

MIKE JENKINS (1982-2013)

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A STRONGMAN

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The morning of Thanksgiving, 28 November 2013, Keri Sue Jenkins posted the following message on Facebook about her 31-year-old husband Mike Jenkins, winner of the 2012 Arnold Strongman Classic and one of the elites participating in the 2013 World's Strongest Man (WSM) contest: "It's with a heavy, heavy heart and great sadness that I want to let you all know that my best friend, my husband, my everything, Mike Jenkins, went to heaven this morning. Please keep us all in your prayers. I will update as I know more." Many of the first responses were incredulous. How could a strength athlete at the top of his game possibly die so prematurely? Rumors flew that it must have been a car accident that took his life. Some posts asked about the possible influence of steroids or other drugs. Many expressed the belief that Jenkins's young, well-developed body could not have failed him. Keri responded by informing Facebook friends that he died in his sleep with little warning of trouble the night before. She told me later that her husband was not aware of major cardiac problems and in fact was given "a clean bill of health" after a cardio workup a few months before. The cardiologist, upon referral from a primary care physician after Mike's return in late August 2013 from the World's Strongest Man contest in China, noted from the results of an echocardiogram that Mike's heart was enlarged, but not enough to be of concern, considering his hefty size and athletic profession. He reported

Mike's blood pressure at 122 over 80, numbers within a reasonable range.¹

Keri did not treat as unusual Mike's expressions of fatigue and soreness the week before Thanksgiving. After all, he had begun training for the 2014 Arnold



Mike Jenkins' ready smile and quick wit helped make the winner of the 2012 Arnold Strongman Classic a beloved figure in the sport of Strongman. *Photo by Jan Todd*

Strongman Classic and followed a tough regimen characteristic of Strongman workouts, in addition to getting up in pre-dawn hours to oversee his gym, CrossFit Gamma, in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The fact that he "was only deadlifting 700 pounds because of the way he felt," according to Keri, did not send up red flags because of the presumption that he was working his way up to his goal of 900-pound deadlifts.² His family hoped that more restful sleep would alleviate his fatigue. (They knew that he had been diagnosed with sleep apnea and that his CPAP [continuous positive airway pressure] appliance had not arrived before Thanksgiving.) It was also not unusual for him to complain of lung congestion, which can also be caused

by cardiac problems. The attending coroner later commented, however, that the appliance "would not have made a difference" in preventing his death.³

Between 3:30 a.m. and 4 a.m. on Thanksgiving morning, Mike's snoring, attributable to his constricted airways, woke Keri and then a short time later she heard a loud thump on the floor. She arose from the bed and turned on the bathroom light. She found Mike lying face down on the floor next to the bed, still snoring. Alarmed, she yelled his name but he did not respond. At that point she called 911 for help and the responder instructed her to roll Mike onto his back and start cardiopulmonary

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resuscitation (CPR). She applied this procedure until Emergency Medical Service (EMS) arrived. Medics found Mike in ventricular fibrillation, a condition in which there is uncoordinated contraction of the cardiac muscle of the ventricles in the heart, making them quiver rather than contract properly. The medics defibrillated him twice and gave him six epinephrine doses, a standard of care in cardiac arrest cases, before reaching the hospital.⁴ When the ambulance arrived at Hershey Medical Center, a few minutes' drive from their home, Mike was asystole, more popularly known as flat-lined, a state of lacking any cardiac output or blood flow. He was pronounced dead at 4:35 a.m.

Because of the unusual nature of the case the Dauphin County Coroner, Graham Hetrick, decided to conduct extra laboratory tests and make an assessment of the circumstances of Jenkins' death. Seven months passed, during which the public rumor mill increased in intensity. At the end of that period Hetrick publicly discussed the postmortem report at a press conference on 6 June 2014.⁵ Hetrick explained that completion of the report was delayed by the wait for specialized testing by external laboratories of the anabolic steroids in Jenkins' body (Vials collected from his bathroom were sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.) as well as to the Dauphin County District Attorney's Office regarding legal implications.

Hetrick listed the cause of death as "complications of cardiomyopathy," popularly known as an enlarged heart, and the manner of death as accidental. He determined the mechanism of death to be a combination of cardiac dysrhythmia and heart failure.⁶ In most cases of cardiomyopathy, the heart muscle thickens or stiffens and impedes the flow of blood out of the heart. The forensic analysis of Jenkins' body showed that his heart muscles had abnormal contraction bands and wavy fibers accompanied by small-vessel disease. An average-sized male heart weighs, according to Hetrick, between 280 and 400 grams; Jenkins' was 844 grams. According to the coroner, Mike's cardiomyopathy induced pulmonary edema and congestion in his lungs along with liver congestion and autolysis (also known as self-digestion, in which cells are destroyed through the action of the organ's own enzymes).

Other organs in Jenkins' body showed signs of damage besides the heart. Jenkins' enlarged liver weighed 3972 grams, more than twice the average weight of men considered healthy.⁷ The spleen, which

acts as a blood filter, was also enlarged, at 680 grams, with marked congestive changes suggesting a response to hypertension. To be sure, spleen weight is correlated to height and bodyweight, but even at Jenkins' relatively large size, his spleen might have been expected to be between 300 and 400 grams—not 680 grams.⁸ An average kidney weighs between 120 and 140 grams; the coroner measured Jenkins' kidneys as 372 and 388 grams, respectively.⁹

In light of Jenkins' case of multiple significantly enlarged organs, Coroner Hetrick introduced the possible relationship of an enlarged heart as a result of steroid use to the problem of a swollen, fatty liver often seen among massive strength athletes.¹⁰ Many strength athletes have enlarged hearts, the coroner acknowledged, but his opinion was that lifting alone did not explain Mike's cardiomyopathy. His report flatly stated that "the cardiomyopathy is due to anabolic steroid abuse" and pointed out that this abuse was "longstanding in keeping with the heart abnormalities."¹¹ Keri Jenkins was aware of her husband's steroid use but she reported that Mike had told her that his regimen was less than that of other competitors (She described his steroid use to the deputy coroner as "a little.") and Mike, in my interview with him in September 2013, also maintained that to be the case, especially considering his expressed concern about having to compete against other top-tier strongmen.

