Dr. Judd Biasiotto—the first guest from the west to train and exchange sports-science information at the Beijing Olympic Training Center—travels, struggles and discovers greatness. This trip to greatness makes an early stop at The Great Wall. Encounter greatness and overcome walls and barriers yourself.
Dr. Judd is available for speaking engagements. Universities, professional meetings, community groups, athletic associations and even businesses and church groups have enjoyed Dr. Judd’s presentations.

This Doctor in Sports Psychology doesn’t desire full-time work in Major League Baseball, but does desire the possibility of entertaining a speaking engagement with your group.

For details on bringing Dr. Judd to your group for a lecture/speaking engagement, contact the publisher. To receive a resume, reference list, topic ideas and scheduling dates, please make a written request for a speakers’ package to: Sports Support Syndicate, 108 S. 12th St., Pittsburgh, PA 15203-1226 USA.
Perhaps *Powerlifting USA* publisher, Mike Lambert, said it best in an article that described Biasiotto’s mental powers:

“When it comes to mind-control, Biasiotto has no equal. He seems capable of changing his emotions from one moment to the next. In fact, I've never seen him out of control. It’s as if someone beamed him down from another planet to teach us lesser folk what mind control is all about. Without question, his success in powerlifting is directly related to his mental strength.”
Search for Greatness

by

Judson L. Biasiotto, Ph.D.

Edited by
Arny Ferrando and Brenda Marley
Foreword

by Joe Weider

Back in 1986, Judd Biasiotto literally shocked the sports world when he squatted 575 pounds at a body weight of only 132 pounds—a feat that some called the greatest strength sports performance in history. Not surprisingly, many strength experts considered Biasiotto’s performance unbeatable. When you consider that the record-breaking lift was performed after Biasiotto had undergone major surgery on his back and neck, the accomplishment takes on an “out of this world” quality.

“Other-worldly” is perhaps the term that best describes the complex personality that is Judd Biasiotto. He is a man of many facets, changing alternately during the day into a world-class athlete, a renowned sports psychologist, an international speaker, or an award-winning writer.

In all candor, it was Biasiotto’s athletic accomplishments that first captured my attention. Although he did not exhibit the muscularity and leverage you would expect in a world-class lifter, he was putting up immense poundages in the featherweight division. Interestingly, through such techniques as hypnosis, biofeedback, and psychic driving, Biasiotto has learned to control his heart rate, brain waves and biochemistry. The secret to his great strength lies in those powers.

Although it was powerlifting that directed my
attention to Judd, it was his writing that brought us together. After reading his first book, *2001: A Sports Odyssey*, I found myself searching for the rest of his works. In my professional opinion, I would have to say that Dr. Judd Biasiotto is one of the best sports writers in America. Of course if I did not feel that way, I never would have recruited him as a feature writer for *Muscle and Fitness*. His unique writing style might best be described as a cross between James Michener and Lewis Grizzard. He is extremely informative and entertaining. Once you start reading his books, you won’t be able to put them down; once you finish, you’ll wish you hadn’t. He is just that good.

This book, *Search for Greatness*, will only enhance his image as both an athlete and a writer. Unquestionably it is one of the best sports books ever written.

The book is a sequel, if you will, to the acclaimed *2001: a Sports Odyssey* and *The Odyssey Continues*. Since 1995, the revised books are titled *World Class Achievements from Backyard Beginnings* and *Parables of Mental Toughness*. Together, the set chronicles Biasiotto’s journey to become the first lightweight powerlifter in the world to break the 600-pound barrier in the squat, a feat that was considered physiologically impossible for a man of his size. It encompasses his training and the scientific techniques involved, as well as Biasiotto’s rare trip to China in which he became the first
American ever allowed to train in the Olympic Training Center in Beijing.

Biasiotto is a magnificent story-teller, using hilarious anecdotes to entertain and teach. Biasiotto successfully explains highly technical information so that even a newcomer to the material can grasp the concepts. He describes characters he meets—some who are easily recognizable—with color and candor. Biasiotto’s expert handling of these characters and his various escapades creates a treasure-chest of adventure and enlightenment.

This book makes for fascinating reading, and also gives instant inspiration. It will give you the feeling that nothing is impossible—nothing.

Joe Wieder
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THE AUTHOR

Judson L. Biasiotto received his doctorate from the University of Georgia, and is currently a Full Professor of Health and Physical Education at Albany State College. He has published scientific articles in professional journals and is highly regarded as a dynamic speaker. As a sports psychologist, Dr. Biasiotto has helped numerous professional and amateur athletes develop their abilities. In addition to his professional accomplishments, Biasiotto has the rare distinction of being a world class athlete in the sport of powerlifting. Although recently retired from competition, he was ranked number one in the world by the ADFPA, and number three in the world by the USPF (132 pound weight class).

Other Books by Dr. Judd

Judd Biasiotto is best know to the millions who have seen his articles in fitness magazines for the past 16 years as his pen name, Dr. Judd. In addition to the hundreds of informational sports-psychology magazine articles, Dr. Judd has written a large collection of books. These books are available directly from the publisher, The Sports Support Syndicate, Inc. or from the better bookstores.

Please support your local bookstores by asking them to order Dr. Judd’s books for you. Bookstore managers can order these books from either the publisher or Baker & Taylor.
Hypnotize Me and Make Me Great
$15.00, 1-878602-48-9, 98 pages, softcover

The Gift Book for Better Breathing
$15.00, 1-878602-10-1, 110 pages, softcover

Triple Header—Self Help
$33.33, 1-878602-43-8, 410 pages, hardcover

Take Control—for Permanent Weight Loss and Weight Management
$12.00, 1-878602-44-6, 134 pages, softcover

World Class Achievements From Backyard Beginnings
$12.50, 1-878602-12-8, 159 pages, softcover

Parables of Mental Toughness
$12.50, 1-878602-46-2, 206 pages, softcover

Sex, Drugs, Sports & Other American Pastimes
$15.00, 1-878602-11-X, 96 pages, softcover

Fundamentals of Fitness
$10.00, 1-878602-45-4, 100 pages, softcover

Power
$10.00, 1-878602-50-0, 114 pages, softcover

Psyching
$10.00, 1-878602-49-7, 114 pages, softcover

A Glossary for Training
$35.00, 1-878602-66-7, 210 pages, softcover

Make Me Great - Audio Tapes
$24.00, 1-878602-47-0, 120 minutes, two audio tapes
Gender and Readability Concerns

Readers, please note the author’s, editors’ and publisher’s concern about readability and gender usage throughout this text. We believe this text is suitable for both a male and female audience.
Dedication to
Dr. Arny Ferrando

Arny, I can't think of any words that capture the essence of our relationship any better than Bette Midler's song, *The Wind Beneath My Wings*.

“It must have been cold there in my shadow. To never have sunlight on your face. You were content to let me shine, that's your way. You always walked a step behind. So I was the one with all the glory, while you were the one with all the strain. A beautiful smile to hide the pain. Did you ever know that you're my hero and everything I would like to be. I can fly higher than an eagle, for you are the wind beneath my wings. Did I ever tell you you're my hero. You're everything, everything I wish I could be. I can fly higher than an eagle for you are the wind beneath my wings. Oh, the wind beneath my wings. You are the wind beneath my wings. Fly higher than the sky, so high I almost touch the sky. Thank you, thank God for you, the wind beneath my wings.”

I Love You, Arny.
Section I
The Search for Greatness Begins

There is a God given power deep down inside each one of us. I know because I’ve tapped that power on a number of occasions. Once you experience it, you will never forget its greatness. It’s awesome, it will give you the strength to believe that nothing is impossible—that there is no limit to human potential.

Unfortunately, only a few of us will ever tap that power, and even those who do will most likely find it difficult to master, at least that is the way it was for me. There were times when it seemed that I could summon forth a strength that easily transcended my mortal powers. During those moments there was no telling what I was capable of doing. My mind knew no boundaries, nor did my body. I seemed all-powerful, all-mighty... at least in a mortal sense. More often than not though, the power would elude me. I’d search the depths of my mind and body and would find only traces of its greatness, and then there were times I could find nothing. It was as if “God” was letting me know that I was yet, just a mortal man. The power is there though, and when a person unlocks its secret, if one ever does, there is no telling the heights of greatness that will be achieved.

Judd Biasiotto
The Odyssey Continues

Page 12  Search for Greatness
Brainwashing Experiment

A brainwashing experiment! I had read a lot about such experiments, but never in my wildest dreams did I ever expect to be involved in such a study. Surely, I was out of my mind, or maybe I was suffering from severe intellectual constipation. I honestly don’t know which. Still, it wasn’t like I was venturing into virgin territory.

When I agreed to participate in the experiment, I had already been through a decade and a half of other “mind trips” that involved hypnosis, biofeedback, meditation, and the like. Through these experiences, I’ve developed pretty awesome mental capabilities, particularly by Western standards. For instance, I’m capable of consciously controlling my heart rate, blood flow, body temperature and brain waves. In fact, I’m just about capable of overriding most of my autonomic processes with my mind. More importantly, I’ve learned how to enhance my performance by altering my biochemistry, my social environment, and my intra-psychology. There is no doubt that the secret to my physical strength and power is deeply rooted in these abilities.

After all, how else can you explain how a guy weighing 131 pounds, with legs that look like a pair of pliers in shorts can squat 575 pounds. That’s the second best squat of all time. I also have bench pressed 319 pounds and deadlifted 529 pounds at the same body weight. Most
powerlifters who push that type of steel at my body weight are generally Cro-Magnon types. You know the kind—5-foot tall, 5-feet wide, eats everything raw, hates his mother, and has hair on the bottom of his feet.

Well, I’m nothing like that! I’m tall and lean, I cook my vegetables, I love my mother, and once a week I shave the bottom of my feet. In fact, it’s been said that I have the body of an 11-year-old stamp-collector. Just in case you’re wondering, I’ve never used anabolic steroids, human growth hormones, or stimulants to enhance my performance. I did it all naturally.

What I did use however, were the powers of my mind and all of the available “powers” of modern science. Of course, it took me a great deal of effort and work to get where I am today. For the past decade and a half, I have spent a good portion of my life researching equipment, methods, techniques, and concepts that enhance my performance. During that time, I’ve accumulated an enormous amount of information and knowledge. I don’t want to brag, but I believe I know as much about athletic performance and human behavior as anyone in the world.

Still, I’m always looking for a new angle or new idea, any little edge that might enhance my performance. In fact, that’s exactly why I was in the Environmental Human Performance Lab in Atlanta, Georgia, getting fitted for electrodes, and preparing myself to be isolated in a deprivation tank for four to six hours. I was about to see exactly how much mind power I really had, and in the process, I was hoping to find a way to enhance that power.

Actually, the deprivation tank and brainwashing idea wasn’t my idea. It was Arny Ferrando’s. In case you don’t know who Arny is, he’s kind of like Arnold
Schwarzenegger, David Letterman, and Albert Einstein all wrapped into one. In other words he’s one incredible human being. For starters, he has a doctorate in performance nutrition, he’s an award-winning writer, a nationally acclaimed speaker, a pilot, a hypnotist, a biofeedback expert, and a highly successful businessman. Oh yea, he’s also a national caliber athlete in three different sports no less—gymnastics, powerlifting and bodybuilding. He also happens to be my training assistant, my best friend, and at times my worst nightmare.

Well, he’s not exactly my worst nightmare, but he certainly ranks right up there when it comes to getting me in deep do-do. Just about the time I think I’ve got my life all together, Arny will come up with something so bizarre and outrageous that I can’t help but get involved. First it was skydiving. Somehow Arny got me to fork over 125 dollars of my hard earned money so that I’d have the opportunity to jump out of an airplane at 10,000 feet, with a parachute that I packed myself, no less. Talk about unadulterated excitement! I hadn’t had a lower colon cleaning like that since I ate a dozen brownies my little sister, Mary Jean, made me out of chocolate Ex-Lax.

Then there was the time that Arny volunteered us for a hypothermia study. In that little adventure, we were submerged in ice water until our body temperature dropped to 95 degrees. The hypothermia researchers were trying to determine if athletes could withstand varying degrees of cold better than nonathletes. They can! After that chilling experience, I was blue for a week, and my nipples were hard for a month. I’m still not entirely thawed out yet, and that was more than a year ago.

There was also the interview with the Hell’s Angels, an evening with 13 witches, a session with a psychic...
healer, and the list goes on. If it weren’t for Arny, I doubt seriously if I’d ever have any fun. Anyway, Arny’s idea this time around was for me to use a technique called Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy (or REST) to prepare for the Southeastern United States Powerlifting Championships. As you have probably guessed, the technique involves the use of a deprivation or flotation tank to deprive subjects of sensory stimulation.

A deprivation or flotation tank is a large enclosed basin that is filled with dense saltwater solution. The saltwater allows the subject inside the tank to float in a type of suspended animation. Generally, the water in the tank is kept at the subject’s exact body temperature. A mask is worn to block out audio and visual stimulus, and a diver’s suit is donned to inhibit sensory input from skin receptors.

The flotation tanks were first used in scientific brainwashing experiments in 1954 by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Subjects who were submerged in the tanks for as little as two hours reported hallucinations, distortions in the body images, and long “blank periods” in which they were unable to engage in any type of cognitive thought. More importantly, the researcher found that an individual who was isolated in a flotation tank could be coerced into making profound changes in his attitudes and values. In fact, the results of every one of the experiments conducted by the NIMH were in accord, indicating that an individual’s freewill could be stripped away by using deprivation tanks and brainwashing procedures.
Now I ask you, after knowing all of that, would you even consider the idea of having someone put you in a deprivation tank for any extended period of time?

Now here’s where Arny’s magnificent logic comes into play. According to Arny, not everything that is bad is bad. In fact, some things that are bad can be very good. You know, like sex, drugs, and women. In other words, most things can be used for both good and bad. As odd as it may sound, flotation tanks seem to fall into this category. Beginning in the 1960s, a number of psychologists started using flotation tanks to employ restricted environment stimulation therapy to help people control their behavior. That’s right, those same sensory deprivation tanks that were used in the brainwashing experiments in the 1950s are now being used as a recreational and therapeutic tool. Interestingly, the tanks have been used successfully to treat individuals who were suffering from anxiety, depression, fear, and even alcoholism and drug addiction.

CASE IN POINT: Dr. Henry Adams of the NIMH has reported that alcoholics who are periodically deprived of sensory stimulation reduce their consumption of alcohol significantly.

In Adams’ experiments, college students who were classified as being social-drinkers were submerged in flotation tanks for two-and-a-half hours daily to deprive them of sensory stimulation. Adams reported that after only two weeks, the subjects’ alcohol intake dropped by an average of 33 percent.

In another series of experiments, Adams and a colleague named G. David Cooper used 30 men and 30 women who were classified as heavy social drinkers as their subjects. Each of the subjects voluntarily spent three hours in a sensory deprivation chamber. After-one-
and-a-half hours in the chamber, half of the subjects were exposed to an anti-alcohol message. “If you need alcohol to feel sociable, you’re in trouble.” The other half received a supportive message. “You don’t really need to use alcohol as a routine part of your life style.”

The experimenters also tested several control groups who were also classified as heavy social drinkers. One control group spent three hours in the deprivation chamber, but was given no message. Another control group was not put in the deprivation chamber, but received the anti-alcohol message. The third control group received no treatment at all.

The results of the study revealed that the experimental subjects who heard the confrontational message while in the deprivation chamber decreased their subsequent drinking by 60 percent. The subjects who received the supportive suggestions did not do as well, but both experimental groups did significantly better than the control group. Even more encouraging was the fact that the experimental subjects maintained their reduction in alcohol consumption for six months, even though they received no further treatment.

The researchers concluded that deprivation increased the attention that the subjects paid to the anti-alcohol message, and it increased the acceptance and social value of that message.

Perhaps of greater interest, at least to the field of athletics, is the fact that sports psychologists are now experimenting with flotation tanks to enhance athletic performance. In an experiment conducted by Donald Carter, athletes who were suffering from pre-competition anxiety were subjected to two-hours-a-day of sensory deprivation in a flotation tank for a period of three weeks. Carter
reported that every one of his subjects significantly decreased anxiety.

In similar experiments conducted by Carter, the subjects spent the same amount of time in the flotation tanks, but were exposed to tape recorded messages designed to enhance confidence and desensitize anxiety. The results of these experiments were even more encouraging, indicating that confidence could be increased and anxiety decreased through this technique. According to Carter, the flotation tank was capable of inducing a relaxation state that was more complete than the deepest sleep. He also theorized that at this state of consciousness an individual's mind is much more receptive to suggestions.

Although the current research seems to indicate that flotation tanks are valid instruments for enhancing human performance, more research is necessary before such a judgment can be made unequivocally. And of course, I was willing to do some first-hand research myself. Actually, I rather enjoy being on the threshold of a new and esoteric technique of performance enhancement.
Going Down Under

As I mentioned, my brainwashing or deprivation experiment took place at the Environmental Human Performance Laboratory in Atlanta, Georgia. What I didn’t mention was that the experiment was directed by Dr. Herbert R. Green, a nationally-renown sports psychologist. In all candor, I was kind of excited about taking part in the experiment. I figured that with the type of mind control that I had developed over the years, I would be able to handle the isolation of the deprivation tank with a minimal amount of effort. In fact, I was sure that Dr. Green and his colleagues would be totally amazed after watching my performances in the tank. After all, I was positive that they had never worked with a subject who had psycho-physiological abilities that I had. But like I said, there was also the possibility that I might learn something from the experience that would enhance my performance. Of course, even if nothing came from the experiment, it would still be an experience I’d remember for a long time.

I eagerly seek new and exciting experiences. To me, that’s what life is all about. I don’t want to stand on the sideline observing life. I want to participate in life. I want to live my life fully and to do that, you have to take some risks. Do things a little differently. I know some people think I’m a little crazy. Maybe I am a little crazy, but
being crazy is not so bad. When you’re crazy, you can do just about anything and get away with it. Besides, if it takes being a little crazy to experience life totally, then sign me up, because I want to do it all. I want to experience everything: love, fear, euphoria, and pain. I want to experience it all. You can’t do that standing on the sidelines of life. So much for philosophy.

Anyway, before entering the tank I was fitted with both a diving mask for breathing underwater and a sound system so they could communicate with me. The good doctor then positioned me in the tank with a make-shift crane. My body was suspended absolutely motionless between the surface of the water and the bottom of the tank. In order to eliminate sensory input, my vision and hearing were totally blocked out. The water temperature was also kept constant with my body temperature so that I couldn’t receive sensory stimulation from my skin receptors. In short, I was almost completely deprived of all types of sensory stimulation while I was in the tank.

At first, “tanking it” was a rather pleasant experience. It was quiet and relaxing, kind of like a low-grade valium trip. The only thing I could hear was the soothing rush of my respiration and the gentle beating of my heart. It was great. The first chance I had in a long time to just stretch out and relax. I couldn’t have been down there more than ten minutes when I drifted off into a light sleep.

When I awoke some time later, I was totally disoriented and confused. In fact, it took me a little while to figure out that I was still in the tank. I wouldn’t say I hit the panic button, but it was a little scary.

How scary, you ask?

Well, scary enough that I decided that I wouldn’t allow myself to lose consciousness again. For the next ten min-
utes or so, I entertained myself by mentally listing all the movie stars I would like to date, alphabetically of course. I didn’t even get to Susan Anton when all of a sudden a voice came out of the void.

“Judd, you are one of the greatest athletes in the world. There is nothing you can’t do. You are strong and powerful. Nothing can stop you from reaching your goals. With each day you will become more positive, and more powerful. You have an unlimited amount of energy and talent. You are focused and dedicated. Soon, your efforts will culminate in an awesome performance. Yes, you will shock the world with your greatness.”

It may sound odd, but as soon as I heard those suggestions, it was like trumpets from heaven. I found myself hanging on to each and every word. Obviously, there was something to this deprivation thing. I had been deprived of sensory stimulation for no more than an hour, and I already hungered to get it back. Worse yet, as soon as the suggestions stopped, the intensity of my hunger increased significantly. Perhaps for the first time in my life I understood how important it is for a human being to experience sensory stimulation. Apparently it’s true that you don’t really appreciate something until it’s taken from you. One thing was for sure, I was going to have to use all of my powers of concentration if I was going to endure the tank for any length of time. Consequently, I decided to keep myself active by designing and building, brick by brick, my dream home in the walls of my mind.

Well, the house was looking real good. I had just finished the living room, when all of a sudden I found myself in a state of brain nothingness. I had read about
brain nothingness, but until “tanking it,” I had never experienced it. When my mind went blank, it wasn’t merely that I saw black or nothing at all; it was a complete disappearance of a sense of vision. I honestly didn’t know if my eyes were opened or closed. It was very eerie.

You may be surprised to find out that a state of brain nothingness, (They call it one-pointedness in Zen, and Nirvana in Yoga.) can be produced fairly easily in your own home. In fact, that very state has been produced numerous times in physiology labs across the country. The only difference is that physiologists call it “blanking out.” As far back as 1981, I found studies in which researchers in the field of neurophysiology were testing the theory that the brain needs continuous change.

In one of the studies, the subjects looked at a totally patternless visual field called a “ganzfield.” No matter how the subjects’ eyes moved, the same whitewashed surface was observed. After only twenty minutes, the subjects reported having no visual experience. Apparently, the same thing that I had experienced in the tank. It might also be noted that physiological readings of subjects who had “blanked out” indicated that they were in a state of deep relaxation. More specifically, the subjects were showing a head full of alpha brain waves, but were not registering any stimuli—a true sign of nothingness, one-pointedness, nirvana, relaxation even.

I’m not exactly sure how long I functioned in a state of brain nothingness, but I had to be in that state for at least twenty minutes. I was brought back to reality by more of the motivating suggestions from top side. At first the voice from above scared the hell out of me. Once again I didn’t know exactly where I was or what I was doing. After orienting myself, I found that I was once again
clinging to each and every word as I had done the first time I heard the suggestions. Perhaps my mind-set and attention level were even more intense this time. I’m not sure.

“Judd, you are one of the greatest athletes in the world. There is nothing you can’t do. You are strong and powerful. Nothing can stop you from reaching your goals. With each day you will become more positive, and more powerful. You have an unlimited amount of energy and talent. You are focused and dedicated. Soon, your efforts will culminate in an awesome performance. Yes, you will shock the world with your greatness.”

But there was one thing of which I was definitely sure; when the suggestions stopped, I immediately longed for the time I would hear them again. There was another thing that was becoming clear. I was starting to lose any semblance of control over my mind.

After a few minutes of what I think was reasonably clear thought, I just decided to lie back and try to go with the flow until the good doctor pulled me out of the tank. That was probably a mistake. During the next whatever time period, my mind entertained just about every sensation imaginable. If the first part of my tanking experience was like a low-grade-valium trip, then the last part of it could best be described as a high-grade-LSD trip.

Bright lights flashed in front of my eyes. I even heard noises and voices coming from these lights. Then my mind started conjuring up all sorts of fantasies that seemed to be beyond my voluntary control. I saw dots, lines, geometric figures, Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Mike Tyson, and an assortment of other cartoon characters. At
one point I actually envisioned a bright yellow light emerging from my stomach. The light grew larger and larger, eventually encompassing my entire body. Then my body started radiating a cascade of colors—reds, blues, oranges. The grand finale came when I envisioned that my head was detached from my body. I then saw my head floating around the tank looking down at my body which lay motionless in the middle of the tank. It was absolutely wild!

By the time I was pulled out of the tank, I was just about ready for a full semester at Crazy State University. I could barely walk or talk, and analytical thought was totally out of the question. In fact, it took me a good twenty minutes before I was capable of holding a single conversation. When I did regain some characteristics of a higher life form, Arny was the first one to talk to me.

“How do you feel?”
“Mentally irregular at best.”
“I’d say that’s to be expected. After all, you spent close to six hours in the tank.”

When Arny told me that, I almost went blank again. I don’t know about you, but even things I love to do, I don’t want to do that long.

“Arny, why in the world did you leave me down there for that long? Are you trying to drive me crazy or something?”

“Don’t blame me. All you had to do was give us the word and we would have pulled you out of there immediately.”

“How in the hell was I going to give you the word while I was three-feet underwater?”

“All you had to do was talk into your mask. You’re wired for sound.”
“Why didn’t you tell me that before you put me down there?”
“I did. We did. Didn’t we?”
“No, you didn’t, and they didn’t! Arny, did I ever tell you that at times you are a blatant, unadulterated lunatic, and that you have your head so far up your ass that I’m going to put a glass marble in your belly button so you can see where you are going.”
“No, but I appreciate the sentiment.”
The scary thing was that Dr. Green felt that the entire experiment was a resounding success. Of course, he wasn’t the one who was down there for six hours. If he was, he might have been singing a different tune. In fact, I found it quite interesting that the longest time he had spent in the tank himself was 130 minutes.
Now I know that the majority of the current research indicates that flotation tanks can enhance human performance, but I honestly don’t like the procedure. Without question, tanking can be extremely dangerous because the tanker or subject is extremely vulnerable to suggestions and manipulation when he comes out. Even more disturbing, at least to me, is the fact that the tanker is at the mercy of the experimenter while he’s in the tank. Without question, I would oppose letting anyone “tank it” unless they did so under the supervision and guidance of a professional therapist. I’d also suggest that Arny not be present.
Actually, when you really think about it, tanking isn’t all that great. It’s certainly not a psychological panacea or cure all and in fact there are a lot of other techniques that work as well if not better. In fact, I’d bet Arny’s paycheck that I could get better results by using biofeedback, psy-
chic driving, and visualization. Besides, these techniques are less expensive and time consuming.

When I use biofeedback and other such techniques, I am totally in control. I can’t forget that it was these techniques that took me to the top of the world once, and there was no reason to believe they couldn’t take me back to that lofty position again. Like they say, if you run a play for a touchdown, then why change the play?
Ronald Reagan

About two weeks after my tanking experience, I got a call from Ronald Reagan. No, not that Ronald Reagan. This Ronald Reagan doesn’t know politics. Powerlifting is his game. In fact, few people know powerlifting better. I’d guesstimate that Ronny has promoted and directed more powerlifting meets than anyone in the entire universe, or anywhere else for that matter.

Why in the world would he do that, you ask? Because, he’s making a small fortune doing it, that’s why. I’d heard through the grapevine that he had grossed more than $150,000 last year, and he was expecting to clear twice that in the coming year. I’ll give him this, too. No one, and I mean no one, puts on a better meet than Ronny. Every one of his meets is an event. In fact, I’d venture to say that the World Championship don’t have anything on one of Ronny’s meets.

Anyway, after we had exchanged a few minutes of small talk, Ronny got right to the point.

“Judd, in a couple of months, I’m going to hold a powerlifting meet in Atlanta, Georgia, and I want you to lift in it.”

“Well, I appreciate the invite, but my powerlifting career is over. I swore after I did the 575 squat I’d let it go. I have nothing left to prove. I’m happy.”

“I’m not asking you to compete. I just want you to put on a little exhibition. I don’t expect you to squat 575 pounds or anything like that!”

“What do you expect?”
“Well, what do you think you can do?”
“I really don’t know. I’ve been training fairly heavy since I retired. I guess with two months of hard training I could probably do somewhere between 520 and maybe 545.”
“God, that would be great! Think about it. The best drug-free squat in the world last year was only 487 pounds in the 132 weight class. I doubt seriously if anyone in Georgia squatted over 400 in your weight class. If you squatted just 500 pounds, you would probably freak everyone out.”
“I don’t know, everyone knows I did the 575 pounds. They’ll probably expect me to do more than that.”
“Do more than 575? Not hardly. I don’t think anyone is going to approach that lift, including you. Everything was right when you made that lift. The moon, the tide, the atmospheric pressure. I believe even the stars came together for that lift. You were on a different planet when you motored that baby up. Trust me, it will be light years before anyone touches that lift and no one expects you to do it again either.”
“I still don’t know…”
“Listen, I’ll pay all your expenses, and if you give a little talk afterwards, I’ll even pay you $500… and a date. I’ll get you a date, too.”
“What will the date look like?”
“Beautiful, of course. A great body, etc.—everything a man would die for.”
A Great Bootie—That’s What Women Want!

For the next twelve weeks, I hit the weights pretty hard. Nothing like in my previous comebacks mind you, but I wasn’t exactly playing around either. Actually, I never had much trouble pushing myself in the gym. In fact, I’ve always enjoyed training. To me attempting heavy lifts and pushing my body to it’s optimum level is challenging and exciting. It’s also rewarding. Through heavy training, you can develop muscle mass and definition that a Greek god would envy. And let’s not forget that heavy squats can help you develop the best bootie in town. In case you aren’t into muscles, booties are “what it is” in the ’90s. Trust me on this one. I’ve used Scope, Brill Cream and High Karate. None of that stuff works. What women want is booties. Nice, firm, tight booties. Booties that come from heavy squats. Like I said, training can be rewarding.

