



Reaching for the **SKY**

As told to Charles Peeples

HAVING BEEN SURROUNDED BY SPORTS AND COMPETITION, I'VE ALWAYS SEARCHED FOR DIFFERENT WAYS TO CHALLENGE MYSELF. IN SEVENTH GRADE, MY MOTHER RECEIVED A CALL FROM MY PRINCIPAL CONCERNED THAT, INSTEAD OF SITTING AROUND IN A CIRCLE LIKE THE REST OF THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS AT RECESS TIME AND LUNCH TIME, I WAS PLAYING FOOTBALL WITH THE BOYS. NOT ONLY WAS I PLAYING, I WAS BEATING THEM!

For eighteen years I was accompanied by a soccer ball just about everywhere I went. In high school I added volleyball, and by my senior year, I was playing both in two very competitive programs. I became one of the top players in the Philadelphia region as an outside power hitter. I was also the captain of my team and statistical leader in kills, runner-up in aces, and team MVP.

In college, I focused on soccer. I was also an ARMY ROTC cadet, which provided me with more of the physical and mental challenges I craved, but finally deciding against a military career, I left the program. To fill the void, I joined the college boxing team. There weren't any females on the team; those who'd tried couldn't keep up with the intense three-hour conditioning practices. But no one was going to show me up, and anyone trying could be damn sure they were going to have their hands full! I was voted Captain of the team my senior year. I graduated from college with a dual degree in Spanish and Criminal Justice with a GPA of 3.8 overall. I was a scholar-athlete every semester, and for the last semester I studied overseas in Costa Rica.

I was hired as a parole officer before I even graduated. It was a good feeling, but I knew I was going to miss one thing in particular terribly...sports. I had to find something to keep me competitive, so I became a certified volleyball coach and a fitness model! Not only was this a complete physical makeover, but mental as well. To achieve it, I pushed myself to the limit. The satisfaction of achieving what I once thought was the impossible is the greatest adrenaline rush I can imagine. The rush of preparing for a shoot encourages me to never settle for what I have achieved, but to push myself even harder. It's been worth it; I'm overwhelmed with endorsement offers, nationally and internationally, including top fitness magazines, fitness/health products, exercise videos, the WWE 2006 Diva search, and many more photo opportunities.

I train very hard, five to seven days a week. This has given me self-confidence both in the gym and in my job; as a parole officer, you never know what to expect at any time. It's not out of the norm to have to arrest someone, search someone's house or person, visit the prison, testify in court and walk dangerous neighborhoods. A parole officer is not man's best friend! The most difficult challenge I face every day is the ultimate decision of whether or not to take away someone's freedom, to arrest a father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister -even a child- and confine him to a holding cell at a prison. There are daily challenges and "what if's," that arise every day, making you question your abilities and decisions. As much as it's about me, my satisfaction and my survival, it's about others as well. I always have to be on top of my game. Fitness keeps me there.



Charles Peeples, NSCA-CPT, NCTMB, whose articles have appeared in numerous fitness and bodybuilding magazines, is a well-known proponent for girls' and women's physical advancement (www.teamvalkyries.org). In addition to being a Nationally-Certified Personal Trainer, he is a Nationally-Certified Massage Therapist (www.yourlocalpersonaltrainer.com).