest of the Iron Slingers. If you weren't strong, you weren't much of anything, no matter how pretty you looked in posing trunks.

WHAT WE NEED

The Iron Game desperately needs to regain its former emphasis on training for strength rather than training for appearance. Weight trainers need to internalize what they are doing. They need to train because they are doing it to satisfy a deep-sealed hunger in their hearts, not because they want the rest of the crowd to tell them how “cut” their legs are or how “buff” their chests are becoming. We need more men like John Davis - men who nailed themselves to their goals with grim determination and who trained with brutal intensity because they knew that nothing less would do the job.

If you want to be a dinosaur, keep the example of John Davis in the forefront of your imagination. Train as if you were John's workout partner. Pretend you have one occasion - one supreme opportunity - to train with John on that old exercise bar in the corner of that humble neighborhood church. Make every training session one that John Davis would have been proud to join you in. Carry that attitude to every session. Be a man. Be a dinosaur. Be like John Davis.

Self trust is the essence of heroism,
~Ralph Waldo Emerson

*It is not necessary to hope in order to undertake,
nor to succeed to persevere.*
~Charles the Bold

*Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp - or what's a
heaven for?*
~Robert Browning

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO: PERSISTENCE

*To live means to have something definite to do -
a mission to fulfill...*

*Human life, by its very nature,
has to be dedicated to something.*

~Jose Ortega y Gasset

A dinosaur's most essential attribute is a grim determination to succeed. Dinosaurs have patience. They have tenacity. They never quit. They never yield. They never give in. They always keep on going. It doesn't matter how long it takes to achieve any particular goal - a dinosaur will stay at it until he reaches the goal. It doesn't matter how many stumbling blocks lay in his path. A dinosaur understands that aches and pains, frustration, discouragement and periods of stagnation are common to all who train with weights. He doesn't enjoy them any more than does the next fellow, but he doesn't let them beat him.

YEARS OF EFFORT

What's the difference between (1) a dinosaur who squats 500 pounds and benches 400 pounds with a 3" bar, and (2) a scrawny wannabe who never handles over 150 pounds on any exercise and couldn't ROLL a 400 pound barbell if his life depended on it? In many cases, the real difference between the two men is at least ten years of hard work. That's right - TEN YEARS of hard, sweaty, agonizing, regular, consistent effort.

STUNNED SILENCE

Many people who see an advanced dinosaur are literally shocked into stunned silence. They can't comprehend how a man can build his body to the point where he squats 500 or more pounds, benches 400 with a 3" bar, curls 170 with a 2 1/2" bar or does a seated military press with 250 on the 3" bar. They don't understand how a man can build a 50" chest or 18" arms. They immediately start to look for a "simple" explanation for the dinosaur's power.

JUMPING TO THE WRONG EXPLANATION

One "explanation" always leaps to mind: drugs. At least half the guys who see an advanced dinosaur immediately decide the dinosaur is using steroids. "He benches 400 pounds! He has 18" arms! He MUST be doing drugs. You can't bench 400 without drugs - it's impossible. I know a guy who uses roids all the time, and even he only handles 320! I could never do 400 pounds without drugs. No one could! You can't get big without drugs. No one can do it. It's impossible!"

Then there is the "genetics" explanation. Many men who see an advanced dinosaur will say to themselves "He has it so easy! He's an EASY GAINER! The guy just has to look at a barbell and he gets bigger and stronger. Anyone could be as strong as him if they just had the right parents. He doesn't know anything about training. His program would never work for ME! I have bad genetics. I could never be like him!"

Then what happens? The wannabe sits back on his chrome plated wonder machine and grinds out a "hard" set of chest flyes with 40 pounds resistance. He doesn't bother to give the dinosaur's program a try. Why should he? He KNOWS it wouldn't work for him, because (1) he doesn't take steroids, and (2) he has lousy genetics. Listen to him talking to himself: "Gotta face facts, man. You're the human equivalent of a gazelle. He's a lion. You need to train for elegant symmetry and graceful proportions. Forget about the strength thing! Size is for grizzly bears! You better pump it and shape it!"

The wannabe has fallen into an all-too-common trap: he has sold himself short because he has failed to identify the one factor that is the major difference between his own scrawny physique and that of the advanced dinosaur: TIME! Advanced dinosaurs are not big and strong because of drugs. They are not big and strong because they are genetic marvels. They

are big and strong because they have trained hard and heavy, and **CONSISTENTLY**, for **MANY, MANY YEARS**. The wannabe missed this important point because all he saw was the end result of many years of sensible, heavy training. He conveniently ignored the long years of blood, toil, tears and sweat that lay behind the end result.

There is an oft told story about a famous artist who drew a hasty sketch on a paper napkin at a restaurant and sold it for ten thousand dollars. Someone asked him how he could justify charging thousands of dollars for a work that took only minutes to complete, and the artist responded: "Behind that picture lay twenty years of daily effort to bring my skills to where they are today. Isn't \$10,000 a fair price for twenty years of effort?"

Advanced dinosaurs are like the famous old artist. Their strength, size and power are the result of many years of regular, consistent, brutally hard work. And that brings us to a very important point: the need to persevere in your training for as long as it may take to develop the size and strength that will label you as an advanced dinosaur.

PERSEVERANCE

Plenty of guys start out with a "gung ho" attitude when they begin to train with weights. They are burning with desire and bubbling over with enthusiasm. They go to the gym five or six days a week and train for two or three hours at a time. They do every exercise under the sun. They train as though their lives depended on it. They are totally, absolutely and unreservedly dedicated to their training.

Two weeks later they quit.

That's right, they **QUIT**. They give up. They wimp out. They trade in their barbells for a big screen TV and spend the rest of their lives watching MTV or the 24 hour a day sports channel. And if anyone ever asks, they are the first to say, "Yeah, I tried the weight lifting stuff, but it just doesn't work unless you take lots of drugs and have the right genetics."

Do you have any idea what the percentage of weight training drop-outs is? Try something like 90% or more. That's right - by conservative estimate, 90% of the people who take up weight training **GIVE IT UP** in short order. That means that nine out of ten people who start a weight training program this month are going to have given it up by this time next year.

If you think about it, that's an appalling statistic. Properly performed, weight training can be of enormous benefit to almost anyone. There is no physical activity that can do so much for a man. Nothing else even approaches the results one can achieve through proper weight training. And yet, nine out of ten people who give weight training a try give it up in a mere matter of months.

Part of the blame for the 90% drop-out rate lies with the idiot programs touted by today's "experts." The modern-day toner/shaper/pumper brigade have made it almost impossible for beginners to obtain sensible, productive training advice. As a result, most people who train with weights do it **WRONG!** They hurt themselves, they overtrain, they get zero in the way of results and they naturally decide that weight training just doesn't work. So they quit.

But another reason for the high drop-out rate is a simple lack of perseverance on the part of almost everyone who trains with weights. People quit training because they lack the tenacity to nail themselves to the Iron Game on a long term basis. They want immediate results - instant success - overnight gains. If it doesn't happen immediately, they are not interested. They don't want to think of training as a long term proposition, they want to think of it as a short term fix.

If you have a short term attitude, you will never achieve long term success.

One of the strongest men of all time, George Hackenschmidt, was right on the mark when he noted: "There are only two principal means of acquiring strength - exercise and perseverance."

Dinosaurs see training as a **LIFE LONG** commitment. Forget about the overnight transformations. Forget about the 30 day wonder programs. We're talking about years. Decades. Lifetimes. And that means we are talking about a training approach that will only work for men who have a supreme degree of tenacity and perseverance: men who will not give up when the going gets tough, and who will not be turned aside no matter what.

HOW TO DEVELOP PERSEVERANCE AND TENACITY

How do you develop the degree of perseverance it takes to stick to your training year in and year out for the rest of your life? Well, if you have made it this far through this book, you obviously have a pretty intense interest in serious training. That's good. If you lacked a deep-rooted interest in developing superhuman strength and barbaric power, you would never last very long on dinosaur training.

SHORT TERM GOALS

The next thing you need to do is focus on the journey rather than the destination. Do this in two ways. First of all, take all of your long term goals and break them down into a series of short term goals. For example, if your long term goal is to bench press 400 pounds, and you currently are handling 135 pounds, set 150 pounds as your immediate short term goal. After you reach 150 pounds, shoot for 185 pounds. When you reach 185 pounds, set a new short term goal: 200 pounds. Then go to 225 pounds ... 250 pounds ... 275 pounds ... 300 pounds ... 315 pounds ... and so on.

Tie your goals to the plates you use: on an Olympic barbell that uses pounds instead of kilos, the big plates are 45 pounds each, and the bar is 45 pounds, so your initial dance with the big plates will see you using 135 pounds. Adding a 25 pound plate to each side is roughly halfway to a second 45 pound plate on each side - hence, the goal of 185 pounds. The next major goal is 225 pounds - the bar plus TWO 45 pound plates on each side. And so on.

