

Everyone Has a Rocky Inside Them

Contributed by George Smalley
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Forty-five year old Geno Sylvain was born in Brooklyn, New York (in the same neighborhood as Victor Martinez). The son of a cliff diver, he started lifting at 24 while attending NYC's Fashion Institute of Technology (F.I.T.). He felt that he needed to fill out his slender physique so he started lifting weights in a friend's backyard. After six months and a few frozen toes, he joined Diamond's Gym in Queens, NY. Nine years later, Geno wound up buying the gym and he changed the name to Top This Gym.

Over the years, countless bright young stars walked into Geno's gym. They heard, through the grapevine, that Geno had great insights and nutritional knowledge. More importantly, the guys knew that Geno had a soft spot in his heart for young up and coming stars and that he allowed underage (under 18) guys to train without their parents.

Over the years, Geno inspired the likes of Victor Martinez, Fakhri Mubarak, Rodney St. Cloud, and countless others. Geno instinctively knew that there was a "Rocky" inside of every one of them. Today, many of his young disciples are top pros and they still come to Geno for advice and posing routines. Geno is more of a father figure to many of these guys. Not only does he advise them on bodybuilding issues, but he also helps them with business decisions and life advice.

Geno eventually sold Top This Gym and started a 24-hour gym, Platinum Fitness, and then sold that to open his current training Mecca-- Genetics Personal Training, where he has over 50 clients, some of who have been with Geno for the last 12-15 years. Just recently, Geno designed a new piece of lifting equipment for the home and commercial gym called the "ABSTER" (look for the infomercial in the next few months).

Growing up, some of Geno's idols were Frank Zane and Serge Nubret-- physiques which are comparable to his long, aesthetically pleasing, lines.

As with every successful competitive athlete, there is also a supportive family and friends behind them. Bodybuilding may be classified as an individual sport, but family and friends motivate and encourage us, especially through the lonely dieting phase when we feel vulnerable and weak. They bring out the ROCKY in us! Geno is no exception. He has two daughters - 26 year old Kadrine and 16 years old Jessa Diamond (named after Geno's first gym, Diamond Gym), He also has a son Geno Sylvain, with his life partner, Alina. Alina is his chef as well as his clients'. Geno insists that he wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for Alina. Alina, his children, and his loyal clients all attend his shows and then go out and celebrate afterward. Geno believes that it's this kinship and support that makes the weeks of sacrifice all worth it. According to Geno, "Bodybuilding is not competition against others; but against yourself!"

I will attest to Geno's strong character. You see, I competed against Geno at the 2006 NPC Eastern U.S.A. (Masters class) in which Geno took 1st Place and I was second. While I was interviewing Geno, he looked me right in the eye and said, "George, you should have won the contest". In fact, he told all his friends and clients the same thing. Geno insisted that all I need to work on is my posing, and he actually volunteered to help me. That's a true gentleman; a truly giving individual. Geno is a great ambassador for the sport of bodybuilding. If more bodybuilders like him embraced the same

selfless values, our sport would be in a better place, today.

The following are some of Geno's favorite quotes. I thought they were insightful enough to mention:

"Love yourself naked."

"Train to grow; not your ego."

CONTEST HIGHLIGHTS:

1989 A.G.A. Mr. Natural USA middleweight and Overall

2001 N.P.C. N.Y. Mets Masters Overall

Geno recently won the 2006 NPC Eastern U.S.A. at a weight of 198. It took him 6 years before he won his first show in the N.P.C.

LONG TERM GOALS:

Geno's not looking to be Mr. Olympia, but he'd love to win the NPC Masters Nationals. Look for him at the 2007 NPC Masters Nationals in Pittsburgh, PA.

Geno offers personal training and can be reached at his gym:

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