Even before the coroner's report blaming Jenkins' death on steroid use had been released, some politicians had begun to call for screening at Strongman contests. In March 2014, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives passed House Resolution 626, originally introduced by Joe Hackett (R-Delaware) and later backed by 28 co-sponsors, citing Jenkins' death. Hackett, formerly director of the Swarthmorewood Athletic Association, condemned the use of performance-enhancing drugs by athletes and rebuked organizations that he said encouraged strength athletes to use these drugs. Specifically, the resolution claimed that "doping" is "rampant among some professional athletes, especially those participating in strongman competitions such as 'World's Strongest Man,' 'The Arnold,' and 'America's Strongest Man.'"¹² To be sure, the resolution was a non-binding piece of legislation that did not prohibit the conduct of World's Strongest Man events, but the story was picked up in major outlets such as *Forbes* and caused a buzz on the Internet in regard to the legitimacy of Strongman as a sport.¹³

Keri Jenkins provided the EMS team several vials of medicine from Mike's bathroom, and she told the team that they were substances he used. According to laboratory tests, the vials contained testosterone propionate (an injectable, fast-acting steroid producing rapid gains in size and strength), testosterone cypionate (an injectable, long-acting steroid for gaining muscle mass and strength), boldenone undecylenate (also known by the brand name Equipoise, a veterinary injectable steroid with strong anabolic and moderately androgenic properties), and Pentosan (also known by the brand name Elmiron used to relieve bladder pain in humans related to interstitial cystitis, a bladder disorder of which the coroner found no evidence). The first three are known as anabolic steroids; testosterone is the parent hormone which is modified by adding an ester (organic compounds formed by the condensation of an alcohol and an acid). The fourth medication is classed as a heparin used principally in medicine to induce anticoagulation and prevent fat buildup within blood vessels. The Pentosan (liquid) that Mike had was designed for use in horses rather than humans. One of the vials had inscribed on it, "For Animal Treatment Only" and the other was labeled, "HorsePreRace." In animals, it is used as a structure-modifying osteoarthritic drug. That is, it not only treats joint pain but halts the progression of arthritis by replacing lost proteoglycans from the cartilage matrix that weakens the joint's structure. There is also mention in the report of three injection sites on the buttocks, where the liquid steroids would commonly be inserted via needles. Forensic tests showed that Mike suffered hemor-

rhage in all three sites.¹⁴ Although the coroner did not specifically test for amounts of steroids in the body, he reported that "we did find evidence of steroid abuse at the scene [Jenkins' residence] and confirmed them [the drugs] to be steroids."¹⁵

The toxicology analysis for levels of compounds in Jenkins's body revealed that Mike had in his blood Theobromine, probably used as a blood vessel widener and diuretic, and Lidocaine, applied as a local anesthetic and antiarrhythmic drug. Of particular concern to the coroner, however, was 64 nanograms per milliliter of DMAA (1,3-dimethylpentylamine or 1,3-dimethylamylamine), or Methylhexanamine (also rendered in medical literature as methylhexanamine), described by Hetrick as a "workout energy supplement" that "was contributory to his overall condition at death."¹⁶ The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) noted as late as 16 July 2013, that DMAA is an ingredient found "illegally in some dietary supplements and often touted as a 'natural' stimulant." The claim to naturalness comes from the listing of geranium oil or extract as a source of methylhexanamine on dietary supplement packages, although the FDA and Health Canada disputed that assertion and reported that DMAA appears in these supplements in the form of synthetic material.¹⁷ The FDA warned that especially in combination with other ingredients such as caffeine DMAA "can be a health risk to consumers." In fact, caffeine was found in Jenkins' system, probably in response to his reported feelings of fatigue.¹⁸ The FDA cautioned that "ingestion of DMAA can elevate blood pressure and lead to cardiovascular problems ranging from shortness of breath and tightening in the chest to heart attack."¹⁹ Toxicologist Edward J. Barbieri, who reviewed Jenkins' case for National Medical Services, stopped short of linking DMAA to Jenkins' death but cautiously concluded that "although DMAA has been found to be involved in a few deaths...there is not sufficient data to associate blood or tissue concentrations with drug ranges in fatalities."²⁰ Although acknowledging that DMAA "can be involved in a death," the toxicologist pronounced that he could not "be certain that this was the situation in Mr. Jenkins' case."²¹ Coroner Hetrick's view was that DMAA in combination with caffeine "probably" caused cardiac dysrhythmia that led to cardiac failure in a heart already weakened by longstanding steroid use. With the intentionality of Jenkins' steroid use in mind, Hetrick noted that his staff "went back and forth" on whether Jenkins'



Mike poses with his wife, Keri Jenkins, after winning the 2012 Arnold Strongman Classic. *Photo by Simon Bronner*

death should be categorized as “accidental,” but went with it because of the evidence that *the addition of DMAA* contributed to his death. Another consideration for the judgment of an “accidental death,” according to Hetrick, was that Jenkins probably did not know the extent of the damage being done to his body by steroids.²²

In 2012, the FDA issued warning letters to companies notifying them that products with DMAA should be taken off the market or reformulated to remove the substance, and many complied, but the drug marketed for burning fat and building muscle is still known to be available on the Internet as a “workout drug” popular with athletes.²³ The FDA, however, did not formally recall supplements with the substance, although Health Canada banned it from all products and the U.S. Department of Defense removed it from all military exchanges worldwide.²⁴ Also in 2012, runner Claire Squires collapsed and died at the London Marathon and the coroner at the inquest stated that DMAA “on the balance of probabilities, in combination with extreme physical exertion caused acute cardiac failure.”²⁵ In 2013, the stimulant was listed in the World Anti-Doping Agency as a substance prohibited in competition.²⁶ Accordingly, American weightlifter Brian Wilhelm accepted a nine-month suspension after testing positive for the substance in a urine sample from December 2012 at the American Open Championships.²⁷ The dietary supplement also received publicity when three athletes tested positive for DMAA at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.²⁸ According to Coroner Hetrick, the supplement has an amphetamine-like effect although it is not a derivative of amphetamines.²⁹ Marketed originally by drug manufacturer Eli Lilly and Company as an inhaled decongestant pharmaceutical drug under the brand name Forthane from 1944 until 1983, when Lilly voluntarily withdrew it from the market, DMAA is classified as an indirect sympathomimetic drug, which means that it mimics sympathetic nervous system action and stimulates the heart. Athletes are therefore drawn to it to boost energy (or as a replacement for the banned substance ephedra in supplements, but in a widely reported statement in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 2012, Professor Pieter Cohen of the Harvard Medical School called for its total ban with the dire warning that it causes health problems by increasing heart rate and narrowing blood vessels which can increase blood pressure and lead to shortness of breath, tightening in the chest, and possible cardiac



Even as a young child, Mike was abnormally large and thickly-built. He weighed 225 pounds by the time he was 12 years old and was able to squat with more than 400 pounds while he was still in the sixth grade.

