



10 at the top

We're proud to feature 10 locals, organizations and people alike, in every issue, who embody the spirit of Santa Barbara: unique, beautiful, wealthy in such a variety of ways. Naming just 10 is a challenge, and we invite you to submit your ideas to info@griffin-pub.com for future issues!

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photography by Clint Weisman

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Johnny G

He calls it "a hiccup"; the diagnosis in 2004 of a virus that severely damaged his heart. Suddenly, Johnny G, the invincible athlete who revolutionized the health and fitness industry by creating the phenomenon of Spinning was flat on his back and pondering his very existence.

"There I was, at the peak of my career", Johnny explains, sitting comfortably in the living room with his wife, Jodi, a gifted designer. "My company was thriving; literally hundreds of thousands of people Spinning in classes around the world and I could barely walk from one side of the room to the next."

Humbling? Yes, but for Johnny G, the man who thought nothing of cycling from L.A. to New York in the grueling 3100 mile Race Across America and a man whose personal motto has always been "keep moving", the idea of bowing out or even retiring at such a young age was simply devastating.

In hindsight, that "hiccup" would prove to be one of the most profound times in Johnny G's life. For as he struggled to heal his physical heart, his spiritual heart took over and he made the decision, that whatever direction his entrepreneurial passions would take in the future, his ultimate goal would be to help others.

"I kept having this vision of a home made hand cycle I had seen at a triathlon for physically challenged athletes in 2002. I kept redesigning it in my head, realizing that suddenly, my whole life had changed. I felt the anguish and the frustration that people who are disabled or rehabilitating from terrible accidents have, and I wanted to find a way to answer their needs as well as those of the typical athlete".

For six years, Johnny G poured his energy and personal funds into developing a sleek, effective and fun exercise machine; eventually building 200 prototypes of a stationary hand cycle, which he ultimately called the Krankcycle. Although designed to be used in a group setting, similar to his Spinning program, it could also be used in medical fitness for it was wheelchair accessible. "I love the concept of inclusive fitness," Johnny G says, "which requires the fitness industry to consider the needs of the physically challenged. Kranking builds up core strength, increases muscle use and develops sculpted arms and tight abs without ever doing a single crunch or curl, plus you can do it in a standing or seated position. It gives everyone the ability to become strong."

Like his ever-popular Spinning program, which Johnny G created in 1987, Kranking comes with a training system that is steeped in mind-body philosophies as well as a certification program for instructors through his College of Knowledge.

Yet, replicating his success from Spinning is the last thing Johnny G thinks about. For his new motto which inspires not only his business life but his family life, which he shares with his wife, Jodi, the Creative Director of his company, and his three grown children, Jordan, Jason and Jackie, is "compete with nothing, compliment everything."

"There is so much to be thankful for", this soft spoken fitness legend says as he smiles at the thought of his newest endeavor. "And with the Krankcycle, I feel like I have a new purpose; a way to give back that includes so many more than Spinning could."

For in Johnny G's vision, giving everyone, from the athlete in his prime, to the wounded war hero in a wheelchair, a chance to get fit, get healthy, and get whole is greater than any success he's ever achieved so far. Time for all of us, as Johnny G would say, to "get Kranking!"

by Diane Hall