

Why it was my Destiny...Blowing Up 446 Balloons In 1 Hour

Darryl Learie

Since September 10th, 1993, I created my own Personal Records Book (A book of my own personal bests, as inspired by the Guinness Book of Records).

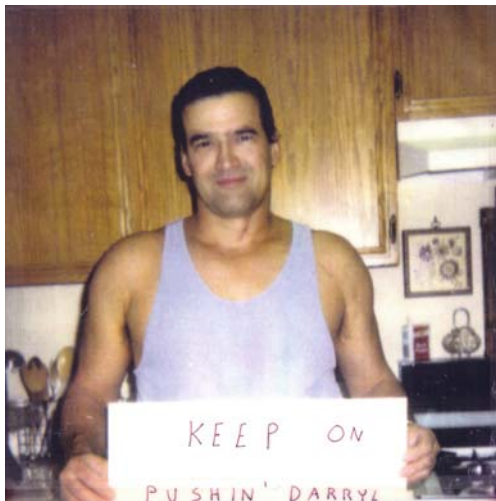
My Personal Records Book (PRB I) was my answer to unscrambling the greatest riddle of all - the pursuit of happiness.

I started documenting my personal bests in the athletic, academic, and spiritual quests (both good and bad).

My first life ambition was to attain the record for the most push-ups in 24 hours, a record held by Charles Servizio (46,001 push-ups - April 23rd, 1993). I chose the push-up simply because it was hard, and to excel in something deemed hard seemed most spiritually rewarding.

From July 9th, 1993 to September 27th, 1999 I had to retire from the push-up due to re-occurring tendonitis affecting both elbows (also known as "Tennis Elbow.") During those 6 years, 2 months, and 18 days, I had achieved 295,214 push-ups.

It was during that time, I first befriended Charles Servizio who first wrote to me on October 27th, 1995 as a result of me asking Guinness to forward my letter to him.



Charles Servizio – 1995



Darryl Learie - 1998

I never lost the wisdom expressed in his letter, *"it takes a lot of heart to break a world record; and from the sounds of your letter, you've got the desire to do just that."* And each letter received was aptly signed, *"keep on pushin' Charles."*

Unfortunately, I soon lost touch with Charles in early 1996. However, on March 14th, 1996 I set my most profound push-up record – 3,000 push-ups in 2 hours, 38 minutes, and 5 seconds.

From continuously crunching push-up numbers, I knew it was an impossible pace for me. I also knew I was in such a delicate zone between my muscles seizing to lactic acid from the anaerobic activity, and my recovering just quickly enough because of the effectiveness of my breathing.

It was the first personal record; I had truly put 100 % of effort into it, it was proof that I had 100 % heart. It is not very often people do their best, not 100 % - that's rare.

On March 15th, 1999 I received my first letter from Ashrita Furman (world record holder for most world records) after asking Guinness to forward my letter to him.

Ashrita wrote;

“My best advice to you is to get your motivation from within. Do these records for your own growth, fulfillment and progress. Try to get your strength from your deeper spiritual self.

Don't worry about what others think about you or mocked you in the past.

If you are sincere in your efforts people will automatically admire you and appreciate your achievements and the spirit you do them in.

Keep up the good work. Sincerely, Ashrita.”

What truly resonated with Ashrita's words was that breaking records was not just an athletic feat, but rather results from feeding off your own spiritual power – because the spirit is limitless. And that is when I slowly began incorporating the ideal that the human spirit is a critical piece of record breaking.

During the year 2000, it was my greatest falling from grace.

I had started partying with friends, time and time again, and took a liking to weed (to escape from my own reality), but eventually traded the weed for cigarettes because I didn't like doing anything deemed illegal.

It mostly happened because I was feeling betrayed by society at the time, because I felt in my heart that I was a good person, and yet it didn't seem like I was reaping the logical rewards.

And un-known to me at the time I was suffering from a mental illness; a pathology of anxiety attacks, generalized anxiety, depression, and paranoia.

I will not go too much into the demons I was facing, but to say, if you ever felt like the world's ugliest and useless creature – you're not alone friend, I have been there. I've been at the top, and I've been at the bottom.

By December 1st, 2000 I was hooked on smoking, but I was also intent on becoming the best person I can be, so I started seeking the philosophy of Buddhism.

What I appreciated most about Buddhism is that it was a philosophy of looking within, for answers, and strength. And that to me didn't seem to be a contradiction to my belief in Christianity, because God and Jesus are external powers.

My first most meaningful lesson in meditation, and breathing (to achieve such meditation) was on February 4th, 2001, when I became a Buddhist (Chan Dat – True Attainment) at the Edmonton, Buddhists Research Institute (Truc Lam Monastery).