Photo courtesy
Kristin Poundstone

arrest.³⁰ Implying that the pronouncement of a direct link of DMAA to cardiac arrest was premature or unsubstantiated, spokespersons for the supplement industry responded that the “jury is still out” on the safety of the substance.³¹



After the news circulated of Jenkins’ death, Jan and Terry Todd announced that the 2014 Arnold Strongman Classic would be dedicated to his memory. Testimonials poured in, and I was struck by the oft-repeated observation of Mike’s kindness as well as athletic talent. His wife described him as “a gentle giant with a heart of gold” and postings by athletes and students echoed this sentiment. For example, fellow competitor Brian Shaw wrote on Keri’s Facebook page the day Jenkins died, “The Strongman community and the whole strength world lost an extremely amazing man today. I had the upmost respect for Mike not only as a competitor but also as a man. He was a truly great guy and I know he touched and inspired a countless number of people.” Tony Doherty, who interacted with many athletes in his position as president of the Australian International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness posted this comment about Mike that many viewers liked, “The nicest guy I ever met in any sport.” No wonder that the memorial shirt created for Mike Jenkins by CrossFit Gamma featured the phrase “Strongman, Warm Heart” and a visage of a smiling Jenkins bedecked with a striped, bright green bandana. His friendly manner, amazing accomplishments, devotion to charity, and gracious personality have been loudly touted in various gatherings. However, the central issue for the Iron Game is whether Jenkins’ “sudden cardiac death” was a tragic anomaly or a

warning sign. With the bodyweights of the top Strongman competitors becoming progressively heavier are there additional risks in the sport because of the supposed widespread use of strength- and muscle-building drugs as well as the absence of testing for such drugs?

On the blogosphere after Jenkins's death, followers of strength athletics remembered 6'5", 300 pound Jesse Marunde (1979-2007) who qualified at the young age of 22 for the 2002 World's Strongest Man competition in Malaysia after winning the title of Strongest Man in the West and later placed second in the 2005 World's Strongest Man competition in China. Despite his youthfulness and general fitness, Marunde collapsed and died immediately following a workout in 2007. Doctors attributed his death to hypertrophic cardiomyopathy which, unlike other forms of the ailment, is a genetic heart defect. That led to speculation as to whether Marunde's death might have been hastened by his strength training, possible use of anabolic drugs, heredity, or some combination of those factors.³² Adding to this conjecture was the tragic early deaths of many superheavyweight strength athletes over the previous two decades, including that of Marunde's fellow Strongman competitor, 6'5", 390 pound Johnny Wade Perry, Jr. (1972-2002), from Zebulon, North Carolina, who died abruptly at the age of 30 on November 21, 2002. An autopsy found that he, too, had an enlarged heart that might have contributed to his death, but the immediate cause was a cocaine overdose.³³ His heart, which weighed 620 grams, raised speculation about a linkage to long-term steroid use. The Chief State Medical Examiner Dr. John Butts commented that "even though he's a big fellow, that's [his heart size] too big."³⁴ (Mike Jenkins' heart weighed 844 grams.)

Public health officials referred at the time of Marunde's death to the growing problem of "sudden cardiac death" among young athletes, young being defined as under-35 years of age, usually caused by ventricular arrhythmias.³⁵ In contrast to the classic "heart attack" in older adults signaled by chest pain and shortness of breath, many young athletes in the pattern of sudden cardiac death or ventricular fibrillation do not complain of acute pain or pronounced symptoms. In cases of sudden cardiac death, unlike classic heart attacks, patients do not respond normally to portable defibrillators. Although some trainers call for regular electrocardiography to screen for problems, the American Heart Association discouraged such tests because of a high false positive

result. Indeed medical researchers Jonathan Drezner and Karim Khan wrote in the *British Medical Journal* that "no study monitoring pre-participation evaluation based on history and physical exam can prevent or detect athletes at risk for sudden death."³⁶

To be sure, sudden cardiac death among young athletes is still considered a rare occurrence when compared to the number of victims of cardiac arrest, especially the kind due to coronary artery atheroma and ventricular hypertrophy. Premature death in the sports world, however, especially the deaths of young adults who appear to the public to be highly developed, healthy athletes, draws media attention. Mike Jenkins's sudden death triggered a public response to Strongman that was even greater than it was for the passing of Marunde and Perry. The global, instantaneous communication of social media certainly was a factor, but so was Jenkins' 2012 victory in the well-known Arnold Strongman Classic, and the charisma that Jenkins exuded in the sport. *Musclemag* editorialized, for example, that "Perhaps no other strongman champion has done as much as Jenkins to positively promote the sport, give back to the fans and use his fame and influence to help others."³⁷ When the press moved beyond memorials in Jenkins' case to find research on scientific studies of cardiac issues by strongmen, however, little came to light.

Even so, one scientific treatise included Strongman contestants, by a team of six researchers led by Tomas Venckunas of the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education found that strength athletes had thicker heart walls and left ventricular diameters than marathoners and a control group of exercising individuals in sedentary occupations. The study concluded that "athletes who are seriously engaged in Strongman sports may demand greater attention as an extreme group of athletic individuals with regard to cardiovascular disease risk."³⁸ The researchers recommended inclusion of endurance training to complement strength training. One factor in the finding of the deterioration of cardiovascular fitness and health, according to the researchers, was the body mass index of the Strongman competitors compared to marathoners and sedentary athletes. Strongmen are usually classified as obese and as having lower aerobic capacity. Thus, the study concluded, "Strongmen are individuals to which consideration of primary prevention from chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease, type-2 diabetes, and stroke is important."³⁹ But the researchers stopped short of making a correlation of

strength athletics with sudden cardiac death. Many previous studies had focused on the muscular-skeletal injuries of Strongman competitors and not the effect of training on internal organs.