What I don’t like about training is all the other things that go along with it. You can’t approach it lightly. In order to compete at an elite level you have to sacrifice. Your time, energy, and social life are completely compromised. Hell, your entire life is compromised. Over all though, it’s worth it. At least it has been for me.
Well, by the time I got through with my twelve-week-training cycle, I was ready to kick ass and take names. And I wasn’t too embarrassed to tell anyone and everyone who would listen just that. In all candor, I had good reason to feel cocky. In my last workout I squatted 485 for three easy reps, using only knee wraps as a lifting aid. I also hit a solid 510 pound squat with the aid of wraps and a competition suit. The way I was lifting, I figured I was good for at least 525 pounds and maybe even as much as 540 pounds come exhibition time. Actually, the way my training went, I felt like anything was possible. Yea, even a crack at 580 pounds was not beyond my mind set. Exhibition or not, I was going to show the sports world, and Ronny, that I still had plenty left.
Going for the Gold

On the day of the meet, everything started out super. I made the 132-pound-weight-class with room to spare, and I felt extremely confident and powerful. Best yet, I had a deep-seeded feeling that everything was going to go great.

For my opening attempt, I decided to try 500 pounds. Like I said, in training, I had tripled 485 pounds with relative ease using just wraps. Consequently, I figured with a suit and a new pair of wraps, I’d have little trouble with the 500 pounds.

After the bar was loaded with 500 pounds, I took my position on the platform. I then hypnotized myself by means of a preconditioned symbol. Once under hypnosis, I hypnotically projected an astral being from my body. Although hallucinated, I could vividly see the astral being which was in my own image and likeness. As I watched and visualized the astral being, he approached the weight, unracked it, stepped backwards, and then positioned himself to squat. He than started to slowly descend with hallucinated weight. When he reached the bottom of the lift, he drove his body upward. Believe it or not, I could actually feel the corresponding muscles in my body contracting as he pushed the weight through the lift. As programmed, the astral being made the lift with incredible ease. No strain, no hesitation. Just one smooth, picture perfect movement. After the lift was completed, my astral being returned to my body. It was now my turn.

I positioned myself under the weight, unracked it, and stepped back. The weight felt amazingly light. There was
absolutely no doubt in my mind that I was going to “smoke” the lift. As soon as I started to descend with the weight though, the straps on my lifting suit suddenly pulled tight, pitching me forward and taking me entirely out of my groove. I tried to drive my shoulders back and regain my position, but I was too far forward. I decided to continue with the lift despite the fact that I was at a mechanical disadvantage. I figured that since the weight was considerably lower than my maximum, I would be able to “muscle it out.”

I figured wrong. When I reached the bottom of the lift, I drove my feet into the floor with all the power and force I could muster. I ascended about three inches out of the bottom, and then collapsed under the weight. In all honesty, I was a little shocked. Even with poor position, I was sure that I would be able to gut the lift out. If anything, the experience reinforced the fact that I was a groove lifter. When I’m in my groove, I can move weight that few men would even consider attempting. But once out of my groove, I’m like my moniker states; the weakest strong man in the world.

For my second attempt, I decided to take 520 pounds. I was convinced that the reason I missed my opener was strictly due to poor form. In fact, I was still positive that I had a good shot at 540 pounds.

After the bar was loaded to 520 pounds, I stepped on the platform and immediately began preparing myself mentally for the lift. This time I focused totally on form. In fact, I paid specific attention to each segment of the lift as my astral being performed it. After I went through my astral routine, I unracked the weight and positioned myself to squat. As soon as I got the signal to squat, I descended with the weight. When I felt myself break
parallel, I drove upward. Well, let’s rephrase that. I attempted to drive upward. If I told you I got an inch out of the bottom, I’d be lying. At best, I did a half-ass isometric for a second or two before I collapsed completely. Worse yet, I had maintained perfect form throughout the lift, meaning that I either lacked the power to drive the weight up, or I broke my concentration totally.

Assuming it was my concentration rather than my power, I opted to go for the whole ball of wax for my third attempt—540 pounds. I missed my two prior lifts with lighter weight, but that didn’t really bother me. Like I said, “I’m a groove lifter.” More than once in my career I’ve missed a lift badly, added weight, and came back and made the lift easily. Not only that, but I’ve never been long on brains, either.

Anyway, when the weight was loaded on the bar, I took my position on the platform. Once again I used my hypnotically projected astral being to mentally rehearse my attempt. This time, even my astral being had trouble lifting the weight. In fact, I never really saw him complete the lift. I saw him unrack the weight, and I saw him descend, but I didn’t see him come back up. In the past when I had trouble visualizing my performance prior to a lift, I usually came up short physically too. Still, there where times when I couldn’t even get my astral being to leave my body, and I still made the lift with flying colors. So, although things weren’t going exactly the way I would have wanted them to, I still believed that I had an outside shot at making the lift.

Also, in the past when things really looked hopeless, even impossible, that’s when I usually came through. I had to believe that this time would be no different. As soon as I un racked the weight, my confidence took yet
another pounding. The weight felt incredibly heavy. I swear I could actually feel my vertebrae grinding against each other as they compressed to support the weight. A not-so-good feeling, especially after having already blown three discs in the past. As I stood there supporting the weight, all I could think about was getting hurt again. I must have stood there a good 15 seconds trying to clear my mind. I couldn’t do it though. In fact, the longer I stood there, the worse things got. My mind kept entertaining the mental scenes of my back collapsing when I attempted to descend with weight. Finally, out of sheer fear, I stepped forward and reracked the weight. It was the first time in my entire lifting career that the weight had “broken me.” From a strictly athletic standpoint, it was by far the worse moment in my life.
“Trashed”  
—for the Last Time

In all candor, I think I handled my disastrous performance with the utmost of poise and grace. I went home and got myself shit-faced. After about three hours of sucking some seriously hard liquor, I found myself in my bathroom wrapped around the porcelain. In other words, up-chucking 95 percent of my innards, stomach, kidneys, lungs, testicles, the works. Needless to say, I was drunker than a worm in a tequila bottle. I remember vividly, fifteen minutes into my dry-heave cycle looking skyward and saying, “Dear God, let me live, and I’ll never drink another drop of alcohol in my entire life.”

Unfortunately, the following day I again declared war on my liver. I swear I drank half the liquor in Albany. I was a real party animal. Even Spuds McKenzie would have been proud of me. In fact, I got so torqued I went and got my neighbor’s dog, moussed his hair, and sculpted him into stuff. My fun didn’t last long though. All of a sudden I felt like I was riding the Scream Machine at Six Flags, complete with double-loop-to-loops. The next thing I knew, I was on my knees praying to the porcelain god. It was déjá vu, stomach, lungs, kidneys, testicles, the works.

“Dear God,” I said, “If you let me live this time, I swear I’ll never drink another drop of alcohol in my entire life... and this time I really mean it.”
I'm proud to say that I haven’t had a drink since, and I’m not going to ever drink again. If I do, God can strike me dead... well... maybe He can strike one of my girlfriends dead or something.

Now, I know what you are thinking. “Biasiotto, you’re a world class athlete, a sports psychologist, and a mind control expert, and here you are drowning your sorrows in liquor after experiencing a little setback.” Well, no one’s perfect.

Let’s be honest. Defeat is never easy. I know a lot of athletes who just can’t seem to cope with defeat in any way, shape, or form. In fact, I know some guys who are ready to put a gun to their head when they lose. When you really think about it though, it’s not hard to understand why some athletes have such a hard time accepting failure. First of all, we live in a society that promotes the myth that winning is the primary purpose of sport. Consequently, we more often than not lose sight of the benefits that losing can bring. This type of “winner-take-all” attitude has led us to the point where it is simply not enough to just compete. You have to compete to win, and if you don’t win, the assumption is that you’ve done something wrong—like fudging on your training, chasing women, or taking drugs. Perhaps Dr. Thomas Tutko said it best in his book, Winning Is Everything and Other American Myths, “The assumption is that somehow the winner does everything right, and the loser does everything wrong. All too often, the message that comes through to those who lose or who fail to reach the top is that obviously they didn’t work hard enough, and that they are not as worthy as the winners. Consequently, when a person starts to lose, we begin
to question his character. It’s as if we see winners as good people and losers as bad people.”

There is also the fact that most athletes haven’t been taught that losing is really a growing experience. Fredelle Maynard, a sports psychologist, has said that most parents work hard at either preventing their children from failing or protecting them from the knowledge that they have failed. One way they accomplish this is to shift the blame for failure. If the kid’s team loses, the parents point to the coach as being stupid or the referee as being unfair. Another thing that parents do is to lower the standards for success. Although their kid played like a deboned landsquid, he is told that he was great.

Unfortunately, most parents in their attempt to protect their child from hurt or pain, shelter them from the real world. They instill the idea that failure is bad and hence, Johnny should never fail. Consequently, when the child is faced with failure in his later years, he is usually devastated by its impact. What parents need to do is let their children experience life, experience failure, and then teach them how to deal with each.

Now, I know what you are thinking. If I know so much, why didn’t I handle my own failure better? Actually, in the past I never really had that much of a problem with defeat. I always looked at defeat as a learning situation. The fact of the matter is that most of our successes in life are really no more than the manipulation of our errors. By accepting failure, by learning from it, we can free ourselves to live our lives fully. True failure is never pleasurable, but neither is it terrible. What is terrible are the restrictions we place on life because of the fear of failure. Not only that, but the simple fact of the matter
is that we are all human and failure is part of the human condition. In fact, being human gives us the right to fail.

O.K., Biasiotto, so you handled defeat in the past, but that was then and this is now. So what’s your problem?

Well, maybe it wasn’t so much my performance as it was the chronology that led up to the meet. From the very beginning, I talked more shit than Robin Givens on the Barbara Walters show.

I told everyone who would listen that I was going to blow away 540 pounds. Psychologically speaking, that’s about as smart as whistling dixie at a Black Panthers rally. When you create expectations of doing great things, you create a competitive mentality in which you compete not to fail rather than compete to succeed. There’s a big difference. Competing not to fail causes an athlete to become conservative and hesitant. Whereas competing to win allows you to go at it with reckless abandon. When you talk like your performance is a sure thing, you have everything to lose and nothing to gain. If you succeed, you were supposed to. If you fail, you’re a loud-mouthed bum. I knew all that, but it still didn’t keep me from promising everyone that I’d do 540 pounds with room to spare.

The fact that I couldn’t even handle my opener of 500 pounds was a hard pill to swallow. I knew that a lot of people would not only remind me of my pre-meet prediction and bullshit, but would also rub a little salt in the wound. I figured I’d have to face that type of music for some time. Of course, I deserved it. My father would always say that when you live big, you pay big. The same can be said about talking big. Write a check with your mouth and eventually your ass will have to cash it, one way or another.
Another thing that weighed heavy on my mind was all the time, money, and energy I had spent preparing for that lift. Trust me on this one, there is a price for success. You have to sacrifice a lot. In fact, your whole life has to be drastically altered, the way you think, eat, sleep, etc. You have to become almost totally mono-idealistic. Everything has to be geared to that single purpose. Then there is all the ass-busting training, not to mention the pain. It can be a living hell. At least it is for me. I'm not one of those gifted athletes like Michael Jordan or Wayne Gretzke that God threw together to show us lesser folks what athletic greatness is all about. I have to bust my behind to just be competitive. Now, I'll admit that this time around I didn't exactly kill myself, but I just didn't sit on my duff either. I worked hard, real hard, and now I had little to show for it. Without question, the cost of the experience was monumental in comparison to the reward I received. Worse yet, I felt that the cost-reward benefit of yet another attempt at competing would be prohibitive. When I weighed the benefits of yet another comeback against the disadvantages, it was just too costly. It wasn't worth it. Meaning that the way things looked I'd be ending my weightlifting career on a down note. That thought alone ate at my psyche. I had staked my reputation for one more chance to taste greatness, and I had lost. Now I would have to live with that fact. Oh yea, and I hated Reagan for talking me into coming back. Besides, that date he got me was a real nightmare. At best, she was uglier than a box of rocks and had an I.Q. lower than my hat size. Needless to say, I had a BAD DAY.
Section II
The CHURCH’s
CHICKEN CONNECTION

During the next couple of weeks, I was so depressed I didn’t know whether to kill myself or go bowling. I just couldn’t get the meet off my mind and the guys at the gym certainly weren’t any help either. I don’t think a day went by that someone didn’t remind me about how poorly I did at the meet. Worse yet, I knew a lot of them were rubbing it in on purpose. Of course, I probably deserved it. Like I said, prior to the meet I bent everyone’s ear about how great I was and how I was going to blow my lifts away. Still, I felt like they could have cut me a little slack. I mean, not even Saddam Hussein would kick a man when he’s down. O.K., O.K.... bad example.

I was actually on the verge of completely giving up on lifting. For the first time in my life, I was tired of it all. The training, the dieting, the constant pain—it just wasn’t fun anymore. In all honesty, I probably would have quit if it weren’t for the fact I’m addicted to lifting weights. Well, maybe not addicted, but I’m certainly habituated to lifting. I’m not lying, when I don’t lift, I go through withdrawal. I get depressed, I can’t eat, and at times I even have trouble sleeping.
Interestingly, there is considerable research which indicates that other athletes experience similar feelings when they stop training. For instance, some long-distance runners actually exhibit characteristics of true addiction. That is, they run in order to get what has become known as a “running fix.” The fix or euphoric feeling that the runner experiences is thought to be brought about by endogenous-morphine-like substances, called endorphins, that are naturally secreted by the body. It has been theorized that when a runner or other athlete pushes himself to the point of pain, the nervous system is stimulated to release additional endorphins. Interestingly, researchers have found that a recently discovered brain endorphin is two hundred times more powerful an analgesic than morphine. Since endorphins are like morphine, not only is the athletes’ pain eased, they also experience a type of drug high. Amazingly, some athletes who are kept from working out will actually experience withdrawal symptoms similar to any drug addition.

I don’t believe I was physically addicted to lifting, but like I said, I was into the iron pretty deep. It was like a chronic condition. Consequently, everyday I would drag myself into the gym with the hope that I would somehow get my drive and determination back.

It didn’t take me long to realize that the way my training was going, I was paving the way for mediocrity—certainly not excellence. I exhibited absolutely no enthusiasm or intensity during my workouts and physically, I was just going through the motions. I had lost my heart and the drive to excel. I was totally empty both physically and mentally. And I was doing nothing to remedy the situation. If anything, I constantly bombarded myself with self-defeating affirmations. Through all my negativeness,
I had convinced myself that I was over the hill and that my only hope for my athletic resurrection was through divine intervention. In reality, I had turned myself into the antithesis of what I had always professed to be—a man who knew no boundaries. A man who believed even the impossible was possible. I was close to extinction, both as an athlete and as a sports psychologist.

Then something happened that literally breathed life back into me. I was in the gym stumbling through my workout when this guy dressed in jeans and a USA T-shirt walked over to me and introduced himself as Jim McCoy, the owner of a chain of Church’s Fried Chicken restaurants. At first, I thought he was putting me on. At best, he couldn’t have been more than 35 years of age and appearance-wise, he looked more like a champion body-builder than a millionaire pencil pusher. I had seen him at the gym before, but I never really paid him that much attention. From the start, it was obvious that Mr. McCoy had taken more than a passing interest in what I had been doing for the past couple of years.

“Aren’t you the guy who wrote the book, 2001: A Sports Odyssey and all those other motivation books?”

“Yea, that’s me.”

“Well, let me give you a little suggestion. Why don’t you go home and read them. I’ve watched you for the last couple of weeks, and you’re nothing like your books. You’re a defeatist.”

My initial gut reaction was to just walk away from the guy. After all, here was a guy I had never said a word to giving me advise and insulting me at the same time. But in my heart, I knew he was right. I wasn’t the same guy in the books. So I just stood there and took my medicine.
After he was through lecturing me on the finer points of positive thinking, he changed the conversation abruptly.

“Listen, if you’re really serious about attempting to make another comeback, I’d like to help you. But, only if you are serious and you are willing to pay the price. That means rededicating yourself entirely. No half-stepping it. I want you to be totally committed to that single purpose.”

“What makes you think I want to make a comeback?”

“I know you. I followed you and your career for a long time. I understand you. We are a lot alike, and I know you can’t walk away from powerlifting until you redeem yourself for that last performance. If you walk away now, it will eat at you forever. That’s your nature. Besides, I have a proposition that you won’t be able to walk away from.”

“And what’s that?”

“A 600 pound squat at 132 pounds.”

“A 600 pound squat! Are you crazy? No one is going to do that. Especially not a drug-free athlete. Hell, no one is even close to squatting that kind of weight!”

“You are.”

“It’s been over a year since I did that 575 and believe me, there is a world of difference between 575 and 600. Not only that, but look what happened my last time out.”

“I believe your last performance is going to help us. It’s going to make you hungrier, more determined.”

“You are crazy. Do you know how much 600 pounds is? The average guy in my weight class only squats about 370 pounds, and no drug-free athlete in the world squatted over 500 pounds last year. I’d venture to say that just about everyone in powerlifting will tell you that the 600
pound barrier is beyond the physiological limits of a drug-free athlete at my weight.”

“Do you believe it is?”

“I’ll say this... 575 pounds took everything I had, and I just barely made it. If a fly would have landed on that bar, I probably would have missed the lift. I really can’t envision doing that kind of weight.”

“Well, I believe you can squat 600 pounds, maybe even more if you totally focus yourself on that goal. And I’m willing to help you do it.”

“Well, exactly how can you help me?”

“I’ll be willing to go the whole nine yards with you. Whatever you need, equipment, coaches, money. I’ll take care of it. But, like I said, you’re the one who will have to pay the price.”

“Why do you want to do all this for me?”

“First of all, I like you, and I believe that if anyone in the world can squat 600 pounds, drug-free, it’s you. If you succeed, it will without a doubt be one of the greatest feats of strength in the history of the sport. I’d like to be a part of that bit of history. I also have some selfish reasons for helping you. After reading your books, I’ve really become interested in learning more about the powers of the mind. I want you to help me understand and master those powers. Then there is my business, Church’s Chicken. I want a commitment from you that Church’s Chicken will have the absolute rights to promote and publicize that lift.”

“I’m not sure I can promise you that. Powerlifting is an amateur sport and there are all sorts of sanctioning regulations that we’ll have to follow.”

“Well then, don’t sanction the lift.”

“Then I won’t get credit for it.”
“Listen, we’re trying to accomplish a feat. You know, like climbing Mount Everest or swimming the English Channel. We’ll get the appropriate judges, use the appropriate equipment, and do everything else that’s necessary. Then, if they don’t sanction it because you’re part of Church’s Chicken, well, then I say the heck with them.”

“I’d still rather sanction it.”

“Well, that’s O.K. by me, as long as I get the rights to promote and publicize the event. Actually, I don’t see the big deal about sanctioning it. Let’s be honest, powerlifting has more sanctioning bodies than professional wrestling and boxing put together. Every time I look in a lifting magazine there’s another organization springing up.”

“Well, I can’t argue with that point. But what if I miss the lift again.”

“All I ask is that you give your very best. I’m not going to put any pressure on you to make the lift. If you miss it, you miss it. But, I honestly believe that you can do it. Just think, then you can write another book.”

“Well, I’ll think about it, but I’m not going to promise you anything. I’m not sure I’m capable of 600 pounds. I’m not sure anyone is. I mean that’s an astronomical amount of weight.”

“There you go again—negativeness. I told you, go home and read your books. After that, think about what I said, then when you are ready, come back to me. Together, we will rock the world—think about that too.”

After I left the gym, all I could think about was what Jim had said, “Rock the world.” It sounded great and that’s exactly what I wanted to do, but I was also aware of what it would cost to accomplish such a feat. The training, the pain, the sacrifice. Even then there was no guarantee that I would make the lift. Still, the words “rock the
world” rang in my mind. It was certainly something worth thinking about.
That night, I received a call from E.J. (Doc) Kreis. Doc and I had been friends for close to a decade, but in recent years we seldom saw each other due mainly to Doc’s busy travel schedule. Since the time we first met, Doc had become a pretty famous person. True, he still had to carry his American Express Card when he journeyed outside the realm of sport, but within the sports domain he was well known, especially among strength athletes. Unfortunately, what he is best known for is the drug scandal at Clemson University in 1985. Just in case you’re not familiar with the event, let me give you a brief overview of what transpired.

On October 19, 1985, Augustinius (Stijn) Jaspers, a world-class-long-distance runner (5,000 meters), was found dead in his dormitory room at Clemson University. A search of Jaspers’ room by University police turned up a small plastic bottle containing three capsules of phenylbutazone, an anti-inflammatory drug that is commonly used by “elite” athletes. The drug, simply known as “bute,” is legally obtainable only with a doctor’s prescription. As you may have guessed, Jasper had no prescription, nor did the bottle have a medical label. Although an autopsy report revealed that phenylbutazone was not believed to be a factor in Jaspers’ death, a full-scale
investigation was launched to determine where Jasper got the illegal drugs.

From what I was told, the investigation was going nowhere fast until Jaspers’ coach, Stan Narewski, stepped forward and admitted giving Jaspers the bute. He said he had obtained the drug from another Clemson coach named Sam Colson. Colson in turn confessed to the South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) that he procured both anabolic steroids and phenylbutazone for Clemson athletes from Doc and M. Woody Wilson, a pharmacist in Franklin, Tenn. Thus begins the biggest drug scandal in the history of inter-collegiate athletics. Sports Illustrated was one of the first to break the story suggesting that there was a drug traffic system that flowed from Nashville to Clemson University. That network is said to have illegally distributed as many as 100,000 units of bute as well as various kinds of steroids and human growth hormones.

Less than a week after the Sports Illustrated report, just about every major newspaper and magazine in the country did a follow-up series on the scandal. Eventually, Wilson admitted that he sold steroids to Colson and to as many as 30 Vanderbilt football players for three straight seasons. It was later discovered that Wilson sold over 30,000 units of steroids throughout the country. During this entire ordeal, Doc maintained his innocence.

He publicly announced that he had never sold or distributed anabolic steroids to any athlete, nor did he advise any athlete to use such drugs. However, he did admit that he had procured the phenylbutazone for Sam Colson, apparently the same phenylbutazone that was found in Jaspers’ room. When all of the evidence was gathered and presented to the grand jury close to a year
later, Doc was cleared on all charges of distributing and selling anabolic steroids. He was charged with a misdemeanor for giving Colson the phenylbutazone, but was given no fine or sentence. In short, he was found guilty of a charge that is equivalent to a traffic violation.

Unfortunately for Doc, during the time between Jaspers’ death and the trial, he was dragged through the mud by just about every sports publication in America, including Sports Illustrated. Due to the pressure, Doc eventually resigned as strength coach at Vanderbilt. Worse yet, Doc’s daughter, Kennedy Francis, was taken ill and died only two weeks after he handed in his resignation.

There is no doubt in my mind that a lesser man would have wilted under such circumstances. Not Doc, though. During the entire ordeal, he somehow maintained his dignity and sanity. Not only that, but he seemed to keep a positive mental attitude throughout the whole mess. Now, don’t get me wrong, I’m not trying to defend what Doc did. He was wrong, dead wrong. He did what he did with the intention of helping someone, but still it was a mistake. In fact, it’s probably the biggest mistake he’ll ever make, especially when you consider how his life was effected.

But, let’s be honest. Who hasn’t made a mistake?

In my opinion, the greatest gift God gave us is that we are human. Being human means that we are allowed to make mistakes, allowed to be less than perfect. It also means that we can expect to be forgiven for our imperfections and we should be forgiven for our transgressions. The day that a single human being develops perfection is the day that I’ll demand perfection of myself and others.
Trust me on this one—we are all safe. No human being is perfect and no human being ever will be.

Wasn’t it our Lord who said, “If there is anyone amongst you who has not sinned, let him cast the first stone.”

To be successful in life we have to make mistakes. In reality, success is simply the manipulation of error. It doesn’t matter what mistakes we’ve made in life, as long as we don’t keep making that same mistake. As long as we have learned from our experiences, as long as we are willing to take responsibility for our actions and go on from there, then there is growth in life.

Unfortunately, one of the sad things about our society is that we feel more comfortable dragging someone down rather than building someone up. We seem to rejoice at another human being’s misfortune and misery. We spend so much time dwelling on what’s wrong in our society, that we overlook all the great things that are happening around us. In fact, the media has such a slanted view of reporting, that Ted Turner of Turner Broadcasting Systems has developed a program called “Good News” to counter-balance all the bad news that’s being reported. It’s wild how our society can be an explosion of negatives.

If there was anything good that came from Doc’s case it was that it served as a catalyst for the present day drug testing in high school, college, and professional athletics. Until the Clemson drug scandal, not a single sports team, to my knowledge, had ever tested their athletes for drug usage. Doc’s case also brought to light for the first time the fact that American athletes were using drugs to enhance their performance. Prior to that time, the American public had this notion that only the Eastern
Bloc Countries used drugs and that Russia and East Germany were the major culprits.

What’s really funny is that just about every coach and athlete from Little League on up was aware of the presence and widespread use of steroids by American athletes. I also venture to say that most college and professional administrations were aware that some of their athletes were using drugs to enhance their performance. Instead of getting involved the way they should have, they simply looked the other way. Interestingly, when it was brought to the public’s attention that drug usage was fairly prominent in the field of athletics, most sports administrations acted as if they had never heard the word “steroid.” Worse yet, they were usually the ones who were most outraged when their athletes tested positive for drugs. I believe you call that hypocrisy.

Well, so much for making a long story short. Anyway, the reason Doc called me was to find out if I wanted to speak at the National Strength and Speed Clinic that was being put on jointly by Middle Tennessee State University and Unipro Nutrition. As you might have expected, he wanted me to talk about the powers of the mind and how they can be used to enhance performance. At first, I wasn’t too keen on the idea. Over the past six months I had been traveling all over the country promoting my company, World Class Enterprises. The thought of jumping on a plane and zooming up to Murfreesboro just didn’t make my nipples hard. What changed my mind was when Doc told me that Chuck Braxton was going to perform one of his sensational strength stunts. That’s something I couldn’t pass up because Braxton is B-A-D, and I do mean with a capital letters.
BRAXTON

In case you don’t know Chuck Braxton, he is the closest thing we humans have to Darth Vader. At 6’3” and 297 pounds, Braxton is one of the strongest men to ever walk the face of the earth. In powerlifting competition he has squatted and deadlifted well over 800 pounds, and has managed a 500-plus bench press. He also has lifted over 2,000 pounds in the Herculean lift. Only one man in the history of the world has ever lifted as much. That, of course, was Paul Anderson—the greatest strength athlete of all time. Braxton isn’t just super strong though, he’s also iron tough. You know, the Roberto Duran–Marvin Hagler type. Believe me, Braxton is so bad he could make a living charging people to breathe. I’ve heard guys say that he’s meaner than a junkyard dog. The truth is Braxton is meaner than a junkyard full of junkyard dogs.

The first time I met him was at the 1977 Southern States Powerlifting Championships in Atlanta, Georgia. During the course of the meet, Braxton amazed the crowd by setting a Master’s World record every time he made a lift. After the meet, he surprised me by asking me to join him for a few beers to celebrate his victory. Although I didn’t know anything about Braxton at that time, I wasn’t about to say no. When Braxton says “jump,” people ask, “How high?” and I’m a people.
Consequently, before I knew it, I was on the back of Braxton’s Harley Davidson heading for what he said was one of Atlanta’s “hot spots”—Tattoo’s. When we got there I could hardly believe my eyes. At best the place looked like an oversized “outhouse.” I doubt seriously if the place had been cleaned since day one. Worse yet, Tattoo’s smelled like an outhouse. But the worst was yet to come. Everyone in the place was right out of a “Hell’s Angel” movie, even the bartender. You know the type: long-greasy-hair, oily skin, rotten teeth, scraggly beard, filthy jeans, shirt, and jacket. They also carried the traditional Hell’s Angel paraphernalia: knives, chains, brass knuckles, spiked wrist bands, and most importantly, a laminated library card. The library card is used strictly for breaking and entering—without the breaking.

When we walked in the place, we got a few stares but nothing else. When you think about it, that’s not too surprising. First of all, don’t forget that Braxton’s 6’3”, 295 pounds of rock-hard muscle. Any human being in his right mind would walk a mile, no ten miles, to avoid a confrontation with such mass and power. Of course, it was questionable whether anyone in this joint was in his right mind. The other thing we had going for us was that Braxton kind of looks like a super giant “Hell’s Angel” without the paraphernalia, filth, and library card. Well, he kind of does and doesn’t. To me he looks more like Santa Claus with muscles. He has long, snow-white hair and a beard just like Santa. In fact, the only real difference that I could see between Santa and Braxton is that Braxton would kill you at the drop of a hat; Santa would probably let you slide. Perhaps our major problem was that next to everyone in the place, I looked like Mr. Rogers. I’m sure that made me a big hit with the good-
old-boys at Tatoo’s. Still, besides the stares, no one said a word.

Instead of just sliding over to a table in a corner of the bar, Braxton took a table that was smack dab in the middle of the room. After a few minutes everything seemed to get back to normal, in fact, nobody seemed to notice that we were there. Braxton changed that in a hurry. You see, Braxton’s a little hard of hearing. Consequently, he talks a little loud. On second thought, he talks real loud—like yells even. Even with Braxton’s loud mouth everything was going O.K. until this guy walked into the place with this girl who was built like Raquel Welch and dressed like Madonna.

“Judd, look at that girl’s tits. They’re huge.”

“Chuck, not so loud. Everyone in here can hear you.”

“All right, but damn, look at those things when you get a chance... Go ahead, look now... now, look at them!”

The next thing I knew, the girl’s boyfriend was right in Braxton’s face screaming and yelling at the top of his lungs. Now that was a mistake of significant magnitude.