We were taught to breathe, as a plant if you will – to focus on no more than one's breathing. It was a method of relaxing, and thus retrieving inner peace. However, such a practice would prove invaluable as it would greatly aid in my physiological reaction to enduring those records where the lungs were involved.

Fast forward to July 12th, 2008 I had been smoking for 7 years, and 7 months (a pack a day) when I performed a 4 minute, 3 second breath-hold (Static Apnea) at Edmonton's West Jasper Place Pool.



Darryl Learie - 2008

I posted the video onto my (now nonexistent YouTube Channel, "Viral Learie) and within the first month it reached 1,501 views, and was linked to 5 diving sites. The video now reposted on my, Darryl Learie YouTube channel has already exceeded 6,000 views.

The Edmonton Public Pools even made a city-wide rule to ban Static, and dynamic apnea because of me. However, if the feat had a point, the point was that, yes a smoker can hold their breath longer than the average person.

However smoking had affected my cardiovascular performance, I used to be able to run a mile in 5 minutes 27 seconds, now my time has slowed to an unimpressive 6 minutes 59 seconds. My average pulse was once 65 bpm with a blood pressure of 110/62, and now it is 75 bpm with a blood pressure of 120/76.

But by breathing, and meditation alone, the lowest I have measured my pulse (avg. pulse is 75 bpm) during static apnea was 41 bpm.

On April 14th, 2009 while visiting my family in Montreal, I achieved another personal record of exceeding my theoretical maximum heart rate of 183 bpm by 5 bpm to 188 bpm within my grandmother's sauna on her lake lot.

The first sauna session was 11 minutes 30 seconds (84.5 Celsius, Humidity 11 %, Humidex 114 Celsius), and I reached my peak heart rate of 188 bpm 7 minutes 41 seconds into my second sauna session(97 Celsius, Humidity 8%, Humidex 131 Celsius).

And I did a third sauna session for 10 minutes 46 seconds (100 Celsius, Humidity 8%, Humidex 139 Celsius) but my heart rate only reached 181 bpm.

This was proof to me, that I can push my physiology to higher limits.

Whether it's static apnea or enduring the sauna, there is always a fear of pushing one's self too far. Ironically, it is the same fear which adversely affects one's physiological response to the environment. Both are dangerous practices but where more effective measures in learning the degree of congruency between my own perceived psychological limits and my body's ability to handle such limits.

Being of proud Finnish background, I have been subject to Sauna's since I was 5 years of age. My first Sauna record dates back to September 15th, 1994 when I endured 115 Celsius, humidity of 4 % and humidex of 146 Celsius (with steam) for 4 minutes, 16 seconds.

After which I jumped into the much cooler lake water (18 Celsius) and realized I pushed my limits a bit too far when I couldn't fix my vision on one spot, but rather saw the world spinning vertically around me.

On January 1st, 2010, Edmonton's CTV (channel 2 news) did a piece on a 5 meter high ice sculpture I had built in my backyard.

By January 29th, 2010 my ice sculpture grew to stand 21 foot, 11 inch (6.6 meters).



Darryl Learie - 2010

It stood 44 % of the current world record, and I had built it all on my own. I knew it was Edmonton's tallest ice sculpture due to the research I had done – but Edmonton was not too interested in recording such a fact.

And I felt it was unfair I could never compete with million dollar corporations that made 48 foot sculptures using a crane, with pre-ordered ice blocks, and employees at their disposal. It was like such corporations could just buy a world record for a given price.

I really felt cheated on that effort.

It was surprising and touching to see all the children and parents who came to observe the giant structure. It felt so good to add a little awe in a neighborhood mostly known for petty crime, and poverty.

On June 11th, 2010 I was published on page 2 of the Edmonton Sun for KAPing (Kite Aerial Photography). I later found out the article ran nationwide from the Vancouver Sun to the Toronto Sun.

This was a massive success for me, despite eventually flying a kite-cam to a record 685 feet, and a balloon cam to 890 feet shortly there-after. The reason this was such a success for me was the powerful symbolism of it.

The article quoted, "The sky is the limit for Darryl Learie."



Darryl Learie - 2010

Here I was living in a low income neighborhood, on a disability pension with my fiancée, and I have always had my eye on the sky, and the world would soon know it.

August 28th, 2010 I created a balloon ball (or clump) consisting of 500 balloons blown, and tied together. The idea was to have all of the community's children pop the balloons to mark of our first, "Youngstown Olympics."

137 of those 500 balloons were blown in 1 hour.