Two years later, research conducted with a larger sample of individuals than in Venckunas' study—this one by lead author Harrison Pope of the Harvard Medical School—reported medical problems with young weight trainers stemming from “performance-enhancing drugs” (PEDs), defined as promyogenic (anabolic) drugs that increase muscle mass or reduce fat mass. According to Pope's team, the most prevalent drugs in this category are anabolic-androgenic steroids, which they linked to severe effects of cardiomyopathy and dyslipidemia (an abnormal amount of lipids in the blood). The team suggested that public health problems are most pronounced among “nonathlete weightlifters” (sometimes referred to as “recreational bodybuilders”), who tend to focus on personal appearance rather than professional contests of strength or muscular development.⁴⁰ These weight trainers had histories of sustained, addictive use of PEDs over a longer period than the competitive athletes and they were prone to adverse effects of combining PEDs with non-steroid anti-inflammatory drugs and opiates. The research team suggested that elite athletes sometimes mitigated adverse effects by withdrawing from PED use in intervals between contests and avoided counter-indications with other drugs. The researchers could not claim, however, that systematic studies of the medical consequences of illicit PED use either had been done or would be done in the future. Although the lack of such studies seems confusing, it is because the medical ethics committees overseeing research studies of this sort will not allow studies which could themselves be harmful to the research subjects or involve illegal substances. Although noting the pervasiveness of PEDs in the strength world and the evolving patterns of PED use in the general adult population that they correlated with cardiovascular and metabolic problems, the researchers regretted that without systematic studies, “The mechanisms by which PEDs exert their adverse health effects remain poorly understood.”⁴¹ These mechanisms include the kinds of bodily compositions of individuals who might be more prone to sudden cardiac death. Coroner Hetrick also commented that even if Jenkins had stopped lifting and using steroids, he would have already suffered non-reversible heart damage. This does not mean, however, that he would not have been able to extend his

life had he significantly reduced his bodyweight, stopped using the many performance-enhancing drugs he was using, and adopted an exercise program which included cardiovascular training.

The recommendations of studies from research teams led by Vaenckunas and Pope echo the warnings of Terry Todd, Director of the H.J. Lucher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, who in 1994 bemoaned the premature deaths from “natural causes,” which indeed might have included cardiomyopathy, of superheavyweight powerlifter Matt Dimel at the age of 33 and Strongman competitor Jon Pall Sigmarsson at 32. Todd editorialized that the popular combination of overeating and steroid use put strength athletes at higher risk of premature death than other athletes. A reason for concern is that strongmen—convinced of their fitness, or “being in shape”—can succumb without warning. However, reports of sudden cardiac death are much more pronounced among men than women. Reports from medical authorities indicate that like Jenkins, the cohort of strength athletes who have died prematurely from “natural causes” often passed physical exams with flying colors, only to collapse suddenly later. The report in the *British Medical Journal*, for example, noted that strength athletes typically experienced their first signs of cardiovascular problems at the moment of death.⁴²

Then again, athletes might confuse feelings of exhaustion or light-headedness that indicate problems of cardiac relaxation with the after-effects of weight training. Jim Murphy had won three straight Massachusetts State Strongman championships by the age of 25 when he checked himself into a hospital after feeling dizzy while helping a friend carry a small television set, which was much lighter than anything he lifted in the gym. Murphy became worried since he had reportedly once pulled a 65,000-pound dump truck and completed an 895-pound deadlift. Doctors offered a diagnosis of cardiomyopathy that probably led to the formation of a blood clot in his heart. He should have died, they told him, because his heart was only pumping eight percent of his blood. Perhaps his relatively slight size of standing 5 feet 11 inches and weighing 215 pounds—compared to other Strongman giants such as Brian Shaw (6 feet 8 inches and 440 pounds)—was a factor in his survival. In any case, Murphy received a heart transplant, and despite warnings against strength training, resumed lifting three months later and placed fifth in the New Hampshire Strongest Man contest three months after



Mike excelled at the timber carry event at the Arnold Classic and placed second in 2011—his first year in the contest—with a time of 10.6 seconds. The timber frame weighed approximately 1030 pounds that year but the athletes were allowed to wear straps. In 2012, the timber frame weighed “only” 880 pounds but the men were not able to wear straps. The lack of straps was no trouble for Mike, who won the event that year, carrying the cumbersome timber frame up the ramp in an astonishing 7.42 seconds.

that.⁴³

Jenkins was not so lucky. His biggest physical worries, so he said, had been muscular-skeletal injuries to his back, knee, and shoulder. He also had an unusual tendency to perspire heavily and he sometimes even wore shorts and sandals in winter, but he did not connect these characteristics to heart problems. As for his training, he espoused loaded movements such as the farmer’s walk for cardio fitness and taking days off between workouts for recovery. Like many strength athletes, he gave particular attention to his food intake. When he began training on Strongman events, he weighed around 370 pounds and had bulked up to 400 pounds before the 2013 World’s Strongest Man contest in Sanya, China. He then dropped to 360 pounds after getting flu-like symptoms. With the encouragement of his wife Keri, who had competed in fitness and bikini contests, Jenkins ate carefully and described his nutrition as “clean.”⁴⁴ He ate between five and seven meals during the day, which were relatively low in carbohydrates. He also used protein powder and downed protein shakes with peanut butter and lean protein meals (At the last workout I attended with him, he offered me elk meat, touted as being nat-

urally low in fat, low in cholesterol, and high in protein.)⁴⁵

Mike turned professional in 2011, and his star rose quickly before being extinguished. Physical educator Kristin Poundstone, long-time observer of Strongman contests including those involving her competitor-husband Derek Poundstone, commented to me after Jenkins’ death, “With the little time he was here he made one of the biggest breakthroughs in strength history.” *Milo*, a magazine devoted to strength athletics, called him the competitor who took “strongman by storm.”⁴⁶ Even if he did not have a lengthy career in Strongman, Jenkins managed, Alex Zakrzewski of *MuscleMag* reflected, to

Photo by Simon Bronner

leave an “indelible mark . . . on both the sport of strongman competition and physical culture.”⁴⁷

Jenkins was born 3 November 1982, in Taylorsville, Carroll County, near Westminster, Maryland. He described the location as “being out in the country,” roughly equidistant from Baltimore to the southeast and York, “MuscleTown, USA,” to the northeast. He emphasized that living where he did exposed him to a variety of physical activities. He recalled “growing up on a dirt road,” and listed his favorite activities as fishing, riding bicycles, and playing sports. Jenkins remembered always being bigger than his fellow students, and certainly larger than his parents, through his schooldays. Remarkably, he hit the 225 pound mark before he turned twelve years old, which puts him in the same rare category as 6’3”, 400 pound WWE wrestler Mark Henry, who won the inaugural Arnold Strongman Classic in 2002, and weighed 220 when he was only ten. As a high school freshman, Mike weighed over 300 pounds and grew to 6’3”. He began weight training in middle school and turned heads by bench pressing 315 pounds and back squatting over 400 pounds as a sixth grader. He wanted to play pee-wee football but he could not

