



Say it Ain't So!

A few years back in this 'A Story A Week' series I wrote about an experience I had while living in London, on going jogging with a couple of friends who were experienced runners (story #216). I myself had not been training like they had been, and yet I was easily able to keep up with them. Talking about this episode I suppose gave me a chance to 'brag' about what excellent condition I had been in, because of my practice of walking many miles around that great city every day of the week, but there was a 'back story' that was less flattering. The real reason I had been walking so much was that I was somewhat afraid about getting on the buses because I knew that you had to talk to the conductor to make payment, and I was too shy to do that!

Well, so be it. The shyness may have been a character 'defect' but the upshot was that - without making any special effort on my part - I was being kept in excellent physical condition, as a simple consequence of my normal daily activities.

Skip ahead through the years ... When I worked at the music shop in Canada, there were always cartons of musical instruments that needed to be unloaded, and stacks of heavy sheet music to be sorted or processed. After I had kids and became basically a 'househusband', our daily routine was full of physical activity. Even during the years I was teaching English at home - before I became a printmaker - I was constantly active, as my classes used no textbooks or pencils, but were based on 'situation training', and I was on my feet with the students many hours each day.

And then of course once the printmaking took over my life, I was almost like an athlete. Manually rubbing dozens of colours onto a stack of hundreds of woodblock prints is one of the most physical jobs on this planet. One becomes literally a 'human printing press'. You don't see many fat traditional woodblock printers!

Add to this the 'no car, no TV, lives in a four-story house' factors, and you begin to understand why Dave here simply doesn't 'exercise'. Who me? Go to the gym? Go jogging? You must be kidding; I don't need that stuff!

Well, maybe. But to tell the truth, today I'm not quite so sure about that any more. As I sat down a few minutes ago to be preparing this little story, the 'theme' for it came to hand very easily. My back hurts; my legs are sore, and my shoulders are stiff. Now before my parents - who read these stories - begin to laugh at me for complaining about what it feels like to be in my 60s, I have to add that there *is* a specific reason for my current condition. Three of the young girls on my staff and I together moved four very large steel cabinets down two long flights of stairs into our new workshop, going over and around a number of obstacles as we did so. It was very heavy work, and everybody involved must have felt the consequences.

Well I'm sure that the girls too 'felt it' the morning after, but this took place a week ago, and I am also sure that the three of them have by now pretty much forgotten the episode.

Well, their day will come of course. And again, there is a 'back story' to help explain things. I mentioned being a *printer* but I am also a *carver*, and that work is much less physically demanding. One hunches over

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the woodblock, and delicately slices away the wood a sliver at a time. There is nothing physical about it at all.

And the way that our work here has been organized recently - with me doing all the carving, and the staff doing all the printing - is obviously having an affect on my condition. Without that daily rub rub rub of the baren keeping me in shape, I'm starting to go downhill, and climbing my stairs dozens of times a day isn't enough to make up for it.

Begin to exercise? Me?

Say it ain't so ...

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