

GREG PANORA

BY JEFF "ROBOT" IRION

Greg Panora is a lifter who needs no introduction. But in case you live under an Atlas stone, here's one anyway. Panora has held the world record total at both 242 and 275 pounds, with best lifts of a 1,060 squat, 820 bench, 820 deadlift and 2,630 total. He has won both WPO [World Powerlifting Organization] meets and Pro-Ams. He was away from the sport for a few years due to a stroke of bad luck, so to speak, but now he's back and doing big things in raw powerlifting.

What's your age, weight and height? I am 33; 5 feet, 10 inches tall. I weigh 257 lbs. in the offseason and compete in the 242-lb. weight class.

When did you start training? Was it clear from the beginning that you were a strong dude and had the potential to do big things in powerlifting? I started training at 13 because I was small. I don't know if I knew of any potential, but I knew that I loved it. It was the first (and last) thing that I've ever really cared about. I read every bodybuilding mag and all the powerlifting and Strongman articles I could find. So, not much has changed. I got strong very quickly and benched 405 the day I turned 16. The gym I was at made a plaque.

When did you first compete? What type of equipment did you wear and what were your lifts? I did my first contest raw at 18 or 19. I had gotten really lean and I think I weighed around 213 pounds. I squatted around 525, benched 435 and deadlifted 650. That was my introduction to pulling big deadlifts out of my ass to win.

You once recommended that lifters start their powerlifting journey in a commercial gym, stick to the power rack and dumbbells, and get strong using minimal equipment. How long did you train in a commercial gym and what were your numbers when you graduated to a powerlifting gym? I'm a huge believer in building a base. I get asked on Facebook all the time about suits and shirts and briefs. I look at some of these guys and think, "put some damn work in!" We live in a country where we want fast results. We are looking for a better pair of briefs or a better training method. Just get on a basic routine and eat some food! I trained at a YMCA until I went to Westside Barbell in 2006. When I got to use a monolift or deadlift bar at a contest, it felt amazing. I was a low 2,200-lb. totaler training alone at a commercial gym. It's amazing what being driven and working hard can get you.



AVERAGE

STOPS WHEN IT HURTS

BEAT AVERAGE™

GNC
LIVE WELL

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Call 1.800.477.4462 or visit GNC.com for the store nearest you. ©2014 General Nutrition Corporation. May not be available outside the U.S.



THE MOST ADVANCED, SCIENCE-BASED SPORTS NUTRITION BRAND EVER

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR WORKOUTS WITH THE LATEST INNOVATIONS IN SPORTS NUTRITION SCIENCE, FEATURING BREAKTHROUGH TECHNOLOGIES AND CLINICALLY STUDIED, HIGH-QUALITY INGREDIENTS THAT TARGET ADVANCED MUSCLE PERFORMANCE FOR PROVEN RESULTS.

OUR NEWEST AND BEST-SELLING PRODUCTS



GNC PRO PERFORMANCE[®] AMP AMPLIFIED TOTAL MUSCLE RECOVERY

• Optimal Muscle Performance Fuel Powered with 50g Protein, 20g Leucine & 10g Glutamine for Maximum Post-Workout Recovery*

• Proven to Generate 400% Greater Anabolic Environment by Modulating Insulin Levels**

• Clinically Studied Ingredients to Fuel Muscle Cells & Enhance Joint Function*

• Gluten Free



CLINICALLY RESEARCHED

CHOCOLATE

DIETARY SUPPLEMENT
Net Wt 36.13 oz (1.03 kg) 855.6 g



GNC PRO PERFORMANCE[®] AMP AMPLIFIED WHEYBOLIC EXTREME 60 ORIGINAL NATURAL Flavors & Sweeteners

CLINICALLY RESEARCHED

• 30% Increase in Muscle Strength*

• Rapid Absorbing Whey Isolates & Hydrolysates

• 7.7g of Leucine Plus 8.5g of Muscle-Fueling Aminos

• Increases Strength & Stamina with Half the Sets**

• Naturally Sweetened with No Gluten, No GMO & No Lactose Ingredients Added



NATURAL CHOCOLATE

DIETARY SUPPLEMENT
Net Wt 14.88 oz (3lb) 422 g



krabobolc mass gainer

GNC PRO PERFORMANCE[®] AMP AMPLIFIED MASS XXX[™]