because he exceeded its size limits. He turned to soccer, basketball, and lacrosse and played football at South Carroll High School, from which he graduated in 2000. After attending Kent State University in Ohio for a year on a football scholarship, he transferred to James Madison University (JMU) in Harrisonburg, Virginia, a Division I (Football Championship Subdivision) school. He was a starting offensive lineman weighing in at 290 pounds on JMU's national championship team in 2004. Deeply involved in athletics, he stayed on campus at JMU to receive his M.A. in Athletic Administration in 2005. An early influence on his weight training was JMU's strength coach Jim Durning, who moved on in 2012 to the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. Jenkins credits Durning for giving him an appreciation of bodily development and strength training. Although the entire team did weight training, Jenkins recalls that he was among a handful of players who, in his words, "were really into it." He attributed this training to his athletic development. In his words, "I went into JMU weighing about 275 pounds, super lean, I left about 300 and still around 8% bodyfat, I looked awesome! I still use a lot of the same methods we did at JMU in my training today, tailored to my Strongman needs obviously...I would go get in extra workouts away from the team facility."⁴⁸

Jenkins had a brief stint in professional arena football, playing for the Georgia Force (Arena Football League) in suburban Atlanta. After his release, he returned to Maryland to work as athletics director for Silver Oak Academy, a high school for youth offenders in Keymar. He continued his weight training, but he recalls that without sports competition in his life, he felt aimless. He needed a goal to drive him to keep up his regimen, he said. Remembering watching World's Strongest Man competitions on television, he took his mother on Mother's Day in 2007 to a local Strongman contest to see the competition up close and consider it as a new direction to get back into competition. Training at home was challenging, as Jenkins recalled: "Mom and dad weren't too keen on having 1000 pound tires in the driveway and neighbors always asked me if I needed help pushing and pulling trucks up and down the road, always driving away shaking their heads wondering why the hell I am pushing a perfectly good truck."⁴⁹

A relative unknown in the strength community of powerlifting and Strongman, Mike entered the Maryland's Strongest Man contest in August of 2007 and—at

325-pounds—the ex-football player in the bright yellow shorts turned heads by winning. The victory qualified him for Nationals in Las Vegas. Up against seasoned men who had trained longer than he had, Mike placed sixth out of approximately 100 competitors and, as he said, "has been hooked ever since."

He improved with more focused Strongman preparation to take second place at the 2009 North American Strongman National Championships in New Orleans. He especially excelled at the farmer's walk and yoke carry, but realized that he needed to build up his deadlift numbers. He applied his background in soccer and football, he said, to farmer's walk and yoke carry, which he categorized as Strongman "moving events." His weekly routine consisted of overhead pressing on the first day, followed by deadlifts and accessory movements on the second day. After a day of recovery that could involve massage and chiropractic care, he devoted himself to squats on the fourth day. He gave himself another day of recovery following that and concentrated on event work such as the Atlas stones and the farmer's walk on the sixth day. He gave himself at least one day a week away from training.

In 2010, he entered the first Arnold Amateur Strongman contest in a crowded field and took first, placing ahead of former professional baseball player Mike Caruso and winning the Press Medley. The victory earned him a pro card and an invitation to the following year's Arnold Strongman Classic. By the time the 2011 Arnold rolled around, Jenkins had made a move to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to be with Keri, who taught at Lower Dauphin High School. He worked at an alternative school, again guiding at-risk youth, and trained in local gyms, including Gold's Gym in Hershey.

When Jenkins walked out on the Arnold stage, the announcer commented that as the first winner of the Arnold Amateur Strongman contest he would have to prove himself against more senior contestants such as Brian Shaw, Žydrūnas Savickas, Mark Felix, Terry Hollands, Nick Best, and Mikhail Koklyaev. Jenkins certainly did that with his performance on the timber carry, which pushed him up the rankings among the leaders. The event involves lifting a frame of barn timbers weighing approximately 1000 pounds and carrying it up a ramp in the best time. Jenkins stood out not only because of triumphing over former winners of the Arnold Strongman Classic but also because of his neon-colored sneakers and the bright bandana he wrapped

around his shaven head. They became his signature fashion statements, which with his characteristic humor were intended, in his words, to “have some fun out there.” He sped up the ramp with the timber frame in 10.6 seconds, only .42 seconds behind leader Brian Shaw. He also finished just below Shaw in the Manhood Stones by hoisting a 535-pound stone over a 48-inch bar twice in 48.19 seconds, to Shaw’s four reps in 53.13 seconds. He rejoined the frontrunners, however, when he stepped on the Veterans’ Auditorium stage to a full house on the final evening of the Strongman Classic. The culminating event was the classic strength test of lifting the “Circus Dumbbell.” The objective was to lift the 242-pound weight with its daunting three-inch-thick handle with one hand straight up above the head the most times within 90 seconds. (Lifters use two hands to get the dumbbell to the shoulder on each repetition, but then must release one hand for the overhead portion of the lift.) Its visual appeal was not only its demonstration of arm and shoulder strength but also the quick lifting thrusts signifying power, much as one would drive a clenched fist into the air. In a remarkable display, Jenkins bested leader Brian Shaw with eight lifts and to the amazement of the crowd the newcomer took second place overall in the Arnold Strongman Classic, ahead of six-time Arnold champion Žydrūnas Savickas. Jenkins was delighted by his finish, and referred to the experience as living out a dream. Mike mentioned to me that “I think I not only shocked the audience but I also shocked myself.” The achievement motivated him to push harder to reach the top the following year. He told Phil Burgess, host of World Wide Strength Radio, “In five years I would like to have a few more Arnold titles and some World’s Strongest Man titles as well. I want to be remembered as one of the best ever, that’s what drives me to train.”⁵⁰

Jenkins had caused a stir in the strength world with his finish at the 2011 Arnold Strongman Classic but still needed to show that he was not a flash in the pan. In early August he flew to Poland for Giants Live to qualify for the World’s Strongest Man competition. There, Jenkins placed just behind home-grown Polish Strongman Krzysztof Radzikowski, who went on to win the World Strongman Federation’s World Strongman Championships in 2012. Jenkins’ qualification for the 2011 World’s Strongest Man contest in Wingate, North Carolina, broadcast by ESPN television and held six months after the Arnold, added drama to the event with a matchup again with Brian Shaw and Žydrūnas Savickas,

neither of whom had been at the Giants Live contest. It also marked the return of Derek Poundstone, who had been a late scratch from the previous Arnold because of a back injury. After qualifying for the final by coming in second to Savickas in his heat, Jenkins demonstrated that he was a force to be reckoned with by winning the first two events—steel frame carry and giant tire walk. He had to withdraw, however, after suffering debilitating back spasms and so placed eighth overall out of ten finalists. The apparently indefatigable Shaw and Savickas placed first and second, respectively.