When I was in college, I read a series of studies conducted by Robert Sommer, a psychologist at the University of California (Davis), on “personal space.” According to Sommer, each of us has our own “psychological territory” that we will “defend to the hilt.” It’s kind of like an invisible bubble of space around our bodies that encompassed what we consider to be our own territory. It’s “space” that’s not to be invaded by others without our permission.

The size of our “personal space” is influenced by such factors as personality, status, and physical prowess. According to Sommer, the personal space of middle class Americans is approximately two square feet from any
body part. For Arabs the space is considerably smaller, and for Russians the space is much larger. As you might expect, people with great status or physical prowess command a larger personal space than do individuals with little or no status or physical strength. From where I was sitting, I figured Braxton’s personal space was right up there with the Pope and the President. Meaning that the guy was a good-ten-feet into Braxton’s psychological territory. A space, as I mentioned, that is defendable to the hilt. Not only was this guy invading Braxton’s space, worse yet, he was fouling it up with a lot of trash talk.

“So you like my old lady’s tits, do you? Well, Hoss, I hope you got an eyeful because that’s the last mother (bleeping) thing you’re going to see for a long time.”

I can’t imagine what the guy was thinking because his chances of stomping Braxton were about as good as a snowball’s chance in hell.

I guess we’ll never know what he was thinking, because before he could say another word, Braxton back-handed him upside his head, sending him flying across the room. It was like a big old grizzly swatting a five-year-old kid. I swear I could hear the guys brain slap against his cranium when Braxton hit him. The guy went down, out for the count and then some. As soon as Braxton hit the guy, four or five guys jumped out of their chairs. Then Braxton stood up with a look on his face that would have melted tempered steel. Immediately, everyone sat right back down as if nothing had happened. Apparently, not everyone in the place was out of their minds. I don’t know what happened after that because from that time until we left, I had my eyes closed. That was the beginning of a long, beautiful, and bizarre relationship.
During the years that I’ve known Braxton, I’ve come to realize that the really great thing about him is not his ass-kicking ability, or the fact that he’s a world-class athlete, but rather that he is totally outlandish. Take his age, for instance. On any given day, according to Braxton, his age will range anywhere from 42 to 54. This discrepancy is probably due to the years that Braxton spent incarcerated in New York State Prison. You see Braxton doesn’t count his prison years as part of his chronological age. Now I know what you’re thinking... “What’s a sweet guy like Braxton doing spending his time in prison?”

Have you ever heard the old cliche, “At one time I was really making big money.” Well, about twenty-five years ago, that’s exactly what Braxton was doing. Trouble was, he was making it about a quarter-of-an-inch too big.

That’s right, Chuck the Truck, (as he is affectionately called) was a counterfeiter. If you want to hear something really amazing though, the secret-service agent who arrested him some 25 years ago was Ben Lockett, my former coach. At that time, I was approximately ten years old and had never heard of Lockett nor Braxton. Not only that, but I lived in Pennsylvania. Braxton lived in North Carolina and Lockett lived in Texas.

It’s really funny how things work out in life.
Some twenty-five years ago, the three of us were: a kid, a counterfeiter, and a secret-service agent. Now we’re all the best of friends. You know, it really is a small world when you think about it.

Anyway, that’s really not the outlandish part, not even close in fact. The real genius, or should I say bizarreness, of Chuck Braxton didn’t surface until about a decade ago. It was at that time that Braxton got into doing dare-devil stunts.

I know there’s a lot of dare-devils floating around the country, but when it comes to sheer nail-biting excitement, none of them can hold a candle to Braxton. The reason I say that is when it comes to Braxton, you never know what the hell is going to happen. I’d venture to say that in the dare-devil business, 95 percent of the stunts attempted are successful. The other five percent Braxton attempted. I’m serious. I’ve never in my life seen one guy screw up so many times. Of course, that’s what makes him so exciting. You just never know what’s going to happen. Every stunt he does is like a life-and-death situation; it’s really great stuff.

For instance, take the first stunt he ever tried. He was hired by the Chevrolet company to test out an experimental, fire-resistant, jump-suit. The stunt called for Braxton to ram a Chevy Camaro into the middle of three other cars that had been doused with gasoline and rigged with dynamite. The gasoline and dynamite were used to insure that an explosion and fire would start with the impact of Braxton’s car. Also, in order to insure that the experimental jump-suit would catch fire, Braxton was instructed to douse the suit with six ounces of gasoline. Braxton, never really being too good on instructions, doused the suit with six gallons instead of six ounces.
As soon as his car made contact with the other three automobiles, all hell broke loose—no pun intended. There were flames a good fifty feet high and a hundred feet wide. At first everyone in the stands, including the researchers, thought that Braxton had barbecued himself. In fact, it was a good twenty seconds before there was any sign of life within the raging inferno, and another twenty seconds before Braxton emerged from the flames. Of course, when he broke free of the wreckage, he was still very much on fire and running at world class speed. Unfortunately, the guys with the fire extinguishers didn’t possess that type of speed. Apparently, fire can really increase your speed and endurance. Braxton must have run a good mile and a half before they caught up with him and put his fire out. I swear, twenty minutes after they had put him out, he was still smoldering. Luckily, he ended up with only a few severe burns, his life, and a char-broiled jump-suit.

Another one of Braxton’s wild stunts that went haywire took place only a week after he had won the World Master Powerlifting Championships. Braxton had read that the World Record weight for a truck running over a man was five tons, set back in 1939. It might be noted that the article did not say whether or not the guy survived. Braxton, apparently not satisfied with his gold medal from the World Championships, decided to let an eight-ton-truck drive over him. The stunt was designed so that the truck would drive up a small ramp, over Braxton’s chest, and then down a small ramp on the other side.

Believe it or not, over 5,000 Greenville, North Carolina residents turned out to watch Chuck and the truck. That says something about the residents of...
Greenville, but I’d rather not say what. Anyway, the stunt went off as planned... well, almost as planned. The truck went up the ramp, over Braxton’s chest, and down the other side all right. The only trouble was, in the process it ripped half of Braxton’s rib cage out. When the truck passed over him, the rig’s fuel tank got hung up on his chest. Braxton yelled for the driver to stop, but the guy thought he was telling him to go. Consequently, he went and so did a good portion of Braxton’s chest. It wasn’t a total loss, though. The Guinness Book of World Records gave him credit for the record.

If you think that’s something, here’s one better. During one of Braxton’s strength demonstrations he decided to drive a twenty-penny-nail through a pine board with his bare hand. It was a feat that he had accomplished numerous times, and one that the audiences really went wild over. First, he wrapped the head of the nail with a thick cloth in order to protect his hand. He then took a one inch pine board and placed it across two cinder blocks. Next, he positioned himself directly over the board, drew his arm back over his head, and then slammed the nail into the board with as much force as he could muster. The nail hit the board dead center making a tremendous thud. The nail went straight through the board... at least, half the nail did. The other half went right through Braxton’s hand—ouch! In other words, he fastened his hand to the one inch pine. In fact, he couldn’t have done it better if he had hammered his hand to the board.

Now, don’t get me wrong. Not all of Braxton’s stunts end up as tragedies. Some of the stunts he does properly, and some of them are absolutely incredible. For instance, he has held back four, 600-horsepower, Cessna airplanes
that were trying to take off in different directions—a world record. He also has laid on a bed of razor sharp nails while supporting more than 2,000 pounds on his chest. Another record.

Aside from his super stunts, Braxton also does a variety of thing that he considers mundane. Like eating light bulbs, bending tempered steel bars, and picking up cars, trucks, and small mobile homes. In short, when it comes to sheer strength, power, and craziness, Braxton is light years ahead of 99.9 percent of the world’s population. As I mentioned, there was just no way I was going to pass up the opportunity to see Braxton make history or a mess one more time.
World Class Speed and Strength Clinic

The following week I hopped on a plane in Albany, Georgia, and headed for Murfreesboro, Tennessee and the National Speed and Strength Clinic. The clinic was being advertised as the biggest, and of course, best sports information event of the eighties. I'm sure that statement might be debated by a few people, but one thing was for sure. Doc had somehow brought together some of the biggest names in the field of strength and speed. To my knowledge, never before had so many people with such a high caliber of knowledge, research, and clinical experience gathered under one banner for the development of sports. Just a few of the big names were: Dr. Fred Hatfield, editor of Sport's Fitness magazine, world record holder and world champion, Dr. George Dinteman, president of The National Association of Speed and Explosion, Dr. Mackie Shilstone, a nutrition analyst best known for muscling up Michael Spinks before his world heavyweight title fight with Larry Holmes, and Dr. A.H. “Lefty” Solomon, a nationally renown physiologist and sports psychologist.

The program also contained strength coaches from the collegiate level. As an added treat, Doc had also arranged
for a few world class powerlifters to put on a lifting demonstration. The most noted being Hatfield, who had sent word that he was going to push out some heavy metal. Last, but certainly not least, there was Braxton. All and all, it looked to be a super event.

When my plane touched down in Murfreesboro, Doc was there waiting for me. As usual, he was smiling from ear to ear. In my life, I've met few men who are as full of life as Doc. Just seeing him always lifts my spirits. He is so enthusiastic and cheerful, a really great person to be around. I have a saying, “If you ever see anyone without a smile, give them one of yours.” Till this day, I never had to give one to Doc. Even when he was at rock bottom, he always managed to have a smiling face. Like I said, he's great. Anyway, after a few minutes of small talk, Doc informed me that Braxton had requested my immediate presence at his place of employment.

In case I didn't mention it, Braxton was a guard for one of Tennessee's “finest chain gangs.” From what Doc said, Braxton's gang was the best of the worst, ranging from killers right up to... well, killers. I was sure of one thing, if anyone could handle such a motley crew, it was Braxton. After getting everything straight with Doc, I borrowed his car and headed out to see the man and his gang.
The CHAIN GANG

When I got to the work site, I found Chuck sitting on top of a small rock with his back turned to the prisoners that he was supposed to be watching. He was busy removing cakes from the prisoners’ lunch bags. When he saw me, his face lit up like a Christmas tree.

“Judd, how the hell are you doing?”

“I’m doing great... ah... Chuck, don’t you think it would be a good idea if you were facing the prisoners? Some of these guys look pretty tough. Aren’t you afraid they might jump you.”

“I hope they do, and then I’ll kill every one of them little bastards.”

“Chuck, you don’t have a gun.”

“I don’t need no gun. I’ll kill every one of them with my bare hands.”

With that Chuck stood up and faced the prisoners.

“Any of you little bastards want to ‘bleep’ with me?”

“No, Boss!”

After giving the prisoners a look that would kill, he sat back down.

“See, those little bleepers don’t want any of me. I’d kill them.”

“I believe you, Chuck.”

“Yeah.”

“Say! What are you doing with all the cakes?”

“I’m getting ready for a little snack. Would you like a piece of cake?”

“Isn’t that the prisoners’ cake?”
“Nah! It’s my cake.”
“All those cakes are yours, Chuck?”
“Yeah, these are all mine. I let the prisoners carry them here for me in their lunch bags. They like doing that for me.”
“Well, anyway, Doc told me that you’re going to do one of your amazing stunts tomorrow. I’m really looking forward to seeing it.”
“Why do you like watching all that shit so much?”
“Well, to be honest, when most guys perform a stunt you have a good idea how things are going to turn out. But, when you do something, you never know what’s going to happen. Face it, Chuck, you’re exciting.”
“Thanks.”
“What exactly are you going to do this time.”
“I’m going to blow myself up with dynamite.”
“OOO...K?!”
“Yeah! I’ve already burned myself up, now I’m going to blow myself up.”
“Sounds like fun.”
“It will be. I’m going to use enough dynamite to blow up a city block.”
“Chuck, you’re intellectually constipated.”
“I know, man. I just can’t help myself... Hey, do me a favor will you? Give my prisoners their lunch bags while I finish eating my cakes.”
“O.K.”
I gathered up all of the lunch bags and carried them over to the prisoners. After I finished handing out all of the lunches, I walked over to one of the prisoners who was sitting alone.
“Hi, I’m Judd.”
“Yeah.”
“Sorry about the lunch. I’m afraid Chuck ate your cake.”

“He be doin dat every day. Sheeit, I ain’t had no cake in damn near two year I be here.”
The following morning, I got up early, dressed, and then went straight to the Speed and Strength Clinic. Although I wasn’t scheduled to speak until one o’clock that afternoon, I wanted to watch the squatting exhibition that Fred “Doc Squat” Hatfield was going to put on.

In case you’re not familiar with Hatfield’s career, let me fill you in. First of all, he’s the Editor-in-Chief of Sports Fitness magazine, the author of eleven books, and the feature character in a video tape series called Strength and Power. Not only that, but according to record, he is one of the greatest powerlifters in the history of the sport and by far and away the greatest squatter (that sounds gross) of all time. In short, he is not only a world class athlete, but also an extremely accomplished author. A combination which is almost nonexistent in this highly competitive and dynamic society of ours.

The last time I had seen Fred lift was at the 1986 World Series of Powerlifting in Auburn, Alabama. If my memory serves me right, he broke three world records that day in the 181-pound class. Since that time, Fred had pushed his body weight up from 176 pounds to 275, and in the process has set the world record in the squat at five different weight classes. No other male or female powerlifter has ever come close to matching that feat.

I guess by now you can see why I didn’t want to miss his exhibition. In addition to the sheer excitement of watching such an event, I was hoping that I could pick up a few tips that might help me with my own squat. When I
got to the auditorium, the place was already packed to
the rafters with spectators. That didn’t surprise me. It
had been rumored that Fred was going to attempt a 1000
pound squat. I’d venture to say that most strength ath-
letes would drive across country to see that kind of
weight being moved. What did surprise me though, was
the way Fred looked. At best, he was a heart attack wait-
ing to happen. True, his 5’6” frame was packed with rock-
hard muscle, but he also was carrying enough adipose tis-
sue to float a battleship. He kind of looked like a cross
between a muscled-up Pillsbury Dough Boy and a short-
legged rhino. And talk about being uncomfortable! Just
about every movement he made seemed to take a monu-
mental effort. Not only that, but he labored constantly
just to get his breath. One thing was for sure, this was
not the same Fred Hatfield that I had seen in 1986. That
Hatfield was a lean, awesomely muscled athlete that pro-
jected a wholesome healthy image. This Hatfield showed
absolutely no semblance of his former self. Worse yet,
when we talked, he openly admitted to jeopardizing his
health for the opportunity to break a world record he
already held.

“Say, Fred, aren’t you a little worried about carrying
so much weight?”

“Well, I feel like shit, and I know I look like shit, but
that’s the price I have to pay to do what I want.”

“What do you want? You’re already one of the greatest
lifters of all time, and I think it’s safe to say you’re the
greatest squatter of all time.”

“I want to be the first man in the world to squat 1,100
pounds. It’s ‘do-able,’ and I’m going to do it.”

“But, aren’t you worried about your health?”

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“Whatever it takes, I’m going to be the first man in the world to squat 1,100 pounds.”

To be perfectly honest, I couldn’t believe what he was saying. I mean here was a guy who was not only a world renown athlete, but also a nationally renowned health advocate. A guy who seemingly had everything—fame, money, intelligence, and respect. Yet he was willing to jeopardize all of that for the sake of succeeding in a sport he had already succeeded at, and one that only a handful of people in America ever cared about. Think about it for a second...

How many people really give a damn if a guy can squat 1,100 pounds? After all, what type of contribution is that to society? True, it’s entertainment for some of us, but little more. When you stack a human life up against such a feat, it has far less significance. Still, the win-at-all-cost philosophy is so well ingrained in the psyche of the American athlete that nothing is spared in the name of winning—not himself nor his life. Winning outweighs every other human aspect. Of course, the world of sports is ripe with examples of this type of blind obsession.

Case in point: Once I received a questionnaire from a nationally prominent sports psychologist. The questionnaire was designed to determine if world class athletes had a specific personality profile. The last question on the survey was, “If you had a pill that would make you World Champion in a year, but would kill you in five years, would you take it?”

When I read the question, I said to myself, “Man! Who in the hell is going to write yes to a question like that?”

A month later I found out that more than 40 percent of the athletes who responded to the questionnaire said that they would take the pill! I guess in light of that expe-
rience, I should not have been too surprised by Fred’s attitude. Still, I expected more from a man like Hatfield. Then again, I have no room to talk. Like I said, for close to ten years, I had brutalized my body with powerlifting. In fact, if I’ve learned anything during my years as a competitive powerlifter, it’s that the sport can seriously upset your Yin and Yang—a lethal infliction. If it doesn’t kill you, it can certainly make you wish it had. I doubt seriously if a 12-month stay in a Chinese torture chamber could have put a “hurtin” on me as bad as powerlifting has.

Over the years, I’ve had my share of injuries. Actually, I’ve had my share and about ten other guys’ share. You might even say that injuries are my forté. According to my medical records, I’ve had a broken finger, a broken ankle, three broken ribs, four teeth knocked out, twenty-three stitches, chest surgery, back surgery, two herniated discs, partial paralysis in my chest and arm, and a ripped quadricep. That’s not counting the thousand or so muscle pulls, spasms and tears I’ve had. I’d venture to say that during the past decade, I’ve experienced more pain than a dog in the experimental group of a German war experiment. Demented but true. And after all that, I’m still lifting. Of course, I’m not in jeopardy of killing myself by having a massive heart attack either. All I have to worry about is crippling myself for life. That’s the great thing about being an American. You can criticize someone else for doing exactly what you’re doing. I call it the Jimmy Swaggart Syndrome.

When you think about it, it’s really ironic. If a man is overweight and overworked, we go to great lengths to try and help him. Yet an athlete can work himself half to death, engage in life-threatening practices, and we
reward his behavior. If anything, we encourage him to work even harder. What we don’t seem to understand is that many athletes are so totally consumed by their sport both mentally and physically, that they couldn’t back off even if they wanted to. They have little, if any, control of their behavior. I’ve seen athletes, and I’m sure you have, who play with injuries that could literally shorten their lives. Does anyone try to stop them?

Hell no!

If anything, these athletes are praised for their toughness and then set up as role models. When it comes to sports, there seems to be absolutely no concern for people whatsoever. As Hatfield said—“Whatever it takes.”

Where will this tunnel vision end?
God only knows.
When the exhibition started, it immediately became evident that this was going to be nothing short of a world class presentation. Not only was Hatfield going to attempt some mind-boggling weight, but Danny Austin, the 1983, 1986, and 1987 U.S.P.F. 148-pound World Champion and world-record-holder in the squat, also was there to show his stuff. After a few warm-up sets with weight that would crush most mortal men, Austin loaded the bar to 535 pounds. After struggling a little getting the bar off the rack, Austin whipped off two hard, but smooth reps with the weight. Amazingly, no one seemed to think that was much of an accomplishment. Probably because Hatfield took the same weight for ten ridiculously easy reps.

The next step was 565 pounds for Austin. Again he had trouble getting the weight out of the rack, but once he set up, he controlled the weight with relative ease for a single repetition. As with his previous lift, no one reacted. Now that absolutely shocked me. I mean here was a guy who was toying with near World Record poundage and no one even seemed to notice.

I’ve heard it said that most people in America tend to focus on the absolute rather than the relative. In other words, they are not so impressed with performance as it’s related to the size or weight of an individual, but rather, performance in general.
For instance, people seem to be more impressed by a 250-pound-man lifting 500 pounds, than a 132-pound-man lifting 450 pounds, even though the latter performance is light years ahead of the former as far as performance is concerned. It’s a shame, because a lot of great lightweight athletes don’t get the credit they deserve. But that’s just the way it is, and that’s the way it’s going to stay until we start educating people about the relative measure of performance.

Anyway, after Austin’s 565, Hatfield elevated the bar to 750 pounds. Then, before you could say “Doc Squat,” he unracked the weight and pumped out three easy reps. Everyone in the place went wild, yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs, but the spectators hadn’t seen anything yet. With the crowd still in a frenzy, the bar was loaded to 910 pounds. Less than a handful of men in the world had ever lifted that kind of weight, and every one of them weighed a good 50 pounds more than Hatfield. When the bar was loaded, Hatfield positioned himself in front of it. He then pointed his finger at me.

“Judd, maybe you better zap me for this one.”

“The way you did 750, I don’t think you’ll need hypnosis or anything else.”

“How many do you want?”

“Let me see your greatness. Give me two.”

“No, I’m going to give you three.”

With that he unracked the weight and proceeded to do three easy reps, and I do mean easy. It was the most vulgar display of power I had ever seen. If there was any doubt about Hatfield being the greatest squatter in the world, that notion was quickly dispelled. He was just that A•W•E•S•O•M•E•….
BLASTING OFF

After the seminar, and exhibition which I might add was a resounding success, about five or six of us jumped in Doc’s van and headed over to the Murfreesboro’s Central Park to watch Braxton blow himself up. When we got there, the place was packed with spectators. Apparently, a man blowing himself up was a big deal in Murfreesboro. The funny thing was that it didn’t seem to be that big a deal to Braxton. At least, that’s the impression he gave me prior to the historic event.

“Chuck, are you sure about this? I mean, dynamite is a little bit different than fire. You could buy the farm instantly with this shit.”

“Nah! I’ll be alright... Just between you and me, it’s a trick.”

“What do you mean?”

“See... I’m going to be lying inside a wooden coffin (box) and the dynamite is going to be around the outside of the coffin. What the people in the stands won’t know is that the bottom of the coffin is about two feet underground. Meaning that I’ll be underground when the explosion occurs. Since dynamite explodes upward, I won’t be taking any of the impact.”

“I don’t know Chuck, it still sounds pretty dangerous to me.”

“Don’t worry... It’ll be cake.”

“Yeah! But you know the record you have with these crazy stunts.”
“Listen, when I want your opinion, I’ll give it to you!”
“O.K. I’ll back off.”
“Come on, Judd, chill... I’m not going to kill myself. I’m just going to blow myself up a little. It’ll be fun; You’ll see.”

After Braxton got into his asbestos suit, the same model I might add that he used in his fire demonstration, he walked out to meet his adoring fans. You would have thought that the Pope had just shown up. The people were going absolutely berserk. I hadn’t heard an ovation like that since I last attended a Bruce Springsteen concert. After exchanging a few pleasantries with his fans, Braxton made his way out to his coffin, which was a good hundred feet from the grandstands.

Once there, he turned to the crowd, waved, then climbed into the coffin and pulled the lid closed. For the next 30 seconds or so there was complete silence. I mean you could have heard a pin drop. Then came an explosion that could have leveled a small shopping center. As Braxton had stated, the dynamite exploded upward. Unfortunately, Braxton also exploded upward. He had used so much dynamite that the impact literally blew him a good six feet out of the hole. Any mortal man would have died instantly. Braxton—well, it just shook him up a little. He struggled to his feet, walked a few steps, then fell over again. He repeated that little routine three or four times before he finally stabilized himself on his feet. By that time, the crowd was going absolutely wild.

When we got out to Braxton, he looked like one of those characters who had just spent 15 minutes playing hell with Bugs Bunny. His hair and his beard were going every which way, his face was covered with black soot, and his asbestos suit was shredded. Still, Braxton had
once again defied death, and in the process, established himself as one of the craziest Homo sapiens on this planet.

After we got Chuck cleaned up, we decided to go out for a bite to eat and then celebrate. All-in-all, it was a super-successful weekend. The seminar was fantastic, there was a huge turnout, and the information presented was tops in the field of strength and speed. And Braxton’s performance—well, people will be talking about that for years to come.

When we got to the restaurant, a little old lady about 90-years-of-age was making her way with the aid of a cane out of the front door. Her head was facing the floor, carefully watching every step that she made. Just as she reached the front door, we were coming in.

Braxton was also walking with his head down, apparently still trying to stabilize his gait. As luck would have it, Braxton and the little old lady walked right into each other. When the lady looked up and saw Braxton’s face, she let out a terrifying scream. Apparently startled by her shriek, Braxton followed suit with a terrifying scream of his own, which just about gave the lady and everyone else in the place cardiac arrest.

“The old bitch scared me,” he blurted, somewhat embarrassed.

Braxton—I’m telling you, the man is B-A-D.
On the plane ride home, I made my decision to give the 600 pound barrier a try. I won't say that Austin and Hatfield's exhibition had a significant impact on my decision, but it certainly helped. If the truth be known though, Jim McCoy's offer to give me financial and moral support was the major factor in my decision. I figured that to really have a shot at 600, I would need all of the advantages that modern technology could afford me. When you get into the science thing you're talking big bucks. Fortunately, Jim had that kind of capital. Actually, when I thought about it, we made a pretty good team. I knew pretty much what it would take—equipment, diet, supplements, training, etc.,—to make a run at 600 pounds, and Jim had the means to insure that I got what I needed.

There were two other factors that significantly contributed to my decision. As Jim noted, I didn't want to end my career on such a sour note. To lose is one thing, but to be totally broken... well, I just couldn't live with that constantly haunting me. I had to redeem myself. It was a matter of pride.

The second factor was the 600 pound barrier. Just the thought of attempting such an awesome weight was mind-boggling. At best, such a weight is a fantasy for even the best lifters in the world. I knew that if I was
successful in breaking that barrier, I would have a promi-
nent place in the history of the sport. In short, it was my
chance to establish myself as one of the top strength ath-
letes of all time. Without question, it was a feat that
would satisfy my quest for greatness.
After I arrived home and got myself situated, I immediately sat down and constructed a list of the things I figured I would need to go for the record. If I do say so myself, the list was pretty comprehensive. It included just about every valid method for enhancing athletic performance known to man. I spared no expense, primarily because I wasn’t paying for it. Hey! When it comes to spending someone else’s money, you can rate me right up there with Robin Givens, Tammy Faye Baker, and Imelda Marcos. Actually, I figured Jim would veto half of my requests but like my father always told me, there’s no harm in asking.

When I had my list together, I got on the phone and called Jim. I was about to see just how serious he was about taking the project to the limit. I was a little surprised to find that not only was Jim waiting for my call, but he had already made some preparations for my comeback. In fact, he started telling me about what he had planned before I even had a chance to tell him that I would attempt a comeback.

“Listen, Judd. I’ve been working on something that I believe will really help our effort... Are you ready for this?”

“Ready for what?”

“I want you to go to China.”
“China! Like in the Peoples Republic of China? Like in Communist ‘Red’ China?”
“That’s the place.”
“I thought China was pretty well closed to the Western world?”
“Well, it is and it isn’t, depending upon the reason you’re going. Getting into China is not that big of a problem, but getting any type of information out of there, especially pertaining to their sports program, is damn near impossible. I believe Frank DeFord found that out when he tried to do that article on Chinese sports for Sports Illustrated. From what I understand, they showed him absolutely nothing.”
“Well, what is the point of going then?”
“I’ve got us an ‘in’. There’s this guy named Ken Lubowich who’s lived in China for close to a decade. I’ve been told that he has more connections than the American Ambassador in China. I’ve talked to him on a number of occasions, and he’s pretty sure that he can get you into their National Sports Training Center in Beijing. Think about this. It will be the first time any American athlete has ever been in their training center.”
“I don’t want to sound condescending, but even if this guy does get me into their training facilities, what makes you think they’re doing anything different than we are?
When it comes to sports medicine and science, I doubt seriously if there is a country who can hold a candle to America. I know a lot of athletes get all excited when you mention the Eastern Bloc countries and their sports programs, but I just don’t believe that they’re as scientifically advanced as we are. They might be a little more daring in the field of pharmacology, as far as some drugs they are
experimenting with, but as far as sports science, I just don’t think they can compare with us.”

“I think you’re wrong. In some respects America may be light years ahead of the Chinese, but in other respects, we may be light years behind. From what Lubowich has told me, they are definitely ahead of us when it comes to sports injury rehabilitation. And he also believes that in some respects, they have an edge in many of their training techniques.

“I don’t know. It’s just hard for me to believe that the Chinese are ahead of us in any area. The entire country is poverty-ridden. In fact, from what I’ve heard, they lack even the most basic amenities, like toilets and paved roads.”

“That may be so, but the Chinese government is going into sports big time. Last year alone they dumped over 300 million dollars into their sports program. I’ll tell you right now, within the next decade, China will dominate world sports. That’s one of the primary objectives of the country and, I honestly believe that they are going to accomplish that goal. Look at it this way though, even if you get just one new idea that will help you, it’s worth the trip.”

“Well, before we decide on China, maybe I should tell you some of the things I’ll need to make this project work.”

“O.K.... shoot!”

“First of all, I can get the weights and lifting equipment. I can also come up with a biofeedback machine... It’s not the best on the market, but I can live with it.”

“No! If we are going to do this thing, let’s do it first class all the way. I’ll get you the machine you need.”
“Ah, yo Jim. You’re talking five or six thousand dollars here, you know?”
“You worry about lifting, and let me worry about the finances… O.K?”
“O.K! I’d also like to have three VCR cameras. I might be able to get one or two of them from school. I’ll need at least a 150 dollars worth of supplements a month, a trained masseuse, a biomechanics expert, an accomplished artist, three lifting suits, two sets of wraps, and Arny.”
“What’s an Arny?”
“Arny is my business partner, my training assistant, my counselor, my performance nutritionist, and my best friend. He’s at Florida State right now getting his doctorate, but I’m sure I can talk him into helping us.”
“Well, if Arny is that important to you, why don’t I send both of you to China?”
“Are you serious?”
“If I wasn’t serious, I wouldn’t have mentioned it. I’m telling you, I honestly believe that China is going to be a significant part of our success. It’s a must.”
“What kind of time period are we talking about?”
“I’ve got it set up for three weeks to a month.”
“A month! In a communist country… Are you sure it’s safe?”
“If it wasn’t safe, I wouldn’t send you. Look, just about any athlete in the country would give their right arm to get this opportunity. Trust me, when this is over, you’re going to thank me for sending you.”
“I’ll tell you what. I’ll call Arny and see what he thinks, and then I’ll get back to you.”
“Fair enough.”
“There’s still one thing that bothers me though. All this money you’re spending to make this thing happen, and we’re not even sure it’s possible. And even if I do make the lift, I’m not sure you’ll get that much out of it. After all, powerlifting isn’t exactly a highly visible sport.”