ENJOY YOUR TRAINING

The second way to develop perseverance is to enjoy your training- I'm deadly serious about that. If you approach your training as some sort of hated chore that you have to force yourself to complete, you are never going to be able to stick to it long enough to develop a really significant level of size and strength. You have to learn to love the hard work, the effort, the pain, the sweat, the forced breathing, the pounding in your temples, the churning sensation in the pit of your stomach, and the aching, burning flames of agony in your muscles. If you don't learn to love the feel of a hard, heavy workout, you will never make it to the level of an advanced dinosaur.

Most people focus solely on the end result of their training. That's a mistake. The journey is much more important than the destination. You have to enjoy the journey. If you don't enjoy your training - really enjoy it - then you will never be able to stick with it.

For a dinosaur, it is perfectly natural to enjoy your training. The harder and more demanding a session is, the more enjoyable it is - at least, if you are a dinosaur. Dinosaurs have a deep-rooted, almost primordial NEED to test their strength against heavy weights and to do so regularly. A dinosaur's training session is the high point of his day. It is the time when he feels most alive. The training session allows him to express his true self - the self he has to cover up in order to live in the everyday world and its myriad of castes, codes and conformity. During a workout the dinosaur is free to be as physical and animalistic as he wishes. He can be barbaric – brutal – primitive - atavistic. He can challenge the iron, grapple with it, do battle, and either live or die. The part of him that never finds expression in the ordinary course of an everyday existence may be unleashed in full force when he attacks the iron.

Those of you who know what I am talking about will recognize immediately the joy of being supremely alive when you battle with a heavy barbell. The feeling cannot be explained to those who have not experienced it. If what I am describing strikes any sort of responsive cord, then you are one of us - one of the dinosaurs. If it seems like meaningless mumbo-jumbo, go to the gym, train hard, train consistently, and try to sense what the dinosaurs feel. Once you realize what heavy training can add to your life, you will be one with the iron for the rest of your days. The very idea of EVER giving up on your training will be absurd - on a par with the idea of giving up on breathing. When you feel THAT way about your training, consistency, perseverance and tenacity become second nature ... and at that point, your ultimate success is a foregone conclusion.

Time and I against any other two.

~Beltazar Gracian

*Any clever person can make plans for winning a war if he has
no responsibility for carrying them out.*

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: THE IRON WILL TO SUCCEED

Beware the fury of a patient man.

~John Dryden

Dinosaurs come in all shapes and sizes, from all sorts of backgrounds, from many different countries, and from many different walks of life. However, they all share one inflexible trait: THE IRON WILL TO SUCCEED. If you lack this one essential ingredient, you will NEVER be a dinosaur. Nor will you achieve much in the way of muscular size and strength, no matter how outstanding your genetics, how good your coaching or how advanced your training facilities. Absent an iron will to succeed, nothing else amounts to anything. With it, you can transform yourself.

Reg Park stated the issue perfectly in an old training course: “To continually strive to handle heavier poundages year after year requires a lot of patience and driving force.” This is why you MUST develop an IRON WILL TO SUCCEED.

TIME AND TENACITY

Substantial increases in muscular size and strength do not happen overnight. They take time - in most cases, a great deal of time. Don't think you are going to train for a year and be able to bench press 400 pounds or show your 18” arms to the world. It just doesn't happen that way. It takes TIME!

Most men do not have the ability to stick to any particular goal for even a short period of time. Look at how many people start a diet or exercise program and give it up almost immediately. If Joe Average lacks the intestinal fortitude to stick to a diet long enough to lose ten pounds, how do you think he is ever going to manage to last the ten or more years of heavy training it might take to reach the 400 pound mark in the bench press or develop those 18” guns?

Dinosaurs are different. Dinosaurs have the ability to nail themselves to their goals. They set their sights on what they want to achieve, then gear up and buckle down for an extended battle. They don't expect to achieve overnight miracles. They don't believe in 14 day transformations. They can separate the real from the fantastic. They expect to have to work - long and hard - to achieve their goals.

MISSING THE MOST ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

Any scrawny runt with an ego problem and a jealous streak a mile long can point to an advanced dinosaur and say “It was easy for him - he has great genetics – he probably takes drugs, too! I could be just like him if I had his genetics and his pharmacy bill!” (Of course, the scrawny runt who mouths these words is precisely the same guy who can't stick to a training program for more than a week or two, who studiously avoids squats and deadlifts, and who prefers to pump and “tone” because it seems to be more scientific, and besides, “everyone else does it that way.”)

But where does the truth really lie? Is the advanced dinosaur a genetically gifted superman? Is he a druggie? To what does he really owe his size and strength?

Well, if you have been paying attention, you already know that dinosaurs HATE drugs. So don't credit dianabol or its endless progeny. It isn't anabolic steroids that account for the dinosaur's size and strength. Not by a long shot.

Is it genetics? To some degree. Anyone who benches 400 pounds is almost always going to have a medium or heavy boned “mesomorphic” body structure. But you don't need “one in a million” genetics to become an advanced dinosaur. There are plenty of men who have the genetic foundation to build truly enormous degrees of muscular size and strength, and almost all men have the ability to develop levels of size and strength that would shock the average, untrained man.

PUTTING GENETICS INTO PROPER PERSPECTIVE

The role of genetics has been horribly distorted by the muscle media. For many years, genetics were hardly mentioned at all. One of the only people who even mentioned the subject was Peary Rader, who frequently warned readers of IRON MAN not to copy a champion's training program because it would be too severe and taxing for the average man. Rader often noted (in words or substance) "The superman has natural advantages which you do not have!"

But hardly anyone else paid much attention to the impact of genetics until Arthur Jones began writing about genetics in his articles and books published in the early 1970's. As in so much of his writing, Jones simply stated the obvious: that genetic factors play a substantial role in one's ultimate levels of size or strength.

The response from the muscle media and commercial interests was overwhelmingly negative. Why? Because if genetics were partly responsible for Mr. Everything's development, then how could you sell courses, equipment or supplements that supposedly could turn Joe Average and Peter Puny into godlike title winners regardless of any genetic factors? In other words, telling the truth about the role of genetics was bad for business. So the initial response was to pretend that Jones didn't exist and the phrase "genetic potential" had never seen the light of day.

But after five or ten years, we saw a new and more cunning response to Jones' discussion of genetic factors. The magazines began to freely acknowledge the role of genetics, but did so in a way that helped to further deify the title winners. Whereas the mighty moguls of the muscle media once raved about so-and-so's "awe-inspiring biceps," they now raved about his "unparalleled genetics." Genetics soon became little more than another tool in the arsenal of the publicists.

You probably realize by now that I don't deify bodybuilding champions. (In fact, I don't like them, don't respect them and have no interest in them whatsoever.) I certainly don't think they are "supermen" because they have good genetics for bodybuilding. Why? There are two reasons. First, no one is responsible for his genetics, so giving credit for "good" genetics is silly. You might as well give credit to someone for being a natural blonde.

Second, many bodybuilding champions have genetics that are not too much different than those of quite a number of relatively "average" men. The difference lies in the title-winner's drug bill. This has been established repeatedly over the past 20 years by instances of bodybuilding champions who went off their drugs for one reason or another and who lost their heavy development almost overnight. Without his drugs, the guy with the "super genetics" often isn't very much at all.

The same is true of lifters and other strength athletes. Many powerhouse lifters lose strength and power at an enormous rate when they go off the drugs. My good friend, Bob Whelan, recalls a former lifting buddy who went on the juice and had his bench press go up by 80 or 90 pounds in a matter of months - from 310-320 to 400 pounds. Then the guy started to have some side effects, got scared, went off the drugs, and lost an average of TEN POUNDS on his bench in every subsequent workout. Think about it: the 400 pound bencher hits 400 on Monday, 390 on Thursday, 380 the following Monday, 370 the Thursday after that, 360 the next Monday, 350 the following Thursday, then 340, 330, 320, and 310. Sort of like a snowman in the summertime.

Mike Thompson has seen the same thing - lifters on juice who squat 600 or 700 pounds, stop taking the drugs, and lose 100 to 300 pounds (or more) off the squat in a matter of weeks. Sure speaks well for their "super genetics," doesn't it?

WAS IT REALLY GENETICS?

Anyhow, let's go back to the topic of advanced dinosaurs and genetics. Is it really genetics that lets an advanced dinosaur bench press 400 pounds with a 3" diameter bar, squat 500 pounds or heave a 250 pound sandbag up onto his shoulder? Maybe it is if the guy can do that sort of thing after the end of his first year of training. But what about the guy who takes TEN years – or LONGER - to build up to that sort of performance?

GENETICS OR PERSEVERANCE?

I have a friend who can squat 500 pounds, wearing no support gear other than a lifting belt. And he doesn't just dip his knees or do a partial movement. He does a solid, top of the thighs below parallel, squat - one that would pass easily in any powerlifting meet anywhere in the world. He does it with a regular YORK Olympic bar and he does it with a cambered bar purchased from IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES (the well-named BUFFALO BAR). How long did it take him to get there? Was it genetics or perseverance? Read Greg Pickett's story - told in his own words - and YOU decide:

“Let's face it; there are no shades of gray with the squat. You either like the lift or you don't. Those of you who don't like to squat and consider it dangerous are probably the same people who prefer “squat substitutes”, counting the seconds of the movement, and shaping and toning. If that's the case, you probably are not reading this book. For those few on planet Earth still interested in heavy lifting (drug-free) for the pure joy of it, please allow me to share my recent training experiences with the squat.