Jenkins suffered a setback with his back injury, but vowed to return in top form by the time of the next Arnold Strongman Classic on March 2-3, 2012. Previous champions Shaw, Savickas, and Poundstone would be back along with formidable competitors Travis Ortmeier, Mikhail Koklyaev, Mike Burke, Laurence Shahlaei, Terry Hollands, and Hafþór Júlíus Björnsson. Savickas jumped out to an early lead by lifting a record-setting four repetitions with Apollon’s Wheels loaded to 459 pounds. Jenkins managed two repetitions, tying him with Derek Poundstone and Mikhail Koklyaev in third place. Jenkins kept pace with the leaders by being the only Strongman able to lift the massive Austrian Oak—a log weighing 456 pounds (207 kilos)—above his head twice and winning the Circus Dumbbell event with seven repetitions (The weight had been increased to 255 pounds for the 2012 event.). Savickas appeared intent on separating himself from the pack going into the final event after setting a new Arnold record of 1117 (507 kilos) pounds in the Hummer tire deadlift. But Jenkins ultimately caught Savickas and everyone else in the final event—the timber carry—and triumphed on the Veterans Auditorium stage with a world’s record time of 7.42 seconds, beating out Derek Poundstone by .14 seconds and one point overall (Savickas and Shaw came in third and fourth with scores of 36 seconds and 36.5 seconds, respectively).

Jenkins followed his victory two weeks later with a trip to Australia to compete in the Giants Live Strongman contest at the FitX Sport and Fitness Expo. He continued his dominance with victories in the Viking Press by amassing 18 repetitions of the 331-pound (150 kilos) apparatus. He also set a world record with a 2500 pound hip lift (1134 kilos) putting him ahead of fellow Americans Nick Best and Mike Burke and qualifying him for the World’s Strongest Man contest. With his travels to attend Strongman events around the world,

Jenkins was forced to quit his job in an alternative school, but he stayed involved with youth by establishing Catalyst Athletics to coach aspiring athletes.

After his victory at the Arnold, Jenkins was gaining notice from the international press. He was featured in spreads in muscle magazines, did interviews for radio and television shows, picked up the sponsorship of Maximum Human Performance (MHP) supplements, and his image lifting the massive Austrian Oak was emblazoned on Rogue Fitness t-shirts. Journalists often focused on his meteoric rise in the strength world and his impressive size; Phil Burgess referred to him as a “Run-away Juggernaut” and weightlifting journalist Thom Van Vleck called him a “modern day giant.”⁵¹ Often there was surprise by some interviewers that he had as much rest in his routine as he claimed, because they expected his ascendancy to be a result of long, intensive training. His large body did not display the well chiseled muscular profile of a bodybuilder but he obviously possessed a great deal of muscle mass and the strength that usually goes with it. He liked to underscore his foot speed and agility, born of his childhood back in the country and his exploits on the football field. Brandishing a wry smile, Mohawk haircut, and exercise outfits with outlandish colors, he was a photogenic, memorable character.

Jenkins rounded out a busy March 2012 by marrying his sweetheart, Keri Sue Ricker, in Hershey, Pennsylvania, on the 24th of the month and laying down plans to live their dream of opening a CrossFit gym where he could train and conduct workshops for aspiring strongmen. He also became an athletic instructor and volunteer coach for the Milton Hershey School, a boarding school established by Milton Hershey for disadvantaged youth. Professionally, he had his sights set on the World’s Strongest Man competition in September. He was, in the words of Brian Shaw, “the man to watch” in 2012 and he went into the World’s Strongest Man in Los Angeles as one of the favorites. After placing second in his heat behind Björnsson, in the finals he again faced Savickas and Shaw as well as Radzikowski, who had bested him in Giants Live Poland. Edging closer to the super-weight barrier of 500 pounds in the log lift, Savickas set the pace with a 485-pound (220 kilos) record lift. Jenkins barely missed at the same weight, and felt dejected after having lost his footing with time running out. Savickas’ countryman Vytautas Lalas made news by leading after the first day with strong finishes in the bus pull and yoke race. Lalas held his lead with a record number of repeti-

tions on the squat lift of 700 pounds (318 kilos). Jenkins kept pace in second but his knee was visibly bothering him, perhaps from his log lift, or lingering consequences from playing football and suffering medial collateral ligament tears on his knee. The Lithuanians Savickas and Lalas placed first and second, respectively. Jenkins end-



Jenkins had terrific overhead pressing strength and won the Circus Dumbbell event at the Arnold Classic in 2012 by raising the 255-pound, thick-handled implement seven times, more than anyone else in the contest that year. *Photo by Jan Todd*

ed up fifth overall, a point and a half behind Brian Shaw and six points ahead of Radzikowski. Björnsson, who had been ahead of Jenkins in his heat, placed third.

Even so, Jenkins was upbeat after the WSM and looking ahead to defending his Arnold title. Sixteen days after the 2012 WSM was over, he posted the message, “Road to the 2013 Arnold Classic has begun” with his first heavy lifting since returning from Los Angeles (17 October 2012). His knee continued to bother him, however, and he went in for arthroscopic surgery in December, forcing him

out of the Arnold competition for 2013. Still, he attended the event and added color commentary to the proceedings from the stage, in addition to writing Strongman articles for *Muscle Magazine*.⁵²

Looking to return to competition, Jenkins prepared for the 2013 World’s Strongest Man contest in Sanya, China, scheduled for August. In the finals, he opened strong by winning the frame carry but felt the effects of a stomach and respiratory bug exacerbated by dehydration from the extreme heat and humidity. He fell back to fifth in his normally favored events of the truck pull and yoke. He mustered his strength, however, to climb into third place behind the familiar names of Shaw and Savickas with respectable showings in the deadlift and overhead medley. After an impressive win with a time of 23.31 seconds in the Atlas Stones, Björnsson moved ahead of Jenkins, who then took the fourth spot overall. When I interviewed Jenkins in September back in Hershey, he was still feeling what he believed to be the effects of the illness contracted in China more than a month before. He sounded congested and had dropped forty pounds. He reflected that, considering his condition at the WSM, he was happy with his finish, but he was looking forward to a comeback at the Arnold in 2014 and he held high hopes for a World’s Strongest Man title in his future. Mike understood his limitations and the possibility of injury as he aged, and he predicted no more



Farewell from a Champion. Mike was a great showman on-stage and always waved to the crowd after finishing an event.