“Listen, I know who you are, and I think I know what you can do. This whole project is constructed by design, not by chance. I’m a businessman, not a philanthropist. I know what I’m going to get out of this. Like I said before, you take care of the lifting, and I’ll handle the rest.”
Does Superman Like KRYPTONITE?

After talking to Jim, I immediately called Arny. In all honesty, I figured he would be dead set against the China trip. I had my reasons for feeling that way. One, Arny is a West Point graduate, two, Arny is a staunch military man, and three, Arny likes communism about as much as Superman likes kryptonite. And, that’s putting it mildly.

Still, I figured there was no harm in asking. Boy, was I wrong. Not about the asking part, about the China part. In fact, he didn’t even care why we were going, he just wanted to go. Even more surprising was that Arny, like Jim, was sure that the Chinese had a lot to offer us as far as sports science was concerned. I still wasn’t convinced, but then who was I to argue with Arny, a West Point graduate, and Jim, a self-made multi-millionaire?

Consequently, I agreed to go half way around the world to see what China was doing to make itself a world power in sports.
China, Here I Come

Exactly two weeks later, I found myself standing in the Atlanta airport with Arny, trying to muster up enough courage to board what my travel agent called a DC-10, wide-body, jet airplane. The word airplane is used loosely here. In case you haven’t had the opportunity to see one of these things, it’s a cross between a large department store and a small apartment complex. Anybody with a sound mind knows damn good and well that anything that big shouldn’t be hovering over the earth at 35,000 feet. If anything, it should be parked somewhere on a 30 acre lot and made into a mall. When Jim mentioned the trip, I was thinking about a slow boat to China, not a damn rocket to the Orient. Now, I’ll be the first to admit that when it comes to flying, I get a little shaky, but nothing I can’t handle with five or six valium and a half case of beer. In fact, my basic philosophy in flying is to always blast off before I take off.

Now, I know what you’re thinking. Biasiotto, you’re a real chicken. Well, you’re right, I am. But as scared as I was, I still got on that thing.

How did I do it, you ask?

Well, to be honest, I don’t remember. I was in a level eight coma throughout most of the trip, thanks to an assortment of muscle relaxers, tranquilizers, and enough Miller Lite to intoxicate Spud’s McKenzie and any six of
his best party animals. In fact, for me the only scary part of the whole ordeal, which Arny said lasted some 20 hours counting lay-overs, was when we were ready to land in Beijing, China.

It was about that time that I had regained conscious-ness and was cognizant of the fact that I was being pro-\pened through space at roughly 500 miles an hour. It’s funny, when most people are on the ground, they worry about getting in the air. Once in the air, they then worry about getting back to earth. I, on the other hand, never worry about getting back to earth. I just worry about how far into the earth I’m going to get. Now this is embarrassing, but as soon as the plane started to descend, I let out a little scream. I couldn’t help it. There was some turbu-lence, and I know the pilot won’t admit this, but he lost it for a second. I could feel it and all I wanted to do was let him know that I was behind him... and that I didn’t want to die just yet. Unfortunately, the only thing that I got for my concern and encouragement was a stern lecture from the head stewardess and a look from Arny that would have turned concrete to mush. Be assured that I wasn’t the only one on that plane who was scared. After I let out that little scream, someone on that plane dropped a load that’d make a buzzard cry.

Anyway, for the next ten minutes or so, I was sweating it out like a whore in church, but through the grace of God and my telepathic powers, our plane touched down in China without further incident. All in all, the experience was about as much fun as frying bacon in the nude.
When I stepped off the plane in Beijing, I was feeling pretty good. I guess that can be attributed to the fact that I had slept throughout most of the trip. Or maybe it was from the realization that I had once again looked death square in the eye and came out on top. Arny, on the other hand, was suffering from some serious jet lag. At best, he looked like death warmed over. His clothes were all wrinkled, his eyes were bloodshot, and his hair looked like he had combed it with a weedeater. Worse yet, he was irritable as hell. I know you’re not going to believe this, but he was all upset about that little scream I let out on the plane. Like it was my fault the pilot lost control!

Anyway, when we got to the terminal, Ken Lubowich was waiting for us. I had pictured him exactly the way he looked. He was of medium height, thickly muscled, and ruggedly good-looking—kind of on the order of a modern-day-mountain-man. Right from the start, I knew I was going to like him. First of all, he was more enthusiastic than a truck load of professional wrestlers on speed. He was also genuinely sincere and extremely positive. Oh, yea, he could also speak fluent Chinese. And it was
obvious from the start that he knew the social customs
and values of the country. In short, he was the exact type
of person you would want to be with if you were in a com-
munist country for the first time.

That night, after being in China less than ten hours, I
got down on my knees and thanked God that I was an
American. I noticed that Arny did the same.
DAVID SUN—A Star Rising in the EAST

The following day, Ken introduced Arny and me to Dr. David Sun, the head honcho of the Chinese National Sports Medicine Center. If there was any doubt in our minds that Ken had connections in China, they were immediately dismissed after meeting Dr. Sun. Not only was Dr. Sun a top ranking official in the Chinese sports program, but he also held a top medical position at the Chinese Institute of Sports—a position that in itself indicates that he is one of the top sports physicians in China.

According to Ken, the Chinese believe that much of their current success in the world of sports is directly related to the training techniques that Dr. Sun has developed.

After looking at Dr. Sun’s resume, it was easy to see why the Chinese believe Dr. Sun to be one of the most brilliant minds of the post-Mao era. I’m not exaggerating, at the age of 32, Dr. Sun has already accomplished more than most people will accomplish in a dozen life times. In fact, I doubt seriously if you could find a more accomplished individual in all of China. More importantly, I don’t think you could find a nicer guy in all of China. An added bonus for us was that Dr. Sun could speak English as well as Ken could speak Chinese.

After we all got acquainted, Dr. Sun got right to the matters at hand.
“What exactly is it that you would like me or the Chinese Sports Federation to do for you?”

“Well, what Arny and I both want is an opportunity to see how your elite athletes train, especially your weight lifters. We would also like to get information on some of the more esoteric techniques that the Chinese are using to enhance athletic performance.”

“What esoteric techniques are you talking about?”

“I’m not sure. I guess that’s why I referred to the techniques as being esoteric.”

“Well, you may be disappointed. I don’t believe the Chinese are doing anything that is drastically different from what the Americans are doing.”

“Well, I’ve heard that some Tai-chi masters have performed super-human feats by using the powers they developed through ‘Qigong.’”

“What type of super-human feats?”

“Well, this may sound crazy, but I heard in the States that some Tai-chi masters can jump over trees that are twenty-feet high, or lift thousands-of-pounds-of-weight with little or no effort.”

“You’re right—that is crazy. There is no truth to these stories. They emanate from unscrupulous merchants who are trying to sell their services and products to an ignorant public. If there was a man in China who could jump 20 feet, we would know about him. These ridiculous claims are bad for Chinese medicine and sports. They rob the great athletes of China of their glory, and they create expectations in sports and medicine that we cannot fulfill. Still, you might be interested in Qigong, an ancient Chinese technique of mind control. Many of our athletes have experienced tremendous success with the technique. None of them can lift a thousand pounds yet, but what
they can do may surprise you. Do you think you would be interested in Oigong?”

“Let me put it this way, we’re interested in learning everything we can.”

“Well, let me see what I can do... Would you be interested in training in our Olympic training center? Perhaps some of our athletes could learn from you.”

“We would love it.”

“No foreign athlete has ever trained there before—it is forbidden. But, I think I can work that out for you. We will see. Just be a little patient with me, it may take a little time to arrange such things. Until that time, perhaps Ken will show you around our city. There are many beautiful and interesting things here for you to see. Like The Great Wall or The Forbidden City.”

“We’re looking forward to seeing and learning as much as we can.”

“Good, then I’ll see you soon.”

After talking to Dr. Sun, Arny and I were so pumped up we could hardly see straight. There was no doubt this was going to be a chance of a life time. Perhaps this ancient land could lead us to future greatness.
THE GREAT WALL

If there was one thing in China that I wanted to see, it was the Great Wall, known in China as the “Ten Thousand Li Week.” As you well know, the Great Wall is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. In case you’re interested in statistics, the wall is approximately 17 feet high, about 10 feet wide, and runs well over 4,000 miles in length. When the wall was constructed, it was strategically situated on top of mountain cliffs so that access to it by an enemy invader was literally impossible. It is said that at certain sections of the Wall, “ten thousand soldiers could not pass even when the Wall is guarded by one sentry.” Just as incredible is the fact that the wall is the only landmark on earth that can be seen from the moon. Without question, the Great Wall symbolizes the Chinese nation. Not surprisingly, it is China’s number one tourist spot. Needless to say, there was just no way that I was going to leave China without seeing the Great Wall, at least from a distance.

Well, the way things worked out, Ken arranged for us to not only see the Great Wall, but to climb it. I’ll say this, there is a major difference between seeing a picture of the Great Wall and experiencing it first hand. In fact, there is no comparison. Of all the things I have seen in my life— the Empire State Building, the Twin Towers, the Grand Canyon, the Sphinx, the Pyramids, etc.—nothing, and I
do mean nothing, compares to the Great Wall of China. It is absolutely magnificent! To think that it was constructed completely by hand almost defies human comprehension. Try to imagine this. The materials that went into building the Great Wall are enough to build over 1,500 Empire State buildings, some 2,500 pyramids, or more than 1,000,000 Church’s Chickens. The estimated cost of building the Great Wall at today’s prices is 147 billion dollars—that’s billion, with a “b.” Obviously, it is the most expensive tourist site in the world, but it is still a hell of a lot cheaper than a visit to Disney World. You can get on the wall for one yen. That’s about 25 cents in American money. The last time I went to Disney Land, it cost me 20 times that much for a soda and a nasty hamburger.

Let me tell you another thing about the Great Wall. If you have the slightest fear of heights, you don’t want to climb it. I’m speaking from experience here. You see, I have this little fear of heights. Any time I even think about going higher than ten feet, I experience what might best be described as extreme rectal-cranial inversion. During this time, I am at best a babbling idiot. I develop this condition known as diarrhea of the mouth, but little if anything that I say will make sense. I guess it’s a fear response—you know, like whistling past a graveyard. Of course, I also experience your typical “I’m scared to death” response. My heart will pound louder and harder than a jack hammer working on cast iron. I’ll sweat like a stuffed pig, and I’ll move like a motor moron—if I can move at all. Sometimes, I’ll become totally cataleptic. Consequently, I maintain a policy to never exceed a height greater than your standard bar stool.

So why in the world did I climb the Great Wall, you ask?
The only explanation I can give is that I was suffering from temporary insanity. A primary symptom of rectal-cranial-inversion.

Truth be known, climbing the wall was not that bad. At least the way I climbed it. I looked straight at my feet every step of the way. Not once during the entire journey up the wall did I look up. In fact, it was not until I was at the very top of the wall for a good ten minutes that I got the courage to take a little peek. When I did, I almost died. We were millions of miles in the sky—millions! The first thing that came to my mind was the pass-it-on-or-else chain letter I had thrown away before we left for China. There was no doubt about it, we were all going to die. Amazingly, I was the only one who was concerned about our well-being. Ken and Arny seemed totally oblivious to the danger we were in. Which just goes to show you how stupid they are. What Arny did next though, even defies stupidity. He got up on the very edge of the wall and did a handstand—posing for photos! All of a sudden, I felt the blood rush out of my head. I swear, if I hadn’t sat down immediately, I would have fainted on the spot.

The next thing I knew, Arny was standing over me giving this half-baked explanation as to why I shouldn’t be afraid.

“Judd, there’s nothing to worry about. The wall is just an illusion. We’re no higher than seven meters off the ground. It just looks high because we’re on top of a mountain. Go ahead and look over the wall—it’s not that high.”

“All seven meters higher than ten feet?”

“It’s about 20 feet.”

I could feel the blood once again rushing out of my head. There was no doubt in my mind—we were going to die.
An Act of Kindness

Now, I know you’re wondering how I got off the wall. Well, it wasn’t a pretty sight. I kind of backed my way down with my eyes partially closed and my head buried in my crotch. I know I must have looked ridiculous, but the technique was extremely effective. I made it all the way down without passing out or throwing up once. I still consider it one of my greatest accomplishments in life.

Once I was sea level again, I started feeling pretty good. Like I said before, there is an incredible feeling of exhilaration that can be derived from scaring yourself half to death. I guess that’s why people like to watch those movies that scare the living hell out of you, or ride those carnival machines that shake the living shit out of you. It’s kind of like hitting yourself on the head with a hammer—it feels so good when you stop. At least, that’s the way I think it works.

Anyway, since we still had another two or three hours to kill, Arny and Ken decided to go back up on the Wall. Me, I decided to see the rest of China from ground level. Consequently, I ventured out on a little excursion of my own. I must have wandered off a good three miles when all of a sudden I realized that I was lost. Well, I wasn’t totally lost, just partially. You see, there was this fork in the road and I couldn’t remember which one I had gone down. My major problem was that if I selected the wrong road, I’d never be able to get back in time to meet Ken and Arny. What I needed was some transportation—and
fast. Since there were no buses or cabs, I decided to see if I could rent someone’s bicycle. As luck would have it, a young peasant woman came by with a beat-up old bike. I know this may sound trite, but in the three days that I was in China, this was by far and away the most beautiful woman I had seen. She had jet black eyes, beautiful olive skin, and the body of a 12th Street hooker.

After I flagged her down, I attempted to explain my dilemma in my best Chinese. I figured if I gave her a real good sob story, I could get her to rent me the bike cheap. Amazingly, as soon as I got the message across that I was lost, she got off her bike and gave it to me. Even more incredible was the fact that she refused to take any money for letting me use it. I really felt guilty about taking her bike for nothing, but I didn’t have time to stand there and convince her to take my money. I figured I’d do that when I brought the bike back. Consequently, I jumped on her bike and headed out to find Arny and Ken. Fortunately, I selected the right road back and located Arny and Ken just as they were coming off the wall. After I explained to them what had happened, we made arrangements to meet at a nearby restaurant after I returned the bike.

On my way back to return the bike, I started thinking about what the peasant woman had done for me. There was no doubt in my mind that the bike was one of her greatest assets, perhaps only second to her home, if, in fact, she had a home. And here I was a foreigner who she had never laid eyes on before, and she gives me one of her most important possessions. She had absolutely no guarantee that I would return it, nor did she have any recourse if I didn’t return it. She was totally at my mercy. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that
giving me the bike was a tremendous act of trust and kindness. I mean, can you imagine someone in America lending their bike, let alone their car, to a foreigner. Let’s be real, most Americans won’t give a foreigner the time of day. Hell, most Americans won’t give another American the time of day. Well, I figured if she could show me such kindness, I could do the same for her. So I decided that I would give her 200 yen for letting me use her bike. That’s about $60\textsuperscript{60} in American money, which translates to about three months wages for a peasant in China.

When I got back, I found the woman sitting on the side of the road waiting for me. After I thanked her, I reached into my wallet and pulled out 200 yen and handed it to her. She immediately returned the money to me, shook her head no, and then gave me a smile that absolutely melted me. I tried to give her the money again, but once again she refused it. I knew this may sound crazy, but as I stood there looking at her, I could actually feel love and warmth radiating from her. I also realized my money had no value at this time. A gift is something that is given from the heart, given without the expectation of praise or reward. Her act of kindness was her gift to me—one I’ll always treasure.
The Olympic Training Center—CHINESE STYLE

After the Great Wall, 6,000 temples, and the Hidden City, Arny and I were both anxious to see what the Chinese Sports program was all about. Unfortunately, it was another five days before Dr. Sun was able to get us into the Olympic Training Center. Considering that Dr. Sun was the head of the entire Sports Medicine program in China, I’d say that was a pretty long time. Then again, considering how fast things happen in China, it was probably quick.

In case you didn’t know, in a communist country you need government permission just to move your bowels. I can only imagine what Dr. Sun went through to get us into the Olympic Training Center—especially when you consider the fact that no other foreign athlete had ever trained in the Center, or that no foreigner had ever seen the inside of the Training Center.

How was it?

Well, in contrast to the United States Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, I’d rate it about a negative fourteen on a scale of one to ten. At best, it was a dump. I doubt seriously if you could get an American athlete to train there for any length of time. First of all, the place smelled absolutely vile, and that’s putting it mildly. You’ve heard the expression “It would gag a maggot,” well, no maggot in its right mind would go in that
place. It was that bad. It was also filthy dirty—the type of place where you wipe your feet when you leave. I doubt seriously if the place had ever been cleaned. Worse yet, the walls and ceiling were all painted in vomit green and there wasn’t a single light in the place that worked correctly.

And this was the Training Center for the best athletes in China! A local YMCA in America would be a thousand times better. Obviously, the Chinese did not believe that the training environment had any type of impact upon performance. In my opinion, that is a mistake of significant magnitude. There is a prolific amount of research which indicates that environmental factors such as lighting, noise, colors, temperature, etc. have a significant affect upon athletic performance. The fact that the Chinese didn’t even consider such factors was rather surprising, especially in light of the fact that they were spending large sums of money to research such things as nutrition, biomechanics, equipment, computerization, etc.

Just as surprising was the fact that the Chinese put little emphasis on the mental aspect of performance. In this area, the only thing they were researching with any fervor was a technique called Qigong (pronounced chi-gon). In short, the Chinese’s primary concerns were the athlete’s physiology. Unfortunately, man is not just a biological machine, rather he is an incredibly complex living system, that is a summation of genetics, biochemistry, mental processes, and social environment. In other words, there is a biological side to man’s nature, a mental side, and a social side. More significantly is the fact that these three systems interact with each other in order to develop behavior. Consequently, it should be understood that in order to gain control of our behavior, we can not...
disregard any of the aforementioned systems. Athletic performance is no different. If you want to reach an optimum level of performance, you must pay attention not only to your body chemistry, but also to your psychological make-up and social environment.

Of course, the Chinese are not the only ones who tend to emphasize the physical and overlook the social and psychological. In fact, most of the countries who regularly compete on the international scene tend to overemphasize the physical. Of course, America is not much better. Although there is a wealth of information available in this country on social and psychological factors and their effect on athletic performance, few coaches in America possess even a cursory understanding of such factors. As a matter of fact, I’d venture to say that most coaches and athletes in America completely ignore such factors in their training. Still, from what I saw at the Chinese Olympic Training Center, the Chinese have a long way to go just to catch up to America in respect to sports psychology, sports sociology, and other performance enhancing factors.

Don’t feel too sorry for the Chinese because they are obviously doing something very right. As a matter of fact, David told us that a number of Chinese sports prognosticators believe that by the year 2001, China will be the greatest sports power in the world. Such a prognosis is somewhat mind-boggling, especially considering the fact that due to the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese have only participated in a broad spectrum of international competition since 1978. Now, brace yourself because here comes another Chinese history lesson... Don’t worry, this time I’ll exclude the first 2,000 years.
Actually, I’ll only need to go back as far as 1966. That’s the year that Mao Tse-tung came to the conclusion that China was going nowhere fast because of the customs and ideals that were promulgated by the country’s intellects and bureaucrats. In an attempt to rectify the situation, Mao started a movement called the Counter Culture that was designed to rid China of old ideas, old cultures, old customs, and old habits. To accomplish this, Mao rounded up the country’s intellectual elite—doctors, educators, government officials, etc.—and relocated them for re-education.

Where were they sent for this re-education?

To all sorts of neat places of higher learning, like pig farms, construction sites, factories, prisons, Outer Mongolia—you get the idea. To ensure that the past would die, Mao also closed the schools and libraries and took control of the media. Within less than a decade after the initiation of the Counter Culture, the Chinese economy collapsed. Without the intellectuals to help rebuild the economy, the country hit rock bottom. Conservatively speaking, the Cultural Revolution set China back a good 100 years.

Not surprisingly, Chinese sports suffered a similar fate. Sports were discontinued and most of China’s elite athletes were sent off to work on farms. Consequently, China had to rebuild its entire athletic program when the Cultural Revolution ended. And build they have.

According to David, since 1978 the Chinese have broken more than 100 world records and won more than 1,000 titles in international competition. During that same time span, 152 Chinese athletes have won 230 world titles, while competing in virtually every sports-capable-country in the world. It might also be noted that China garnered
32 medals in the 1988 Olympics, 15 of which were gold. And the Chinese are confident that the best is yet to come.

The real question is how have they rebuilt so fast? There are probably a number of answers to that question, but one thing that really stands out is their youth sports program. Without a doubt, the youth sports program is the highest manifestation of Chinese sport. From what I am told, the Chinese sank a significant amount of money into their youth sports program. The money has been well spent. The Chinese youth sports program is cranking out world class athletes at an astonishing rate. Incredibly, over half of China’s world class competitors are under the age of 20, and it’s been estimated that within the next decade that percentage may rise to as high as 70 percent.

What is their secret for producing super-human athletes?

Well, unlike programs in America, the Chinese youth sports program is based on a systematic approach for procuring and developing world class athletes. First, great pains are taken by Chinese sports officials to ensure that the best athletes are identified at an early age. Scouts are sent throughout various provinces in an attempt to identify children who are genetically and psychologically suited for various sports. This is accomplished by testing children as young as four years of age in such areas as flexibility, balance, strength, agility, speed, and personality. Children who fare well on these tests then undergo a more extensive evaluation.

First, x-rays are taken to determine the child’s bone density and skeletal structure. Next, muscle biopsies are performed to ascertain the ratio of fast-twitch and slow-
twitch muscle fiber. Then, neurological tests are given to
determine the child’s movement and reaction time. In
addition vision, hearing, and dexterity are tested. Once
the child has undergone this wide range of physiological
tests, they are then subjected to another battery of psy-
chological tests to determine if the child is mentally capa-
bile of withstanding the stress of high intensity training
and competition. According to David, the Chinese believe
that this testing will enable them to not only tell which
child has world class potential, but also in which sport
the child has the greatest chance of excelling. If after all
the testing the child is considered a prospect, he is sent to
a provincial sports school where he will receive extensive
training in the sport that he has been assigned.
Interestingly, the athletes at these provincial schools all
look like clones. The gymnasts are all short and thickly
muscled, the ping pong players are all tall and thin, the
weight lifters are super short and massive. You can tell
exactly what sport they are in simply by looking at their
bodies. Of course, this probably is due to the selection
process that the Chinese use for each sport, or more accu-
rately, the demands and requirements particular to each
sport.

Anyhow, the best athletes at the provincial schools are
then selected to compete in national competitions. The
athletes who fair well at these championships are then
selected to train at the National Institute of Sport in
Beijing, better known in China as the Olympic Training
Center. From the athletes who train at the Olympic
Center, a national team is selected and then prepared
specifically to compete in international and Olympic com-
petition. No doubt by the time you get to that level, you’re
one hell of an athlete.
Now, I know what’s on your mind. “Isn’t the selection process the Chinese use just about the same system that the Russians and most of the other Eastern European countries were/are using? And if so, why is China being singled out as the next sports dynasty in the world of sport?”

Well, a blinding flash of the obvious lies in the sheer numbers from which the Chinese have to choose. With a population of over 1.2 billion people, the laws of probability would certainly dictate the favorable chances of finding potentially great athletes. And from what David told me, China combs the entire country looking for their athletes. Just about every kid in the country is tested. In short, they try and get the most out of their great population base.

Of course, their selection process and their enormous population isn’t the only reason why China is rising to world domination in sports. Another thing that David pointed out was that the Chinese filter their athletic population into a wide spectrum of sports. In other words, they have a large number of athletes competing in every sport. That’s certainly not the case in America. In the States, athletes are given the opportunity to choose their sports, but tend to gravitate to the high visibility sports. Consequently, more than 70 percent of American athletes participate in the big three—football, basketball, and baseball. As noted, the Chinese feel that every sport is important and every one of them gets equal financing, publicity, visibility, and status.

I also believe that China’s social and economic condition is a tremendous advantage. You only have to be in China for two hours to realize that there is absolutely nothing to do—a perfect place to be if your sole purpose in
life is to focus on your sport. In contrast, American athletes have numerous distractions to cope with. There’s women/men, cable T.V., night clubs, schools, cars, Rambo movies—the list is endless. For the Chinese athlete, the only distraction is education, which only amounts to a few hours a week. There is also the fact that the Chinese athletes live together, eat together, train together, and play together from a very early age. Without question, such a situation is conducive for creating a cohesive unit with a single focus.

Consider also the issue of economics. The vast majority of American athletes leave their sport after college in favor of pursuing a more financially rewarding field—you know, like doctor, lawyer. Even the best of America’s world class athletes are often side tracked by financial considerations. A primary example of that is Florence Griffith Joyner, affectionately known as Flo Jo, and perhaps one of the world’s greatest female sprinters of all time. After blowing away the competition at the 1988 Olympics, she was faced with the choice of continuing her athletic career or making multi-millions endorsing products. Not surprisingly, she went with the mega-bucks. Although it’s true that China provides their athletes with special benefits, privileges, and salaries not afforded the general population, these luxuries are contingent upon their success from year to year. If the athletes produce, they are rewarded. No production, no rewards—it’s just that simple. And of course, there is no reward for the athlete outside of sport. Consequently, the athlete actually benefits more the longer he or she stays at the top of the sport. That’s the hard, cold reality of being a Chinese athlete. With so much riding on their performance, it is not surprising that the Chinese athlete is one of the
hungriest in the world. Indeed, they all have the “eye of the tiger.”

Anyway, after we toured the Olympic Training Center and met a number of the coaches and athletes, I was ready to take an active part in what was going on at the training center.

“Dr. Sun, what you showed us is great, but is it possible for Arny and me to train here, and perhaps experience some training method or procedures that you are using to help your athletes?”

“It won’t be easy to arrange such a thing. As I told you before, no foreign athlete has ever been in our Olympic Training Center, let alone train here. Still, I may be able to arrange it. We will see. Tomorrow though, I have arranged for you and Arny to meet with our sports psychologist here at the Training Center. They have heard of the things you have done, and are anxious to meet you.”

“That’s great, but I’m sure I haven’t done anything that they are not familiar with.”

“We shall see.”
The Hidden City of BEIJING

During the next three days, Ken dragged Arny and me through every temple in China. Trust me on this one, China has more temples than K-Mart has Blue-Light-Specials. Even more amazing is the fact that every temple in China looks like an exact replica of the one you just saw. I swear if it wasn’t for the sign in front of each temple, I wouldn’t have been able to distinguish one from the other. Needless to say, both Arny and I were “templed out” well before we visited our 6,000th temple. I think that was the half-way point of the tour. In all candor, the only thing that got us that far was Ken’s enthusiasm. I didn’t know if he was putting us on, but to listen to him you would have thought that temples were right up there with sex and ice cream—in that order. Well, I hate to admit this, but half way through the Temple of Heaven (or was it Hell?), I called a screeching halt to the temple tour. I couldn’t help it. I was going insane.

“Ken, these temples are a lot of fun. In fact, I’m pleased as punch, but there is just so much fun a person can stand.”

“Let me guess, you’ve seen enough temples?”
“Well, let me put it this way. If I see another temple, I’m going to shave my head and play Buddha. Isn’t there anything else we can see or do?”

“Actually, there is something else I want to show you. I was saving it for last as kind of a surprise, but I guess this is as good a time as ever to show it to you.”

“Show us what?”

“Beijing’s hidden city, that’s what.”

“I’m almost afraid to ask, but what is Beijing’s hidden city?”

“It’s an actual city buried 50 feet under the city of Beijing. Very few foreigners even know about the Hidden City and less than a handful of outsiders have ever seen it. It’s not publicized, and the Chinese don’t talk about it, but it’s there.”

“What’s it like?”

“It’s incredible. It has just about everything that the surface level of Beijng has... hospitals, schools, theaters, shops, the works. Not only that, but the place is wired for electricity, has running water, food, and medical supplies. I was told that if war broke out, more-than-five-million people could move underground and stay there for months.”

“Well, how did you find out about the city?”

Ken smiled confidently.

“If you haven’t figured it out yet, I have friends in high places. I was probably one of the first foreigners to learn about the city, and I know I was one of the first to actually see it.”

“Well, what makes you think they are going to let Arny and me see it?”

“That’s already arranged.”
After leaving “The Temple of Doom,” Ken took us to a little store on a crowded side street. There we met an old Chinese gentleman named Chi Lyn. From the start it was obvious that Lyn was expecting us. Ken barely had a chance to introduce us properly when Lyn pushed a button behind a counter and a piece of the floor slid back, just like in one of those Sherlock Holmes movies. Beneath the floor were narrow stairs barely wide enough for one person. Small lights were strung along the ceiling, but they were so dim you could not see the bottom of the steps. I immediately looked at Arny and said, “You first.”

