

Strength in Numbers

Powerlifter says team effort motivates her to achieve record-breaking statistics

By Jeanie Senior

Athletic in build, but only 5 foot 4 inches tall, Nadine Huxley doesn't seem like an imposing force, yet she has the strength of many men.

On a good day, she can lift 353 pounds.

Nadine is a competitive weightlifter. She holds two world records—one for bench pressing 275.5 pounds—and a number of state titles.

The 353-pound dead lift was a personal best, although it wasn't a record.

Nadine is a serious and dedicated powerlifter. She is a member of a team that trains together three to four times a week at Virginia Williams' Black Iron Gym east of Goldendale.

Nadine is the only current world record holder at the gym, but many of the trophies shelved there were won by other team members.

It is teamwork that counts the most, Nadine says, because it makes good things happen for her and everyone else.

"I could not do this in a vacuum," she says.

Members of Black Iron Gym help each other, cajole each person who is lifting to extra efforts, offer advice and generally demonstrate the best aspects of teamwork.

"It's the camaraderie, the team members goading each other on, the encouragement," Nadine says. "I don't know how people do it without a support system."

As the gym's trainer, Virginia tracks each athlete's progress and sets goals.



Nadine Huxley spots for Ken Schlieff at Black Iron Gym east of Goldendale.

"And, she makes sure you're safe," Nadine says.

In turn, Virginia says the team's successes have put her gym on the map.

She urges team members to try for personal bests, but she also stresses training with great care to avoid injuries.

"We all want this sport to grow," Virginia says. "It's hard work, but the rewards are great. We are kind of a tight little group and we enjoy lifting with one

another, but we welcome anybody who comes."

Black Iron Gym is a simple, plywood-sided building with a big yellow smiley face painted on the front. Sports-related posters, photos and bumper stickers plaster the walls inside. The gym is stocked with a variety of weightlifting equipment, such as benches, exercise gear and bar bells in graduated weights.

During a practice session, Virginia



Nadine discusses a lifting regimen with Black Iron Gym owner and trainer Virginia Williams.

chuckles when Nadine bench presses 235 pounds with little visible effort.

“She makes it look easy,” Virginia says. “That’s one of the good things about working together. That’s going to make everyone work a little harder.”

Mild-Mannered By Day

Outside the gym, Nadine is the customer service and human resources manager at Klickitat PUD. She started as a meter reader at the PUD in 1981 and moved up through the ranks, including a six-month stint as interim general manager.

Nadine started powerlifting seven years ago when she was recovering from knee surgery, and getting ready to climb Mount Shasta in Northern California.

She summited the mountain on her third try, adding the successful climb to a list of conquests that includes Mount St. Helens and 10 climbs to the top of Mount Adams.

“I have not done Mount Hood, and I won’t because my mother doesn’t want me to. She says it’s too dangerous,” Nadine says of her mother, Dorothy Miller, who lives in Goldendale.

In the 1970s, Nadine’s family divided

its time between Southern California winters and Klickitat County summers.

Her late father, Ray Miller, a native of Klickitat County, was an avid team roper, an interest he passed on to many family members. Moving between states allowed for year-round roping, with horses that were always ready to go.

The family became full-time residents of Klickitat County again in 1980, just in time to see Mount St. Helens blow.

Nadine does not ride competitively now, but still has three horses—“two young ones and an old, cranky one,” she says.

Nadine contends she was a nerd in high school, graduating near the top of her class, while working 40 hours a week as a truck stop waitress.

Her pursuits since then have included a number of athletic accomplishments. Her focus now is on weightlifting, where being part of a community is as important as self-achievement.

Says Nadine, “You’ve got an obligation to yourself and to the team.” ■

For more information about Black Iron Gym, call (509) 773-5104.

KPUD Through the Years

Nadine Huxley has seen many changes at Klickitat PUD in her three decades of service.

When she started work there, “we had typewriters, no (desktop) computers,” she says. “A lot of stuff was done by hand. There was one computer. It took up half a room.”

In those days, the utility was strictly a power retailer. That started to change in the 1990s, when the PUD joined Northern Wasco PUD in The Dalles in ownership of a 10-megawatt (MW) generating plant at McNary Dam.

The PUD later developed a methane-powered generating plant at the giant landfill north of Roosevelt and partnered with three other Washington public utilities to initiate construction of the 205-MW White Creek Wind Project.

The PUD also built transmission lines to carry electricity generated by the region’s other wind farms and the gas turbine plant in Goldendale to the Bonneville Power Administration system.

Nadine’s daughter, Amanda Huxley, followed in her mother’s footsteps, both as a mountain climber and an electric utility employee.

Amanda started climbing young. She took her talent to work for Portland General Electric, and became the first woman to graduate from the Vocational Outside Line Training Academy, an apprentice lineman school. ■



Nadine at her desk at Klickitat PUD.