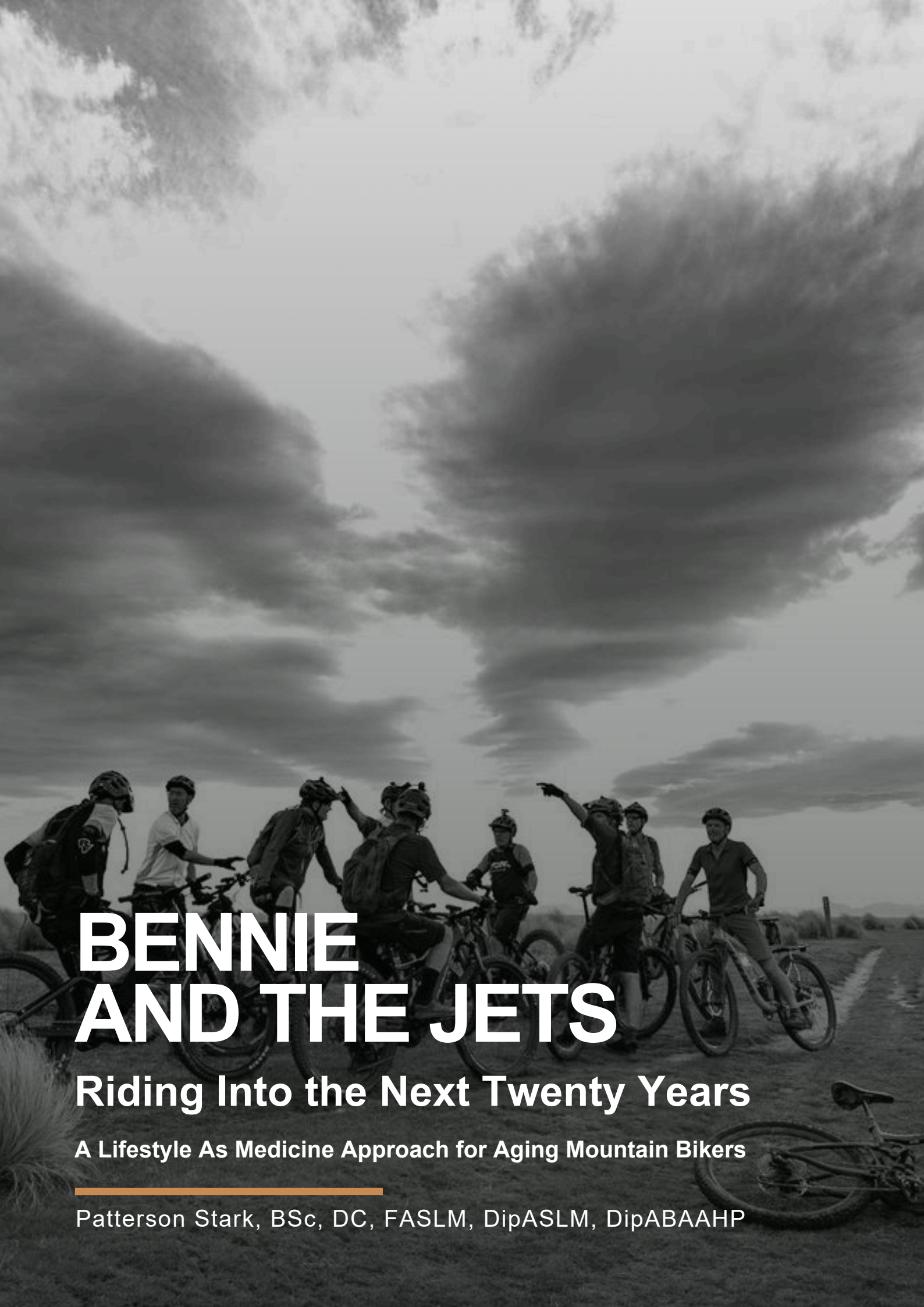


A black and white photograph of a group of mountain bikers on a dirt trail. There are about eight people, some standing and some on their bikes, looking towards the right. The sky is filled with large, dramatic clouds. The overall mood is adventurous and active.