First, some background is in order. I never used steroids and I never will. I competed in PL meets from 1984-1985, and from 1987-1993. One of the major reasons I stopped competing was the ridiculous allowance of support gear. My best competition squat was 633 lbs. However, I realize that the 633 squat did not demonstrate “my” strength because of the stress absorption effect of support gear, i.e., suit and wraps. After many telephone conversations with Brooks Kubik (I must have gotten on his nerves, but he was patient with me!) I decided to squat with only a lifting belt as support gear. Brooks also influenced me with single-rep training. Singles, I reasoned, would allow me to use heavier weights in the squat with decent, reproducible form.

My squat form is very simple; feet wider than shoulder width, toes turned out, head up, chest out. The bar rests in a very natural groove on the traps. On the descent, I sit back, reaching a depth where the top of the thigh at the hip joint is below the top of the knee (below parallel). On the ascent, I keep my knees apart as pulling the knees in on the ascent is dangerous. It is far better to keep the knees apart as the stress remains on the larger hip and thigh muscle groups and increases your poundage potential. I admit to forward lean on the ascent. Videotape review reveals, however, that my back is flat on the upward drive. The ascent is accomplished by driving back on the bar (tough with a BUFFALO BAR - more on that later) and moving the hips forward.

The following is a chronology of some of the training sessions in the push to my goal of a working weight of 500 x 1. Please note: I did not cycle or use any Eastern European periodization program. The key ingredients in the success achieved were guts, persistence, and time. No food supplements were used during this time, just good solid food. I train alone in my basement gym at very odd hours (6:00 A.M.) sometimes. A lifting belt was the only support gear used.

March 19, 1994—Squat—135x3, 135x3, 235x1, 325x1, 405x10x1.

April 20, 1994—Squat—135x3, 135x3, 235x1, 325x1, 375x1, 430x8x1.

May 15, 1994—Squat—Top sets of 436x5x1.

September 16, 1994—Squat—Top sets of 440x5x1.

November 21, 1994—Squat - 440x8x1.

December 11, 1994—Squat - 450x5x1.

December 22, 1994—Tried to squat. Back severely strained from overzealous stretching.

At this point. I obtained a BUFFALO BAR™ from IRONMIND® ENTERPRISES. This bar is thicker than a regular power bar. The thickness greatly reduces the “whip” of the bar. The bar is almost “dead” when driving out of the hole. This is a positive as it forces the lifter to push harder.

January 26, 1995—Squat - Top sets of 460x4x1. Used BUFFALO BAR™. As you can see, I added weight when I felt strong. I did not follow a preplanned program of weight increases.

March 21, 1995—Had flu virus. Fell horrible. Trained anyway. Top sets of 410x3x1.

April 18, 1995—Top sets of 410x18x1. I wanted to do this as I read that Louis Abele squatted 400x18 consecutive reps. The 18 singles took 73 minutes to complete.

May 29, 1995—Squat - Top sets of 425x12x1.

I then began to reduce the number of top sets, with the goal of heavier and heavier poundage on the squat bar. The name of the game is sheer poundage in decent form, not how many reps you can pump out (even single reps).

June 30, 1995 — Squat — 140x3, 140x2, 250x1, 320x1, 390x1, 461x3x1. Used BUFFALO BARTM. The 461x3x1 was constant on squat day until August 23, 1995.

August 23, 1995—Squat— 140x1, 250x1, 340x 1, 400x1, 465x2x1.

October 6, 1995—Squat - Lifted at a gym in Clearwater, Florida while on vacation (TOO much chrome!). 145x1, 235x1, 345x1, 415x1, 465x1, 475x1. Personal record with no suit or wraps.

I had been hungry for 500x1 for some time. I fell ready for this poundage as it had been “bothering” me.

October 30, 1995—Squat—Used a regular power bar. 135x1, 235x1, 325x1, 415x1, 500x1.

November 9, 1995—Squat—Used the BUFFALO BARTM. The 500x1 with the BUFFALO BARTM was tougher than the same lift with a regular power bar. This is due to the “deadness” of the BUFFALO BARTM.

Five hundred pounds is now a working poundage that I will hit in many workouts in a row. When the body is ready for more poundage, I will add it to the bar. It's as simple as that.

Please allow me to blow a few weight training “truths” out of the water.

“Singles don't build strength. They merely test it.” My squat training consisted entirely of single reps, first multiple single reps, then later progressively heavier single reps to a top single rep set. At 248 lbs., the 500x1 is a personal record that I never would have achieved with multiple rep sets.

“You need to train in cycles, reaching a top, pre-planned weight. Then, take a week off, reduce the poundage, and rebuild again to an even higher single.” NO! The only time I took off from lifting was when I had the flu and the December, 1994 back injury. I trained as heavy as possible all the time. Cycles do not work for me.

“You are a short man; therefore, the squat should be an easy lift for you.” Please note that my first workout without suit and wraps was on March 19, 1994, 405x10x1. It took a little over 19 months for me to reach 500x1, with a lifting bell as the only support gear. If the squat is “easy” for me, then why did it take 19 months to achieve 500x1? Time and persistence are ALWAYS necessary to achieve any major goal on any lift!

“You need to have a specific day of the week for each lift.” While consistency is important, the best recovery occurred for me when I allowed 10 days between squat sessions, I trained other lifts between squat days. However, the sheer poundage necessitated more recovery from the squat sessions.

“You need to do leg extensions, leg curls, and calf work in order to stabilize the knee, and strengthen the ligaments and tendons.” BULL! The only lower body moves I do are squats and deadlifts (regular and straight-leg). If progressively heavier squat singles, without knee wraps, don't strengthen ligaments and tendons - I don't know what will!

A word about aches and pains. YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE THEM IF YOU LIFT HEAVILY! ACCEPT THAT FACT! Use ice, mild stretching, and aspirin and MOVE ON! To quote Brad Steiner, “When pulled muscles, sore, tired, and aching body areas scream at you to quit, you must simply put the discomfort out of your mind. Success comes to the lifter who PUSHES and KNOWS HOW to push.” (Steiner: Your Guide to Success in Powerlifting: The Bench Press.) That's more than enough about that subject.

Do I expect you to do things as I've done them on the squat? No. My only purpose in writing this is to share training experiences. I want you to persevere in your training and reach goals that seem impossible now. If an average trainee like myself can back out of the rack and squat below parallel with 500 lbs., then YOU can reach your goals as well.

BE A THICK, POWERFUL, SON-OF-A-GUN!”

PEARY RADER: MR. INSPIRATION

Peary Rader, founder, editor and publisher of IRON MAN magazine for fifty years, is one of the best examples ever of a man with iron determination and an unshakable will to achieve his dream of power and muscular size. Peary was an absolute bean-pole when he began his training. He stood around 6' tall and weighed all of 120 pounds soaking wet. His knees were bigger than his thighs, his elbows bigger than his biceps, and his head bigger than his torso. A picture of Peary the way he once looked appears in one of the very first issues of IRON MAN - I don't have a copy, but I have seen it - and it shows a bag-of-bones with what appears to be the worst potential of all time for building muscular size and strength. His early results bear this out 100% - after his first ten years of training, Peary had not gained even a pound of muscle.

But there was one thing about Peary Rader that WAS big - his heart. Peary never gave up. He didn't quit. He kept on going. After ten years of unsuccessful efforts, Peary read about a new exercise system based on plenty of heavy, high rep squats with lots of deep breathing between reps - an exercise system promoted by Mark H. Berry. The squat program was raising eyebrows throughout the world of weights because of the startling transformations it brought to such men as Joseph C. Hise and William Boone. After going nowhere for ten years, Peary gave the squat program a try. And it worked. Did it ever work!

Peary gained ten pounds in his first month on the program and almost 100 pounds in the next two years. Moreover, the weight gain was solid muscle. Peary became a regional champion and record holder in Olympic lifting and developed enough power and strength to do honest-to-goodness "Strong Man" exhibitions.

When Peary began his squat program he could barely manage 20 reps with an empty bar. Two years later he was handling 350 pounds for 20 reps. In other words, he increased his squatting strength by over 300 pounds. He ended up SEVEN TIMES STRONGER THAN WHEN HE STARTED!

My own training got on the right track at a relatively early age through the advice in Iron Man magazine. I probably would never have achieved much of anything in weight training or sports if it had not been for IRON MAN. Peary's unshakable IRON WILL changed not only his physique, and indeed, his entire life, but my own as well - and the physiques, and lives of tens of thousands of other young men for half a century. Peary Rader is directly or indirectly responsible for the acquisition of untold TONS of muscle. And it all resulted from his unwavering determination - his iron will to succeed.