Photo by Jan Todd

than five more years of participation in professional Strongman competition. “What do you want to do then?” I asked. His thoughtful answer indicated that he wanted to make his gym a success, continue to mentor youth and, most of all, it seemed to me, devote himself to his family. Recognizing the toll that Strongman was taking on his body, he did not want to be on the road chasing titles in his forties. He knew that his giant frame and feats of strength drew expectations of prolonged competition but he said that, ultimately, he wanted “to be seen just like anyone else—with a family, interests, and life.”

A special event in Mike Jenkins’s life was the grand opening of his gym CrossFit Gamma on 7 September 2013. He sponsored a fitness contest that day and devoted funds raised there to benefit a local young mother combating ovarian cancer. T-shirts were made up that featured an image of Mike with kettlebells above the words “smashing cancer.” On the back was a pair of angel wings with a ribbon imprint representing the battle against cancer. The highlight of the event was his pulling of a fire truck loaned by the Hershey Fire Department. Tears filled many eyes as he presented the woman with a check for \$8,000. It would not be Mike’s last expression of selfless devotion to the welfare of others. For example, he pulled a bus for a fundraiser, “Barbells for Boobs,” that paid for breast cancer detection services, and he participated in a “Hero WOD” for fallen fire-

fighters who battled blazes in Arizona earlier during the summer. His wife Keri commented, “I’m proud to know that he used his achievements to create awareness for causes he felt passionate about and always helping the ‘underdog.’”

I attended subsequent workouts on the Strongman Wednesdays Mike held in the gym together with Keri. He worked participants through tire flips, keg carries, and Atlas stones, always with a touch of humor, often decked out in neon green print bandana and pink and purple Converse sneakers to go with his iconoclastic haircut. A memorable line of his after hearing someone claim that Strongman was too hard was, “if it didn’t hurt, it would be Zumba!” He wanted participants to know he was behind them. His refrains of “don’t quit” and “you can do it!” urged on the athletes. His charisma was evident; the sight of 20 persons coming out at 6 a.m. for Strongman work was due largely to the pull of his personality. On October 26, he held a clinic for aspiring Strongman contest competitors and announced he was ready to ramp up his workouts for the Arnold. No mention, of course, was made of steroids or supplements. On the eve of Thanksgiving—his last—Mike posted a picture of the “workout of the day” with kegs and stones.



When Mike Jenkins’ face came on the giant screen at the Arnold Strongman Classic stage and the announcement was made that the event was dedicated to his memory, I could tell that he had earned admiration and emotion from fellow strongmen as well as fans. A buzz could be heard onstage and in the wings that Mike was too generous, too kind, too talented to have left this world so soon. Indeed, he passed away prematurely, and the circumstances of his sudden departure raised still unanswered questions about the limitations of the body and the risks that competitors take to triumph at the ultimate levels of strength athletics.

Two days after CBS Sports again televised the WSM contest from China, featuring Mike Jenkins, Coroner Hetrick at his press conference reflected that Jenkins’ death should be a signal to begin screening athletes in Strongman contests. He observed that gym members across the country have a lively, secretive, and often inaccurate oral tradition on the pharmacology of muscle

mass and energy, and he hoped that bringing research-based information more out into the open would help the sport as well as the health of its participants.⁵³

As Mike Jenkins’s image continues to appear on shirts, posters, and the Internet, the message—conveyed in a burst of bright color—is about the value of strength and determination, and an inspired outlook on life. Keri Jenkins captured this sentiment when, in sharing the spirit of her late husband, she posted a picture of him competing in a Strongman contest wearing a neon green t-shirt featuring his uplifting words, “This is what it looks like when we realize all of our hard work, strength, and determination are paying off! I’m so fortunate to get to see the joy on each of your faces when you have this moment!” The question for many Strongman competitors and fans in light of Mike’s death at 31 is this: What can be done to make such moments safer?

NOTES:

1. *Editors’ note: We asked Dr. Reginald Baptiste, an Austin cardiothoracic surgeon and Adjunct Professor at the University of Texas to comment on several aspects of this article, and Dr. Baptiste said that it would have been inappropriate to give Mike a “clean bill of health” since the subsequent autopsy and coroner’s report revealed that he suffered from significant cardiomyopathy—with a heart from two to three times larger than average—and that he also had sleep apnea, which is often seen in obese people with cardiac disease.*
2. Wayne K. Ross, [Michael Jenkins] *Postmortem Report* (Harrisburg: Dauphin County Coroner’s Office, 2014), 2.
3. Graham Hetrick, Email correspondence with Simon J. Bronner, 12 June 2014. *Editors’ note: Dr. Baptiste’s opinion is that a CPAP appliance could have made a difference. He also pointed out that what sleep apnea does is to cause a person to temporarily stop breathing, which then forces the person to wake up and start breathing again, which means that such sleep is seldom restful.*
4. Ross, *Postmortem Report*, 2.
5. Matt Miller, “Long-Time Steroid Use Helped Kill Famed Strongman Mike Jenkins, Prompts Coroner’s Warning,” *Patriot-News* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), 6 June 2014.
6. Ross, *Postmortem Report*, 10.
7. L. Garby et al, “Weights of Brain, Heart, Liver, Kidneys, and Spleen in Healthy and Apparently Healthy Adult Danish Subjects,” *American Journal of Human Biology* 5 (1993): 293.
8. See: Susan Sprogøe-Jakobsen and Ulrik Sprogøe-Jakobsen, “The Weight of the Normal Spleen,” *Forensic Science International* 88 (1997): 215-23.
9. J.R. Nyengaard and T. F. Bendtsen, “Glomerular Number and Size in Relation to Age, Kidney Weight, and Body Surface in Normal Man,” *Anatomical Record* 232 (1992): 194-201.
10. See: Miia Pärssinen and Timo Seppälä, “Steroid Use and Long-Term Health Risks in Former Athletes,” *Sports Medicine* 32, (2002): 84.

