

# Starting Strength

## The York Barbell Series – Exhibitions IV

by  
**Bill Starr**

For most of the exhibitions that we put on, everything was routine. We'd show up, meet our sponsor or sponsors, put on the show, collect our money, and leave. But one exhibition that Bob Bednarski and I put on ended up being a nerve-racking affair. I got a call from a gentleman who wanted Barski plus one other lifter, or two, to put on a lifting demonstration as part of a mid-winter fair. He said that payment would be \$200, which piqued my interest considerably. He gave me the name of the town, approximately where it was located in western Pennsylvania, and the date and time we needed to be there.

I told him I would have to check with Barski to see if he was free on that date and get right back with him. Of course, Barski jumped at the opportunity to make a hundred bucks for some driving and lifting for 45-minutes. We pulled out our road atlas, and after a great deal of searching found the small hamlet of Clinchfield in western central Pennsylvania. The closest town of any size was Latrobe. Using the scale, we calculated that it was about 200 miles from York, about a four-hour drive.

No other lifter was interested in making that long drive, even if the money was good. I called the man from Clinchfield back and informed him that we would be there. Between my acceptance of the exhibition and the trip, Barski pestered me about taking his live-in babysitter along. I didn't like the idea at all and told him so.

"Why? We took her with us to Gettysburg College and they loved her."

"That was a fraternity rush, and of course they loved her. When you held her up over your head while balancing her with your hand on her butt and twirled her around, they got an eye-popping view of her cute little ass and bright red thong. But that was a bunch of horny college kids. This show is for families: mothers, fathers, young children. I don't think they want to see Donna's ass and underwear."

"I bet some would," he said with a smirk.

Ignoring his snide remark, I asked him, "How are we going to explain having a fifteen-year-old girl with us?"

"We'll say that she's my sister," he replied. "There's nothing wrong with that."

I tried to imagine all the ways this idea could turn sour and came up empty, but my gut feeling was that it was not a good idea. I finally relented. "Okay, she can come, but no funny business."

He just grinned and said, "Not till we finish. She'll be good company on the ride home."

Donna was the live-in babysitter for the Bednarskis. She was a fox who reminded me of a young Cher. Raven black hair that fell to the back of her knees, a tight, well-proportioned body, and

## *York Exhibitions*

a pretty face that never smiled. Her skin was the color and texture of alabaster, smooth as fine silk. I seldom heard her utter a word. It was as if she lived in her own small world. According to Barski, who knew first hand about her sexual prowess, she was a nymphomaniac – a match made in heaven, because Barski was a male version of a nympho.

We took the company van. I drove while the love doves frolicked in the back seat. It took a bit longer than we had figured since I had to travel through some formidable back roads in the country, but we still arrived ahead of schedule and found the site of the exhibition. The town we went through was obviously a coal mining town. All the buildings were black with coal dust and soot. The word that came to my mind was “bleak.”

The fair grounds where the exhibition was to take place was on the outskirts of town, in a large rectangular building. Inside we were greeted by the gentleman who had arranged the show, and he gave us a tour of the indoor winter fair. He said they put on this fair every February to break up the monotony of the long winter in the mountains. The week before, they had held a wrestling tournament and 130 youngsters had shown up. We were in the heart of Pennsylvania wrestling country.

We walked behind our sponsor, checking out the booths filled with homemade crafts, furniture, art, quilts, and, of course, lots of food. There were also a couple of small carnival-type rides. At the far end of the building, a stage had been set up and various forms of entertainment were in process: a band, followed by a church choir, and then a comedian. We were to be the last act of the night. Mr. Jackson, the name I will provide for our sponsor since I have long since forgotten his real name, had scheduled us last just in case we had trouble finding the place.