BRADLEY J. STEINER'S OPINION

The men who really know what they are talking about when it comes to serious strength training have ALWAYS emphasized THE IRON WILL TO SUCCEED. In 1974, Bradley J. Steiner wrote the following words on pages 28-29 of his terrific book, A COMPLETE GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE BARBELL TRAINING. Read his words, read them again, and continue to read them until they are SEARED into your brain:

IF YOU ARE RESOLUTELY DETERMINED TO BUILD YOUR BODY, TO OVERCOME THE OBSTACLES OF POOR POTENTIAL, OR EVEN THE RAVAGES OF POOR HEALTH, THEN NOTHING CAN OR WILL STOP YOU!

When once you come fully to grips with the above fact - when you realize that YOU are truly in command of YOU, then you will have unlocked the door leading to the success you desire ... You can make it to the top without a lot of things - but there never yet was a man who made it to the top without the RESOLVE to do so.

Half a century before Steiner penned those inspiring words, other giants of the Iron Game expressed the same idea in similar words.

Consider the words of the famous wrestler and strongman, George Hackenschmidt, 'The Russian Lion' - a man who could one arm snatch 197.5 pounds and who set a record in the bridge and press that lasted for over FIFTY years, making it one of the longest lived records in all of sport - a man who held the Heavy weight Championship of the World in professional wrestling back in the days when wrestling was a real sport.

In his grand old book, THE WAY TO LIVE. “Hack” wrote:

DO YOU WISH TO BECOME STRONG?

“Certainly, you will answer, that is my intention, that is my wish; to which I should reply that a simple wishing will not do it. You must want to – in other words, you must act.

You have no idea how much stress I lay on that first condition! The will I should call that incessant inward impulse which spurs one on to the goal. The beginning is difficult, and many a man gets no further than the initial stages. He is not unlike the would-be piano virtuoso, who, after a few lessons, comes to the point when the exercises become more difficult and tedious, when he throws them up altogether. Others, again, put exercises off from day to day by taking firm mental resolutions to begin in earnest, and to make up for lost time, on the morrow - which seldom comes.”

Believe me, excuses which a man may advance such as, “I am too old,” “I have not sufficient time,” “My position or my business does not permit,” etc., are all mere subterfuges to cover a weak will-power. You Britons have a splendid proverb, “Where there's a will there's a way,” and I am a staunch believer in it.

The determination to become strong is indispensable for success, ... All prominent strong men have fostered their strength by the aid of a strong will-power; they wanted to become strong and consequently succeeded.

Again, I have come across many young men, who by nature seemed very weak, but who, in consequence of physical exercises and strong will-power, became pre-eminently strong. You must have faith in your ability to make yourself strong.

Banish, therefore all your said or miserable thoughts, and keep on with your physical training, without ever thinking for one moment that you might not succeed.

Think about it. What am I trying to tell you? What was Steiner trying to convey? What was Hackenschmidt trying to teach? Why am I devoting so much ink to this topic? Why do I devote several separate chapters of this book to different aspects of the mental elements of training? Answer these questions, and you will have uncovered the true secret of success in the Iron Game.

Character is destiny.

~Heraclitus

Out of intense complexities, intense simplicities emerge.

-Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR: FADS, FALLACIES AND PITFALLS

Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.

~Aldous Huxley

Advanced dinosaurs do a pretty good job of avoiding fads, fallacies and pitfalls. Beginners and intermediates often have a more difficult time. Here are some basic rules to follow to help avoid wasting years of training by following bad advice, bad thinking and bad examples.

WHERE TO TRAIN

First of all, understand that you are far better off training at home then training anywhere else. If you train at a commercial gym you will be surrounded by people who give you bad advice. This applies to almost any gym in the world. The exceptions are so few that they barely matter: Dick Connor's PIT in Evansville, Indiana, Dr. Ken Leistner's IRON ISLAND GYM in New York City and a couple of other places. For the most part, commercial gyms are cesspools of mindless nonsense.

If you go to a commercial gym and someone tells you to do something - or to do something a certain way - you are virtually guaranteed that what they are telling you is (1) wrong, (2) dangerous, and (3) non-productive. Thoreau once claimed that he never learned anything important from anyone over the age of 30 (a comment that somehow seemed infinitely more insightful when I was the ripe old age of 17 than today, more than 20 years later). You probably could paraphrase Thoreau and say, without exaggeration, "I never learned anything about correct training in a commercial gym."

If you **MUST** train at a commercial gym, pay no attention whatsoever to anything anyone ever tells you. Ninety-nine percent of it will be absurd, dangerous and foolish. Only one percent of it might actually be good advice. Rather than sort the wheat from the chaff, just ignore all of it. That may bruise some egos and hurt some feelings, but it's really the only rational way to deal with the problem.

LEARNING NOT TO LISTEN

The second thing you need to do is learn not to listen to people just because they have an impressive build or can push or pull more iron than you. Being big and strong is no guarantee that a man knows anything at all about how anyone else can get there safely and efficiently. In most cases, big and strong guys in today's idiotic world got that way by doing drugs - and a drug baby has absolutely nothing to offer to a dinosaur. If you are new to the Iron Game it is critically important for you to learn - and learn quickly - that the guy with the biggest arms is almost always NOT a source of useful training advice.

BEWARE THE ARMCHAIR EXPERT

The third point is the flip side of the second point. On the one hand, you would be a fool to listen to some drug-bloated pretty boy just because he happens to have a big arm or can lift three times more than you can handle. But on the other hand, you would be a fool to listen to some self-appointed "expert" who doesn't have enough muscles to pour into a thimble. **BEWARE** the armchair expert!

Armchair theorizers are all too common in the Iron Game. They multiply like maggots. You can hardly avoid them. Walk into the "exercise" section of any bookstore and you will see one book after another authored by some scrawny pencil-neck who has no idea in the world what real training is all about. Or worse - much worse - he doesn't even care.

SOME BOOKS DESERVE BURNING

A related point involves “celebrity” exercise books. It should go without saying that a current matinee idol, rock star or television personality is NOT going to have anything worthwhile to say about weight training. A dinosaur would sooner eat old automobile tires cooked in kerosene than read a celebrity exercise book.

CONFUSING ART AND SCIENCE

One of the biggest mistakes that trainees make is confusing art and science. Strength training is an art, not a science. This is why there is no one way to train and no one training system that everyone should follow. Many men get off track because they look for a “scientific” training system, because they are converted to the totalitarian dictates of the latest “scientific” training system or because they decide that their training program is so “scientific” that they don't need to bother with good old fashioned hard work!

Dr. Ken Leistner addressed this problem in an excellent article (“Strength Training: Science or Art”) that appears in the September, 1985 issue of THE STEEL TIP (Vol. 1. No. 9). Dr. Leistner wrote:

“If you took the time to read the numerous books related to physical fitness, exercise, and nutrition, you would realize that there are as many “scientifically backed” theories as there are authors. You might also come away with the notion that you needed a stopwatch, pulse counter, blood pressure cuff, calorie and nutrition almanac, \$79.95 running shoes, and a complete blood profile in order to achieve a state of fitness. A perusal of the muscle building literature would assault you with a variety of periodization programs, mini-cycles, plyometrics, muscle fiber type specialization movements, and exercises that a contortionist would have difficulty with. Magazine authors propose a new and earth shattering training theory almost monthly, often spurred on by the opportunity to profit from a new product that coincidentally augments their latest and greatest training theorem.

Significantly, the true requisites for increasing strength and cardiovascular fitness have been lost. The common sense approach to the attainment of strength and health has become a thing of the past, overshadowed by the new, the “hip,” the “scientific.” I do not believe that the development of strength tends itself to a scientific explanation. True, legitimate research has given us useful insights, but generally speaking, strength training has marched steadily backward for the past decade as the masses have genuflected to Eastern Bloc verbiage and the “latest” from the California crowd. The dependence upon hard work and the application of dedicated effort have been replaced by quick hitting anabolic drugs and a vast array of useless equipment. Perseverance and insistence upon progressive overload utilizing basic exercises that call upon the major muscular structures of the body are seen as a comical cliché, yet, the average results of training, the gains made by the vast majority of trainees, is no better now than it was fifteen or twenty years ago, especially if the drug users are culled out of the population sample.”

MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT

You really do need to be cynical when it comes to weight training advice. The amount of bad information on the market is staggering. We need to re-institute meaningful deterrents to criminal behavior - drawing and quartering, the rack and the thumb screw, for example — and reserve them for those who publish worthless information about weight training. The situation really is that bad.

FIFTY OR SIXTY YEARS AGO

Ask yourself how people learned to train fifty or sixty years ago. There were virtually no books or courses available back then - there was no television - there were almost no magazines - but somehow, most people who trained with weights managed to get real strong real quick. How did they do it?