And it is here where my destiny crossed with thousands of balloons. After I posted the videos onto YouTube, a YouTube fan was so touched – he sent me \$ 35 cash (anonymously) via mail.

The views were going crazy, it was obvious that people love balloons – everyone loves balloons, and I loved blowing balloons (The more balloons the better).

October, 2010 I bought the 2011 edition of Guinness to find-out that on page 92, Felipe Nascimento (Brazil) blew up 320 balloons in 1 hour.

"Oh my God", I thought, "I could never blow up so many balloons-that's crazy." I've only done 137 to his 320.

On December 6th, 2010 was the day of my 37th birthday, and while checking the stats on my YouTube videos, I find a comment by Charles Servizio.

Charles had commented on a YouTube tribute video I made from his tape he sent me back in 1995, and signed his comment with his e-mail address.

"I would like to thank you for this video. You did a great job with it! My daughter said she saw another one you created that included the one-finger pushup record. Do you still have it? I would like to save it.

Thanks again for the great work you did with my pushup record.

Charles Servizio"

I was so excited, I immediately wrote to him, and started sending him the files. Soon we were talking by phone, and e-mailing one another.

I felt bad that I had never returned his original tape from 1995, and never achieved a world record to call my own after all he did for me, so long ago. It was time to make it happen.

First I began working on building as much of a tribute to Charles on the internet, since Guinness no longer published his 17 year standing record of 46,001 push-ups. So I began working on a Wikipedia article for Charles, and contacting Dr.Laue from Alternative Book of Records to let him know I had a video of Charles (since Dr.Laue had published a very popular list of push-up world records on the internet).

And after a few e-mails back and forth with Dr.Laue, I started inquiring if any of my previous personal records would qualify for his Book of Alternative Records.

Dr.Laue had informed me that I should shoot for the most balloons blown up in 1 hour, and had sent me the required criteria which was by the same standard as Guinness. I immediately learned that the balloons had to be blown up to at least 20 cm in diameter (Then I realized the average diameter of the 137 balloons I blew up in 1 hour was 28 cm).

Then I decided it was time to attempt another (hopefully successful world record fundraiser).

Here is a past attempt that was successful; back in March 12th, 1994, I had won the Edmonton's Sexual Assault Centre's " Summit-Up event". It was a stair climb event, up and down the 27 floors of Edmonton's downtown Commerce building.

By late 1995, I had planned to do a 12 hour push-up marathon (my 12 hour record was 6,010 push-ups) to raise money for the Centre, but I was denied.

So now more recently, I got in touch with Fusion (A Christian organization that empowers the Youth and the community) who had an office in the Boy's and Girl's club a few blocks from my home. We had decided to shoot for an August fundraiser of blowing up the most balloons in a 24 hour period (which Dr.Laue was willing to accept as a new record category).

On January 9th, 2011 I decided to see how many balloons I could blow up in an hour, if I kept the balloons at a much smaller diameter just above the 20cm criteria – I blew up 244 balloons (72 % of the current world record of 335 by Brian Jackson).

I learned of Brian Jackson from Dr. Laue, so I sent Brian Jackson an e-mail I found on his "I believe website". I informed Brian that I had reached 72% of his world record. Brian complimented me; and then he let me know he was planning to retake his own record on April 12th, 2011.

Then on January 29th, 2011 I decided to step-up my pace, and focus – I ended breaking his world record un-officially with 351 balloons.

I choose my best balloons (the one's which would not pop, or unexpectedly deflate) for the attempt.

That was a hard attempt as my 2 fingers of my left hand developed 3 rather large and painful blisters in the first 45 minutes. And wrapping the neck of the balloons around my blistered fingers to tie them off was excruciating, but I told myself, "Brian Jackson would not quit" – so I didn't quit and I tolerated the pain.

I told Brian Jackson by e-mail of my un-official success, and his words were, "congratulations," "and you didn't submit a claim?"

I knew Brian was going to go for the record again on April 12th, 2011 so I contacted Edmonton's City TV (channel 7) using their website, and explained that I broke this record, and needed media to confirm my breaking it (I also needed witnesses).

By the next day, I had a call from the host of City TV's BT-Edmonton show. Who told me that had a spot for February 9th, 2011 – perfect, I said yes.

I needed to train, the very first day (February 1st, 2011) my fiancée and I went to Jasper Place Pool, and I set a new record within the steam room; 28 minutes, 4 seconds at 45 C with a humidity of 90 %, and a Humidex of 87 C.

I am an absolute believer in the steam room, which differs quite a lot from the physiological benefits of the sauna.

The air within the steam room is oversaturated with water (although not gaseous water, that happens at much higher temperatures), and because of this, there is no evaporation from one's cooling sweat. And it is that evaporation that cools one's body as heat within the sweat is dispersed into the air.