→ 50g of Protein with Micronized Aminos

→ Increases Lean Mass with 40% Fewer Sets*

→ 3g of Creatine to Improve Athletic Performance

→ Improves Muscle Stamina & Strength*



▲ Clinically Researched

CHOCOLATE

Natural + artificial flavors

NET WT 6 LB (96 OZ) 2727 g

See the full line at GNC.com/AMP

© 2015 GNC. All rights reserved. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners. AMP is a registered trademark of GNC. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. This advertisement is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an offer. Not for sale in Canada. © 2015 GNC. All rights reserved. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners. AMP is a registered trademark of GNC. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. This advertisement is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an offer. Not for sale in Canada.



During your time at Westside, you took your total from low-2,200s to 2,630. What were the top three factors in this increase? 3.) I had coaching for the first time. Louie was great at saying, "Greg, don't do that." 2.) I believed 100 percent in the methods. I still do. 3.) The most important part of Westside Barbell is how competitive it is there. I thrived in that kind of environment. I like to win.

Your multi-ply squat form looked strange, maybe due to the way you'd hold the bar. It obviously worked for you, but what was the deal? I have zero mobility in my shoulders.

You were jacked and tan before being jacked and tan was cool. Would you call yourself a trendsetter? Honestly, I like hot girls. Fat guys with big squats don't get hot girls. Most of my friends were not powerlifters. They were wannabe Jersey Shore guidos, so I had to fit in.

How did you manage to get big and strong without getting fat? Did you stay lean in order to gain an advantage over your competition,

In your opinion, when is it appropriate for a lifter to start getting into equipped powerlifting? I think it's different from person to person, but I would say, spend at least two or three years building a base. I also believe in

training raw more often than equipped once in gear. Listen guys - gear is not that difficult to use. I have no clue how to use any of it and I got huge carry-over in it. Spend time getting stronger and less time blaming your squat suit.









LIFTING



LARGE.COM

SHIPS WORLDWIDE

POWERLIFTING

WEIGHTLIFTING

CROSSFIT

BODYBUILDING

STRONGMAN

FOLLOW THIS QR CODE
FOR A DISCOUNT ON
YOUR NEXT ORDER



or are you just a closet bodybuilder like Mark Bell? I tried to put body-weight on. I'm still trying! I eat seven times a day and I'm pretty lazy, so I'm not sure what's going on.

Can you give us an idea of what your diet looks like? Do you stick to clean foods? I try to eat healthier. Basically steak, chicken, eggs, peanut butter, pasta (lots of pasta), sushi, Jag-ermeister, oatmeal and pizza or Mexi-can at least once a week. I don't do the supplement thing, mainly because I'm too lazy to learn about it.

You've trained with some legendary lifters throughout your career. What are three of the top things you learned from them? Most of my advice was from Louie, and most of his information was locked in riddles. He would always tell me, "The toughest pitbull leads the pack," and that was Louie for, "You need to lead this group." He really understands the game and knows how to prepare for a contest. I learned a lot from Matt Wenning about how to frame a workout and train optimally instead of being crazy and just killing myself. I spent



a ton of time watching Chuck V train, and he did a lot of bodybuilding style movements; I carried this into my own training.

**You were the king of the multi-
ply world. Then in early 2010, you**

decided to leave Westside. Tell us about that. Westside seems like so long ago. It's funny what a few years can do. Louie and I were not doing so hot. I wanted to wear gear more often in training. If you know Louie, this is

FORZA

STRENGTH SYSTEMS

BENCH OF CHAMPIONS

F200 Super Bench

Price \$995/ S&H \$275
 Durable Powder Coat Finish
 Competition Gripper Pad
 Spotter's Platform
 Adjustable Bar Catchers
 4X2" & 3X3" Steel Tubing
 Easy 4 Bolt Assembly

Safety Arms Option
\$475/ Pair

Pad Only with Forza
 Innovative Gripper Cover
 \$295/ S&H: \$45

Bar & weights not included.

Check out our Full Line of Used Equipment

ORDER TODAY! - 1.800.769.9259

FORZASTRENGTH.COM

Made in America
with
Italian Passion



I lost function of my right arm/hand, I couldn't talk, and my vision was really blurry on my right side.