In many cases, they did it by hands on trial and error - which is still one of the best ways to learn to do anything. They also did it by following the handful of good sources of training

information available in those days - books and courses by Calvert, Saxon, Pullum, Inch, Aston, Hackenschmidt, Jowett and Liederman. They read Alan Calvert's *STRENGTH*, Peary Rader's *IRON MAN*, Roger Eells' *VIM* and Bob Hoffman's *STRENGTH AND HEALTH*. It was actually EASIER to find decent training advice in those days. Why? Because there was not much information on the market, but what WAS available was all pretty good. Nowadays, the real problem is figuring out what is good - it tends to get lost in the shuffle with all of the bad stuff. And the bad stuff outnumbers the good by about 100 to one.

THEN AND NOW

One very important difference between THEN and NOW was that people who lifted weights fifty or sixty years ago were interested in *STRENGTH*, not in looking “cut” or “sleek” or “buff.” That provided a very easy way to test the validity of any training advice you received. If you gave it a try and you got stronger, it was good advice. If you gave it a try and you either stagnated or LOST strength, you knew almost immediately that it was bad advice!

The same was true if you thought of something new and gave your idea a try (and back then, so much was “new” that many guys developed their best training ideas entirely as the result of trial and error and a helpful burst of intuition). If you got stronger, your idea was good: if you did not get stronger, it was a bad idea. The proof was in the pudding. You tested everything. You kept what worked and you discarded the rest.

Today, most people train for appearance rather than strength, and as a result, they cannot effectively gauge the results of any given suggestion or idea. Take the idea of super-sets, for example. Guys will say they got “good results” by doing two exercises for the biceps back to back with no rest between exercises. “Good results?” By what standard? Do they mean they got STRONGER by training that way? Not likely! What they mean is that they got “a good bum” or “a good pump” and therefore it “felt” like the supersets were working. Or else they did them for a couple of workouts and someone said their arms looked “buff” and they attributed their new-found buffness to the supersets. But pump, burn and buffness don't add up to strength.

The old-timers never would have fallen for such nonsense as supersets, slow motion training, pumping or “going for the bum.” I'd love to hear Herman Goerner's response to the suggestion that he stop doing one arm deadlifts with 600 or 700 pounds and “train for a pump.”

I'd love to hear Arthur Saxon's response to the idea that he should count to ten while lifting a light weight instead of heaving a 300 pound sack of flour overhead at whatever speed he could manage.

I'd love to hear Doug Hepburn's response to someone who told him to super-set presses and lateral raises instead of building his enormous deltoids by military pressing world record poundages as hard and fast as possible.

I'd love to hear Bob Peoples' response to anyone who told him to stop doing deadlifts because they were too “basic” and to switch to a hyperextension/leg curl super-set instead.

I'd love to hear John Davis' response to someone who told him that Olympic lifting didn't build size or strength because you used “momentum” to lift the weight.

I'd love to hear Norb Schemansky's response to someone who told him to stop squatting, pulling and pressing world class poundages, “isolate” his muscles, move very slowly and learn to “feel” the weight all the way up and all the way down.

Men like Goerner, Saxon, Hepburn, Peoples, Davis, and Schemansky didn't have to read books or glossy magazines to figure out what it takes to grow big and strong. Neither do you. Neither does anyone. More important than what you read is what you DON'T read. Knowing what works is largely a matter of knowing what doesn't. More important than what you know is what you know enough not to try. Be a dinosaur. Stick to your guns. Train like a dinosaur. Don't get sucked into every passing fad or fancy. Keep things simple. Retain your cynicism. Don't get sidetracked. Dinosaur training is the Royal Road to muscular size and strength. You deserve no less than to follow the Royal Road. Leave the bunny path to the bunnies.

*Often do the spirits of great events stride on before the events/
and in today already walks tomorrow.*

~Samuel Taylor Coleridge

*In critical and baffling situations, it is always best to return to
first principle and simple action.*

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE: JUST DO IT!

The great end of life is not knowledge but action.

~Thomas Henry Huxley

You are almost at the end of this book. You now have to make an important decision. You have to decide whether to train like a dinosaur.

IT'S YOUR DECISION

No one can make you train in any particular way. You are the master of your fate when it comes to mapping out an exercise schedule. If you want to do leg extensions and lunges instead of squats, there is nothing I can do to stop you. If you want to wear padded gloves and avoid grip work like the plague for fear of developing calluses, I can't do a thing to make you change your mind. If you decide to do time controlled reps - ten seconds up and five seconds down with a puny poundage - a training style that I do NOT recommend and that any dinosaur would LAUGH at - then that's your business. If you decide you can't wait to do it naturally and you "must" use steroids to build your body, then that too is YOUR decision and YOUR decision alone.

In the final analysis, there is only one person who can take responsibility for your training and the results of your training, and that person is you.

No one else can decide that you should train like a dinosaur - or a rabbit. The choice is yours and yours alone. No one else can take credit for your decision and no one else can change your mind. The choice - dinosaur or rabbit - is in your hands.

NO ONE ELSE CAN DO IT FOR YOU

Similarly, you and you alone are responsible for the degree of EFFORT you put into your training. I can tell you that you need to work hard. Mike Thompson can say it, Dr. Ken Leistner can say it, Bradley J. Steiner can say it, Greg Pickett can say it, Peary Rader can say it, Dr. Randall J. Strossen can say it, Bob Whelan can say it, Osmo Kiiha can say it, and John McCallum can say it - but what you do when you get to the gym is entirely up to you.

It isn't enough to decide to train like a dinosaur. That's the easy part. Now you have to go out and do it. You not only have to do it today, you have to do it tomorrow and the next day and every day thereafter.

SURPASS YOURSELF

Every day you train you must surpass yourself. I don't mean you must lift more weight or do more reps than you did before - you can't better your best efforts every time you train. Your body grows at its own pace - you have good days and bad days - growing spells and spells where you are laying the groundwork for future growth but are not actually growing.

What I mean when I say you must surpass yourself is this: you must bring out the best within you every time you train. Your best is the ability to focus on the task at hand, to train with while hot determination, to ignore aches and pains and fatigue, to banish commonplace cares and the inevitable problems and frustrations of day-to-day existence, to act with courage, to be decisive, to be positive, to be optimistic, to be aggressive and to carry yourself in all ways such that if one of the great dinosaurs from the past – Saxon, Goerner, Hepburn, Peoples, Boone, Inch or Steinborn - were to walk into your training quarters, he'd see immediately that you and he were brothers.

BE A HERO

Remember, you do not need to be able to bench press 400 pounds or do other outstanding feats of strength to be a dinosaur. A dinosaur is an ordinary man who chooses to train in an

extraordinary way. HE IS A HERO. He is a hero regardless of his present level of strength and development and regardless of his inherent potential for strength and development.

He is a hero because he has made a conscious decision to choose what is hard, difficult and demanding.

He is a hero because he has the courage to turn away from drugs, hypocrisy, cant, superstition and all of the popular delusions that shape the world of modern training.

He is a hero because he accepts the fact that what he wants to achieve will take time, effort, and determination.

He is a hero because he has made the decision to be in it for the long haul.

Emerson said, "A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer." He was describing a dinosaur.

Albert Schweitzer said. "The tragedy of life is what dies inside a man while he lives." He was NOT describing a dinosaur.

GIVING UP BEFORE YOU EVEN GET STARTED

Most men who read this book will put it down and think about being a dinosaur for a few minutes or a few days, and then decide they need to "pump" their biceps with some extra sets of concentration curls or add a few specialized movements that I somehow forgot to mention when I listed the exercises you should do. They will consider the idea of gelling a thick bar, a power rack, or some sandbags, resolve to "do it next week," and later - when next week has come and gone - decide I probably don't know what I am talking about, conclude that dinosaur training is too radical in any event, start to browse through the latest glitz and glamour magazine, and then decide to try the new arm blasting program recommended by Joe Superstar ... and if anyone ever asks, they'll say they gave dinosaur training an honest try but found it was not for them.

CONFORMING TO MEDIOCRITY

Face it. Most men are afraid to do anything that is different from what the rest of the world is doing. Most men condemn themselves to lives of hopeless mediocrity because they cannot envision doing anything that would separate them from the mediocre. Most men would rather walk into the gym stark naked than walk into the gym with a thick handled barbell, a trap bar or a 150 pound bag of sand. Most men would rather stay small and weak than do something radically different from what everyone else at the gym is doing. Most men would give up their left testicle before they would do heavy singles or high rep breathing squats with a heavy poundage, the farmers' walk, sandbag curls, bottom position rack work or anything else that would make them stand out and be different from the rest of the group.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

Andrew Jackson said, "One man with courage makes a majority." Finding that one man is almost impossible in today's times. You could travel from gym to gym across the world and be darn lucky if you found even one man who was willing to stop the silly nonsense that everyone else is doing and give something as radical as dinosaur training a try.