BENNIE AND THE JETS

Riding Into the Next Twenty Years

A Lifestyle As Medicine Approach for Aging Mountain Bikers

Patterson Stark, BSc, DC, FASLM, DipASLM, DipABAAHP

BENNIE AND THE JETS

Riding Into the Next Twenty Years

**A Lifestyle As Medicine Approach for
Aging Mountain Bikers Everywhere**



By

**Patterson Stark, BSc, DC, FASLM, DipASLM, DipABAAHP,
A.J. (Ancient Jet)**



THE TRAIL AHEAD

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Science & Reader Resources

A man wearing a white bicycle helmet, yellow-tinted sunglasses, and a blue jacket is smiling while sitting on a bicycle. He is positioned on the left side of the frame, with his hands on the handlebars. The bicycle has a black frame and a red reflector on the front. In the background, there is a calm body of water reflecting the sky. A grassy hill with some trees is visible on the right side of the water. A faint rainbow is visible in the sky above the hill. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

FOREWORD

A Humble Offering

“We are all living on the sharp end of the stick - stay alive and well!”

FOREWORD

Starting a Fire

I feel incredibly privileged to be part of the Jets. My life's work has been dedicated to health, human physiology and deep clinical connection, and for nearly half a century I have been trying to connect the dots. It has been a long and winding trail - sometimes difficult and, at moments, life-threatening - but today by mere luck, I find myself surrounded by a unique tribe with the genuine potential to break away from the conventional pack of "the aged".

I firmly believe we can ride into the future with robust health, vibrant energy and, with a little luck, plus intelligent living, it can be done without catastrophic chronic disease interfering with our sacred Tuesday-night activities most importantly.

The biology, however, has rules. Our cells do not negotiate with enthusiasm, expensive bike parts or denial. This little booklet is intended as a trail guide: a way of checking that we are colouring within the lines of what is biologically possible so we can collect as much performance and health-span as possible.

The choice, of course, remains entirely ours. As one of the Elders of the group, my humble goal is simply to help keep the tribe robust—and to pass some useful longevity knowledge to our families and friends along the way.

Live Long and Prosper,
Patterson Stark



COUPLED WITH DETERMINATION MOST KNOWLEDGE
AND WISDOM ARE THE PROGENY OF FAILURE



CHAPTER 1

Signs You Might Be an Aging Mountain Biker

The transition is subtle. Until it isn't.

YOU MIGHT OFFICIALLY BE AN AGING IF...

Early Warning Signs

- **Discussion topics.** Tyre pressure, tubeless sealant and post-ride menus now outrank politics.
- **Wardrobe secrets.** More Ground Effect, merino and padded undershorts than formal clothing - and half a bathroom drawer versus three drawers of bike parts and tools.
- **Post-ride fuel.** Beer is now carefully described as “essential electrolyte and carbohydrate replenishment”, occasionally followed by a second and, on a full moon, a third.
- **Distance definition.** Kilometres matter less than how long the start time is debated and how soon a respectable arrival at the pub can be achieved.
- **The Stats Table.** Statman’s numbers are accepted as the absolute, indisputable *Podium of Truth*.
- **Photo archives** of the tribe show ample hair with colour!



THE MECHANICAL - IT HAPPENS



Occasionally a Jet limps into the pub early with a broken chain or something. When this happens, waiting for the tribe to arrive can be a lonely and painful experience.



CHAPTER 2

A View of the Jets

History, stubbornness, friendship—and the inconvenient arrival of age.

The Tribe, Then and Now

Legend has it that decades ago, in the time before “e”, a small and stubborn tribe gathered at the invitation of John Bennett to ride the Port Hills. Fittingly, Elton John’s 1973 hit supplied the battle cry, and Bennie and the Jets were underway.

The mission was simple: ride hard, sweat heavily with friends, and conquer rugged trails on analog bikes, heavy gear ratios and 26-inch rims. Ahh, those were the days.

Somewhere along the dusty singletracks of Canterbury, it was quietly observed that a subtle but inevitable phenomenon was taking shape at Jet Central: **Jets were getting older.** And that realisation started me thinking: can we do better with the aging process and slow down that damn clock?

Then came the e-bike. A passing fad, surely. A decade later the E-Heavies and E-Lites are still here, while the AnaSlogs continue to insist that these battery rigs are only trying to look like real bikes.