We made small talk and he accepted the fact that the pretty young girl, who looked like she had not seen daylight in a few years, was Barski’s kid sister. I told him to let us know about twenty minutes before we were to go on so we could be ready. He did and we applied our muscle rub generously. It was rather cold in the large building. We stretched, did some shadow lifting, and when the final act before us left we carried the bar and weights onto the stage. Mr. Jackson had gotten a few men to bring the equipment in from the van and place it next to it.

Since we were the main attraction for the night, everyone in the building gathered in front of the stage. It was a sizeable crowd; I guessed at least two hundred people. Most likely every citizen of the town and nearby countryside was in attendance. This was good, I thought. Barski always puts on a better show when he’s in front of a lot of people.

The crowd really got into it from the very first press and when Barski started handling some very impressive numbers, they expressed their awe and appreciation loudly. The louder they applauded, the more stoked Barski got.

I’ve noted previously that even though we had the advantage of using shaved down plates when we put on exhibitions – the 45s, 35s, and 25s, actually weighed 40, 30, and 20 pounds – we made it a rule that we would never handle more at an exhibition that we had done either in training or a contest.

When I finished my last clean and jerk with 405, 415 being my best, and reloaded for Barski’s final lift, I announced that he would attempt 450 pounds, adding that this was approximately the weight of a fully loaded freezer. A murmur went through the crowd as I told them that he was the current world record holder in this lift, having done 486. Another ripple of amazement. All eyes were on Barski, and he played it to the hilt, standing over the bar and raising both hands high over his head as if he were beseeching the gods for assistance.

The actual weight on the bar was 405, duck soup for Barski and he toyed with it, cleaning it like he had 135 on the bar, then double jerking it, and finally doing the trick that he had learned from

## *York Exhibitions*

Tommy – after his second jerk, he lowered the bar to the back of his neck and knocked out ten strong reps in the back squat and that brought down the house.

After giving countless exhibitions, we had learned that most of those in attendance didn't really fully comprehend what it took to snatch or clean and jerk a heavy barbell. When these lifts were done smoothly it appeared to be some sort of trick. But whenever one of us squatted with a considerable amount of weight, everyone understood that this was, indeed, a feat of strength.

They continued clapping even while we broke down the weights, then we bowed to our appreciative crowd and quickly began gathering our things so we could get on the road pronto. I knew that I was going to be doing all the driving. Donna came on stage and was helping Barski pack his gym bag, the type of thing a sister would do. Then I saw Barski hand her a couple of pills and swallow some himself, chasing them with some coffee from the thermos we had brought with us.

"Oh god, NO!" I muttered to myself, "they're taking downers." This wasn't good. I knew that they often used barbiturates to elevate their libidos. Which was crazy, since neither of them needed any extra help becoming hornier. Both were in a constant state of horniness.

I walked over to them and snarled, "Couldn't you have waited till we got on the road?"

Barski grinned and said, "We'll be on the road before they kick in."

"I sure hope so," I grunted, then went to help the two men who had brought the weights and bar in from the van load everything on a dolly. Then I grabbed Donna by the arm and said, "You come with me. I don't want you two together till we're outta here." She gave me her usual blank look and followed me and the two men pushing the dolly through the crowd.

A few people patted me on the back and offered to shake my hand, but it was Barski who was the star of the show and they mobbed him. Everyone wanted to shake his hand and a dozen or more wanted his autograph. When we got outside to the van, I tucked Donna in the back seat and helped the two men load up the van, so we could get the hell out of Dodge.

We almost made it.

It was a full ten minutes before Barski came out of the building, walking with our host. He had given me the check for the exhibition before the show so I hadn't bothered trying to find him in the crowd. When they approached, Barski announced, "We've been invited to go to an Italian restaurant in town."

"No, no, NO!" I objected frantically. "We need to be heading back to York. We both have to work tomorrow." My voice was shrill.

Barski was flying high from all the attention he was receiving and wanted it to continue a bit longer. "What difference is half an hour going to make?" he said to me.

Mr. Jackson, seeing my reluctance, intervened. "It's nothing fancy. Just a spaghetti dinner, a thank-you meal for the organizing committee, and we'd be honored if you three would join us."