You have to accept the fact that dinosaur training will make you unique and different - an object of amusement to many, of scorn and derision to many more, and even an object of outright hostility to a surprisingly large number of people. Why? Because people HATE anything that is new and different, Aldous Huxley once noted - and his words are directly applicable to dinosaur training and those who train like dinosaurs: "The vast majority of human beings dislike and even actually dread all notions with which they are not familiar. ... Hence it comes about that at their first appearance innovators have ... always been derided as fools and madmen,"

On the other hand, never forget what you will lose if you bow to the false god of Conformity. Schopenhauer said, "We forfeit three-fourths of ourselves in order to be like other people." In the physical sense, he was literally correct. If you train like a dinosaur you can gain fifty or sixty pounds of muscle - or more - over the course of your training career. You can push your

bench press to well over 300 pounds, your squat to well over 400 pounds and your deadlift to 500 pounds or more. If you are afraid to be different - afraid to do something radically unique - afraid to chance the smirks and scorn of your peers - then you will not attain one quarter of the success you could have attained by training like a dinosaur instead of a bunny rabbit.

THE COURAGE OF YOUR CONVICTIONS

You must have the courage of your convictions to train like a dinosaur. It is not enough to read this book and be caught up in the momentary exuberance of reading about some thing new and different and exciting. That sort of response will sustain your training for only a couple of weeks. You need to resolve - deeply, firmly and with the utmost conviction - to adopt dinosaur training and a dinosaur's philosophy as YOUR way of doing things for the rest of your life. You have to turn your back on all of the popular follies and mass-marketed delusions that have shaped you to the present. You have to begin to create a new person - a new self - a new YOU!

On the physical level, dinosaur training can and will transform you. But its effects on the mental and emotional levels are even greater. Dinosaur training will remake your mental attitudes. You will reshape your being. You will become a different person.

This is a heavy burden to carry. Self-actualization in any form is the most difficult of tasks. It also is the most rewarding.

What is your choice? Which door will you open? Will you rise to the challenge of the dinosaurs - or will you succumb to the siren song of the bunny rabbits? The decision is yours.

I shall tell you a great secret my friend. Do not wait for the last judgment, it takes place every day.

~Albert Camus

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX: NO EXCUSES

There is no failure except in no longer trying.

~Elbert Hubbard

Dinosaurs don't make excuses. Everyone else seems to be more interested in making excuses for their failures than about earning their successes. If you want to get big and strong, get under the bar and lift. Don't bore me with ten thousand reasons why you cannot do something, just do it. As I always tell anyone who starts to concoct excuses, "Shut up and lift!"

NO MORE EXCUSES

Let's discuss the excuses that 99% of those who train will offer to avoid the pain, torture and agony of dinosaur training. Why run through the list of excuses? Because I want YOU to be left, at the conclusion of this chapter, with NO excuses for not training hard, heavy and seriously on a sensible, abbreviated program similar to those detailed in this book. You can CHOOSE not to train hard, heavy and serious, but I want you and everyone else who reads this to know that your excuses are nothing more than an admission that you prefer to train like a bunny rabbit instead of a man.

"TOO OLD"

What's the first common excuse guys use to avoid hard training? "I'm too old." Oops – sorry, guys, it just won't work. How old do you think I am? I'm 38 years old at the time of this writing. That's two years shy of 40. That's old enough to be the father of the majority of guys who lift weights, and almost old enough to be the grandfather of many of them. I guess I'm "too old" to train heavy, eh? Then why am I benching 400, squatting 500 and tossing heavy bags and barrels around like they were paper? Maybe the barbells, bags and barbells don't know they're dealing with an old man.

Guys, there is no such thing as being "too old" for hard training. Obviously, if you have not trained since you were a teenager, you need to get a physical exam and your doctor's approval before starting in on any sort of exercise program. You need to break into things slow and easy. You need to use caution and common sense. But you don't need to sit on the curb and watch the parade pass you by. You can still march in the parade. You can even ride the elephant if you wish.

If you have trained consistently from your youth, you can continue to train for your entire life. History is full of examples of serious weight trainers who kept going well into their fifties or sixties. Jan Dellinger told me about watching John Grimek casually clean and press a pair of 100 pound dumbbells during a workout at the York gym when Grimek was around 65 years old. Grimek cleaned the bells like they were paper and pressed them five times as if they weighed nothing at all.

This was done as part of a three-times-per-week schedule of circuit training, not as a maximum effort or any sort of big deal. Grimek also did partial squats with 800 pounds or so - with no spotter, with only a thin leather lifting belt, and using a set of "stair" squat stands instead of a power rack. Hackenschmidt retained the ability to lift 150 pounds overhead with one arm well into his sixties. Henry "Milo" Steinborn lifted an 800 pound ELEPHANT when he was 57 years old, and was doing 400 pound squats when he was 70. John Y. Smith won a prestigious, hotly contested contest to determine "The Strongest Man in New England" when he was in his 60's. Doug Hepburn still handles ENORMOUS poundages - and the man is approaching 70! Father Bernard Lange of Notre Dame University, a "Milo man" who got his start with a Milo barbell and a course authored by Alan Calvert, was able to deadlift well over 500 pounds when in his 60s. The list goes on and on.

“NO TIME”

What's another common excuse for not training? “I have a busy job – I don't have time to train.” Sorry, pal, that's another excuse that won't hold water. What do you think I do for a living? I'm a lawyer, I work at a large law firm. It emphasizes commercial litigation, discrimination suits and employment law. My practice keeps me extremely busy. I'm also a freelance writer, I'm married, I have the same demands and time constraints that anyone has when he lives with another person. But guess what - I still make time to train. If I can do it, you can do it. Anyone can do it. It's just a matter of self-discipline and determination.

Most people are geniuses at wasting time. Most people who lift weights are absolute geniuses at never having enough time to fit some squats or heavy back work into their schedules. Don't follow their example. Time is too valuable to waste. Devote yourself to your job and to your family, do what you need to do, and make the time to train. If you WANT to train, you will FIND the time to train.

Consider the example of Greg Pickett. Greg is married, has three small children and works a demanding, time-consuming job as an auditor. Greg will drag himself out of bed at 4:00 in the morning, crawl down to his basement gym and do heavy singles in the squat with over 480 to 500 pounds, heavy deadlifts with over 500 pounds and dumbbell deadlifts with 200 pound dumbbells or more. He doesn't make excuses and he doesn't whine and cry about not having the time to train. He MAKES time to train.

“BAD GENETICS”

What's another common excuse? How about “I have bad genetics for lifting weights. I can't do squats or benches or deadlifts because I have bad leverages for those lifts. I know I can never be very strong or muscular, so I don't see why I should train as hard as guys like Kubik, Pickett, Whelan or Thompson.”

Sorry. That's yet another excuse that just won't wash.

Weight training has developed - or is developing - a cult of mediocrity. The genesis for the cult of mediocrity is the realization that genetic factors play a substantial role in one's rate of progress and in the ultimate level of muscular size and strength that one can achieve through weight training. I have nothing at all against pointing out the importance of genetic factors. People need to know that Joe Superstar is the champion of the hour in large part because of his genetic potential for bodybuilding or powerlifting (and his drug bill!) rather than any special training secrets, supplements or other commercial razzle-dazzle. There's nothing wrong with pointing out the role that genetics plays in Iron Game success.

There is, however, something wrong with patting yourself on the back because you are “the world's hardest gaining bodybuilder” or any similar self-appointed title. There is something wrong with those who take perverse pride in dwelling on their failures. There is something wrong with those who claim to have special insights to offer solely because they have trained for years and can only bench press 200 pounds. There is something wrong with those who dwell on training injuries, sticking points, genetic limitations and failure.

When John Stuart Mill stated that “[T]he general tendency of things throughout the world is to render mediocrity the ascendant power among mankind,” he wasn't speaking of weight trainers, but he certainly could have been.

Men, there is nothing wrong with having average or even less than average genetic potential for building muscular size and strength. There also is no glory in it. It is absurd to pat yourself on the back because you have difficulty gaining size or strength, and it is equally absurd to forego serious training because you feel you are only “average.”

The great value of weight training is that it can take even an average man and turn him into a superhuman powerhouse of strength and might. He may not look like Joe Superstar when all is said and done, and he might not set any world records, but he will be four or five times stronger than he was when he started. He will be healthier, happier, more fit, better conditioned, a better worker, a better husband, a better father - in all aspects of his life, he will improve himself ENORMOUSLY through serious, heavy weight training. And what is equally important, he will have fun doing it!

Don't talk to me about "poor genetics" or "disadvantages." I don't want to hear that kind of negative talking. I don't care who you are or how poor your potential. I KNOW that if you knuckle down to some serious, heavy training, you WILL begin to see results. You may not end up by being the champion of the world, but you can go far - much, much further than you presently realize.

A PERSONAL EXAMPLE

Let me offer a personal insight into "genetics." As a young man, I read enough to realize that genetic potential played an important role in one's ultimate level of muscular size and strength. I had trained hard for a number of years and had made what I felt was good progress. I weighed 175 or 180 pounds, benched 350 pounds for one touch and go rep, squatted 315 for five reps, and figured I had pretty much gone as far as I could realistically hope to go.

Then I learned how to train the right way – HARD and heavy, on ABBREVIATED routines. That's when things started to happen. One day I stepped on the scales and found I weighed 193. And I was closing in on a 400 pound bench press. I continued to train and my weight jumped to 198 ... then 200 ... 205 ... 210 ... and now I weigh 225. My personal record in the bench press is up to 415 pounds, starting from the chest and using a 3" bar. When I weighed 175, I doubt if I could have managed 250 in that fashion.

