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Fitness: Motivation



Fisherman's Fitness Tale

Hooked

This Massachusetts fisherman started exercising -- and couldn't stop. Now that he's back in shape, he's trying to save the Atlantic Ocean, too

Reported by: Bob Drury, Photographs by: Corey Arnold

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Must a man save himself in order to save an ocean? Perhaps not, but it's a start.

A little over 3 years ago, 38-year-old Paul Parker returned from a day of long-lining, unloaded his catch at the pier at Chatham, Massachusetts, and headed to a nearby tavern for a dinner of fried clams and fish and chips. He washed it down with several pints of stout. During the meal a friend, a fellow commercial fisherman built like a sandbag, approached him. The man wore a huge grin and carried a magazine. It was the latest issue of *Cape Cod Life*. A waist-length photograph of Parker graced the cover; he was leaning against a piling staring pensively at the camera, clad in a red cap and an orange slicker.

He looked like the offspring of Blackbeard and Mrs. Paul.

The publication had named Parker, now director of the Cape Cod Fisheries Trust, one of the Cape's 400 "finest," for his work as an environmentalist and advocate for reform of the commercial fishing industry.

"Parker's organization, made up of commercial fishermen and concerned local citizens," the article noted, "plotted an unexpected course: push for conservation of marine resources as a way of safeguarding the industry."

Parker ignored the article and instead stared at himself on the cover. He had only one thought: *Thar she blows*.

TODAY I MEET PARKER at the very same dockside tavern, where he is sipping sparkling water. "I was happy about the recognition for our association and what it could mean for the New England fisheries," he says. "But I was not happy about the way I looked. I'm a big guy, but still."

Actually, as I stare at the old photo I don't think the guy looks half bad. Big, for sure, at 225 pounds. But Parker is 6 foot 3. And he's a commercial fisherman, for goodness' sake. The rigors of the profession mandate that they breed big.

However, Parker has a family history of **high cholesterol** and **heart disease**. His paternal grandfather died young of a heart attack, and his father, still living, is on heart and **cholesterol** medications.

Parker is certainly not stupid; he has a bachelor's in biology from Cornell and a master's in coastal environment management from Duke. But like so many American men, he just hadn't been paying much attention to his health. "I grew up with a 1980s, Schwarzenegger-style gym routine -- minus the **supplements**, of course. Lift, lift, lift. All the emphasis was on trying to be big. I played hockey through high school, and hockey meant bulky and beefy."

But after seeing himself on the magazine cover, Parker scheduled a medical appointment. He was aghast at the

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results: His **cholesterol** was near 320.

"The doctor wanted to put me on medication. But I said, 'Whoa. Isn't there any alternative here?' I just felt that jumping on meds was the easy way out. So he gave me instructions on modifying my diet. No more drinking except for the occasional glass of wine. More fish, even though I already ate a lot. More vegetables, smaller meals more often, no fried foods. I carved out a new exercise routine. Running. Bicycling. Stressing flexibility and stretching; focusing less on the big weights and low reps. I started looking at the **fitness** trends, and I realized I was behind by at least a decade.

"And, finally, yoga. Can't say enough about what yoga has done for me. It keeps me going."

THE NEXT MORNING, Parker folds his now-lean frame into a seat at a shiny mahogany table in a conference room in West Yarmouth, Massachusetts. It's the kind of day when he should be out on the water, fishing for haddock, stirring the sand for clams, jigging for cod.

Instead, he's making a pitch. It's a subtle pitch, not a hard sell. He's seeking a donation toward the \$10 million he hopes to raise to buy more commercial fishing permits.






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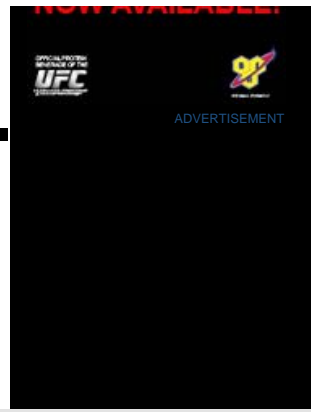
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