11. Ross, *Postmortem Report*, 10.
12. Joseph Hackett, "House Co-Sponsorship Memoranda: Resolution Condemning the Use of Performance Enhancing Drugs (PEDs)," *Pennsylvania House of Representatives*, 12 December 2013; viewed at: <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/Legis/CSM/showMemoPublic.cfm?chamber=H&SPick=20130&cosponId=13792>.
13. Mike Ozanian, "Business-SportsMoney: Pennsylvania Lawmaker Hoping to Rebuke IMG's World's Strongest Man Competition," *Forbes*, 17 December 2013; viewed at: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2013/12/17/pennsylvania-lawmaker-hoping-to-rebuke-imgs-worlds-strongest-man-competition/>.
14. Ross, *Postmortem Report*, 7.
15. Hetrick, Email correspondence.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See: Pieter A. Cohen, "DMAA as a Dietary Supplement Ingredient," *Archives of Internal Medicine* 172 (2012): 1038-39.
18. Ross, *Postmortem Report*, 9.
19. U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "DMAA in Dietary Supplements," 16 July 2013; viewed at: <http://www.fda.gov/food/dietary-supplements/qadietarysupplements/ucm346576.htm>.
20. Ross, *Postmortem Report*, 9.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Miller, "Long Time Steroid Use."
23. U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
24. Cohen, "DMAA," 38-39.
25. British Broadcasting Corporation, "Claire Squires Inquest: DMAA Was Factor in Marathon Runner's Death," *BBC News London*, 30 January 2013; viewed at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-21262717>.
26. World Anti-Doping Agency, "The World Anti-Doping Code—The 2014 Prohibited List: International Standard," 8; viewed at: <http://list.wada-ama.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/2014-Prohibited-List-ENGLISH-FINAL.pdf>.
27. United States Anti-Doping Agency, "US Weightlifting Athlete, Wilhelm, Accepts Sanction for Anti-Doping Rule Violation," Press Release, 8 August 2013; viewed at: <http://www.usada.org/media/sanction-wilhelm8813>.
28. "Disqualified Olympic Athletes Testing Positive for DMAA Point to Supplements," *Natural Products Insider*, 25 February 2014; viewed at: <http://www.naturalproductsinsider.com/news/2014/02/disqualified-olympic-athletes-testing-positive-fo.aspx>.
29. See Joseph V. Rodricks and Michael H. Lumpkin, "DMAA as a Dietary Ingredient," *JAMA Internal Medicine* 173, (2013): 594.
30. Cohen, "DMAA," 38-39.
31. Denise Mann, "Researcher Calls on FDA to Ban Speed-Like Ingredient DMAA," *WebMD Health News*, 7 May 2012; viewed at: http://www2.fourstateshomepage.com/webmd/vitamins/story/Is-Workout-Supplement-Ingredient-DMAA-Safe/vR_OJ8Kj3EG4XMDfN-hCgZQ.csp. See also, Rodricks and Lumpkin, "DMAA as Dietary Agent."
32. Gare Joyce, "Jesse Marunde, 1979-2007," *ESPN Page 2*, 28 December 2007; viewed at: <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=obits/marunde/071227>.
33. Allen G. Breed, "Johnny Perry's Goal Proved the Death of Him," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 March 2003.
34. Oren Dorell, "Autopsy: Cocaine Overdose Killed Perry," *News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), 12 April 2003.
35. See R. Hausmann, S. Hammer, and P. Betz, "Performance Enhancing Drugs (Doping Agents) and Sudden Death—A Case Report and Review of the Literature," *International Journal of Legal Medicine* 111, (1998): 261-64.
36. Jonathan A. Drezner and Karim Khan, "Sudden Cardiac Death in Young Athletes," *British Medical Journal* 337, no. 7661 (2008): 61.
37. Alex Zakrzewski, "Strongman Champion Mike Jenkins Dead at 31," *MuscleMag Feed*, 2014; viewed at: <http://www.musclemag.com/strongman-champion-mike-jenkins-dead-31/>.
38. Tomas Venckunas, et al, "Strongmen Sport is Associated with Larger Absolute Heart Size and Impaired Cardiac Relaxation," *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 25, no. 10 (October 2011): 2924.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Harrison G. Pope, Jr., et. al., "Adverse Health Consequences of Performance-Enhancing Drugs: An Endocrine Society Scientific Statement," *Endocrine Reviews* 35, (June 2014): 341-343.
41. *Ibid*, 343.
42. Terry Todd, "Another Big Man Gone," *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture*, 3, no. 3 (April 1994): 1-2. See also: Drezner and Khan, "Sudden Cardiac Death," 61.
43. Collin Orcutt, "Success Story: Cardiac Kid," *Men's Fitness* 26, no. 4, (May 2010): 136.
44. Adam Farrah, "Paleo Strongman Interview—Mike Jenkins," *Evolved Eating, Evolved Training, Evolved Living: Adam Farrah's Blog*, 30 August 2012; viewed at: <http://practicalpaleolithic.com/paleolithic-diet-blog/paleo-strongman-interview-mike-jenkins>.
45. Mike Jenkins, "Only the Strongest: Mike Jenkins' World's Strongest Man Workout," *Bodybuilding.com*, 16 December 2011; viewed at: <http://www.bodybuilding.com/fun/only-the-strongest-mike-jenkins-workout.html>.
46. Thom Van Vleck, "Mike Jenkins: Made for Strongman," *Milo* 20, no. 2 (September 2012): 47.
47. Zakrzewski, "Strongman Champion."
48. Bryan Hildebrand, "Mike Jenkins: They Call Me 'M'," *RxMuscle.com*, 25 February 2011; viewed at: <http://www.rxmuscle.com/strength-articles/2611-mike-jenkins-they-call-me-m.html>.
49. *Ibid.*
50. Phil Burgess, "Mike 'Juggernaut' Jenkins—Strongman and 2012 Arnold Strength Classic Winner," *Viking Strength*, 5 April 2012; viewed at: <http://vikingstrength.com/2012/04/05/mike-juggernaut-jenkins-strongman-and-2012-arnold-strength-classic-winner/>.
51. Burgess, "Mike 'Juggernaut' Jenkins"; and Thomas Van Vleck, "Mike Jenkins a Real Giant," United States All-Round Weightlifting Association; viewed at: <http://www.usawa.com/mike-jenkins-a-real-giant/>.
52. Mike Jenkins, "The Longest Yards," *Muscle Magazine*, April 2013: 196-97.
53. *Editors' note: Dr. Baptiste strongly supports Coroner Hetrick's recommendations and adds that a circuit of events should be established around the world so these huge men could be regularly drug-tested. Baptiste argues that until Olympic-level drug-testing is done the leading Strongman athletes will feel pressured to use performance enhancing drugs and risk their health and even their lives in order to be on a level playing field with their competitors. He also recommends counseling and education for all athletes whose bodyweights would place them in the "morbidly obese" category. We are deeply grateful to him for his review of this article and his thoughtful assistance.*