As a result the body slowly overheats, the heart attempts to pump faster to push blood to the surface of the much cooler skin. But the skin cannot cool, and thus the heart beats even faster – hence aerobic benefits resulting from lengthy duration in steam rooms.

I've researched, and verified this fact with my own pulse, and blood pressure instruments. And blood pressure even drops due to the vascular system of the body expanding to allow more blood to flow – unless my body differs from others.

I would greatly attribute my many steam room sessions to my world record balloon feat, and my 4 minute static apnea. It's rather difficult to breathe air that's almost completely saturated with water (our lungs simply cannot extract oxygen from water) – which makes the environment perfect for breathing exercises.

The most beneficial breathing for blowing up balloons is (power) chest breathing verses diaphragm breathing. That is where a person inhales as much air via the expansion of the chest, holds their breath for 5 seconds, and releases all air at once.

Of course, anyone who enters the steam room dehydrated, lacks to drink any water during their duration, has no measure of their pulse, and ignores the symptomologies of heat stroke (headache, confusion, delusions, etc) with the attitude of outperforming everyone – will certainly die.

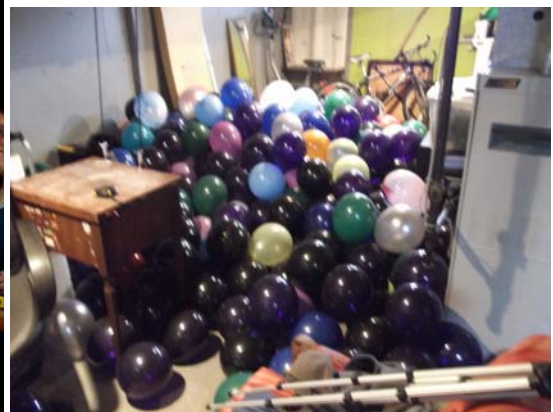
On February 3rd, 2011 I knew I had to practice, and see what pace I can keep – in short, I had to push myself. So I decided with 2 band-aids around my sore fingers to blow up 1,000 balloons as fast as possible.

I decided to use my junk balloons as all my balloons were purchase from the dollar store, and many were malformed or torn, etc.

It took me 3 hours, 51 minutes to finally blow up all 1,000 balloons (including the two 5 minute breaks I took for a smoke).



Darryl Learie – World Record – 2011



Darryl Learie – Basement Practice - 2011

Every second day after that, I blew up balloons for an hour – until I barely broke the record again using my junk balloons.

The night before that fateful day, I was nervous, anxious, and knew I would resent myself if I didn't break the record officially – I really did not like that I had 1 chance verses practicing in my basement where I could try and try again and post my successes onto YouTube.

On the big day, February 9th, 2011 – I was set up with Fusion's Jocelyn Hansen to my right, and Fusion's Leah Uptigrove to my left. My fiancée Deborah was filming off stage for later submission, and Deborah's son Bryan Szalecki was behind me.

I had invited Fusion on my behalf, and asked for their assistance. I made sure to make my dedications clear; I dedicate this world record attempt to God, my daughter Raven Lapatak, Charles Servizio, Brian Jackson, RJ O' Hagan aka Lulu Vetter on YouTube, and the Bullied, the mentally ill, and the homeless.

I don't remember much around me while I blew up 446 balloons in an hour, I was just too focused, but I did it (not sure how) – the Glory is God's (not my own).

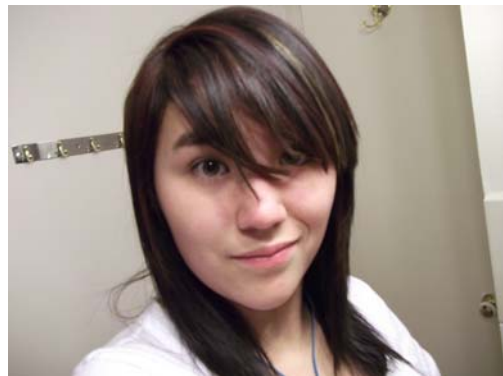
To this day, I have 404 personal Records documented in my Personal Records Book, and 1 World Record.

Special Thanks to ca.fusioninternational.org Jim Moore for sponsoring my attempt.



Darryl Learie (Glory to God sign) – 2011

(Right to Left, Jocelyn Hansen (Fusion), Paul Robertson (Fusion),
Deborah Strobel (Finacee), Darryl Learie, Lia Chasse, Ashley Strobel,
And Leah Uptigrove)



Daughter, Raven Lapatak – I Love You, Raven
(My greatest success story – my daughter)