If I had decided that my "genetics" did not allow me to go any further than a bodyweight of 175 pounds, I would still weigh 175 pounds. In fact, that IS what I thought for many years, and for many years my size and strength went nowhere. It was not until I began to re-evaluate what might be possible that I started to discover new levels of muscular size and strength.

Genetic potential is undeniably of tremendous importance to any serious weight lifter. But you can't do anything to alter your potential. All you can do is try to actualize it. Even if all you have is only "average" potential - if you make the most of it, you will leave the rest of the world gasping in amazement at what you can do. Remember, even "average" potential - if fully actualized - will make you incredibly strong.

Don't get overly concerned about your genetic potential. Whatever it is, you can achieve tremendous results. Never sell yourself short.

David Webster has authored a great book, *SONS OF SAMSON*, which profiles over 500 professional strongmen entertainers. It is limited to men who made a living by doing strength shows, and thus, does not include many other enormously powerful men: Olympic lifters, wrestlers, highland games competitors, field athletes, football players, certain pre-steroid bodybuilders (e.g., Park, Grimek and Ross) and powerlifters. Many of the athletes featured in the book did shows during the 1890-1920 period (the "Golden Age" of strength shows), and some lived earlier; thus, they lacked any of the "benefits" of modern equipment, modern supplements or modern training information, let alone modern pharmacology. Nevertheless, Webster identifies over 500 men so powerful they could earn a living by doing strength shows. Are we to believe that all of these men were genetic freaks? Or were the majority of them men with average or above average genetics who trained like grizzly bears to develop as much power as possible?

The worst thing that can happen to a man is to give up on his training because he feels he doesn't have the potential for great gains. "The deepest personal defeat suffered by human beings," said Ashley Montague, "is constituted by the difference between what one was capable of becoming and what one has in fact become,"

Don't give in to defeat without even putting up a fight. Gird your loins and enter the fray. Don't use poor potential as an excuse. Be a dinosaur. Make the most of what you have. Be everything you CAN be before you worry about what you CANNOT be.

THE ULTIMATE EFFORT-SAVING DEVICE

When you come right down to it, excuses are a way of avoiding effort. Most men live their entire lives without ever making a serious, determined effort to achieve anything. In the incomparable prose of William James, it was expressed like this:

Compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake. We are making use of only a small part of our physical and mental resources. Stating the thing broadly, the human individual thus lives far within his limits. He possesses power of various sorts which he habitually fails to use.

Don't make excuses today and wake up tomorrow kicking yourself over what might have been, what could have been or what should have been. Seize the moment. Act today. Act now. Step confidently and resolutely toward the goals and achievements you desire. If you don't run, you can't win. If you make excuses and don't enter the race, you forfeit all opportunity of ever accomplishing anything. A person who is constantly making excuses is nothing more than the earliest of quitters. Determine today that YOU will not become an encyclopedia of excuses. Determine today that YOU will become the one man in a thousand who dares to bring his dreams to life.

The fear of life is the favorite disease of the twentieth century.

~William Lyon Phelps

You must never make a promise which you do not fulfill.

~Sir Winston Churchill

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN: EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS

One very useful trick which the weightlifter should adopt is a wisely moderated contempt of his weight.

~Arthur Saxon

We are now at the final chapter of this book. If you have been paying attention, you have learned many long lost secrets of productive training. You have learned about thick bars, grip work, rack work, singles, hard work, the 5 x 5 system, the importance of heavy weights, and many aspects of the all important mental elements of training. You have learned from one book what took me over twenty-five years of trial and error to understand. You have had an excellent education.

The only thing that remains is for you to take the principles detailed in this book and put them to use in your training. Ideas are wonderful things, but it is action that moves the world. Merely learning how to train productively and effectively is not enough. You must actually go out and apply your knowledge. You must train.

The one thing that might stop you is a nagging doubt about whether you really CAN achieve the training success that you desire.

Don't let that stop you. That nagging doubt has stopped too many lifters for too many years. It has prevented too many from daring to do their best. It has ended spectacular careers before they even started. We need to do something about that nagging doubt. We need to hunt it down and kill it.

I want to share a story with you. It is a personal story, told in the first person, but for that I offer no apologies. It is important that you understand that what I am about to relate really happened.

I want to share with you certain words of encouragement that a weight training author penned in a hot apartment in New York City in the early 1970s. And I want to share how I carried those words with me, and still carry them today. I want to tell you how I responded to those words.

Bradley J. Steiner's COMPLETE GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE BARBELL TRAINING was printed and published by IRON MAN INDUSTRIES in 1974. I bought a copy as soon as it hit the market. I was 17 at the time, a senior in high school, and weighed all of 145 pounds at my present height of 5'9".

Steiner's book was a masterpiece. It provided one of the best and most comprehensive overviews of sensible training ever written. It was particularly good with regard to the mental elements of training - something that most authors in the field totally neglect or address only in passing.

The final chapter was titled "The Windup." In it, Steiner wrote, "We have come a long way together, you and I." He stated, "Only time will ultimately tell how far you go in the wonderful Iron Game." He then added, "it is my true and sincere wish that you will strive to go as far as your potential permits - and that you will succeed beyond any dreams of accomplishment you may now have."

At that time, my best bench press (touch and go style) was 225 pounds, my best squat was 250 and my best deadlift was 320. I wore a size 14 or 15 shirt and would have killed for a pair of arms that stretched the tape to 15 inches. I was a good athlete and a champion at wrestling, but hardly a model of Iron Game success.

On the last page of the book, Steiner wrote. "If you win the Mr. America title someday, I'll jump almost as high as you do! But whatever your goals, I want you to make it." He closed with six short words: "God Bless You, and GOOD LUCK!"

Well, I never won the Mr. America title – never even competed in a bodybuilding contest. Never wanted to. But I did do something that I view as a significant accomplishment. I did it more than 16 years after I first read Steiner's inspiring words. And when I accomplished my

goal, I felt that I was repaying a long overdue debt to an outstanding author and to a man who has helped me and many others learn what it takes to achieve our goals.

Fast forward to May, 1991. We are in St. Louis, Missouri. I am backstage at the 1991 NASA National Masters and Submasters Powerlifting and Bench Press Championships. I weigh 193 pounds and am entered in the Submasters division of the bench press competition - in the 198 pound weight class. This is an all natural competition - drug-tested to assure that the competitors are natural athletes.

The smell of stale sweat mingles with the harsh authority of every type of liniment under the sun. That's one thing that immediately tells you that you are at a masters and submasters powerlifting meet - the liniment. Everyone uses the stuff. All of us. Every competitor. Including me, a veritable rookie in only my second official bench press competition. The first had been a Kentucky State Championship that I won the week before with a lift of 374 pounds. I missed 396 twice at the state meet. I had no real idea what I would be able to handle at a national meet, with stricter judging and lifts being red-lighted for even the slightest of infractions.

I was competing on the second day of the meet. The first day had included all of the women and all of the men up to 181 pounds. Day two included the 198s, the 220s, the 242s, the 275s and the super heavies. There were several hundred competitors, coaches and handlers backstage on Day Two. At 198, I was one of the little guys. Some of the biggest men I had ever seen in my life were roaming like grizzly bears through the warm-up area. These guys were BIG. I mean, gigantic. They looked strong enough to juggle 200 pound dumbbells. And there were not just one or two of these guys. There was an entire room full of them.

Somewhere in that group of monsters stalked my competition. I had no idea who would be in my weight class. I had no idea how much they could handle. I had no idea how I would do. I hoped I wouldn't make a fool out of myself. It would be a long drive back to Louisville if I got blown away.

The competition started with the squats, and all of the lifters in all of the classes went through their three attempts in that lift. The only guys who didn't squat were the guys like me who were entered in the bench press only part of the competition. We were the "lucky" ones. We got to sit around and get nervous and worry. I still had no idea how I would stack up in a national championship against the best lifters from across the entire country.

It seemed to take forever before we got to the bench pressing.

Finally, it was time to warm up for the benches. I did five reps with 135, then a single with 225. It felt heavy, I was tired and stiff. My stomach was in knots. My throat was dry as the Sahara. I had a bottle of mouthwash in my gym bag. I kept using a little every five or ten minutes.

I was really worried about feeling so tight and weak. It was around 11:00 in the morning. I always lift in the late afternoon or evening. I can hardly move until after lunch time. I wished I had competed at 181 the day before - I would have been in the last class of the day instead of the first. However, I had seen one of the 181 pounders the night before at dinner and he looked like he could bench press a truck. Maybe it was better to lift at 198. Unless the 198 pounders all ended up being able to bench press TWO trucks!

It was hot back stage. I was sweating so much I figured the bar would fall right out of my hands. I kept an extra towel around to dry them off. I used it every couple of minutes. It didn't do much good.

I had planned to open at 374 pounds. I really felt weak. I went out and found the scoring table. Thankfully, they let me drop my opener to 365.