At the bottom of the stairs was a huge tunnel with rooms on both sides of it. One of the rooms was like a large dining hall with tables and chairs set up in a formal fashion. Also, in the room was a map of the underground city showing entrances in above-ground shops, hotels, hospitals, etc, According to the map, there were two underground levels. We were on the top level. After studying the map for a few minutes, we went back into the tunnel and started walking toward a large opening. When we got to the opening, I couldn’t believe my eyes. Standing in front of us was an actual city complete with roads, side walks, and street lamps. The place was absolutely amazing—something right out of a Steven Spielberg movie.

Actually, what was below the ground looked every bit as good as what was above. The place could have used a good cleaning, but then everything in China looks like it could use a super dose of FORMULA 409.

Anyway, we couldn’t have been there more than ten minutes when all of a sudden Arny started experiencing an anxiety attack. I’m talking major anxiety here—rectal cranial inversion, diarrhea of the mouth—the whole nine
yards. Let me put it this way, Arny left something down there that would make a dozen buzzards cry and ten dozen silk roses wilt on contact. I’m telling you, if we hadn’t gotten Arny out of there immediately, today he’d be a primary resident at Charter by the Sea Institute. Now, I know that must sound absurd. I mean, here’s a guy who risks his life to do a handstand on the Great Wall, doesn’t bat an eye doing it, and then falls apart because he’s 30-feet underground. Sounds crazy, doesn’t it? But it’s not. Actually, such cases are rather common. You might be surprised to find that there is considerable research which indicates that courage is extremely specific. For instance, a series of sports-related studies were recently conducted in Czechoslovakia in order to explore the nature of courage. The studies are rather unique and interesting, so let me give you a quick overview of how they were conducted.

First, the experimenters got together a bunch of athletes who they felt were the most courageous. You know, real bad-mother types like boxers, race car drivers, sky divers, and ski jumpers. They were confident that they had selected the most courageous athletes they could find. The researchers then took them up on top of a three meter diving board and told them to dive off. Each athlete’s performance on the diving board was filmed and then evaluated by a panel of judges to determine the degree of fear that was exhibited. The athletes were also asked to make the same assessments of their own fear following their dives. Interestingly, more than 20 percent of these brave souls refused to dive. One guy even refused to go to the top of the diving board, and that’s only ten feet high! No, it wasn’t me. Of the athletes who did dive, more than 50 percent of them took longer than a minute...
to get the courage to do so. As you might expect, the athletes who participated in sports in which jumping and height was a component, such as ski jumpers and sky divers, exhibited less fear than the athletes who participated in sports that are played at ground level. Interestingly, boxers and race car drivers, the guys who you would think were the badest of the bad asses, exhibited the greatest amount of fear.

Overall, the researchers concluded that athletes do not possess an all-encompassing trait of “courage,” nor can such a general trait be developed. Rather, courage is specific and must be developed independently for each particular situation. The researchers also concluded that transfer of courage from one dangerous situation to another is not likely to occur unless the activities are highly similar.

On a more positive note, the researchers suggested that any athlete could be trained to exhibit courage in specific sports situations by exposing him or her to the fear producing stimuli in gradual stages.

You might be interested in knowing that you can also increase courage by bombarding the individual with the fear stimulus. In other words, the complete opposite method of what the Czechoslovakian researchers suggested. This process is known as flooding. Flooding is a technique in which you flood or expose the individual to a great amount of the fear-evoking stimuli all at once.

For instance, suppose one of your friends was deathly afraid of water and you wanted to help him overcome his fear by using flooding. What you would do is take him out on a lake and then throw his ass in. Oh, before I forget, if it’s a good friend, make sure the water level is not over his head.
Well, needless to say, Arny was in, or should I say “down” over his head. Being claustrophobic, Arny was suddenly flooded with stimuli, and it looked like he was going to sink instead of swim. Regardless, I had seen enough of the Hidden City to make an impact on me. I was impressed with Ancient China—now I was ready to see what today’s China had to offer.
BOYS AMONG MEN

The next morning Arny and I were picked up by a government limousine and taken to the Beijing Institute of Physical Education some 30 miles from the heart of the city. At the Institute, we were greeted by Dr. Qiwei and seven of China’s top sports science researchers, including Dr. Li Menghua, the Minister for the Chinese Physical Culture and Sports Commission. Once at the institute, we were immediately taken to a magnificent conference room. It was there that we spent the next three hours sipping hot tea and discussing various techniques that could be used to enhance human performance.

I was surprised to find that what the Chinese were most interested in was subliminal persuasion, a mind control technique that supposedly can be used to take away an individual’s free will. The reason it surprised me is that I figured the Chinese would have already researched subliminal persuasion. After all, the Chinese are not exactly strangers to the world of mind control. In fact, as early as the 1930s, the Chinese had developed techniques that had been used to brainwash individuals. They even used some subliminal techniques during that time. Obviously, the Chinese government didn’t share their research on subliminal persuasion with their sports community. Of course, it wasn’t until just recently that subliminal persuasion was used to enhance athletic performance. For instance, I had heard that a number of...
fairly renown sports psychologist in America were using subliminal techniques such as sleep learning and subliminal tape recordings to enhance athletic performance. I had also been told by a number of American athletes who were using the technique that it had enhanced their performance significantly. I'm also aware that in 1987 alone, over two million subliminal persuasion tapes ranging in price from $1000 to $2500 were sold in America alone. In case you're interested, you can purchase for the modest price of $650 a sleep learning kit consisting of records, headphones, and twelve tape recordings containing subliminal suggestions. As you probably already have guessed, the tapes contain suggestions designed to enhance athletic performance while the athlete is asleep. According to the proponents of this method, an athlete can increase his self-confidence, motivation, determination, aspiration, and just about any other psychological component necessary for success in athletics.

There are a number of ways in which subliminal suggestions can be given. It can be a voice too low for us to hear consciously. It can be a message flashed on a screen too fast to notice, or a filmed message shown continuously, but below our conscious awareness. Other methods might consist of mixing subliminal messages with music, lighting, pictures, etc. Before I get too carried away, it might be a good idea to digress to the beginning.

Subliminal persuasion originated somewhere in the Netherlands before M.T.V. Just kidding! Actually, I don’t know where subliminal persuasion originated. I do know, however, that it wasn’t until 1956 that the technique received national attention. That recognition was due primarily to a motivational researcher named James Vicary.
Vicary conducted an experiment in Fort Dix, New Jersey, which revealed that an individual’s mind or free will could be controlled by flashing “hidden messages” on a movie screen. During the feature film, Vicary flashed secret messages on the screen so fast that none of the people in the audience were consciously aware that the messages were being presented. The “secret messages” Vicary flashed on the screen were, “Drink Coca Cola.” and, “Eat Popcorn.” Amazingly, popcorn sales rose well beyond 50 percent, and soft drink sales increased about 18 percent. Hence, the birth of subliminal persuasion in America.

Within less than six months after Vicary reported his findings, just about every major advertising agency in America was investigating the effects of subliminal persuasion on human behavior. Actually, that really shouldn’t be too surprising. After all, if Vicary was correct, the implications for subliminal advertising were mind-boggling. Think about it, people could be coerced into giving up their hard earned money for products they might not need or even want. Politicians could sway people to vote for them even if they were not the candidate of choice. Government agencies could influence the way you thought and acted. The IRS could get everyone to pay their taxes—all of them. Hell, they could probably even make you eat at the House of Pancakes or Atlanta Braves baseball games. Now, that’s scary! The possibilities for subliminal persuasion seemed endless.

As you might have expected, Vicary’s findings scared the hell out of just about everyone. Before you could say “brain-washed,” religious and civic groups nationwide denounced Vicary for having developed a mind control technique that would render the term “free will” obsolete.
forever. It wasn’t long before the Congress introduced legislation that would outlaw the use of any type of subliminal persuasion. Shortly thereafter, the American Psychological Association publicly denounced the technique.

However, none of the aforementioned complaints and denouncements seemed to bother many of the American advertising agencies. As I mentioned, shortly after Vicary’s experiment at Fort Dix, these agencies conducted a prolific amount of research to determine the effectiveness of subliminal suggestions.

In 1957, subliminal persuasion reached its zenith when Vance Packard, a marketing expert, published a book entitled *The Hidden Persuaders*. The book, which presented an arsenal of subliminal techniques for controlling behavior, sold more than three-million copies in 12 languages. If what Vicary did scared the hell out of people, what Packard said scared the hell, heaven, and earth out of them. According to Packard, an individual’s “free will” could be totally altered by using subliminal techniques. “The subliminal approach,” said Packard, “is to get messages to the individual beneath his level of awareness.” Supposedly when this is achieved, an individual can be programmed or “brain-washed” to behave in accordance with the subliminal suggestions given. In other words, it is a technique which is designed to program the subconscious mind and thereby influence human behavior. Put in layman terms, “It can make you do things you don’t even want to do, and you won’t even know you don’t want to do them!”

All of this sounds great, fantastic even, but does subliminal persuasion really work? Can someone take your “free will” away by using subliminal techniques? Can an
advertising agency using subliminal advertisement coerce you into buying something you don’t really want? Even more intriguing, at least to the athlete and the Chinese sports community, can a sports psychologist enhance your performance through subliminal methods? Can this stuff really turn you into a character right out of The Night of the Zombies?

Luckily, I had already researched subliminal persuasion. At the time I figured that if subliminal persuasion was half as powerful as everyone was claiming it was, I wanted that power. Consequently, I embarked on an extensive literature review of the research that was conducted to determine the effectiveness of subliminal persuasion. What I found was extremely disheartening.

I hated to tell the Chinese, but the chances of being persuaded to do something against your free will because of subliminal programming are about as good as your chances of finding a television evangelist who doesn’t ask for money. It’s possible, but certainly not probable.

As mentioned, shortly after Vicary’s experiment at Fort Dix, a prolific amount of research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of subliminal suggestions. A review of the research literature overwhelmingly revealed that subliminal suggestion is not an effective method for influencing human behavior or athletic performance. In fact, subliminal attempts to manipulate human behavior have yielded, at best, meager results. As far as enhancing athletic performance, the technique works just as well—meaning not at all.

In order to understand why subliminal persuasion doesn’t work, you’ll need an appreciation of how your nervous system processes incoming sensory data. I don’t mean to get scientific on you, but I will. Don’t worry, this
stuff isn’t exactly nuclear physics. In fact, it’s rather simple and fascinating, so stick with me. O.K, now let me explain to you why this stuff can’t work.

According to James V. O’Connell, an award-winning author and psychologist, (I’m paraphrasing here—O’Connell doesn’t have my great sense of humor), from a psychophysiological standpoint, we are a conglomeration of thresholds that can be categorized under three specific headings—sensory thresholds, perceptual thresholds, and action thresholds. I know what you’re thinking now. What the hell is a threshold? Good question.

A threshold is a halfway point between two places or states of being. For example, if you’re standing in the doorway of a room, you’re on the threshold of that room. You’re neither in the room nor out of it, but rather on the verge of entering or exiting the room. Makes sense, right? Once you move in either direction, forward or backward, you pass the halfway point between the inside and outside of the room and thereby cross the threshold.

O.K, now that you understand what a threshold is, let’s look at the types of thresholds we have in our bodies. First, there’s the sensory threshold. The sensory threshold is the most sensitive threshold you have in your body. If a stimulus is not strong enough to cause your sensory receptors to fire—that is, to cross the sensory threshold—your body will not respond to that stimulus in any fashion or manner. If, however, the stimulus is strong enough to trigger your sensory organs, that information will be passed on to your lower-brain centers. It is here where your perceptual threshold comes into play. Although the stimulus was strong enough to activate your sensory receptors, it still may not be strong enough to cross your perceptual threshold.
The perceptual threshold is exactly what it sounds like. It’s the threshold that must be crossed if you are to become conscious of the stimulus. If the stimulus is not strong enough to pass over your perceptual threshold, you won’t perceive the stimulus even though your body may respond to it. For example, a very faint sound may be strong enough to cause your hearing receptors to be stimulated (that is to cross your sensory threshold), but not strong enough for you to consciously hear the sound.

Now, just because you perceive a stimulus does not mean that you will respond to it. You might see, but ignore a man walking by you on the street. You might, however, do something significantly different if a naked man or woman walked by you on the street. Here’s where your action-threshold comes in. A stimulus must be strong enough or significant enough to provoke a response that will cross your action-threshold. In other words, if a stimulus causes you to act, it is said to have passed over your action-threshold. Perhaps an example would help you understand this a little better.

Again, I’ll paraphrase O’Connell—I can’t help it, he’s a whiz at this technical stuff. Let’s say you wanted to test an individual’s auditory threshold. One way you could do this would be to have your friend or subject wear a pair of earphones. Then you could present your subject a soft tone through the earphones. As noted before, a weak stimulus or tone may be strong enough to cause the subject’s auditory sensory receptors to fire—that is to cross the sensory threshold, but not strong enough to cross the perceptual threshold. Consequently, the subject’s body may actually respond to the faint tone, but he may not be consciously aware of the noise. In this case, your ears “hear” but your brain doesn’t pay attention because it is
unable to perceive the stimuli. What you would do next is start turning up the intensity of the tone until your subject first becomes consciously aware of the tone. The point at which the subject could just make out the tone would be one measure of his auditory perceptual threshold. At this point, if you turn the tone down a little the subject won’t hear it anymore. If you turn it up ever so slightly, the subject will have no trouble hearing it all that time. Neat, huh?

There is a point, a halfway point, between hearing and not hearing that you could ascertain by using the earphones. This halfway point, of course, is the subject’s perceptual threshold. By definition then, the auditory perceptual threshold is that intensity of stimulus (the intensity of tone) that you can hear half of the time and that you can’t hear half of the time. In other words, if the tone were right at your subject’s auditory threshold, you would expect the subject to hear it half the time, or five times out of ten. A tone that your subject can hear only once in ten trials is obviously far below that person’s perceptual threshold.

The Latin word for threshold is *limen*. A weak tone below perceptual limen is sublimen. Technically then, a subliminal stimulus is one that is so weak that you would be conscious of it less than 50 percent of the time. Most psychologists, however, define the word subliminal as a stimulus that is above the sensory threshold, but below the perceptual threshold.

Note also that even if the auditory message is strong enough to cross your subject’s perceptual threshold, it still may not be strong enough to elicit a response from your subject. For a response to occur, the tone must be sufficient enough to cross the subject’s action-threshold.
Now that you have a fair understanding of how the nervous system processes incoming sensory data, let’s see how your brain centers respond to such data. Right before I came to China, I had this knock-down-drag-out argument with my girlfriend. We were arguing about something really significant, but for the life of me I can’t remember what it was all about. I can remember her saying something to the effect that I was only the second generation in my family that walked upright. That hit a nerve, because I responded by telling her that not even Mr. Rodgers would make love to her—no matter how bad he needed a neighbor.

Anyway, the argument in question occurred the night before I was to drive 200 miles to Atlanta, Georgia. Needless to say, all I could think about on my trip to Atlanta was the argument. In fact, you might say I drove the entire 200 miles on automatic pilot. I don’t remember a thing that happened from the time I got into my car until the time I pulled into my motel in Atlanta. Worse yet, I paid absolutely no conscious attention to my car, traffic signals, or traffic itself. Yet somehow I managed to stay on the road, make the appropriate turns, slow down and speed up at the right moments, and avoid other vehicles.

How in the world did I do all that without having an accident?

You’re probably thinking, “Big deal, I’ve done the same thing a thousand times myself.”

And I’m sure you have, but the question still remains, how is it done? How can a person literally block out his conscious awareness and still drive a few hundred miles without wrapping himself around a pole?
The answer is rather simple. After driving for a number of years, most of the motor skills necessary to operate an automobile become spinal cord level or automatic. Meaning that the responses your hands and feet make in relation to your car have become reflexive. As implied, reflexive movements are generally handled by the lower brain centers, thereby freeing your higher cortical centers so that they can concentrate on more significant matters. Since your higher brain centers are the site for consciousness, responses that are reflexive or automatic are usually unconscious.

According to O'Connell, “When driving, the stimuli that we respond to are almost always supraliminal. In other words, if you direct your attention to such stimuli, you can consciously recognize them. However, as mentioned, when our higher-brain centers withdraw for a time being, our lower-brain centers can respond appropriately to supraliminal stimuli. This phenomena is known as discrimination without awareness.”

Sounds scientific doesn’t it?

“Discrimination without awareness occurs only when the stimuli crosses the perceptual threshold. Meaning that your brain could consciously perceive and respond to the stimuli if your attention was directed to them. Subliminal perception is a whole other ballgame. With subliminal perception, the stimuli are above your sensory threshold, but below your perceptual threshold. Consequently, the stimuli never reaches your higher brain centers even if your attention is directed to them. The stimuli is too weak to reach your brain, so the perception of the stimuli never reaches consciousness. And there’s the clincher! In short, your brain can’t respond to
subliminal stimuli for the simple reason it can’t detect or sense such stimuli.”

So once again, just for effect—“How well does subliminal persuasion techniques work?”

Well, according to scientific research, subliminal persuasion works about as well as Spanish Fly. In short, it is very unlikely (more like a snowball’s chance in hell) that your behavior will be influenced by subliminal stimuli.

Interestingly, research has revealed that straight-forward suggestions can have a significant impact on behavior. In other words, your chance of influencing an individual’s behavior (including your own) is much greater when you give suggestions above threshold of consciousness rather than below his threshold of consciousness. In plain language, if you want someone to do something, tell him or her to do it. “Please” and “thank you” help.

After I explained the aforementioned to Dr. Qiwei and his delegation, the conversation turned to hypnosis, then meditation, then biofeedback, and finally to covert training.

In retrospect, it was unreal. Here we were, comparatively speaking, two kids sitting among some of China’s oldest and most brilliant minds, answering questions and giving out all sorts of free advice. Even more incredible is the fact that these guys were sitting on the edge of their chairs, hanging on every word we said. We certainly didn’t disappoint anyone, that’s for sure. By the time the dust cleared, Arny and I had been made honorary members of the Chinese Sports Medicine Association and given free access to the Institute’s research. Up until that time no foreigner had ever seen the inside of the center, let alone given total freedom inside. Even more flattering was that after the conference, Dr. Qiwei invited us to stay

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in China for as long as we wanted, expense free, to do 
sport-related research. We might have been boys, but the 
Chinese were treating us like men, mighty important 
men at that.
After the meeting, Arny and I joined Dr. Sun for dinner at the Beijing Hotel. As far as Arny and I were concerned, it was a victory meal. We had been intellectually challenged by some of China’s best sports minds and had come through it all with flying colors. Undoubtedly, Dr. Sun felt the same way.

“The doctors at the Institute are extremely impressed with both of you. They have suggested that I encourage you to stay in China to do research.”

“I’m not sure Arny or I could arrange to stay here for any extended period of time, but we would certainly be willing to share with you and Dr. Qiwei any information that you might be interested in.”

“I know Dr. Qiwei will be disappointed that you will not be able to stay in China longer, however I will pass on your offer to help us. He will be pleased to hear such news... Now, Dr. Qiwei has instructed me to make the rest of your stay in China as informative and exciting as possible. If you tell me what you wish, I will try and arrange it for you.”

“Well, as I told you before, I would like to learn as much as I can about Qigong?”

“That will be no problem. Is there anything else you wish?”

“Yes! We both need to workout.”

“That’s already been arranged. Tomorrow morning meet me at the Olympic Training Center, and I’ll take you
to the weightlifting center. You will be able to train as long as you like.”

“Will it be possible for us to train everyday from now on?”

“Yes, if that’s what you wish.”

After dinner, Arny and I headed back to our hotel. We were sitting on top of the world. We had shown the Chinese what we were all about intellectually and tomorrow we were going to show them what we were about physically.
The following morning after breakfast, Arny and I went straight to the Olympic Training Center. When we got there, Dr. Sun was already waiting on us. After a few minutes of small talk, Dr. Sun took us to the weight training facility and introduced us to Kim Chang, the Chinese Olympic weightlifting coach, and a number of the lifters. Unfortunately, none of them could speak a word of English, and between Arny and I, we had command of about ten words of Chinese. Still sports seems to be one area in life where language can be transcended. There seems to be a common bond or understanding between athletes that helps them to communicate non-verbally. Perhaps it’s the fact that athletes express themselves physically more than the general population. Or maybe it’s some type of common body language with which they communicate. I don’t know, but there is something present that allows athletes to communicate beyond the spoken language.

Before Dr. Sun left, he told us that we had free access to the entire facility, and that if we needed anything, just to take it. After Dr. Sun left, we got right to work. It had been close to 20 days since we had lifted. Consequently, we didn’t want to waste a single minute of our training time. To get things rolling, Arny pulled out his miniature “ghetto blaster,” flipped in a Michael Jackson tape, and
turned the volume wide open. Within no time the place
was jumping with excitement. Unfortunately, it wasn’t
the type of excitement we expected. Less than 20 seconds
into Michael’s “I’m Bad,” Coach Chang came over and
turned off the tape. He then pointed to a sign on the wall
which was apparently a set of gym rules written in
Chinese. It appears that one of the rules was “No Michael
Jackson music in the weight room.” Arny and I just stood
there smiling and shaking our head in agreement. Coach
Chang gave us an eat-shit-and-die look, shook his head
from side to side, and then went on about his business.

Although the incident was a little embarrassing, we
weren’t about to let it ruin our workout. Like I said, it
had been close to 20 days since we had worked out, so
nothing but nothing was going to keep us from pumping
some iron. After we stretched out a little, we loaded the
bar to 225 pounds to warm-up for our squats.

Did I say warm-up?

I don’t know about Army, but that 225 pounds felt like
a small apartment complex to me. It was amazing how
much strength I had lost. Arny wasn’t exactly tearing it
up either. Both of us struggled from one set to the next,
but we persevered.

About half way through our training routine, Arny
and I had to go to the bathroom. Not a big deal except for
the fact that we didn’t know the location of the bathroom
or WC (water closet) as they call it. After a few minutes of
trying to locate the place, Arny called Coach Chang over
and in his best Chinese mouthed the word “x#!?x” which
means bathroom in Chinese. Immediately, Coach Chang
pointed us to a door at the other end of the gym. When we
got to the room though, the only thing that was there was
about a six inch drain in the middle of the floor. We
figured right away that we were in the wrong place so Arny went back out and called Coach Chang over and again asked him where the “*!x?+” was. Once again Coach Chang pointed to the room we were just in. This time though, he seemed a little aggravated that we had bothered him. So Arny and I went back into the room as fast as our little legs could carry us.

“Arny, this can’t possibly be the men’s room—there’s nothing here but this drain.”

“Hey, this is China remember! I don’t think there’s a real toilet in this whole country. Just be glad you don’t have to take a dump.”

“Come to think of it, how would that work?”

“Listen, why do you have to be so inquisitive. Just go ahead and water your horse so that I can go.”

Throwing caution to the wind, I took good aim and started expelling water at a record pace. When I was half way through, one of the lifters came in wearing only a towel. Seeing that I was using the toilet, and apparently not wanting to wait, he turned around and left. When I was done, Arny took over. He hadn’t even gotten started when all hell broke lose. Coach Chang, followed by at least ten of his lifters, came storming into the room yelling and screaming at the top of their lungs. Arny showing amazing physiological control, cut off his flow in midstream. We didn’t know what was up, but it didn’t take us long to realize that whatever it was, it wasn’t good. These guys were acting like they wanted to kill us. Luckily, Dr. Sun showed up just in the nick of time to save us.

“Dr. Sun, what are these guys so upset about?”

“I’m afraid you and Arny are urinating in their sauna room.”
“It wasn’t me Dr. Sun, it was Arny!”

After Dr. Sun explained to the Chinese lifting delegation why Arny had peed in their sauna room, everything got back to normal. In fact, Arny and I actually worked out with a number of the Chinese Olympic Lifting Team members. Considering everything: the plane ride, time zone, lack of sleep, poor diet, and not training for close to two weeks, our training went fairly well. We didn’t do anything to write home about, but we didn’t exactly embarrass ourselves either.

Well, that’s not exactly true. When some of the lifters found out that I had squatted 575 pounds at 131 pounds, they got their 181 pound National Champion to challenge me to a squat contest. At first I agreed to the contest, but then after thinking about it for a while, I sheepishly backed out of the contest. I just wasn’t ready. Earlier I struggled with less than 450 pounds for three reps. In all candor, I doubt seriously if I would have been able to crack 500 pounds for a single. Still, the fact that I backed out of the contest bothered me a little. Usually, I’ll try anything. In fact, I can’t remember backing off a challenge like that before.

Anyway, for the next ten days, Arny and I trained in the Olympic Training Center. It was a super experience. During that time, we met just about everyone of China’s Olympic athletes and numerous future Olympians. Actually, the only bad part of the experience was the way our training was going. It seemed that the harder we trained, the weaker we got. I’m not lying, we could actually see our bodies atrophy from day to day. The reason was obviously diet. We just couldn’t get enough high quality food. In desperation, we actually started eating dog and on one occasion we sampled the exquisite delicacy, China-
fried rats. That’s right, rat. Like in rodent. It didn’t help. At one point, my body weight dropped as low as 123 pounds and Arny, who had come to China looking like a miniature Frank Zane, was now looking like a lean Mr. Rogers. Consequently, when Dr. Sun told us that he had finally arranged a meeting with Dr. Liu, a Qigong Master, we were more than ready.

By this time both Arny and I had come to the conclusion that the only thing that China had to offer us in the way of performance enhancement techniques was Qigong. Hence, our plan was to get the low down on Qigong and then head back to the “lands of plenty” in the good old U.S. of A.
In case you don’t know what Qigong is, don’t feel like the Lone Ranger. In fact, I doubt seriously if many people in the Western World are even familiar with the word Qigong (pronounced: Chi-gon). Of course, that shouldn’t be too surprising because not many people in the Western World have had any type of exposure to Chinese culture, besides the China exhibit at Epcot Center, that is. Well, I don’t want to brag, but I’ve had quite a bit of exposure to Chinese culture. Besides visiting Disney World three times, I also had the opportunity to room with a Chinese gymnast named Kim Ne for a solid week when I was at Georgia Southern College. Kim was at Southern to give a gymnastics exhibition along with my roommate, Yoshi Takai, who happened to be the number two ranked gymnast in the world at that time.

During Kim’s stay, he gave both Yoshi and I a crash course in Chinese philosophy, medicine, and exercise. A lot of what he told us was about Qigong. Consequently, I had a general idea of what the Chinese believe and why they consider Qigong to be the most powerful mind control technique known.
In order to understand how Qigong works, you have to have a cursory understanding of human physiology. No, that’s not true. What you need is a cursory understanding of Chinese physiology. Believe me, there is a world of difference between the two. So pay attention because you’re not going to find any of this info in DeVries Physiology or Gray’s Anatomy, or most likely anywhere else in an American library. Now this stuff isn’t rocket science—it’s worse. I’d venture to say that Rocket Science 101 and 102 is a lot easier to understand than this stuff. So put your thinking cap on for the next ten minutes—You’re going to need it. In fact, if your cholesterol level is higher than your SAT score, you may want to tune me out for the next few minutes.

For starters, the Chinese believe that the human body has a network of channels and collaterals that run from the top of your head to the tip of your toes. No, I’m not talking about the circulatory system. These channels are independent of the circulatory system. Don’t bother looking in Gray’s Anatomy—I told you that won’t help. You see these channels are invisible. Not only that, but modern science, as of yet, has not devised an instrument that is capable of detecting these channels.

Now I know what you’re thinking—if the channels are invisible and there is no way to validate their existence, how do the Chinese know that they do in fact exist?

Good question. The same one I asked Kim. Unfortunately, his answer wasn’t all that great.

According to Kim, the Chinese know that the channels exist because of 5,000 years of Chinese Medicine. Translated into scientific terms, the channels are there because for 5,000 years the Chinese said they were there.
Hey, it gets better. Listen to this, through these channels flows a life force called Qi (Chi). Yea, it’s invisible too, and no, it can’t be detected by scientific means, but yea, it exists because of 5,000 years of Chinese medicine. Anyway, when Qi is surging through your channels unrestricted, you are potentially an ass-kicking, mother-trucker, or something like that. The problem is that more often than not the channels become congested or blocked due to an illness, disease, or an injury. When this occurs, your Qi can’t flow freely through your channels. Consequently, you become a butt-licker instead of an ass-kicker. In other words, you’re totally out of sync—no body equilibrium say the Chinese.

Of course you can reverse that scenario by opening up your channels again. One way to do that is through Qigong, a psychopneumatological exercise method that incorporates posture, breathing, and mind focus. As mentioned, “Qi” refers to the body’s vital life force and Gong refers to Gongfu, which means practicing skills. Therefore, Qigong is a kind of self-training technique in which exercises (movement, posture, breathing, and mental energy) are used to increase the flow of Qi. In turn, the increased Qi flow unclogs the channels and re-establishes the body’s equilibrium. This improves the dynamic equilibrium of Yin and Yang (I’ll explain that later), harmonizes Qi, and fosters vitality and essential Qi. If you understand all of that, raise your hand...

Too bad, we’re going on anyway. Hey, get excited! I’m giving you the keys to the universe here. I mean, when was the last time someone explained to you the effects of dynamic equilibrium between your Yin and Yang? Well then, today is your lucky day.
According to Kim, the theory of Yin and Yang refers to the unity of the two opposites. Yin and Yang depend on each other, but also oppose each other. Yin and Yang are the source of each other and under certain conditions are opposites to each other. Now that makes sense… Right? Well, if it doesn’t, this will straighten everything out.

