

Newsletter Mission Statement: Sharing science, experience, and questions with friends, family, and clients as we strive to live the perfect fitness lifestyle.

In this issue: The Donna Edition!

I. 700 Workouts!

II. 5-year Anniversary of Workout #1

III. 5 Questions with our Guest of Honor, Donna Cowick

I. This past week Donna Cowick celebrated her 700th workout as my client. "Client" sounds too informal, because when you spend 700 hours with someone in the trenches of sweat and strength, you become family. This newsletter is dedicated to Donna Cowick and her heroic efforts in the gym. Her achievements go beyond personal records for lifting... Donna has faced adversity her entire life and the past 5 years were no exception.

At the time Donna began training, she was a 58-year-old grandma who had been sedentary for most of her life. Doctors wanted to perform knee replacement surgery on her right knee and a rocky childhood still created lingering thoughts of self-doubt and low self-esteem. Even after she began working out, her challenges persisted: a few years ago her husband, Richard, went through open-heart surgery; a freak training accident left her in a cast with a broken ankle for about 2 months (I promise it wasn't my fault☺)...all of these things would have made it easy to just say "Forget it!". Instead, she continued on. Not only has she persevered, but something extraordinary has happened.

Donna hasn't just made herself better...she has created a whole new self! The physical strength has brought forth an inner strength to deal with life's problems that before would have left her worried and searching. Now she knows she can handle anything and that is what makes me the proudest.

II. It didn't start that way though...let me take you back to our beginning in June of 2000. I'll never forget Richard's words to me, "It's our 40th anniversary this year and I want that fun person that I married back in my life." Donna admitted to me that she had become agoraphobic (fear of society or social settings that offer no escape) and would stay in her house for several days at a time. Also, wearing shorts in public and any activity that made her sweat were a big "no-no". When you combine the

psychological effect of training with the orthopedic needs that she had, I thought to myself, "If I can make this work, I can train anyone."

That first workout, I planned to just walk and talk. Try to keep her calm and smiling. About 2 minutes into our planned 10:00 walk, Donna started having a mild panic attack and had to stop. I really doubted if this was the right thing for her, but we just took it slow and finished our walk. You could say that this was her first of many victories to come. That entire first summer, we used the pool at Fit-For-All Personal Training Studio to expose her to safe movements and make her feel comfortable. Back then, she could barely tie her own shoes and had to take stairs one at a time. Now, Donna has deadlifted 150 lbs., can walk up and down stairs easily, and has even pushed my SUV 46 yards in 30 seconds!

Here's the other part of the story...Donna was my first client! In fact, she was my only client of 2000, and as much as I loved training her, I started thinking that I needed to start training at the YMCA or another gym just to build-up my name. God must have heard those prayers, because Donna came into the studio soon after, and said, "I did it!" She informed me that she had called the Charlotte Observer to tell them her fitness "testimony". The article ran in the January 1, 2001 paper and I guess the rest is history.

So, yeah, this is my 5-year anniversary too. But there would be no anniversary -- heck, maybe not even a Rhymer Fitness -- if it wasn't for Donna Cowick. Donna, it's an honor to train you and call you a friend and I look forward to many more great sessions with you!

III. Let's hear from the Guest of Honor herself. Ladies and gentlemen (drum roll)...Mrs. Donna Cowick (massive applause)!

1) What has been the greatest discovery about yourself since you started training?

I would never have thought I would learn to love and look forward to exercise. It still amazes me. I didn't even like to sweat. My favorite thing used to be doing anything that did not take energy. What a change!

2) How does the knee, that doctors wanted to cut on, feel today as compared to 5 years ago?

The last doctor, who examined me, just a few months ago, could not believe what I could do with my knee, squats, heavy weights, etc. He pointed to my arthroscopy photos from 05/99, and said, "You needed a knee replacement over five years ago. It is amazing what you can do. Just keep doing what you are doing". That says it all! Also, I remember when I could not vacuum my home because of knee pain, I could not

bend over to tie my shoelaces, I had trouble bending, stooping to pick things up, etc., etc.

3) What are a few of your most favorite and least favorite exercises?

I love bench pressing, and almost any exercise that uses free weights. I say I don't like certain exercises, such as lunges and squats, but I think I just feel I do better with the upper body. I have learned to appreciate the exercises that incorporate many parts of the body at the same time.

4) How has increasing your fitness levels helped you deal with other areas of your life?

I can be having one of those "blue" days, when the weight of the world is bearing down, but a workout session can make that go away. I usually leave with a smile! I would also say I've gained in confidence and self-esteem.

5) What would you say to someone who is over 50-years old that wanted to start training, but maybe thinks that it is too late?

If I am not a good example of "never too late", I really don't know who is. I was doing nothing, had not ever formerly been in an exercise program, except for three weeks of Jazzercise in 1984, and an even shorter time of trying jogging with some neighbors. This would have been at the time of our daughter's wedding and, as is normal, you try to take off weight, trying to look better for the photos! I can truthfully say that this has been one of the best things I have ever done for myself. I certainly don't feel 63.

Donna has given permission to include her email address. Send your kind thoughts or questions to dhcow1@aol.com

NEXT ISSUE (Coming soon too!): 5th Anniversary means BIG announcements! Videos, consulting, website, products...Oh my! Stay tuned.

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