"Shit!" I thought as I tried desperately to come up with a valid reason for skipping out of town, because I didn't want to be sitting with a group of people when those downers kicked in. This was not good, and it could end up being a total disaster.

But Mr. Johnson was insistent and Barski made it clear that he wanted to go to the restaurant, so I caved, knowing I was going to be very sorry that I did. Mr. Johnson asked Jim, one of the men who helped us with the weights, to ride with us and show us the way to the restaurant.

Fifteen minutes later, Barski, Donna, and a highly nervous me, were sitting around a long table in a narrow room in the Italian restaurant along with a dozen men and women. I tried to sit between my two companions, but Barski had guided Donna in first and they sat side by side with me next to Barski. As the guests chatted among themselves, I heard a great deal of talk about the mines, and I

## *York Exhibitions*

determined that everyone present was involved in the coal mining business in some way or the other. Plus, children and the church were freely discussed.

It was obvious that these were good, hard-working, family oriented, church-going, God-fearing folks. To confirm my assessment, there was even a piece of art on the wall across from us of the Baby Jesus in Mary's loving arms. To say that I felt like a cat in a roomful of rocking chairs would be a gross understatement. I kept a close eye on Barski, determined that he would not embarrass us, or worse.

For about ten minutes, everything was fine. Barski answered a host of questions thrown out at him, mostly by the men in attendance and his voice let me know that the pills hadn't taken effect. Then it got ugly. Donna was the instigator – I saw her slender hand slip across Barski's thigh and grab his crotch. At first, he ignored her, then in a flash the petting and groping went into high gear, like the initial moves of two teenagers in the back seat of a car at a drive-in.

I elbowed Barski in the ribs hard enough to make him grunt and stop what he was doing and turn to me. I hissed at him, "Stop that! Behave yourself!" Barski was in many ways just a big kid, so he did behave himself, but not for long because Donna was bubbling in a sexual state. She groped Barski and started kissing his neck and cheek. Barski responded. I was getting dizzy, imagining all the possible scenarios. Someone was about to stand up and shout, "I don't care if you are one of the strongest men in the world, we don't tolerate that sort of smutty behavior around here! Get out of here, and NOW!" And, "We're going to report this immoral behavior to the York Barbell Company." My mind also constructed a moving picture of the three of us being tarred and feathered and carried through the streets on a rail.

It would be bad enough if they thought that Donna was his underaged girlfriend, which was the truth, but her being his sister made what they were doing something bordering on incest, and I didn't believe this religiously-oriented assembly of people was going to allow them to continue to carry on like they were doing much longer. After all, this was a public place.

Now, here's the strangest part of the tale. While Donna and Barski were groping and fondling one another in full view of Mary, the Baby Jesus, and a room full of solid citizens, no one paid them the least bit of attention. It was as if what was transpiring between this very muscular, handsome man and this pretty, petite teenager couldn't be happening. It was just too bizarre, too surreal for their innocent minds to wrap around the fact that these two were engaging in sexual activities without the least bit of shame. It just wasn't possible.

Or they were too stunned to speak. Hell, I don't know, but I can tell you that when we finally got out of the restaurant and were safely tucked in the van, my nerves were frayed to the breaking point. I lifted a prayer of gratitude to Mary and Baby Jesus for getting us out of that situation with our skins and sexual organs intact.

My traveling companions, of course, were totally oblivious that anything out of the ordinary had just taken place. Once they got settled in the back seat, they picked up on what they had started in the restaurant, but with more intensity. I knew I would be wasting my breath by chastising them so I didn't bother. What I did do was keep my foot on the accelerator for about a half an hour, just in case someone at the restaurant decided to sic the law on us.

Needless to add, I never agreed to take Donna along to another exhibition.

---

[Starting Strength](#) : [Resources](#) : [Articles](#) : [Forums](#) : [Discuss This Article](#)