Female is Yin, and male is Yang—they’re opposites. Now do you get the big picture?

Along these same lines, Yin is cold, you know like females, and Yang is hot. Right, like men. Also, heart, lungs, kidneys, spleen, and liver are Yin and the stomach and bowels Yang; internal is Yin and external Yang; quiet is Yin and movement Yang; Cory Everson is Yin, Arnold Schwarzenegger is Yang; and Richard Simmons is either Yin or Yang or both. But who really cares? Did you get all of that?

Good, because now it gets really confusing.

According to Kim, there are times when Yin and Yang are as one. This is called unity. Think of it like a psychic intercourse—it helps. When Yin and Yang are one, there is no high, no low, no external, no internal, no upper viscera, no bowels, no cold, no heat, no activity, no solace, no Cory, no Arnold, and maybe no Richard (thank God), unless he is a Yin and a Yang which means he’s already reached unity—I think.

Now for the good part. Under the right conditions, Yin and Yang can change into their opposites. For example, chills (Yin) cause fever (Yang) and fever leads to chills. Yin overtly unbalances the natural equilibrium, causing deficiency of Yang, diseases and vice versa. And so on and so forth, as long as life continues.

As mentioned, Yin and Yang always depend on each other. With Yin alone, there would be no birth; with Yang
alone, there would be no growth. Consequently, the Chinese believe that we must maintain an equilibrium between Yin and Yang in order for our body to function normally. If the balance is lost, illness or even death may follow. Obviously then, keeping fit is to keep your Yin and Yang in balance. Makes sense—right? Actually, that’s no easy task because Yin is quiescence (quiet), and Yang movement. Consequently, Qigong practitioners have to observe the Yin/Yang relation or chance throwing the whole system out of balance.

In order to take into account both the Yin and Yang, the Qigong Masters came up with three different types of exercises. The methods include: Jinggong, quiet exercise, Donggong, dynamic exercise, and Jing-Donggong, a combination of the aforementioned exercises. Here’s the neat part. In order to observe the Yin/Yang relation when an individual practices Jinggong (quiet exercise), it is important to keep the exterior of the body quiescent while propelling Qi (remember Qi—the energy force) along the channels. When practicing Dynamic Qigong, it is important to keep your thoughts concentrated, thus remaining quiet while carrying out body movements and propelling Qi. In other words, there is movement in Quiet Qigong, and quiet in Dynamic Qigong.

Well, there you have it—the Reader’s Digest version of your Yin and Yang. Don’t get too excited though because there’s more. Hey, give me a break! I’m giving 5,000 years of Chinese Medicine in 15 minutes here. Now, do you remember those invisible channels with Qi flowing through them? I hope so because we’re back to that now.

According to Kim and 5,000 years of Chinese medicine, Qi flow has a direct effect on blood flow through the cardiovascular system. Note that the blood and vascular...
system I’m referring to here is the real deal. You know, the same ones that are in Gray’s Anatomy. When Qi and blood circulate freely, the organism stays healthy; if either is blocked, disease ensues. So free, unimpeded flow of Qi and blood is essential to good health. Qigong mainly influences the flow of Qi, in turn though, Qi influences blood flow. Also, Qi circulation causes blood circulation. If Qi becomes stagnated in the channels, the blood becomes static also. Conversely, if Qi flows freely then so does the blood.

Now, get this; Qigong doesn’t only increase Qi flow, it also strengthens it. In case you weren’t aware of it, Qi comes from heaven. An interesting concept considering that China is a communist country and philosophically does not accept the existence of a deity. Although Qi comes from heaven, it is nourished biochemically by air, water, and food. Like a muscle though, Qi can only be strengthened by exercise. As mentioned, the exercise used to strengthen Qi is Qigong. The more Qigong is used, the more powerful the Qi becomes. Supposedly, the Qi can become so powerful that it can give the individual super-human powers.

Well, there you have it. The persistent use of Qigong exercise will help you maintain dynamic Yin/Yang equilibrium, harmonize your Qi and blood, dredge your channels and super-charge your Qi. All of which will increase your resistance to disease, strengthen your constitution, prolong your youth and life, and give you super-human power.
Now, all of this doesn’t make a lot of sense, and if you think it does, I suggest you lay off the peyote for a month or two. From a purely psycho-physiological point of view, the Chinese description of Qi and the various channels is about as scientific as a Charlie Brown football play. In simple terms, most people don’t buy this line. Hell, most people can’t even understand it!

Now, I realize that the bigwigs who pioneered the field of Qigong have built upon centuries of experience sitting around trying to achieve psychic intercourse between their Yin and Yang. And I’m sure they put this whole thing together before anyone knew about human anatomy and physiology as such, but let’s face it, we are in the 20th century. How about a little progress after 5,000 years of Chinese Medicine. Without question most of their theories are heavily ambiguous, metaphysical, and unscientific. It’s no wonder that scientists in the western world who can’t tell their Yin from their Yang are turned off by all the mysticism that surrounds Qigong. I know I was.

Now, I know what you’re thinking. If Qigong is built on ambiguous, metaphysical, and unscientific concepts, why in the world would I be interested in the technique?

Good question, but one that’s easily answered. First of all, Kim had a prolific amount of scientific research which indicated that Qigong was extremely effective in treating numerous diseases including hypertension, ulcers, chronic constipation, and even cancer. He also had a number of studies, many of which were conducted in America, indicating that Qigong could be used to enhance strength, muscular endurance, and power. Best yet, most of the studies he produced contained strong experimental paradigms, excellent monitoring devices, and longitudinal duration. In short, there seemed to be strong scientific
evidence that Qigong could be used to enhance human performance. Consequently, I reasoned that if Qigong worked, I could accept the procedure without accepting the mystical explanations for why it worked.
The following day, Dr. Sun picked us up and took us straight to Dr. Liu’s office. When we got there, Dr Liu was already waiting for us. As with the majority of people we met in China, Dr. Liu was extremely sincere and congenial. Also like most of the elite intellects in China that we meet, he spoke fluent English. After we got acquainted, Dr. Liu got right to the purpose of our meeting.

“Dr. Sun tells me that you are interested in Qigong. Well, there is much to learn. There are countless styles and techniques of Qigong which have been developed through China’s long history. I have studied Qigong all my life, and I still have much to learn.”

“Well, we have about a week left before we have to go back home. Could we get a condensed version?”

“A condensed version?”

“You know, the abbreviated, shortened, Reader’s Digest version.”

“I know Readers’ Digest, but I doubt if even Readers’ Digest could condense 5,000 years of Chinese study into two weeks... I’ll do my best though. What is it that you want to know about Qigong?”

“Everything! Or at least everything that we can learn in a week that will have an impact on our performance.”

“I see. Well, we will start at the beginning. Qigong is the word used in China to identify all forms of exercises used to develop one’s Qi or energetic capacity.”

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“Dr. Liu, I don’t mean to interrupt, but I believe we have the basic theory down—the Qi, the channels, the Yin, the Yang. I believe we understand most of that stuff or at least a cursory understanding of it. I guess what we want to know is how to use or implement Qigong.

“Yes, we will start there then. In general, Qigong consists of three parts. It adjusts your body posture. It adjusts your respiration or breathing cycle. And it adjusts your mind and nervous system. These three components are independent yet each one affects the other two. In order to master Qigong, you must understand and develop all of these components. Then and only then can you achieve Rujing.”

“What’s Rujing?”

“Rujing is the secret to Qigong. It is a state of being which distinguishes beginners from those who have mastered Qigong. It is difficult to describe exactly what the state of Rujing is in so many words since it is a unique experience for each person. Perhaps it could best be described as a state of quietness. A condition where the mind is completely at rest and the body is totally relaxed.

All of a sudden I started getting this terrible pain in my groin. It happens to me when I get so frustrated I could scream.

Why was I frustrated?

Because this stuff started sounding more and more like meditation with a different name. It’s not that I have anything against meditation. It’s just that I didn’t want to go half-way-around-the-world to hear about something I already knew. I guess I felt like my mother did after she spent a small fortune on sponges, massages, and brushes to do away with her cellulite, only to learn that there is no such thing as cellulite.”
“Dr. Liu, I hate to interrupt you again, but I’d be curious to know if there are any studies that have been conducted to measure the physiological changes which occur during Rujing?”

“Yes, numerous studies. For example, several experiments measured subjects who had been practicing Qigong for several years. The subjects were monitored before, during, and after practicing Qigong. The results consistently showed that during Rujing, the respiration rate is lower, and there is a dramatic decrease in oxygen consumption, blood lactate, and carbon dioxide elimination. Alpha brain rhythms and galvanic skin resistance (GSR) increases during Rujing, while heart rate and respiration decreases. Even though a person is wide awake during Rujing, the brain remains in a very calm state like that just preceding sleep. The study of brain wave patterns of Qigong practitioners has also shown that the cerebrum stays in a sedated state for extended periods. Maintaining the brain in a state of inhibited cerebral activity for long periods serves to restore the functioning of the brain to a normal condition after it has become over-excited or fatigued. As I stated earlier, this creates conditions favorable for the regeneration of vitality throughout the whole body and for attaining one’s optimum physical condition.”

“Say Doc, by any chance can this stuff increase your creative intelligence, or maybe even your cosmic consciousness?”

“I believe so.”

Holy shit. This stuff was meditation, and if it wasn’t, it was certainly it’s kissing cousin. Now my groin was really killing me. In fact, I don’t remember it hurting me that bad since Bobby Fisher kicked me there in third
grade after I told the teacher that he was under the steps looking up girls’ dresses.

“Dr. Liu, I don’t want to sound overly anxious, but since we only have a week remaining in China, maybe you could take us step-by-step through the procedure.”

“With all due respect, that is exactly what I am attempting to do. You must be patient. There are some principles that you must pay attention to before you involve yourself with the procedure.

“I understand.”

Actually, I didn’t understand, but my groin was killing me. Like I said, I couldn’t see the point of spending the next seven days of my life learning about something I already knew. I did enough of that when I was in college. So I figured the sooner we got this thing over with, the better. I mean my groin could only take so much.

“O.K, when you start practicing Qigong, you will have to abstain from any type of sexual activity.”

“No, sex?... I thought just about everyone in China practiced Qigong?”

“That’s right.”

“Well, if everyone in China is practicing Qigong, and sex is a no-no, how do you explain the 1.2 billion people here? Somebody must be cheating.

“A joke, right? I said when you first started practicing Qigong you will need to abstain from sexual activity. Sexual intercourse greatly excites the central nervous system and effects the balance between mental and physical functions. Thus sex can be initially disruptive for Qigong training because it can go against the aim of establishing harmony between one’s mind and body.”

“Well, how long do you have to abstain from sex?”

“I would say at least four to five months.”
“Four to five months! What if you’re a sex maniac like Arny? He has sex twice a day whether he needs it or not.”

“Funny, another joke I see. There are Qigong exercises to reduce your sex drive. When performed you will have no desire for sex. For example, when you feel the desire for sexual release, close your eyes and focus your attention on the very top of your head, and inhale after touching the tip of the tongue on the hard palate. At the same time, contract the anal sphincter muscles to pull the anus in and draw up your testicles. Hold your breath as long as possible after inhaling, and then exhale and start all over again. If you still have desires, you may firmly press the perineum just between the anus and the back of the testicles with the middle finger. You may also practice constricting your anal sphincter muscles as if trying to prevent a bowel movement for at least one minute every day. Holding your testicles while you perform this exercise helps.”

“I’ll bet. Just hearing about this stuff turns me off.

“But what happens after the four months of practicing those exercises. Is Arny going to be able to crank himself back up? You know I worry about Arny.”

“Actually, after practicing Qigong for a long period, people usually improve their physical condition substantially, and their alertness and level of physical energy progressively increases. Additionally, most people experience an increase in sex drive.”

“I guess that explains the 1.2 billion people.”

“Exactly, good joke. Now, there are a few more rules you need to be aware of before we practice Qigong. First, never practice the technique on a very full or empty stomach, when you’re excessively fatigued, or when you’re in an excited or irritated state. The best time to practice
Qigong is when you are in the happiest and most relaxed state and when your surroundings are relatively calm and quiet. Well, would you like me to carry you step-by-step through a Qigong session?

“Let’s do it.”

“Now, understand that Qigong must be practiced regularly and methodically to reach proficiency. It cannot be mastered overnight. In order to develop the proper body posture and to master the breathing techniques, we must begin with the easy exercises, before attempting to do the more complicated ones. At first your practice sessions should be brief, no more than 15 to 20 minutes. Later you can expand the time to as much as 30 minutes.

“Now, we are ready... I hope. First, lie down on your back with your head raised slightly higher than your foot. Don’t raise your shoulders or elevate your chest. If you don’t feel comfortable with your posture, you should adjust yourself so that you are free and relaxed. Most importantly, you must relax your muscles, particularly the muscles of your lower abdomen. Once you have accomplished that, you must now relax your mind. During exercise you must concentrate and avoid the slightest distraction.

“We’re with you so far, Doc.”

“Now, after you have achieved a relaxation state, you must now pay attention to regulating your breathing rhythm. The manner in which you exhale can frequently indicate whether or not both body and mind are in a state of relaxation. To achieve mental quietness while engaging in Qigong, you must focus your thought and consciousness completely on the exercise itself. Of course, it is normal for beginners to be diverted from concentration by distractions. If this occurs, you may mentally suggest to
yourself that you need to be patient and that you have
the will to overcome any problem. Such mental sugges-
tions will often calm the mind. In practicing Qigong, you
must integrate the training of your consciousness (Yì),
with the training of Qi, regulating your respiration. You
must learn how to direct the movement of Qi with your
consciousness. In other words, let your thoughts control
your breathing. Allow your consciousness to adjust the
regularity, duration, volume, and speed of your breathing.

One last thing before we begin. After you are ßnished
with the exercise, don’t stand up suddenly. Always per-
form some closing moves before ending a Qigong practice.
For instance, slowly open your eyes and place the palms
of your hands on your forehead. Then close your eyes as
you gently rub over your face with the palms of your
hands. Next, massage the back of your neck thoroughly,
using both hands. Then, you may slowly stand up. Shift
your weight onto one leg and briskly move your arms and
legs back and forth to cause a shaking motion. Finish by
standing up on your toes and then drop back down onto
your heels. Repeat this movement several times. Now, are
there any question? If not, lets begin our ßrst Qigong
exercise.”

After practicing Qigong for ten minutes, I was
absolutely convinced that Qigong was a fancy name for
meditation. In fact, Qigong and meditation were one and
the same. If that was indeed the case, I’d have to say that
the Chinese are light years ahead of the rest of the world
when it comes to meditation. You see, to meditate the way
the rest of the world meditates, you have to assume a
lotus position. In case you don’t know, a lotus position is
where you sit cross-legged with your heels in your groin,
hands on your knees, palms up, and your fingers making
an “O.K.” sign. At least, I think that’s the way I was con-
torted. Trust me on this one, the lotus position can rip
your groin slap out. A not so fun experience. Actually, I
never could understand why in meditation where the
object is to relax, you are asked to assume a lotus posi-
tion. It would seem to me that if you want to be relaxed
and comfortable, you should just lie down. Obviously, the
Chinese figured that one out since they let you lie down
when practicing Qigong. I believe that’s a real plus for
Chinese Medicine. Of course, they had more than 5,000
years to figure it out.

Anyway, if Qigong was meditation, it was O.K. by me.
After all, meditation is an excellent technique for induc-
ing deep muscle relaxation and it can be used to help you
with all sorts of neat things. If you want to know what
neat things, let me suggest you read a copy of the book,
The Odyssey Continues. It’s super great, easy to read,
hilariously funny, and extremely informative. I know
because I wrote it. Yes, it’s come to that for me to sell my
books. In all candor though, it is a great book, and it will
tell you all you want to know about meditation and just
about every other mind control technique that is of any
value. Buy it—I need the money for Arny’s operation.

Anyway, like I said two or three times before, I didn’t
mind if Qigong was meditation, I just didn’t want to lie
around for the next seven days or so learning something I
already knew. After all, I had already found my cosmic
consciousness, creative intelligence, and universal-self a
good five years ago. And I had absolutely no desire to
relocate any of them.
TIENANMEN SQUARE

Well, the way everything worked out I didn’t have to lie around for the next seven days relearning meditation. After our session with Dr. Liu, Dr. Sun picked us up and took us right to our hotel. I don’t think he said more than ten words the entire trip. At the hotel, Ken was waiting for us, and what he had to tell us was not good news.

“I’m afraid your visit here will have to be cut short. As you know, for the past two weeks students have been gathering in Tienanmen Square to demonstrate for social freedoms and changes. This morning I was informed by a very reliable source that within the next couple of days the government is going to take steps to break up the demonstration. My source fears that military force is going to be used. If he is right, it will not be safe for you here in Beijing. Consequently, Dr. Sun and I have arranged for you and Arny to fly back to the United States tomorrow morning. You need to pack tonight and be ready to leave at 5:00 am tomorrow morning. If you need anything, we will get it for you tonight.”

“Is it that bad?”

“From what I am told, it could be very serious. If I thought otherwise, I would never alarm you like this. The way it looks now, no one is safe in Beijing. Foreigners may be in even greater danger. In such matters, you just don’t know. If I’m wrong, and everything passes peacefully, you are certainly welcomed to return and continue your research here. Dr. Sun and I will see to that. At this
time though, I can’t and won’t take the responsibility for your well-being. You’ll have to leave tomorrow.”

“We understand.”

In all honesty, I wasn’t ready to put a gun to my head because I had to leave China early. If the truth be known, I was ready to get back to the United States. As far as I was concerned, I had done everything I wanted to in China and more. True, I still wasn’t sure if Qigong was meditation or not, but I really didn’t care. I was sure that Qigong couldn’t do any more than meditation or a dozen other mind control techniques I had already mastered. Deep down I felt that the claims for Qigong were fairly well exaggerated, much like the claims for hypnosis in the United States. I also reasoned that if the Chinese had some other esoteric technique to enhance performance that I didn’t know about, they probably wouldn’t tell me even if I spent a month of Sundays there. Besides, like I said, I was ready to go home. I longed for a good meal, a clean bed, and a real honest-to-goodness toilet. If I learned anything in China, it was to appreciate the small things in life. Oh, yea, and it reinforced in my mind what I always knew to be true—the United States of America is the greatest country in the world!
The HOPE and the HORROR

The following morning, Arny and I flew out of China without incident. At least I think we did. I was functioning under standard operational flight procedures. I was near comatose by the time we reached the airport, and I was in a Level Seven Coma by the time we took off. Perfect timing if I do say so myself. In fact, I’m sure I would have made it all the way back to the states in dreamland if Arny hadn’t revived me halfway through the flight.

“Judd, the Chinese military just ran roughshod over the students in Tienanmen Square. One of the flight attendants told me that at least 100 students were killed.”

“You have to be kidding me?”

“I’m afraid not.”

When we touched down in Los Angeles for a four-hour layover, we got the rest of the tragic details.

Apparently, in the early morning hours a large convoy of tanks and trucks surrounded Tienanmen Square. Then a column of soldiers, carrying automatic weapons appeared suddenly from behind the tanks. The soldiers lined up and took aim at the protesters, then open fired. It was estimated that as many as 800 citizens died during the initial attack, although thousands of others may have died. After the square was cleared, the soldiers poured gasoline over the students bodies and burned them.
As the news media continued to unfold the details of the Tienanmen horror, it struck me odd how most of America remained eerily distant from the events. I suppose that I too would have remained distant from this tragedy had it not been personalized. Only days before I had embraced the Chinese people, and now I could only helplessly watch as they were being slaughtered. I don’t believe Americans can ever truly grasp the magnitude of this incident. Then again, perhaps one of the greatest things about America is that they may never have to.
When I finally got home, a message was waiting on me from my mother. The news wasn’t good. My grandmother, 92 years old, had been diagnosed as having terminal cancer and was given less than three months to live. Understandably, my mother wanted me to fly to Pennsylvania to see my grandmother one more time before she passed away. Needless to say, there is nothing I wouldn’t do for my mother or grandmother. They have both showered me with so much love and affection in my life that I could never say no to any request they would have of me. Consequently, I hopped on the next flight out to Easton, Pennsylvania.

When I got to my mother’s house, my grandmother was asleep in her room. After talking to my mother for an hour or so about the trip to China and everything else that had transpired since I had seen her, I decided to look in on my grandmother. When I got to her room, she was still fast asleep, so I snuck in and took a chair next to her bed. I sat there and just looked at her, thinking of all the wonderful and beautiful things she had done during her life. I know I’m biased, but in my eyes she’s one of the most magnificent human beings that God has ever created. Always positive, always smiling, and always loving. Honest, hardworking, intelligent, giving, and powerful. She is simply an awesome force. Best yet, she gave all that she had to give.
I must have sat there a half hour just thinking about this fantastic woman and all the love that she had given in her 92 years. Then her eyes opened slowly. They were alert and clear. Slowly her head turned, and she focused on me. She smiled gently, then reached out and took my hand and squeezed it lightly.

“Judd, I’m so glad you came to see me. I was afraid that I would die before you got here, and I wanted to tell you one more time how much you mean to me and how much I love you.”

I could feel myself choking up, but I fought back my emotion the best I could.

“Gram, you’re not going to die. You’re going to be all right.”

“Now Judd, who are you trying to kid. The doctors know I’m going to die, I know I’m going to die, and you know I’m going to die. Don’t try to hold on, Judd. It’s time for me to die. I’ve had a wonderful life. I’ve experienced so many fantastic things. I’ve had a great husband, loving children, and more friends than you could even imagine. I’m happy. I’m ready to see what else God has in store for me. I’m looking forward to seeing what’s next.”

I knew what she was saying was right, but I didn’t want to let her go. I didn’t want her to leave me. I know that’s selfish, and I know it’s wrong, but that’s how I felt.

So there I sat, just looking at her with tears running down my cheeks, too choked up to say anything.

“Judd, don’t act like a baby. There’s no reason to cry. I told you I’m happy. I’m ready to die.”

“I can’t help it. I don’t want to lose you.”

“You’re not losing me. I’ll always be a part of you as you will always be a part of me.”
I tired to stop crying, but the tears kept streaming down my face. If anything, I was getting worse.

“Judd, if you don’t stop that crying, I’m going to get out of this bed and box your ears. Listen, I want to tell you something that’s really important. I’ll be 93 years old in a few weeks and do you know something? When I die, I won’t have an enemy in this world—not a single one. After all these years, there’s not a single person who can say anything bad about me. When I’m dead and buried, no one will hate me, or slander my name, and no one will be able to say that I owe them anything.”

“What’s your secret?,” I asked wiping away my tears.

“I out-lived everyone of those son-of-a-bitches—that’s what!”

When she said that, I almost fell out of my chair. Here she was on the edge of death, making jokes in order to soothe my fear, my pain, attempting to help me accept her death. What an amazing women. Leo Buscaglia has said that, “It is essential that we accept our death, for only by accepting our death can we truly accept life.” My grandmother had obviously accepted her own death. She was in control. She didn’t carry death around her neck like an albatross. She was aware that death was just an extension of life and that dying is just a process that takes us forward. Like Buscaglia, she realized that you can’t live life focused on death—you have to focus on life. And here, at the end of her life, she was trying to teach me the same lesson—to look at death as just another aspect of life.

That night we must have talked for a solid two hours. Mainly, we reminisced about the past, but there were also times when we looked to the future. It was great. We talked about everything—religion, sports, politics, sex, all
the good times and some of the bad, and yes, her death and my future. When we were finished, I was still a little sad, but I wasn’t afraid any more. Before I left the room, I took one last look at her. Those beautiful blue eyes and that warm loving face. She was a real piece of work—one of God’s best.

The next day, I flew back to Georgia. No sooner did I get in my front door when the phone rang. It was my mother. My grandmother had died earlier that day. My mother told me that she had an easy time. No pain, no struggle, she just slipped into her new world. A death fitting of a truly great lady. I’m not ashamed to say that after I hung up the phone, I cried, but when I was done, I was ready to go on just the way my grandmother would have wanted me to.
PROJECT “GREATNESS”

When I returned from Pennsylvania, Arny and Jim had already made considerable preparations for my comeback. Actually, that’s an understatement. What they had put together was absolutely mind-boggling. For starters, Jim had rented a small studio, and arranged it to look exactly like the competitive environment. The backdrop, the lighting, colors, platform, the squat racks, even the chalk box were all arranged to simulate the meet environment. He even had loud speakers set-up so that he could pump in pre-recorded crowd noise during my practice sessions. Of course, Arny and Jim’s idea was to take advantage of a technique called model training.

In case you’re not familiar with model training, let me explain. During practice, an athlete will usually experience only a minimal amount of psychological stress. During competition, this stress is magnified significantly. Therefore, if an athlete isn’t trained to “cope” with competitive stress, he/she will generally perform below his/her optimum level.

A few years back, the Russians theorized that if an athlete trained under conditions duplicating the competitive environment, he/she would learn to adapt to the actual competitive environment much faster. In order to test their hypotheses, the Russians went to great lengths to incorporate into their practice sessions the social, psychological, and technical stressors that their athletes
would face in the competitive environment. It worked like a charm. Almost 100 percent of the athletes who used model training adapted to the stress of competition significantly better than athletes who didn’t use the technique. It wasn’t long before the Western World got word of the technique.

Shortly thereafter, a prolific number of research studies were conducted to determine the validity of the technique. The research was in accord indicating that while training under conditions duplicating the competitive environment, athletes will learn to better adapt to the actual competitive situation. Funny thing is that even though model training has been shown to be very effective in desensitizing competitive stress, very few athletes in America use the technique. Myself, I’ve used it extensively during my career, but I can’t say that I ever arranged anything quite as elaborate as what Jim had set up for me. The place looked so authentic that I could actually feel my competitive juice rising just standing in the studio.

Model training wasn’t the only thing Jim had arranged for either. He had rented four video cameras so that every one of my practice lifts could be filmed from the front, sides, and back. Along with the cameras, he had video screens mounted on the walls so that I would be able to analyze and review each lift immediately after I executed it.

Believe it or not, the training studio was just the tip of the iceberg. In a room adjacent to the studio, Jim had set up a laboratory with some of the most sophisticated equipment money could buy. He had a top-of-the-line biofeedback machine, a physiograph, a transducer, a 4' by 4' oscilloscope, and two IBM computers equipped with...
software and printers. You might be interested to know that the biofeedback machine alone costs in the neighborhood of $8,000. I'd venture to say that he dished out well over $15,000 for every thing he had in the lab, and that's not counting the lavish furniture he had in there.

Along with the technical equipment, he had also hired a small staff to help Arny and I with my training. And the staff wasn't just a bunch of guys he picked off the street either. He had a lab technician, a biomechanics expert, a massage therapist, and four spotters. Incidentally, the spotters were all professional football players. There was Dan Land from the Los Angeles Raiders, Jeff Hunter from the New York Giants, Chris Sheffield from the Pittsburgh Steelers, and former All-Pro, Mike White, from the Seattle Seahawks.

Jim felt that the aforementioned spotters would not only ensure my safety, but add considerable motivation to my training. I had to agree with him on both counts. I'd say that the average height and weight of these guys was about 6'4" and 260 pounds. There was no doubt that between them they could easily handle any weight that I was going to squat, which of course did wonders for my confidence. As far as motivation goes, I've always felt that if you surround yourself with positive confident people, you'll tend to be the same. Good people bring out the best in others. I think you can say the same about athletes.

Anyway, after Jim finished my tour of the training facility, we went back to his office for a little chat.

"Arny told me that you didn't get much from the trip to China."

"It was a great experience. In fact, both Arny and I had a super time. Unfortunately, I don't think that we learned anything that we can use for this project."
“If you learned anything—even if it doesn’t apply to the project, it was worth the effort. The fact that you both had a good time makes it worthwhile to me.”

“Jim, I really appreciate every thing you have done for me. I just hope I can make all of this work for us.”

“Just do your very best, and I’ll be happy, whether you make the 600 pounds or not. This whole experience is going to be super fun—you’ll see.”

“I don’t know about super fun. This is going to take a monumental effort and maximum sacrifice. Not only that, but after China, I’m as weak as I’ve been in a long time. It will be almost like starting over again.”

“I’m not worried. We have plenty of time. After a few good meals, some quality sleep, and a little training, you’ll be as good as new. Besides, you had to be much weaker after you got out of the hospital in ’86 and look what you did. You’ll come back.”

“I promise you, I’ll give it everything I have.”

“I know you will. If I didn’t think so, we wouldn’t be here right now. So what do you think about our set-up?”

“To be honest, I feel bad that you’re going to all this expense.”

“I told you... Let me worry about the money, you worry about the lifting. Besides, it’s not as expensive as you might think. I told you I have a lot of connections. Most of the equipment here was borrowed, rented, or given to me.”

“Still, I hate that you went through all this trouble.”