I'd always had higher blood pressure, but it came out of nowhere. I spent a week or so in the hospital and neurologists and doctors couldn't figure it out either. Anyway, it was the greatest thing to ever happen to me and I wouldn't trade the horrible year that I had after that, either. You really have no idea what's important until you lose everything.

When you said you'd always had higher blood pressure, how high are you talking? I can't remember numbers. I remember the doctor kind of panicking when I was in high school. Apparently, as an infant, doctors told my dad to keep an eye on it.

What happened after the stroke? My life completely fell apart. I spent 3 years going from place to place, job to job, girl to girl. Looking back on it, I was trying to fill the hole that had been powerlifting. I had trained for 18 years and then all of a sudden my stability was kicked out from under me. I stopped caring about anything and was basically just surviving. I spent some time in Florida continuing down the same path into oblivion. I started training again and I had a decent job, but I was miserable. I said, "F it" one day and drove back to Maine. I really wasn't sure where I was going or why. I had to find a reason to live again, I guess.

My first year in Maine was a mess. I just wasn't making enough to survive. I had no set address and I bounced from one couch to another. I was working 40 hours a week but I could barely survive. Towards the end, I was living in my car at a rest stop, my tooth was compacted and completely abscessing and I knew I had to do something. Looking back on it, I realize it's easy to say, "How did you not realize this until now?" I'm not sure. I was so broken and angry at that point that I couldn't see much.

I decided soon after to man the F up and actually become accountable for my actions. A friend helped me get a job at CrossFit that absolutely saved my life. I decided to use my anger to become successful and stop being a little bitch. People actually started lis-

a big no-no. I'm watching Frankl over there at Big Iron continually making huge gains and I was leveling off a little bit. I really had no idea how to "use" equipment and figured that if I wore it more, I could learn it better and put up some gigantic numbers. Anyway, Louie and I got into a huge argument and I walked. In a lifetime of bad choices, that one is the top. I had worked so hard to get there and I let it all slip away. Anyway, I will always love Louie and thank him for everything he taught me. The man is a genius and I wish Westside nothing but the best.

Wait a second... First you said "gear is not that difficult to use" and that lifters should "spend time getting stronger and less time blaming [their] squat suit." Now you're saying that you wanted to be like Frankl and "learn [the equipment] better and put up some gigantic numbers." Are you contradicting yourself? I was waiting to get called out on that! OK, my thing was that I was already strong. I figured there

had to be some secret gear sorcery I needed to figure out. The gear is pretty easy to use. I hardly ever put it on. I figured if I wore it once a month, my numbers would move up.

Fair enough. It seems like the message is that lifters should have a strong base before they worry too much about equipment. What came next for you? So, I left Westside and lost all direction. I stopped really caring about anything. I was still training, kind of. I didn't have a clue where to go and what I was supposed to do. I had broken the world record a bunch of times, and no one really tells you what you're supposed to do after you reach your goal. Movies end right after you reach that goal, but life doesn't. I was in for the darkest two years of my life. My girlfriend and I broke up, which left me homeless. I ended up living in a one-room apartment with a buddy. My job wasn't paying me anymore, so I had to resort to bouncing at a little redneck bar. I was basically coming apart at the seams. On Mother's Day 2010, I had a massive stroke.

CRAIG CAPURSO
BODYSPACE: CRAIGCAPURSO
MEMBER SINCE: MAY 2008



GOAL

I WANT TO GET STAGE
READY AND COMPETE
IN 6 WEEKS

PLAN



BUILT BY SCIENCE
6-WEEK MUSCLE
BUILDING TRAINER

FINISH
~~START~~ **SOMETHING**



MOTIVATE

1250+ FOLLOWERS
18 FITBOARD POSTS
100+ COMMENTS

TRACK



431K LB LIFTED
16 WORKOUTS
+1.3% BF CHANGE



SET A GOAL
GET A FREE PLAN
TRACK YOUR PROGRESS
STAY MOTIVATED
BODYBUILDING.COM/FINISH

and provided for personal use only. No reproduction or retransmission.
For reprints please contact the Publisher.



tening to me and my classes multiplied and turned into 1:1 sessions, which turned into group sessions. I haven't had a full day off in almost 3 weeks and a lot of days are 14-15 hours. Everytime I step on the platform, I think back to where I was 2 years ago. I could absolutely care less what anyone says about my lifting. I do this for myself and my family at CrossFit Casco Bay and my beautiful girlfriend, Dr. Melinda Hurt.