My final warmup was 335. It was TOUGH - ragged and uneven. I was NOT happy. This was getting serious.

Finally, it was time for the benching to begin. I waited anxiously for my name to be called. I figured the announcer would mispronounce it. I lost track of where I was in the group of lifters in the first flight. I was afraid they had lost my score card and skipped over me. I went up and double-checked. It was ok. They hadn't reached me yet.

Then they called my name. I was "in the hole." That meant I was the third man in order, with number one being the lifter on the platform at that time.

I chalked my hands and waited. I figured I should wait until the man before me (number two) was on the platform to tighten my lifting belt and my wrist wraps. (Knee and wrist wraps are used in powerlifting competition. Although I don't use them for training, they are a must for competition.)

Then they called the lifting order. I was “on deck.” That meant I would go right after the guy in front of me finished his lift. I tightened my belt, wrapped my wrists and chalked up. I focused on getting the lift. It wasn't hard to focus on the lift - I had been thinking about virtually nothing else for months. As I lifted, as I ran, as I drove to work in the morning and home in the evening, I had thought about this very moment - stepping onto the platform at the national championships and getting under the bench press bar.

I needed a little extra level of psyche. I slapped myself hard across the right cheek. WHAM! I repeated the process on the other side of my face. WHAM!

I turned to the bench.

They called my name.

I walked onto the platform.

I was focused. I was intense. I was hot. I was flying. I was ready for battle. I was ready to lift. I was ready to do it.

I got into position, focused, nodded to my hand-off man, took the bar, lowered it smoothly, paused at the chest until the referee said “Press!” and then drove me bar up and back to arms' length. I held the bar until the “Rack!” command, then put it back in the saddles.

I looked at the electronic scoreboard. Three white lights! I had made my first lift!

I walked over to the score table and gave them my next attempt, I would try 385.

I had to wait 20 minutes or more until they cycled through the flight and it was my turn to lift again. I had stayed psyched the whole time. I was almost bouncing off the wall. The intensity oozed out of me like electricity. I felt like I was on fire.

I nailed the 385. Three white lights!

I asked for 396 on my third attempt. This was the one I had missed two times at the stale meet just two weeks earlier. Neither attempt had even been close.

I had lost track of my competition. I had no idea where I stood or what I needed to do. I Just figured I would give that 396 the best shot I could manage.

Another 20 or 30 minutes passed before I was called for my third and final attempt. During the whole period, I kept telling myself to stay on top of things, to be strong, to push hard, to hold it together for one more effort. I was drenched with sweat, I had to sit on a towel because the backs of my legs were so sweaty. My hands were dripping. I had to keep running them through a towel. I chalked up every couple of minutes. I wondered how I was doing in the competition, told myself it didn't matter, and tried to focus on going out and doing my very best.

I wondered what in me world I was doing in a national championship. I promised myself that if I could only make it through this meet, I'd never do anything as crazy as this ever again.

I wondered if the last lift would be the one that won or lost the competition for me. What if I missed it?

“Don't think about it. Just think about your lifting,” I said to myself.

They called my name.

I was in the hole.

Then I was on deck.

Then I was on me platform. There was only me and the bar. Three hundred ninety-six pounds. One hundred eighty kilos. It was a contest between the two of us. Nothing else mattered. Nothing else existed. The entire universe faded away, leaving only me and the bar. One of us would win, one of us would lose. Two weeks ago, the bar had won.

Today it was my turn.

I growled at the bar, turned, planted my feet, flexed my back muscles, and lowered myself into position on the bench. I breathed deeply, held my breath, nodded to the hand-off man and took the bar at arms' length.

Three hundred ninety six pounds. One hundred eighty kilos.

I lowered the bar to my chest.

“PRESS !”

I drove the bar up and back. It hit the sticking point and almost slowed to a grinding halt. I drove as hard as I could - pushed with everything I had. The bar continued to move ... slowly. I pushed and pushed. The bar inched its way upward.

The bar faltered and almost stopped. It was GOING to stop. The weight was too heavy.

I couldn't believe I would miss the lift after coming this close. It wasn't fair. I had worked so hard for this moment! A lifetime of effort was reduced to the almost imperceptible movement of the bar. I drove frantically to finish the lift.

Suddenly my arms exploded to the lock-out position.

“RACK IT”

I sat up and looked at the scoreboard.

Three white lights.

It was a good lift. I had defeated the weight. I had won. It was me against the bar, and I won.

“Congratulations.” someone told me. “That was the heaviest bench of your flight.”

I almost fell to the floor. It was like popping a balloon. I felt as though all of the strength and power and psyche had been sucked out of my body. I tried to piece things together.

If I had made the heaviest bench of my flight, that meant I had out-lifted everyone else in my weight class.

I was a national champion.

I was the champion of the entire United States - all fifty states - everywhere. In high school wrestling I was a state champion in Greco-Roman style wrestling. But this was different. That had been one state. This was the entire United States.

I felt so weak that the slightest breeze would have knocked me over.

I couldn't believe it. All the years of sweat and effort had been justified. All the years of studying the Iron Game. All the lonely hours lifting by myself because no one else trained the way I trained. All the years where my only training partners were Bradley Steiner, Peary Rader, and John McCallum.

It had worked, I really had succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. The skinny kid who read Steiner's books and articles over and over had never dreamed he would one day win a national championship.

Steiner had said he would jump as high as I did if I ever won the Mr. America contest. Well, this wasn't the Mr. America contest, but it was pretty good.

“National champion.”

“NATIONAL CHAMPION!”

I looked over at the trophies on the awards table. One of them was mine.

I smiled and wished that Steiner had been there. Then I realized that he had.

“Thanks, Brad.” I said.

That was the first of five national championships in the bench press. I also set a number of national meet and American records in the bench press, and in one organization, set a couple of world records. My last meet was in 1993, and like my first, took place at the NASA National Masters and Submasters Power-lifting and Bench Press Championships. I won the 220 pound class in the submasters division and set an American and national meet record with 407 pounds. After that, I turned all of my attention to writing and to the sort of “down in your basement” training detailed in this book.

There are several points to the preceding account that I want to discuss. First, I want to emphasize that all of the information in this book really works. It is not the arid intellectualization of an armchair theoretician. This is real world stuff, from a guy who proved that it works by challenging and defeating some of the best drug free lifters in the world.

Second, I want you to understand that my story is one that YOU can duplicate. You may never win a national championship or set powerlifting records, but that's not what matters. What MATTERS is that YOU can do what Steiner told ME I could do. He said I could exceed my expectations. So can you. And I want you to do so. I am in your corner, fighting

alongside of you every inch of the way. I have total and complete confidence in your ability to achieve things that far surpass anything you could presently imagine.

Someone had faith in Steiner once. Steiner had faith in me. I have faith in you. That's the way of the world. The real beauty of the Iron Game is that it is a living tradition. It has no past, no present and no end. When I train in my basement gym I train with John Davis, Harold Ansorge, Kim Wood, Jan Dellinger, William H. Hinbern, Reg Park, Clyde Enrich, Tommy Kono, Arthur Saxon, George F. Jowett, Bruno Sammartino, Mike Thompson, Bob Whelan, John Brookfield, Greg Pickett, Hugh Cassidy, Paul Young, Dr. Randall J. Strossen, Maurice Jones, Thomas Inch, Sig Klein, John Grimek, Steve Stanko, Norb Schemansky, Bob Peoples, Apollon, Louis Cyr, Joseph C. Hise, Louis Abele, Doug Hepburn, Fred Howell, William Boone, Peary Rader, Henry "Milo" Steinborn, Harry Paschall, John McCallum, George Hackenschmidt, Dennis Weis, David Horne, Vic Boff, Dr. Ken Leistner, Clelio Massimo, Earle E. Liederman, Alan Calvert, Edward Aston, Bob Hoffman, Bradley J. Steiner and others too numerous to mention.

The tradition has been passed from one generation to another, and will be passed on to future generations. I now pass that tradition on to each and every one of you.

With the tradition, I pass on to you my fervent desire that you achieve great and glorious things in the Iron Game. I have absolute and unshakable confidence in you. I KNOW what you can do. I KNOW what you can achieve.

Over the years, as you train, you will have good times and bad times. You will encounter victory and defeat. You will be plagued with aches and pains, accidents and injuries (none serious. I hope!), and there will be times when you are tempted to throw in the towel.

Don't ever do that. Never give up.

All of us, all of the dinosaurs of the past, all of the dinosaurs of the present, are there beside you, pushing and pulling and bleeding and sweating. Steiner was there with me when I won my first national championship. I will be there with you on YOUR day of victory.

EXPECT to succeed - because YOU WILL!

I wish the very best of luck, health, strength and power to each and every one of you. I am enormously proud of each and every one of you. You are the heirs to a rich and wonderful tradition. Use it wisely and well.

God Bless You. and good luck!

Success cannot be guaranteed. There are no safe battles.

~Sir Winston Churchill

In the battle of life it is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled, or where the doer of a deed could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have tasted neither victory nor defeat.