“Hey, you haven’t seen anything yet. Arny and I have everything worked out for you for the next six months. Everything’s been computerized—your lifts, your meals, your mental training routine, even your daily work schedule at school. Every minute of your life has been
programmed into the computer. Starting tomorrow at six in the morning, right up until you squat 600 pounds. I can punch up any day within the next six month period and tell you how much you’ll weigh, what you’ll eat for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks, how many sets, reps you’ll do, how much weight you’ll lift, how long you’ll spend on the biofeedback machine, and how many bowel movements you’ll take. Well, maybe not how many bowel movements you’ll take, but just about everything else has been accounted for. We’re even going to draw your blood once a week to make sure your body is responding to your diet and training. I don’t think our Olympic athletes are monitored as closely as you’re going to be, and I doubt seriously if they have a training facility as good."

“You’re probably right, but the fact that you went through all this expense and trouble puts a lot more pressure on me. I’d feel terrible if I don’t make the lift. Besides, I’m not sure that even with all of this stuff, I’ll be capable of lifting 600 pounds. You seem to forget that not one drug-free lifter in my weight class has even cracked the 500 pound barrier this year.”

“Listen, if you were 100 percent sure you could make this lift, it wouldn’t be any fun. I think the great thing about sports is that you never really know the outcome of the event until it’s over. That’s why sports are exciting. They’re totally unpredictable. Predictability is a bore. As far as the pressure goes, that’s just part of it. If you can’t handle defeat, don’t compete. But remember, if you don’t compete, you can’t win. I think in one of your books you said that we don’t live in a risk-free society. We have to take risks in life if we are going to grow. I believe that, and I know you do too. Your entire life reflects the fact that you enjoy living on the edge. Don’t change now.”
I knew what Jim was saying was right, and in all honesty, I never had any intention of not going for the record. I believe that happiness can only be achieved when we push our hearts and souls to the zenith of which we are capable. If I said it once, I’ve said it a hundred times, for me the purpose of life is to matter, to count, to have a reason for existence. I don’t want to go through life only to find on the day of my death that I never have lived at all. Erick Fromm has said, “That the pity in life today is that most of us die before we are fully born.”

Not surprising, Elizabeth Kubler-Boss reports that the people who scream the loudest on their death beds are the people who have never lived. They are people who observed life, but never actively participated. They are spectators, not participants.

I want to be a participant. I want to take an active part in my life. I don’t want to stand on the sidelines and watch life pass. I don’t want to miss out on anything that life has to offer. I want to embrace life totally. I’m not afraid of living my life totally. I want to feel. I want to take chances. I want to experience it all, because living means being actively involved. If I fail, then so be it. I’ll take the responsibility for creating my own hell, but in doing so, I’ll also take the responsibility for choosing and defining my own life.

You know, I’m really a lucky guy because throughout my life I’ve had numerous opportunities to try and go beyond myself. And I’m proud to say that on every one of those occasions, I went for it. I never backed off. I didn’t always succeed, but I always tried. This time would be no different. Once again, I would attempt to go beyond my breaking point, to go into the stars, to live. I mean really live.
GETTING DOWN

For the next five months, the 600 pound barrier was a total obsession with me. Nothing else in my life mattered, not my job, my writing, or my social life. There was only the 600 pounds. I was determined to squeeze out the maximum of what I had left. As far as I was concerned, there was no tomorrow. As in my previous comebacks, I drove myself unmercifully. I pushed steel, heavy steel, for three hours a day, six days a week. Each training day, I would push myself to the limit, both mentally and physically. Some days I worked my legs so hard that I could barely walk out of the gym. I also gave my lower back and abdominal muscles similar attention. I did sit-ups until my “abs” screamed in pain. I showed them no mercy. I never worked as hard in my entire life—never! My intensity and drive easily transcended what I had experienced during my comeback in 1983 and 1986 combined, or for that matter anything that I had experienced during my entire powerlifting career. Some days my entire body actually racked in pain.

As hard as I worked physically, I trained even harder mentally. Each day before practice, I would hypnotize myself, induce deep-muscle-relaxation with biofeedback, and then visualize myself going through my entire workout for that day. I would conceptualize everything as
vividly as possible—the gym, the weights, even the odors in the gym. During my mental session, I omitted nothing. I visualized myself warming up, stretching, loading the bar, and making every rep of every set. I even did all of that for my warm-up sets. I rehearsed my workout routine in this manner at least 50 times during each training session, and I visualized breaking the 600 pound barrier at least one hundred times during each session.

As you might expect, when I wasn’t engaged in some type of systematic, mental training program, I was constantly thinking about breaking the record. In fact, the 600 pounds was the only thing on my mind. If there was anything else going on in the world at that time, I was certainly unaware of it. Like I said, I was totally obsessed with that one idea. Never in my life had I ever put as much time and energy into my training. I loved it though, every minute of it. I loved the fact that I was once again an athlete and that soon I would be comparing my strength against that of other athletes! There was also the thought that I would challenge standards that had been set by some of the most powerful men who walked the face of the earth. In short, I was in a position to do what other men could only dream about. That thought alone sent chills through my body. It was mind-boggling—awesome. Still, it was the opportunity to just compete again that excited me.

Any athlete who has tasted competition knows what I’m talking about. There’s something about athletic competition that produces a “high” like no other I’ve ever experienced. I realize sports is just a game, but that does not diminish the fact that it can produce joy and happiness found only in a few other activities. The drive to
compete and excel is essential to me. It is my essence! It breaths life into me.

Anyway, all of my hard work and effort was paying off in large dividends. I know this is going to sound egotistical, but I was getting so powerful it was scary. Never in my life had I ever handled so much weight so easily. My body seemed capable of pushing through back-breaking lifts with a minimal amount of strain and effort. Even my maximum lifts seemed relatively effortless. I was at a point that nothing seemed impossible—nothing. On any given day, I could easily pump out ten solid reps with a thousand pounds on the leg press. A 1,200 pound leg press for six reps was no problem, nor was 1,400 pounds for three reps, even 1,500 pounds was in my range. I was powerful, and I do mean with a capital “P.” By the time I entered my last training cycle, I was already doing reps with 535 pounds. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever expect to be in such a position. Like I said, it was scary.

The way the computer had it figured, I’d have to “hit” at least 550 pounds for a double to have a shot at the 600 pound barrier. Of course, the way my training was going, I was confident that I had at least that much in me. You never know though, especially in a sport like powerlifting. Nothing is a sure thing. One minute you can be on the top of the world, and the next you’re at the bottom. A small muscle tear, a cold, even the loss of a little sleep can significantly decrease performance, and in turn, destroy your dreams. Believe me, I’ve been there and so has just about every other powerlifter who’s played the game. It’s kind of like walking on egg shells. You just never know what can happen, especially when you’re pumping serious steel. In all candor, it’s not a great feeling always walking on the edge. I’ve spent the majority of my life on the edge.
and I believe I can deal with it as well as anyone. I cer-
tainly didn’t want to go through all that training and pain
and then come up short. But, if you don’t take a chance in
life, you’ll never get anywhere—haven’t I said that
before? To be really successful in life you have to pay a
price. I was paying the price for this goal, yet I knew that
the bill was not yet paid in full.
The Fusion of Mind and Body

As in my previous comebacks, my primary focus in training was to develop a strong mind/body fusion. Through past experiences, I’ve discovered that the ability to fuse mind and body during each and every lift is of paramount importance in reaching an optimum level of performance. Having complete communication with your mind and muscles is a significant edge, a power if you will, that can help transcend performance beyond what most people believe is possible. In fact, the power and strength that can be derived from such intimate cooperation between mind and body is absolutely mind-boggling.

Of course, such power and control will benefit every athlete. In fact, I believe it is essential for quality training. As I mentioned, without the ability to focus, optimum performance can not be achieved. I think every athlete has experienced workouts where one’s mind was somewhere else. Like thinking about what happened the day before or about what’s going to happen later in the day. Generally these non-focused workouts are not productive, especially when compared to workouts were all of our mental and physical energy is focused on our training. When the mind becomes totally focused on an effort, all doubt and uncertainty is pushed aside. In short, you will
cease to experience a body that is inhibited by the distractions of your mind.

During this single-minded focus, the will to lift is transmitted into the act of lifting. At that moment, muscle and mind are mixed in a crucible of intensity. It is at that moment that the awesome power from within surfaces. Such control does not come cheap nor can it be learned through a haphazard effort. Once it is obtained though, you can become immersed into each event that you encounter. Each moment will be infused with importance and necessity.

I found from experience that in order to develop a strong mind/body fusion, you must first learn to associate. I’ve noticed though that most lifters engage in disassociation—the very opposite process of what is necessary for total involvement. Disassociation is easiest to understand, so let me explain that first. Athletes who disassociate use environmental or cognitive stimuli to distract their minds from the tasks at hand. For instance, while lifting, an athlete may count reps, day dream, listen to music, or a training partner’s motivational rap. In other words, mind-set is directed away from the lift rather than on it. That person doesn’t experience the lift, rather avoids the experience by distracting his or her mind.

The athletes who associate do just the opposite. Every set is an event, an experience of which they are an integral part. They don’t run away from the experience, they participate in it—the movement, the pain, the development. They are a part of it all. Nothing occupies awareness, only the lifts. These athletes live in the moment, not in the past or the future. They are totally focused on what they are doing.
Learning to associate would seem easy enough—just pay attention. Well, that certainly helps, but unfortunately, it’s not that easy. Like other skills, there are levels of competence. Paying attention to what you are doing takes understanding and considerable training. In fact, entire books have been written on the subject. The best of which is Lifting in the 5th Dimension by Tom Foote. Foote’s book can help you discover how infinitely fascinating our moment-by-moment experiences can be. The book can also teach you to live in the moment of power, where you function as a whole to form something more powerful than the simple sum of your parts. It is essential reading for every athlete who wants to learn to fuse his mind and body.

In order to focus your energies into a specific movement, it only stands to reason that you would need an understanding of that movement and the muscles that are involved in it. Not surprisingly, research in the field of psychomotor development has consistently revealed that the more intelligent an athlete is about the physiological and mechanical demands of the sport in which he/she engages, the more likely he/she is to excel. The research also revealed that highly skilled athletes have a much clearer concept of what constitutes perfect form for the skill they are developing. Prior to my first day of training, Jim, Arny, and I went to great lengths to obtain a precise biomechanical analysis of my squat. For instance, in order to perfect my squat, Jim got a team of biomechanic experts to do a mechanical analysis of my lift with the aid of a computer. Once they determined what was the most mechanically efficient form for me in the squat, I practiced that form using only a “power bar.” When I had my
form down pat, I was photographed by a series of cameras from several different angles.

After my squat was filmed, Jim had a cartoonist replicate each frame of the film. Once these drawings were complete the cartoonist, with the help of the biomechanics team, drew in the exact muscle groups that I used during each segment of the lift. The drawings were done so ingeniously that when I flipped through them, I could see how each muscle group was recruited for the lift. For example, flipping through the drawings of my squat you could see exactly in which portion of the lift that the quadriceps came into play, when the glut’s were activated, and when the rhomboids were being used.

After the drawings were completed, they were made into a loop film so that I could view them with a projector. By viewing the film, I was able to become aware of the muscles I was using during each segment of my lifts. When I got stuck at a certain part of the lift, I knew exactly which muscles to recruit and concentrate on to make the lift. The film also helped me to perfect my form. It taught me the exact moment during my squat when I should kick my hips in and throw my shoulders back. In short, by using the films as a training aid, I learned to synchronize my mind with my body. With the aid of this film, I learned not only to “connect” with my muscles, but to be totally focused on them throughout each and every lift.

Remember, when lifting or performing any other motor skill, there should be nothing occupying your awareness except the skill you are performing. Your “mind set” should be totally focused on what you’re doing. The past and future should have no influence upon your psyche. What has occurred moments before is irrelevant,
as is what will happen in moments to come. Only the immediate moment and event has significance, for it is only that moment that can be controlled. There is no reason to worry about what has transpired or what will transpire, only about what is.

At the ultimate level of association, the distinction between subject and object disappears. You become “one” with the weight and the activity of lifting becomes the moment. When you reach that level of mind/body fusion, even the impossible becomes possible. I don’t want to brag, but I’ve been at that level for years, and every day the fusion between my mind and body becomes stronger—more powerful. There is no doubt in my mind that the feats of strength I demonstrated in the past were directly related to my ability to connect my mind and body. And I was just as convinced that the communication between my mind and muscle would take me back to the top to the world.
MICHELLE—a Child of God

Exactly two weeks before the meet, I got a call from my old friend, Curt Leslie. In case you don’t know, Curt is one of the strongest men to ever walk the face of the earth. At six-feet, two-hundred-and-twenty-three pounds, Curt has more muscle mass than your average Brahma Bull. It’s been said that when Curt was born, he picked up his doctor by the feet, slapped him on the ass, and then took a taxi to the nearest gym. I believe he’s been residing there ever since. I’m telling you, Curt is so powerful that if he hit you on top of the head you’d be eating through your fly for a month. I’m not exactly sure how many world titles and records he has, but I do know he has squatted more than 900 pounds, benched more than 500 pounds, and deadlifted more than 800 pounds. Not even a prize Brahma Bull can move that kind of weight.

When I got Curt’s call, I figured he wanted some information on the meet. However, that wasn’t the case. What he wanted was for me to drive to Atlanta to talk to a seventeen-year-old girl named Michelle Foote who was dying of leukemia. It was déjà vu. Only a year earlier, one of my best friends, David Liberatti, died of the same disease. Leukemia is a horrifying and gut-wrenching disease for all involved. As you’re probably aware, it’s a cancer of
blood-forming tissues and is characterized by excessive production of immature white blood cells. Usually, the disease is accompanied by severe anemia and enlargement and hyperactivity of the spleen and lymphatic glands. Even more disheartening is the fact that leukemia is almost uniformly fatal. From what I gathered from Curt, the girl’s mother wanted me to help her daughter use a psycho-physiological technique called psychoneuroimmunology to control her leukemia.

Briefly, psychoneuroimmunology is a technique that incorporates hypnosis, deep muscle relaxation, and visualization to combat various diseases. It’s based on the wholistic premise that the mind is capable of curing the body. Although the science of psychoneuroimmunology is really in it’s embryonic stage, it has already worked “miracles” with some people. Although I didn’t have any experience with the actual science, I had extensive experience with all of it’s components, and I had a pretty good understanding of how these components were to be incorporated. However, I was far from being an expert on the matter. Apparently though, there was no time to find an expert in the field. Curt told me that Michelle’s blood cells were already 96 percent leukemic and that her doctor gave her only days to live. I was her last resort.

Although I wasn’t too crazy about the idea, I figured that if I could be of any help to Michelle at all, it would be worth the trip. Consequently, I got a few things together, jumped in my car, and headed to Hot-Lanta.

When I got to Atlanta, I drove straight to Emory Hospital and proceeded directly to Michelle’s room. As I had anticipated, Michelle’s mother, Bertha, was there with her. The first thing that went through my mind was that here were two absolutely beautiful women, Ebony...
magazine material all the way. Bertha, who must have been well over 40, did not look a day older than 25. She had soft, smooth skin and some of the most beautiful brown eyes I had ever seen. She was also built like a brick house. As magnificent as Bertha was, Michelle was every bit as attractive, maybe even more so. Like her mother, she had soft, smooth skin and beautiful brown eyes. She had high cheekbones on the order of Whitney Houston, pearly white teeth, and a smile that could pillow-erect the hairs on your arm in a heartbeat. Oh yea, she was also bald, apparently from her cobalt treatments. Now I know bald heads aren’t fashionable, but on Michelle it looked great. In fact, I couldn’t imagine her looking any more beautiful with hair. Hell, the girl was awesome—a solid ten on anyone’s score card.

As beautiful as Bertha and Michelle were extrinsically, they were just as beautiful intrinsically. I don’t think I ever met anyone who was more loving and caring. And talk about courage—no one, and I mean no one, I’ve ever met had more than these two ladies. Here was Michelle, who was on the very edge of death and she exhibited absolutely no overt indication of fear or depression. I can’t even imagine how I would function in a similar situation. I doubt seriously if I could handle it as well as Michelle. I doubt many people could. Nor can I imagine how it must feel to stand by day after day and watch the person I loved the most slowly dying in front of me. That experience must be accompanied by as great a pain as any known to man. Of course that’s the cross Bertha had to bear. She handled it extremely well… no, incredibly well.

Anyway, after we all got acquainted, Bertha left the room so I could talk to Michelle. And talk we did. For a good three hours we talked about the powers of the mind
and its healing capabilities. I also attempted to teach Michelle how to use psychoneuroimmunology. I’d have to say that considering everything, our session went great. When it was time for me to leave, Michelle reached out and grabbed my arm.

“I’m afraid, Judd… I don’t want to die.”

Déjà vu again. Almost the exact words that David had spoken to me just a year ago. Although I had previous experience in this situation, I was at a complete loss for words. I just couldn’t seem to think of anything to say. Then, as if from Divine Intervention, I was reminded of a parable written by Norman Vincent Peale that addressed the fear of death. As best I can remember, here’s what I told Michelle.

“Let’s suppose there is this unborn baby tucked away safe and sound beneath his mother’s loving heart. Then one day someone comes to the child and tells him that he will have to leave his present world in a very short time. The person tells the baby, ‘In a few months you will be born, or as you may think of it, die out of your present state.’

“Because the baby is secure in his world he might resist. ‘I don’t want to be what you call born or what I call die, I want to remain where I am. I’m comfortable, happy, and loved here. I don’t want to leave this place.’

“Of course, eventually the baby is born or dies out of his present world. It’s a little struggle at first, but once he is born, what does he find?

“He feels the comfort and strength of loving arms around him. He is loved, protected, and cared for, and best yet, his fears have vanished. ‘How foolish I was to resist,’ the child might say. ‘This place that I have been
born into or died into is infinitely more beautiful and magnificent than my past world.’

“The child then goes on to enjoy the wonders of life. He experiences all sorts of beautiful, loving things in his new world. As time passes, he becomes secure and comfortable, and it seems that the essence of life is his. Then someone comes to him and says, ‘You are going to die, or as we call it, be born out of this place into another world.’

“As before, he might demonstrate, ‘I don’t want to die. I love this world—the dawn, the sunset, the moon, the starlight. My loved ones are here, and everything else I ever wanted. I feel comfortable and secure in this world. I don’t want to die or be born to a new world.’

“But in natural course he does die. What happens then? Does God suddenly change his nature?

“Can we not assume that he will once again experience the comfort and strength of loving arms around him and once again become comfortable and secure in this new and beautiful world?

“Won’t he soon be exclaiming, ‘This world that I have died into is infinitely more beautiful and magnificent than my past world. This is wonderful! I want to remain here forever.’

“What do you think, Michelle, doesn’t this make sense?,” I asked.

She looked up at me with those big beautiful eyes. A single tear rolled gently down her cheek.

“I’m not afraid anymore.”

That night Michelle was born into her new world.
After Michelle’s death, my training took a turn for the worse. My intensity dropped off significantly, and I couldn’t seem to focus as well on my lifts. My form didn’t feel right either. When I reviewed the videos, I couldn’t see any major breaks in form, but I just didn’t feel like my movement was as smooth and efficient as in the past. On the bright side though was the fact that I hadn’t missed a single lift in the six-and-a-half months that I had been training. Actually, that really wasn’t atypical for me. I’d bet that in the eleven years that I’ve been competing, I could count the number of times I missed in practice on my right hand. Some people would say that’s because I train considerably under my maximum. But I prefer to think that my success in practice is due to training smart.

I don’t believe in taking chances in practice, nor do I believe in missing. I’d rather pass up an attempt if I thought I had a chance of missing. I believe missing not only disrupts your physical training but your confidence and mind set as well. When you “hit” each one of your lifts in training week after week, you get the feeling that you’re never going to miss. You develop a type of psychic chemistry where you believe that no weight is too much, that nothing is beyond your capacity. I don’t want to know
how missing feels. I believe it can be habit forming. You get into a situation where you actually need to push, and you remember how much easier it is to just quit. I don’t want to have that feeling ingrained in my mind. I want only success responses to remain in my mind. Consequently, I take great pains to construct a training schedule that is extremely challenging, but one that is definitely within my physical and psychological parameters.

Anyway, going into my last day of heavy training I hadn’t missed a lift. Like I said though, I was struggling. My training schedule for the day called for a maximum attempt at 555 pounds for three repetitions. I figured if I made that lift, I’d be ready for 600 pounds or more come meet time. The problem was I just didn’t feel ready. I felt O.K. physically, but I didn’t have it in my heart. Actually, the way my opening sets went, I apparently wasn’t “up” physically either. Everything felt heavy. Worse yet, I could feel myself getting more and more frustrated on each set.

On my set prior to 555 pounds, I took 505 pounds for a triple. If I had any doubts about how my body was responding, that set cleared it up real quick. I almost ripped my spine out of my back getting that third rep. I could feel a rage building up inside of me. Here I was, the week before the meet and I was struggling with weight that I should have been moving with ease. In all candor, after my set with 505 I didn’t want to even think about attempting 555 pounds, and there was no way in hell I would have tried it if Arny hadn’t insisted I do so. In fact, it took him a good ten minutes to talk me into it. Against my better judgement, I went for the 555 pounds. As soon as I unracked it, I knew I was making a mistake of
significant magnitude. I swear it felt like I had a small apartment complex on top of me. Once again, I could feel rage building up inside of me. I stood there supporting the weight, refusing to descend with it.

“Damn it, Arny! I can’t do this!”

“Shut-up and just do it. You’re psyching yourself out. You have plenty of strength to do this.”

“If I miss it, it’s going to mess everything up.”

“You’re not going to miss it. Just do it, you’re wasting energy standing there and arguing about it. Do it!”

I must have stood there another ten seconds, then I descended. When I reached the bottom of the lift, I drove my body upwards. Inch by inch I fought my way back to an upright position. The lift took me an eternity to complete. In fact, I could have grown a beard trying to finish that lift. Worse yet, I was totally spent.

“Arny, I can’t get this next rep. I’m going to rerack.”

“Don’t you dare. You can do it. Shut the ‘bleep’ up and do it!”

“I can’t.”

“You can, Damn it. Do it!”

I could feel that frustration and rage building inside again. It seemed like everything I had worked for in the last six months was on the line and I was about to lose it all. The longer I stood there thinking about it, the madder I got. Finally, I attempted to descend with the weight, but this time it was just too much for me. In fact, as soon as I unlocked my knees, the weight drove me right to the floor. After spotters helped me untangle myself from the weight, I flew into a rage. Actually, I started my tantrum while I was still under the weight—and it was all directed at Arny.
“Why in the ‘bleep’ did you make me go for that lift!? You ‘bleeped’ everything up... God damn it! All that ‘bleeping’ work for nothing!”

I just kept going on and on abusing Arny, and he just stood there taking it all. When I finally got done, Arny walked over to me and put his arms around me.

“Hey... I love you. This doesn’t mean anything. You’ll make that 600. You won’t let this stop you. I know you, and I believe in you.”

I could feel all the emotions of the last six months building up inside me and then I let it out. I was standing there crying like a baby with Arny holding me. Everything seemed to be coming down on me. I felt tired and ashamed. Here I was, striking out against the best friend I ever had. A guy who had sacrificed a good portion of his own career so that I could succeed. A guy who always put me first, gave me all the glory, and stood by me through thick and thin. And here he was taking all of my bullshit and still sticking with me. I felt terrible, but in some strange way I felt rich and alive. Hell, I still had Arny.
After my workouts, I started getting really depressed. Actually, I was more scared than depressed. I hate to admit it, but that one miss with 555 pounds just about destroyed my confidence. I reasoned that if I couldn’t handle 555 pounds for at least a double, there was no way in hell I was going to lift 600 pounds. It also kept running through my mind that I had been physically and mentally broken by that same weight less than a year ago. The more I thought about it, the more convinced I became that the 600-pound barrier was impossible to break. And the more I thought about that, the more depressed and frightened I became. I tried to rid my mind of those destructive thoughts, but the harder I tried to calm my mind, the worse matters got.

I even started thinking about my neck injury a few years earlier, and how that injury had not only robbed me of a chance to be world champion, but how it also left my upper body partially paralyzed and deformed. In the past when things didn’t go well, I would look for anything that was positive about the situation and then focus on that. This time though, I was totally focused on the negative. I was walking through my mind with dirty feet, and in the process, I was tearing down everything I had built during the past six months. I felt alone and confused. For a good three hours, I lay on my bed running negative thoughts.
through my mind and feeling sorry for myself. I was real close to reaching the point of despair, when all of a sudden, I remembered a fight I had during my childhood. It wasn’t just any fight, it was a fight that impacted significantly upon my life and my athletic career. In fact, in many ways that fight was the foundation for my success on a world class level.

This is a “once upon a time” type thing—so brace yourself. When I was young, just about my entire childhood was characterized by violence. All I can remember when I was a kid was fighting. Everyday I’d get into two or three fights. I honestly don’t know what possessed me. I know I had a lot of hate and frustration in me at the time, but I can’t really say what drove me to violence—what made me thirst for it? Maybe at the time fighting was the one thing that gave me any type of self-worth. I was certainly good at it, very good. It was a way of life with me—the only way I knew.

In retrospect, I must have been a little crazy. I say that because of who I fought. “Who” was anyone! It didn’t matter how big, how strong, or how old they were. If they got in my way, I’d fight them. Sometimes I’d get my face beat in, but it didn’t seem to matter, I’d fight them the next day, and even the day after that if I ran into them again. I was at war with everyone. There was hate in me, deep-seeded hate. I was capable of just about anything at that time.

The thing is, when you fight all the time, not only do you get good at it, but it becomes a part of you. You get to the point where you expect violence—it’s no big deal. It’s just a way of life. But I wasn’t the only bad mother where I come from. Hell, the streets were loaded with them. Guys would break your arm just to see how it dangles.
Of all the guys I ran into though, one stood above the rest. His name was Bobby Cuzzo. Cuzzo had hate in every inch of his soul. He lived only to fight, at least that’s the way it seemed to me. The type of guy who would rip your ear off and cram it up your butt so you could hear him kicking your ass. I remember an incident when his brother got shot in the chest in a gang fight. That night while his brother was on the operating table fighting for his life, Cuzzo was out walking around wearing his brother’s blood-stained shirt. He was showing everyone the bullet hole and the blood, and vowing that when he found the guy who shot his brother, he was going to shove the shirt down the guy’s throat until he choked to death. His brother survived, and Cuzzo never found the guy. Was he capable of killing someone...?

There was this other time, later on in his life, when a guy came into our neighborhood late one night and kidnapped one of the girls who lived there. He took her to “the park” about a block away and raped her. Before he was done though, the cops found him. He immediately put a gun to the girl’s head and told the cops if they didn’t leave he would blow the girl’s head off. Of course, the cops pulled back out of the park. Within ten minutes though the cops had the place surrounded. Still they were afraid to go in because of the fear that the guy would carry out his threat. For two hours, the guy had the girl down there in the park. When Cuzzo heard she was down there, he went home and got a gun. He then slipped into the park, sneaked up behind the guy, and shot him from point-blank range in the back of the head, killing him instantly. I guess there’s a little good in everyone.

In short, Cuzzo wasn’t exactly your neighborhood Good Humor Man. Simply put, he was big, tough, and
mean. In our neighborhood, he was the lightweight champion. A lot of guys tried to take him, but none could. I’ll say this too, most everyone who fought him paid dearly for that mistake. He wouldn’t just beat them, he literally abused them. If he got a guy down, he’d beat them until they were unconscious, and then until they were a bloody mess. Even if he knew a guy didn’t stand a chance, he’d never hold back. He’d just keep on until he beat the guy senseless. He was just one mean son-of-a-bitch—a real animal. I mean that in the literal sense. In my opinion, it’s a strain to call him a human being.

If the truth be known, I hated Cuzzo. Not because he was mean or anything like that. Hell, I wasn’t any better, although I did have a little compassion for people. I hated him because he was so cocksure of himself, so confident that he could break the will of any man. Perhaps I was afraid that he would break me, take my manhood away—the one thing that I had at the time that I could be proud of.

Amazingly, it was years before we eventually got into it. I say amazingly because when you have two guys in the same neighborhood who fought as much as we did, it would only seem reasonable that one of us would test the other. I can’t speak for Cuzzo, but in all honesty, the reason I didn’t push it was because I was afraid. Don’t get the wrong idea. I wasn’t afraid of what Cuzzo could do to me physically. I never thought about stuff like that. Even when I did get hurt now and then in a fight, it never really bothered me. It was like I said before, I was afraid that he would strip away the reputation that I had established as being... well, tough. That was something I didn’t want to lose. At the time it was my only source of recognition, my only accomplishment. The scary thing was that I
knew I could lose it all if Cuzzo kicked my ass. That was the only fear I had—the only fear.

I could never understand why it took Cuzzo so long to fight me. He was a good twenty pounds heavier than me and two-or-three-years older. I'm sure he felt he could take me, but he never tried. Maybe he wasn't as confident as I thought. Like I said, I could fight. I had boxed since the time I was a little boy at the Police Athletic League and the St. Anthony Youth center, and I had literally hundreds of fights in the streets. I'm sure he knew I wasn't going to be like one of those candy-ass guys who would curl up and die after taking a few good licks. Still, it was hard to understand since this guy loved living on the edge, and if anything, he was driven to fight and conquer.

Anyway, the time did come for us to fight. I don't believe there was any real reason for the fight. Of course, in the streets, there never has to be a reason. I guess it was just time for Cuzzo to find out what I was about.