In hindsight, do you think there's anything you could've done to prevent the stroke? I definitely should have paid more attention to my blood pressure. I was warned but ignored it while in my teens. I thought I was invincible. Now I see a doctor every couple of months to make sure I'm OK, and I take blood pressure meds. So far, so good. Most recently I was told to cut my energy drink intake down.

Did the stroke force you out of multi-ply lifting? I lost wrist strength and couldn't hold anything more than

635 lbs. on a bench. My wrist would go limp. I also couldn't hold more than 400 lbs. on the deadlift. I probably could bench in a shirt now, but I've lost the desire. I had no plans to return to the sport, but Brandon Lilly started writing all this cool shit about raw lifting and I decided, what the hell? Plus this guy named Dan Green started to do some big things and I got interested again.

When did you start training seriously for raw powerlifting? I never really stopped training. I was still routinely benching 500 lbs. and squatting 600 for ugly reps. About a year and a half ago, I talked a couple of my CrossFit clients into doing a push/pull competition and I decided to join them. It felt amazing to be back on the platform and I started training hard right after that.

After a three-year hiatus, you returned to full meet powerlifting in May and posted a 2,000 raw total. Why did you wait so long to

compete again? For me, powerlifting isn't fun or a hobby. A lot of people say that, but I mean it. It's a drug for me. I get extreme highs and extreme lows. I needed to make sure I was ready for that again.

Let's talk about your transition to raw lifting, one lift at a time, starting with the squat. You've written before about how you struggled to transition from geared to raw squatting. What was your biggest weak point and how did you bring it up? My biggest weakness wasn't really a muscle, but my brain. It was a huge fear of two things: 1.) Getting low is a horrifying feeling. The hole is an awful place for a slow/grinding lifter like myself. I had to come to terms with being a bad squatter. I'm a guy who used to routinely go over a grand, and now 405 is tough. I think it was harder on me because I'm so slow and my form had been so tailored for a suit/box. I would sit way back and drop until the suit grabbed me, push my knees out

and re-arch my back. Now, none of that really worked. 2.) My second biggest fear is/was failure.

What technique changes did you make? Unless you have the most flexible hips in the world, your feet are going to have to come in raw. You also have to get used to a much faster lift. I can't really sit back raw, so I push my hips back then descend down as opposed to continually pushing back throughout the lift.

You're carrying the bar a little lower, and also moved your hands in a few inches. If you were to return to multi-ply, do you think you'd still use this new bar position and grip?

My bar position in multi-ply was a guessing game once the straps came up. I couldn't feel it. I was coaching a friend at CrossFit a few months ago and he put the bar ultra-low. He looked very comfortable and I tried it with good results. I could actually arch my back. If I went back to multi-ply, then I would try to do this, but who knows what would happen?

Since you've used the "C" word twice now, what are your thoughts on CrossFit? I love CrossFit. I love anything that has to do with strength. I admire the athleticism and, more importantly, the asses on the girls. But seriously, it took guys off of Hammer Strength machines and girls off of the treadmill. CrossFit Casco Bay got me back into powerlifting, makes me money, made me my best friends and introduced me to my girlfriend. For me, CrossFit changed my life.

Let's turn our attention to benchin'. Before we get into raw benching, let's harken back to a time when the plies were plentiful. You hit all of your biggest benches in a denim shirt and routinely benched 800-plus at a time when that wasn't common. What was your general game plan for benching in a shirt?

I benched raw 90 percent of the time and kept getting stronger.

What technical cues do you use for raw benching? My bench is 95 percent bar placement. If I hit that sweet spot, then it flies up. My raw and shirted benches look the same.

Is that the reason why you were able to build your shirted bench by benching raw 90 percent of the

time? I think it actually built my raw bench more than my shirted bench. My shirted bench really developed as a result of tons of extensions and triceps work.

People say that shirted benching is all about lats and triceps, whereas raw benching is all about pecs and shoulders (and triceps). What do you say? For me, both are lats, shoulders and triceps.

"I love CrossFit. I love anything that has to do with strength.

I admire the athleticism and, more importantly, the asses on the girls...

CrossFit Casco Bay got me back into powerlifting, makes me money, made me my best friends and introduced me to my girlfriend. For me, CrossFit changed my life"

Given that you benched 405 on your 16th birthday, it's fair to say you've always been a strong raw bencher. To what do you attribute this?

It was always the most important lift to me. Squats and deads are annoying things I have to do to be a good powerlifter.

Moving on to the deadlift. As a conventional puller, did you have any difficulty transitioning from equipped to raw? Not really. The suit just cut off circulation in my balls.

Wow! That could inspire one to pull more weight. What other differences did you find between pulling raw and in a suit? I don't get the same speed off of the floor. I thought I had a deadlift suit figured out. I would get it super tight and cut the leg openings. It stayed super tight on the hips and weight would fly off the floor.

We've talked about the three lifts

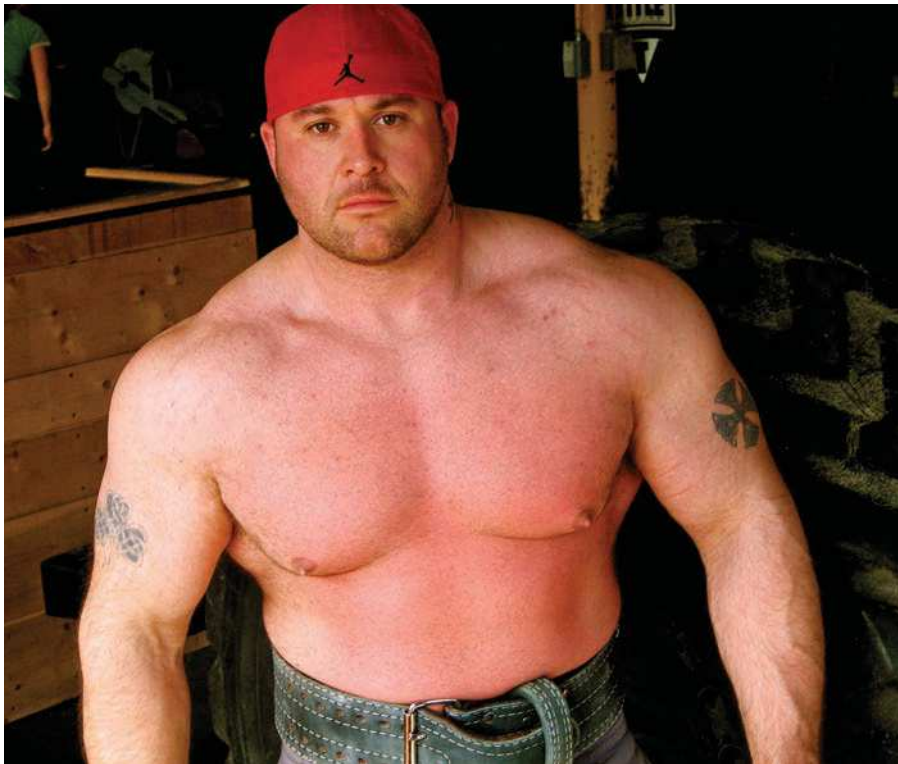
individually, now let's talk about your training as a whole. Give us an overview. What does your weekly training schedule look like? Do you have someone coaching you?

Are you following some type of program? I do my own thing. Speed bench, deadlift reps, max-effort bench and speed squats alternated with reps squat. I don't believe in having a set plan for myself. I think of what I'm going to do in the shower before work. I go over weights and rep schemes in my head until something feels right. My training is an oddball mixture of Westside Bench and Cube-type squat and deadlift, with some bodybuilding thrown in. I guess it makes sense, as Louie Simmons, Brandon Lilly and Dorian Yates have been the three biggest motivators for me. I learned a ton of bench stuff from Robert Wilkerson, as well.

That's an interesting mix of training methods: Westside, Cube and HIT [High Intensity Training] bodybuilding training. Tell us one key principle from each that you include in your training. From Westside, conjugate training is just plain fun. Cube brought old-school hard training back and introduced me to pause squats. Bodybuilding helps keep me well rounded and uninjured.

You've mentioned incorporating bodybuilding-style training a few times now. Are you just a vain SOB, or do you think it has benefits for powerlifting? Louie made me do bodybuilding style workouts when I got there, and it's really worked to build size. I think it's helped me handle heavy weights and stay injury-free because nothing is weak.