The thing I remember most vividly about the fight was the fear I had right before we started throwing punches. It was intense, and it ran through every inch of my body. In a fight, fear and terror can be a blessing. It's been said that the man who has the strongest will, who best controls and channels his fear, is the lord and master. Great fear, tightly controlled, is great power that once unleashed can be devastating. That's the fear I had. It wasn't doubt, it was a controlled rage waiting to strike.

When we squared off, I decided to take it right to him. That may sound crazy to you considering that Cuzzo was much bigger than me, but in a fight a little guy is always better off inside. By getting in close, right up on a guy's chest, you can significantly erode the larger fighter's power. I also figured that I was a lot faster than him, con-
sequently, I felt that blow for blow I could win the war inside. The greatest problem with that way of thinking would occur if Cuzzo decided to grab me rather than fight. That wasn’t Cuzzo’s style though, he was a puncher not a wrestler.

I should also mention that a fight then was significantly different from what is termed a fight today. When I was a kid, there were no rules per se, but it was understood that you didn’t hit a guy in the head with a board or try to kick his groin up into his tonsils. Today a fight isn’t a fight, it’s more like kick boxing with weapons. Everything goes. Chains, boards, knives, guns, it’s crazy—dangerous even.

Anyway, as soon as Cuzzo moved in to begin his assault, I moved quickly forward as well. I was fast alright, but he was just as fast and a lot smarter. He let me get almost to him, then he side-slipped a little, just enough to avoid my attack, and then he slammed a vicious hook into my right eye, splitting my head open. When I turned, I ran right into a left–right combination. The fight wasn’t more than five-seconds-old, and Cuzzo was already cutting me apart. I staggered backwards. Surprisingly though, Cuzzo didn’t continue his assault. He just stood there with a little grin on his face admiring his handiwork. There was blood streaming down my face, but I wasn’t about to quit. I knew that the pain I would experience from quitting would be ten times worse than anything Cuzzo could give me. I wasn’t going to let him break me. He might beat me, but he won’t break my will.

After I regained my composure, I rushed him again. I figured he’d try the same thing, and he did, but this time I was watching for it. When I saw which way he was sliding, I went with him and landed a solid punch to the
bridge of his nose. He countered with a right, but I slid under it and came back with maybe four or five blows to his face before he was able to back off. Needless to say, he wasn’t grinning any more. Blood was oozing from his nose and mouth. It was then, at that very moment, that I felt it. Call it what you will—a power, a heightened sense of self-assurance, whatever. All I know is that, from that moment on, I was in control of that fight. I refused to be intimidated, hurt, or beaten.

It won’t prove anything to try to describe what happened after that. We both took a pretty good beating. I’m not saying I beat him, but I will say it was he who let it go, not me. More importantly, it was the first time I had ever experienced the deep-seeded powers that God had instilled within me. It was a magnificent feeling. A feeling of overwhelming strength and power—a feeling of indestructibility. I had, for a very short period of time, been elevated to a higher level. From that day on, I had a different outlook on life. I had a different resolve—a confidence that over the years I’ve drawn on more than once.

The more I thought about that fight, the more confident I became that I had a legitimate shot at the 600 pound barrier. This may sound crazy, but the thought of that fight somehow shocked me back to reality. It reminded me that nothing in life is impossible—nothing. If you believe, really believe, there is just nothing you can’t do. It also reminded me that in the past I always performed at my best when things were at their worst, and that I had a history of making the seemingly impossible possible. In short, the thought of that fight reminded me of who I was, what I believed, and what I was capable of accomplishing. At that very moment, I made up my mind
that I would never again entertain the thought of failure. I would refuse to miss—refuse to quit. I would impose my will and my physical power over that 600 pounds. My mind was once again set to make the impossible possible. That was my volition.
A Call from the PHARAOH

That very night... well, actually it was about 3 o’clock in the morning, I was awakened by a phone call. I answered the phone with a semi-comatose grunt, only to be greeted by a thunderous voice.

“Judd Stud. The Pharaoh sends his best.”

“Could this be Ben Lockett, my coach who is too busy watching President Carter’s ass to be with me when I need him most?”

“Good guess. I’m in Egypt with Carter. It’s written on the pyramids that you are shooting for the stars again.”

“Does it say anything about me breaking my neck or anything of that nature?”

“It’s written only that you will rock the world, and in the process you will bring powerful men to their knees, and you will make women and children weep. Even the stars and planets will be moved.”

“Well, I hope it all works out that way.”

“It will, I just wish I was going to be there to see it.”

“In all candor, I feel pretty good about everything. I had a little trouble in my training, but I believe I’m right where I need to be for a shot at 600.”

“Judd, there’s no doubt in my mind that you will break the 600 pound barrier. I want you to know that I might not be there for you physically, but mentally and spiritually I’ll be with you all the way. I also want you to know that I’m really proud of you, and I’m proud to say that I had a small part in your career.”
A small part in my career? At best, that was a monumental understatement. There is no doubt in my mind that if it wasn’t for Ben Lockett, I wouldn’t have achieved a third of what I have in the sport. When he found me, I was at best a poor imitation of a powerlifter—women and children could beat me. It was even rumored that the U.S.P.F. was going to revoke my lifting card for impersonating a powerlifter. At lease I think it was a rumor.

Anyway, Lockett took me, an insecure kid with a body that looked like a broomstick, and literally transformed me into a world class athlete. A world class lifter himself, Ben sacrificed a large part of his career to ensure my success. I know of few athletes who would be so selfless. Without question, Ben Lockett is the best thing that ever happened to me in the sport of powerlifting. True to form, he was now calling from half-way around the world to insure I was on the right track. I’m telling you, there’s no one better than Lockett. He’s a magnificent human being. I wish I could share him with each and everyone of you.

Right before we hung-up, Ben told me something that sent chills streaking through my body.

“Judd, of all the athletes I have ever met, if I had to have one player compete for me in a life-and-death situation, it would be you. I know Jimmy Conners said the same thing about MacEnroe, but he doesn’t know you. If he did, he’d want you playing for his life too. I believe in you. You’re going to do just fine. I love you.”

And I love Ben Lockett. Hell, who wouldn’t?
DURING THE NEXT 12 DAYS, I SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASED THE TIME I SPENT IN MY MENTAL TRAINING SESSIONS. I FIGURED THAT SINCE I WASN’T SCHEDULED TO ATTEMPT ANY NEAR MAXIMAL LIFTS, MY BEST CHANCE TO ENHANCE MY PERFORMANCE WOULD BE THROUGH MENTAL TRAINING. I WAS AWARE THAT MY MISS WITH 550 POUNDS WAS GOING TO PRESENT MORE OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM THAN A PHYSICAL ONE WHEN IT CAME TIME TO ATTEMPT THE RECORD.

Consequently, I embarked on the most intensive mind control program I’ve ever used.

Believe it or not, some days I would spend as much as four hours in mental training. During these sessions, I would hypnotize myself, run through an extensive biofeedback program designed to induce deep muscle relaxation, and then mentally rehearse the lifts I was going to attempt in competition. When conceptualizing, I omitted nothing. I visualized myself warming-up, stretching, the bar being loaded, and making every rep of every set with power and picture-perfect form. I’m not exaggerating when I tell you that I visualized my competitive lifts at least one thousand times during each of my hypnotic training sessions. It got to the point were I could actually feel the muscles in my body responding to the conceptualized version of my lifts. In short, I was programming both my mind and body by using visualization.

In case your wondering, there are a number of reasons why this is possible. First of all, the brain and the nervous system cannot distinguish between an experience
that is real or imagined. If you visualize yourself performing the perfect lift, your mind will process that information in much the same manner that it would if the lift was performed in real life. Additionally, if your brain constantly processes the performance of the perfect skill, you are in essence boosting your self-confidence for the real life performance of that skill. Next, as your mind conceives of an idea, it generates impulses throughout the body which facilitate neurons of the body to perform the idea being conceived. In other words, if you visualize yourself performing the perfect lift, your muscles would be programmed neurologically in exactly the same manner that they would have been had you actually performed the lift physically. Consequently, by visualizing your lifts, you are programming both your mind and your body.

After I finished visualizing my lifts, I would then use scripting and motivational tapes to bombard my mind with positive affirmations. Most of the tapes I used were designed to increase my self-confidence. When producing the tapes, I took great pains to insure that the statements I used were extremely motivational and rich in mental imagery. Even when I wasn’t actively engaged in my mental training, I constantly used trigger words or power statements to program my mind. I would wake up every morning and immediately say to myself, “I feel great, powerful, and full of energy. There is nothing I can’t accomplish today!” Throughout the day, I would constantly tell myself, “You’re awesome, Biasiotto, you’re the best!!” Even my recreational time was spent watching video tapes of the Olympic games or other motivational athletic competitions. In fact, throughout every waking
hour, I was engaged in some type of technique that was geared towards enhancing my confidence.

Without question, such behavior borders on extreme obsession. But in all candor, it works. I believe that in order to reach an optimum level of performance, you have to be somewhat obsessed. At least that’s the way it was for me. The more I bombard my brain with positive affirmations, the more powerful and confident I become. And this time was no different. When the eve of the meet rolled around, I was as confident as ever—in total control. There was no doubt, no trepidation. I was ready both mentally and physically. I was going to once again shock the world and this time, it was going to be electrifying.
Backstage Jitters—Only for a While

The day of the meet I was up at the break of dawn. I was a little apprehensive, maybe a little scared. I was keenly aware that what I was about to participate in was more than just a powerlifting meet. It was an event. A lot of time, energy, and money had been invested in the project, and its entire success rested squarely on my shoulders. If I failed, there would be no tomorrow, no next time. This was strictly a one shot deal. Still, this was the moment that I had been reaching for throughout my entire life. This was my chance to be all that I could be. The chance that every athlete dreams about.

During my entire life, I’ve worked to be the very best. I gave myself totally, I faced pain, crippling injuries, and sacrificed just about every aspect of my life for a moment like this. Now all of my dreams were just minutes away and the chance for greatness was in my hands. I was going to seize this moment. I would make it shine. I would refuse to be anything less than my best. I would not fail. I would race against destiny, and I would win! That was my volition.
MIND-BOGGLING

When I got to the meet site, I went straight to the locker room and changed into my lifting gear. Then I went to a small storage room that Jim and Arny had set up for me to prepare for the competition. When I got there, Arny was already waiting for me.

Arny said, “Judd, this is it. If you live to be a thousand years old, I don’t think you’ll experience a more precious moment in sports than this… Think about what you’re going to do today… You have a chance to rewrite the record books, set new parameters for strength. That’s mind-boggling. I get chills all over my body just thinking about it.”

“I wouldn’t say the lift is that significant.”

“Whether you want to admit to it or not, it is that significant. No drug-free lifter in the world can even envision doing the weight you’re going to attempt today. Trust me, you’re going to freak people out.”

“I hope it all works out that way.”

“Is there any doubt? This is going to be your day. There is no way in hell you’re going to fail. I know it, and so do you.”

“To be perfectly honest, I’m looking forward to this chance. I feel real good about it… real good. If it’s possible for me, I’ll do it. I promise you this, if I miss, it won’t be because I didn’t try. I’m prepared to give everything I have. I refuse to let self-doubt or fear beat me this time around. If I have to, I’ll go to the very limit. Even if it kills me. I’m that determined.”
“Listen, I’ve never seen you this good mentally or physically. Even when you did the 575, you didn’t have the power you have now. The only thing you have to do is go out there and do it!”

Leave it to Arny, the consummate optimist, to re-enforce my mind-set. After a few more minutes of power talk, Arny hooked me up to the biofeedback machine. Arny then left me to myself so that I could begin preparing myself mentally for the meet.

Since I had an hour or so before my opening attempt, I decided to wait a little before actually getting into my mental training program. At first I just lay there and reminisced about what had transpired over the past year or so… My success with 575 pounds, my trip to China, my grandmother, Michelle, and my training. Then I found myself praying to God for strength. I kept thinking about what He had told us in the scriptures. “If we have faith as small as a grain of mustard seed and ask that a mountain be moved, the mountain would move. If we believe, nothing will be impossible for us.” (Matthew 17: 20) Over and over I ran that powerful affirmation through my mind, and then I totally surrendered myself to God.

The next thing I knew, Arny was at my side telling me it was time to get ready. Apparently, I had drifted into a deep, relaxing reverie for close to an hour. I hadn’t even turned on the biofeedback machine, let alone started my training mentally, yet I felt great. I mean really great! I felt alive and powerful. I’ve heard it said that the level of athletic performance is directly related to the way one feels inside—that there is a linear relationship between optimum performance and self-actualization. If that was the case, I knew I was in for a big day. Never in my career did I ever feel physically and mentally as strong. I could
feel a strong integration between my mind and body, a harmony between my mental and physical functions. I felt like I was actually aware of every aspect of my body. I was in control. Totally in touch with everything around me, with everything within me. As if I was one with myself and the world around me. Yet, I felt a rush of vital energy streaming through my veins. It was an odd mix. I felt extremely energized, yet physically and mentally I was totally relaxed. It was all so perfect. Just the way I had dreamed things should be.

“600, 600, 600.”

When we got to the lifting arena, the place was already buzzing with excitement. If I had to guess, I’d estimate that there was close to a thousand people in attendance. Included in the audience were three television crews to film the lift and about ten Church’s Chicken cartoon characters, who were busy leading cheers in order to psych up the crowd. The whole scene was wild, like something you would expect to find in a Sylvester Stalone fight flick. Rather than enter the arena, Arny and I stood in the back of the auditorium and watched the last three lifters attempt their lifts. Each time a lifter made his attempt the crowd went absolutely berserk.

It was great. I was getting charged up just standing there and watching. After the last lifter finished lifting, Arny and I walked into the arena. Immediately, everyone in the stands stood up and started chanting, “600, 600, 600...” Talk about being psyched up! I had goose-bumps on every inch of my body, and I could feel the fire inside of me raging into a flaming inferno. I felt indestructible. There was no doubt this was my moment in time.
A Different Breed of HUMAN

For my opening attempt, I decided to take 540 pounds. Just for the record, that weight was enough to exceed both the I.P.F. and the A.D.F.P.A. world records. I was confident that I could handle the weight with relative ease. In practice, I had doubled 555 pounds and tripled 535 pounds. Consequently, I felt that 540 pounds was well within my capabilities. Let’s face it, if I couldn’t do it with relative ease, I had no business even considering the 600 pound barrier.

Still, it wasn’t exactly a walk in the park. Take my word for it, 540 pounds is a lot of weight—for anyone. There are some heavyweights who would have trouble with it and for 99.9 percent of the 132 pounders in the world, it’s at best a fantasy. Of course, you also realize that kind of weight can kill you—dead even. One wrong move and it could be wheelchair city. Add all this to the fact that less than nine months before I had been mentally and physically broken by the same weight and you can see why I was, shall we say, attentive. But if the truth be known, I wasn’t worried one bit. If anything, I was completely confident.

I’ve often said that the body serves the mind. If you have a powerful mind, you can impose your will over your natural capacities. With your mind, you can just about do
the impossible. You can become a different breed of human being.

One thing was for sure. I was on the threshold of reaching that point. I was so coordinated, so completely balanced, that I felt like nothing was beyond me. I felt that whatever I chose to do, I could accomplish. Squatting 540 pounds was certainly no exception. In short, I was ready to shock the world.

After the bar was loaded to 540 pounds, I walked out to the platform. Immediately everyone in the place started screaming and yelling at the top of their voices and stomping on the bleachers. The noise was deafening, and the closer I got to the weight, the louder the roar became. It was incredible. Only once in my life had I ever experienced anything like it. That was when I squatted 575 pounds, but even then the crowd didn’t seem as loud or as emotionally involved.

After I gained my composure, I hypnotized myself with a preconditioned symbol and then hypnotically projected an astral or hallucinated being (in my own image and likeness) from my body. My astral being then executed the lift with picture perfect form and minimal effort. After my astral being executed the lift and returned to my body, I got ready for the “real” thing. I unracked the weight and positioned myself to squat. When the head judge gave me the signal to squat, I descended with the weight. When I felt myself break parallel, I “exploded” upward.

The lift went up so easy it was scary. No strain, no hesitation, just one, smooth, fluid movement. Never in my life had I ever lifted so much weight so easily. This may sound crazy, but I was actually in awe of myself. I had tapped into an energy source that was beyond descrip-
tion. Clearly, I was functioning at a different level. A level I had never reached before. I was perfectly in tune with the moment, both physically and mentally. Without a doubt, I was ready for my shot at greatness.
A GIANT STEP TOWARDS GREATNESS

For my second attempt I decided on 580 pounds. Actually, Arny and Jim both wanted me to go straight to 600 pounds. Apparently, they were a little worried that an attempt at 580 pounds might take too much out of me, thus decreasing my chance at 600 pounds. They further reasoned that if I went right to 600 pounds and missed, I would still have two more attempts at the lift. In other words, they felt that an attempt at 580 pounds was a waste of both energy and a lift. Although their reasoning had considerable merit, I wasn’t about to buy into their way of thinking.

First of all, their only criterion for success was for me to break the 600 pound barrier. Although that was my ultimate goal too, it wasn’t my only goal. I figured if I could come away with a new world record, I could live with myself, whether I squatted 600 pounds or not. On the other hand, if I went right to 600 pounds and came away empty, I’d feel terrible, especially considering all of the time, energy, and money we had invested. In short, I wasn’t about to come away with nothing. Consequently, I opted for the 580-pound barrier. Of course, the 580-pound lift wasn’t exactly a sure thing. The most weight I had ever lifted was 575 pounds, and that lift just about crippled me. But I knew I was a lot stronger now. Not only that, but the way I motored up 540 pounds, I knew 580
pounds was well within my range, given good form and execution. Hell, even if I didn’t execute, I wasn’t going to miss it. My mind was set. I refused to miss. I wouldn’t be denied.

After the bar was loaded to 580 pounds, I positioned myself on the platform. As with my opening attempt, the crowd gave me an incredible reception. They were yelling and screaming so loud, I could hardly hear myself think. Talk about a psych—I was wide open! I could actually feel the hair on my arms and legs piloerect, and I felt power surging through my entire body. I was ready. There was no doubt, no trepidations, just pure, unadulterated confidence. After I went through my astral routine, I unracked the weight and positioned myself to squat. After the head judge gave me the signal to squat, I descended with the weight. When I felt myself break parallel, I drove my body upward with all the power and force I could muster. Slowly, but steadily, I began to rise with the weight.

When I reached my sticking point, I could feel myself pitching forward ever so slightly, pulling me out of my groove. I knew that if I got too far forward, I was going to be in major trouble. I immediately tried to drive my shoulders backward in an attempt to return to my groove. It was no use though, the harder I drove my shoulders back, the more I seemed to get out of position.

I soon realized that if I was going to make the lift, I would have to power through it. Without further hesitation, I lowered my shoulders slightly and put my back totally into the lift. I swear I could actually feel my spine bending under the force of the weight. I refused to quit though. Inch by inch, I fought my way upward, finally surfacing in an upright position.
If there was any doubt about my power, I put it to rest right then and there. I had just powered up 580 pounds without any hesitation at all. Best yet, I had reached the point were I felt that there was nothing I couldn’t do if I had to. I felt incredibly powerful and confident—god-like. The 600 pounds was going to be mine There was no doubt!
THE BIG TIME

T
his was it, the chance to go beyond the boundaries of what most men believed was possible. To go beyond what was thought my breaking point and succeed. For an athlete, there is no moment more precious in life. It is the “white” moment. The moment in time that an athlete trains a lifetime just to experience. There is no amount of money, no amount of power, or status, and no position in life that can equal the experience. It is totally awesome. I know because I had experienced it before. Since that time I had hungered just to taste it again. And now my moment in time was once again here. It was strange, but I had a feeling of joy, a sense of ecstasy, a near perfect emotion. I was ready to take my mind, body, and soul to the very limit. For this moment in time, I was prepared to go to the very edge.

When the bar was loaded to 603 pounds, I took my position on the lifting platform. As I stood there looking at the weight, I felt totally consumed by the event itself. It was all coming together. I felt a fusion of mind and body that is beyond explanation. There was no need for hypnosis or mental rehearsal. I was totally focused on the moment, perfectly attuned to what was about to transpire. It was as if everything in the world had disappeared. Only the weight and myself seemed to be in existence. I was completely immersed in the event. I felt power, extraordinary power. I felt no boundaries—no limits. I felt as if
nothing was impossible—nothing. It was time—my moment in time.

I unracked the weight and positioned myself for the lift. I could feel the full measure of the weight on my body, it was incredible. Quickly though, that feeling faded, giving way to belief and confidence in myself, and then to deliberate action. Without hesitation, I descended with the awesome weight. When I reached the bottom of the lift, I drove my body upwards with every ounce of energy I had. Slowly, but surely, I began to rise. I was intensely focused, totally consumed by the momentum of the event.

When I reached my sticking point, my body started to rack uncontrollably. Then I felt a sensation in my left eye—it was a burning sensation. I forced myself to concentrate on pushing through the lift, pulling my attention from my eye. Pushing and straining, I continued to move upward. The power I felt within me seemed limitless. It was as if God Himself was with me, helping me through the lift, helping me to create a miracle. Finally, I achieved an upright position. For a good five seconds, I just stood there supporting the weight, trying to absorb every aspect of the moment. When I racked the weight, everyone in the auditorium was standing, yelling, and screaming. It was an awesome display. I had gone beyond, I had created my miracle.
Section V
WHERE THEY ARE NOW

Arnny Ferrando is residing in Houston, Texas where he is doing nutritional research for the National Aeronautical and Space Agency (NASA). He has recently married a great gal named Tracy. We are still very best of friends—brothers in spirit and heart.

Jim McCoy is living in Blackshear, Georgia with his elegant wife Sukie. We remain close friends and I remain indebted to him for his support and belief in me.

Jay “Doc” Kreis is the strength coach at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro.

Fred Hatfield is presently working with eight time Mr. Olympia, Lee Haney, franchising Animal Kingdom gyms. His dream of squatting 1,000 pounds materialized on February 23, 1988 when he squatted 1,014 at a body weight of 267 pounds. Author, lecturer, World Class Athlete—Hatfield is simply an awesome force.
Chuck Braxton died on May 6, 1990. Ironically, Braxton died from a massive heart attack while competing at the USPF National Masters Championships. Apparently, the good Lord had some heavy lifting to be done. He certainly picked the right man.

Ken Lubowich is probably one of the most prominent “unknown” figures in East–West relations. He now spends more time in China than in America. Under the title of China Educational Travels, LTD, Ken shuttles five to six groups of researchers a year across the world to unlock the mysteries of Chinese medicine.

David Sun is living in Beijing, China where he is head of the Chinese Olympic Training Center. We still keep in close contact by mail.

Ben Lockett is living in Plains, Georgia where he is employed by the United States Secret Service. His present duty is to care for the protection and safety of former president Jimmy Carter. A phenomenal athlete, a super intellect, and a loving human being, Lockett is one of the world’s elite.
Judd Biasiotto is still living in Albany, Georgia. Judd has written a total of ten books on sports, fitness and human performance topics. See page nine of this book for a list of the other books Judd has written.
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Glossary

glossary notes
an expanded glossary of many technical, fitness terms can be found in the book, A Glossary of Training, published by the Sports Support Syndicate. Many of Judd’s definitions and explanations are in that book.

abs
abdominal muscles

associate
an act where athletes heighten their experience, becoming an integral part of every event. Part of mind/body fusion and opposite of disassociation

astral being
hallucinated being in my own image and likeness

Austin, Danny
world champion lifter.

bootie
butt, ass, behind, bottom

brain nothingness
Until “tanking it,” I had never experienced it. When my mind went blank, it wasn’t merely that I saw black or nothing at all; it was a complete disappearance of a sense of vision.

Church’s Chicken
a place to eat chicken, and some are owned by Jim McCoy, a sponsor in Judd’s world-record lifting attempt.

Colson, Sam
a Clemson coach who made the news

Cuzzo, Bobby
a one-time foe of Judd’s

déjà vu
the illusion that one has previously had an experience that is actually new to one

deprivation tank or flotation tank
a large enclosed basin that is filled with dense saltwater solution. The saltwater allows the subject inside the tank to float in a type of suspended animation.

Dinteman, Dr. George
president of the National Association of Speed and Explosion

disassociation
the very opposite process of what is necessary for total involvement. Disassociation is easiest to understand. An athlete who disassociates is one who uses environmental or cognitive stimuli to distract his mind from the task at hand.

discrimination without awareness
This phenomena is when our
higher-brain centers withdraw for a time being, our lower-brain centers can respond appropriately to supraliminal stimuli.

Donggong
dynamic exercise, one of three different types of Qigong exercises.

DMR
deep muscle relaxation

drug-free
Judd is drug-free, as he has never taken any steroids, human-growth hormones or other artificial drugs. the only way to be.

Fisher, Bobby
third grade foe of Judd’s

flooding
a technique in which you flood or expose the individual to a great amount of the fear-evoking stimuli all at once.

Foote, Michelle
beautiful young lady who died from leukemia

Foote, Thomas R
author and illustrator of the highly suggested book, Lifting In the 5th Dimension, regarding mind/body fusion and the esoteric experience

Fromm, Eric
“The pity in life today...” (see page 161)

ganzfield
a totally patternless visual field

Gong
refers to Gongfu, which means practicing skills.

Gretzke, Wayne
a great hockey player in the NHL and gifted athlete

Jaspers, Augustinius (Stijn)
deceased long-distance runner from Clemson.

Jing-Donggong
a combination of the exercises of Jinggong (quiet exercise) and Donggong (dynamic exercise), one of three different types of Qigong exercises.

Jinggong
quiet exercise, one of three different types of Qigong exercises.

Jordan, Michael
a retired, great basketball player in the NBA and gifted athlete

groove lifter
a lifter who can better perform when good form or specific mechanics are followed.

GSR
galvanic skin resistance (GSR), increases during Rujing

Hatfield, Dr. Fred
author, world-record holder in the squat

Hunter, Jeff
training partner and spotter for Judd, then with the NY Giants in
the NFL
hypothermia
a lowering of the body temperature
Kubler-Boss, Elizabeth
“People who scream the loudest...”
(see page 161)
Land, Dan
training partner and spotter for
Judd who played for the Los
Angeles Raiders in the NFL
Liberatti, David
Judd’s close friend who died of
leukemia
limen
The Latin word for threshold
LSD
an illegal and dangerous drug that
causes hallucinations
leukemia
a horrifying and gut-wrenching
disease for all involved, cancer of
blood-forming tissues
mind/body fusion
when mind and body are
harmoniously one.
model training
to incorporate practice
sessions that induce
social, psychological, and
technical stressors in the
athlete’s environment.
muscle it out
a successful lift, but performed
with poor form and technique that
is biomechanically undesirable
NIMH
National Institute of Mental Health
Nirvana
Yoga term, much like one-pointedness and brain nothingless
One-pointedness
Zen term, much like Nirvana of
Yoga and brain nothingless
Phenylbutazone
an illegal drug, anti-inflammatory,
simply known as bute
psychoneuroimmunology
a technique that incorporates hypnosis, deep muscle relaxation, and visualization to combat various diseases.
Qi (Chi)
a life force that flows through
channels. It’s invisible and can’t be detected by scientific means. Refers to the body’s vital life force
Qigong
A psychopneumatological exercise
method that incorporates posture, breathing, and mind focus, a kind of self-training technique in which exercises (movement, posture, breathing, and mental energy) are used to increase the flow of Qi, the word used in China to identify all forms of exercises used to
develop one’s Qi or energetic capacity.”

REST
Restricted Environmental Stimulation Therapy

Rogers, Mr.
a host of a Public TV show, Mr. Rogers Neighborhood

Rujing
the secret to Qigong. It is a unique experience for each person—a state of quietness—A condition where the mind is completely at rest and the body is totally relaxed.

running fix
some long-distance runners actually exhibit characteristics of true addiction. They run in order to get what has become known as a fix or euphoric feeling. The runners’ experiences are thought to be brought about by endogenous-morphine-like substances called endorphins.

Sheffield, Chris
training partner and spotter for Judd. Former Pittsburgh Steelers in the NFL.

Shilstone, Dr. Mackie
a nutrition analyst

Solomon, Dr. A.H. “Lefty”
a nationally renown physiologist and sports psychologist

Sommer, Robert
a psychologist at the University of California (Davis) who wrote about “personal space.”

spotter
person who stands near a weight lifter and assists with the weights to prevent injury and at times helps with motivation.

squat
A weight-lifting exercise in which Judd holds a world-record for his weight class.

subliminal stimulus
a stimulus so weak that you would be conscious of it less than 50 percent of the time. A subliminal stimulus is above the sensory threshold, but below the perceptual threshold.

Tatoo’s entertainment and refreshment establishment, complete with good-old boys

trashed
drunk, intoxicated

unity
Yin and Yang are as one. This is called unity. Think of it like a psychic intercourse.

Vicary, James
a motivational researcher

Weider, Joe
Publisher, editor and one of the most respected person in the fitness industry and publishing today.

Search for Greatness Page 225
White, Mike
training partner and spotter for Judd. Former All-Pro with Seattle Seahawks in the NFL. Main character with Judd in the book, *Hypnotize Me and Make Me Great*.

Wilson, M. Woody
a pharmacist in Franklin, Tenn.

Yi
the training of your consciousness

Yin and Yang
refers to the unity of the two opposites. Yin and Yang depend on each other, but also oppose each other. Yin and Yang are the source of each other and under certain conditions are opposites to each other.