When you talk about bodybuilding training, is it anything fancy? Or is it just a few sets of isolation exercises thrown in at the end of workouts to help add size and prevent imbalances? It's honestly to get a pump! It's really nothing fancy: dumbbell presses, crossovers, pull-ups, a ton of upper back work, shrugs, butt blaster and occasional Zumba classes. I feel like it's kept me uninjured and I also feel like I can fight from bad positions a little better because of it. I also do a ton of ab stuff, and that's really made my squat possible. I never feel



he is really scared right now. At this point I'm crazed - I want this guy's head on my living room table. I realize that she doesn't get it at all and she says goodnight and goes back [to her boyfriend]. At this point I feel like complete shit about everything. I feel like shit that this stupid young girl is living like this. I feel terrible that I was almost willing to give up a life I'd worked my ass off to build from shit. I feel bad that my girlfriend had to see me like that, as I make a point to never raise my voice to someone that important. I hate not knowing what the outcome of this is going to be. I feel like I turned into the guy I'd worked really hard to leave behind. I don't get in fights anymore or act on impulse, but that's exactly what I did.

On a more positive note, tell us about your volunteer work with pit bulls. I train and became good friends with a guy named Frank Billings. Frank runs a dog daycare and a rescue called Buddy Up in Portland, Maine. I help out by getting abused dogs out of bad situations, occasionally going along to extract abused dogs. I have always felt a bond with pit bulls. It's not a "look at me, I'm a badass type of thing." I know what it's like to have to survive. I understand feeling completely misunderstood. We, as lifters, have one thing in common with these dogs: the media has completely destroyed our image and demonized masculinity in the same way that these assholes have turned pit bulls into savage beasts. If I hear one more person say, "pit bulls turn on their owners" or "I pick stuff up and put it down," I will flip out.

Anyone you'd like to thank? Honestly, I have so many people to thank. I wouldn't be here without Big Dan McNutt or Matt Brown. I have to thank my friends at CrossFit Casco Bay. You guys are my second family. My training partners at DynaMaxx, especially Mike Lawrence, for all of your help. Brandon Lilly and Chad Wesley Smith for believing that I might still have something to offer. My crew at Juggernaut for making me feel weak and constantly setting the bar higher. Last but not least, my girlfriend Melinda Hurt for using PT magic to keep me in this game a little longer and teaching me that I'm not that tough. **PM**

like I'm going forward and I can keep air in really awkward positions. I do V-ups, leg lifts with ankle weights and tons of weighted sit-ups.

For a raw lifter, what are your thoughts on speed work for each of the three lifts? I think they are great for myself because I'm a very slow lifter. I think it's not necessary for a beginner, though.

Westside is big on using tons of variations of the big lifts, with box squats and accommodating resistance being perhaps the most prominent modifications. Do you feel that using a vast assortment of exercises is useful for raw lifting, or should a raw lifter stick more closely to the competition lifts? I think it probably differs from person to person, but most top guys seem to do better with the competition lifts. Accommodating resistance focuses on making the top portion harder, since that's where gear cuts out, but raw lifting is primarily the bottom portion so I wouldn't do it every week. I get great results with a Westside-style bench program. I do mostly full range movements, though.

You totaled 2,000 at 242 in your raw debut. What's next? Well, last weekend I totaled 2,038 via a 771 squat, 512 bench and 755 deadlift, so I'm moving in the right direction.

Eventually I want to go face to face with that dude with long hair in the 242s. What's his name? It's going to take some time, but I'll get there. 2,100 is my immediate goal for 2014. I need to get my dead back above 800 and the rest should follow.

Back up for a second. You happened on to a domestic dispute and punched out a window?!? What's the story there?

One weekend I went to grab drinks with my girlfriend and another couple. I was in a really good mood as I had just received a lot of good news. I was even dancing, which is very unlike me as I'm a 260 pound white guy. We decided to go back to my girlfriend's place and have a few more drinks. As the night wrapped up, they called a cab and walked outside to leave. My friend, Bob, ran back in and was shouting that the guy upstairs was abusing his girlfriend in front of the window. We ran upstairs and I kicked the door off the frame and punched out a window. I lacerated a vein in my arm and bled all over the floor. Shortly after, the girl came down and tried to play it off that he was drunk and she said the wrong thing. I went ballistic at this point as she was basically a stupid kid who didn't get it. She asked at one point if we could be friends as