So the real question is simple: can we keep doing this for another couple of decades—with less risk and more laughter along the way?



Bike parts have broken with heroic regularity. Rider parts have broken with predictable consistency. Local repair shops have prospered magnificently.

“Beneath the banter is something much more important: a remarkable, unbreakable thread of friendship and shared adventure.”

CHAPTER 3

The Technology of Longevity & Health Span

The most important rider upgrade will not be made by Fox, Shimano or Sram

The Biological Game of Life and Death

The ultimate answer to longevity in the saddle cannot be found in a carbon wheelset or suspension upgrade. It lies in the science of how daily behaviours shape long-term health and performance.

Every day—with every meal, every hour of sleep, every trail climbed and every period of stress—we influence the internal environment in which our cells must live. Over years and decades, those choices accumulate cell by cell, tissue by tissue and organ by organ.

The consequences can appear as chronic inflammation, joint pain, cardiovascular decline, high blood pressure, weakened immunity, cognitive change and digestive problems. The central Lifestyle Medicine proposition is simple: a meaningful proportion of this burden is modifiable through the way we live.



TRAIL NOTE

One meal never defines a life. A pattern repeated for decades does.



LOOKING AHEAD

The Jets Longevity Advantage

By simply showing up and being part of this group, the Jets already possess several built-in biological advantages.

- Maintain an active body weight and good functional capacity.
- Exercise regularly on demanding aerobic terrain.
- Maintain strong, long-standing friendships.
- Support one another—chains, tyres, gates and E-Heavies included.
- Avoid the worst excesses of substance abuse.
- Build trails together.
- Enjoy recognition, accountability and belonging within the tribe.

Sometimes the smartest thing you do for longevity is just turn up, again and again.

Showing Up Counts!

Consistency is the quiet superpower of the tribe. The group’s own riding statistics make the point better than any lecture.



52 × ?

There is no magic number here. The point is repetition: weeks become seasons, seasons become years, and years become a very different aging trajectory. One that keeps you in the saddle.

NO MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE.
These deeply ingrained habits are almost certainly working in our favour.
Your mileage may vary - of course.

CHAPTER 4

The Seven Pillars of Staying in the Saddle

JQL

Jets Quality of Life: the operating system for the next twenty-five years.

PILLAR 1

Nutrition — Fuel for the Engine

Your body is a high-performance machine built from biological parts with a history stretching back billions of years. What goes in the tank influences tomorrow's performance—and how long the engine lasts.

Energy, Delivery, Recovery

01 · Mitochondria

Support the cellular power plants that generate ATP for long climbs.

02 · Vascular health

Support heart, arteries and capillaries that deliver oxygen and determine recovery.

03 · Systemic recovery

Fibre, micronutrients and phytochemicals support muscle, tendon, joint and metabolic systems, while supporting DNA repair and immune surveillance.



Malcolm shows why and how he gets constantly more mozzarella on his pizza!

Greens on Every Plate — Yeah.



Practical target: make the default meal recognisably whole-food and plant-based. Perfection is not required; direction is.

A diet rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds supplies fibre, micronutrients and a wide range of phytonutrients is common to all long-lived populations in the Blue Zones. (95% Plant based)

The most current epidemiology science consistently associates dietary patterns lower in saturated fat and refined sugars, and highest in minimally processed plant foods, with lower risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several other chronic conditions. A wider lifestyle picture, includes Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis and Cognitive Impairment which will seriously cut short the number of riding days left. The one ring binds them all - Inflammation!

“And, while the evidence linking e-bikes to hair loss remains regrettably incomplete, we should probably continue the investigation.”

From Epidemiology to Muscle

THE BIG PICTURE

The original manuscript draws on the Seven Countries tradition, Walter C. Willett's nutritional epidemiology, and the author's own long clinical and personal journey. These examples are illustrations—not proof by themselves.

THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Put to the test of time, after surviving a cancer diagnosis that once looked terminal, and after decades in clinical practice, my wife and I moved toward a roughly 99% whole-food, plant-based lifestyle. At 74 I feel lighter, stronger and more energetic than I did a decade ago.

SARCOPENIA: THE ENEMY OF INDEPENDENCE

Aging riders must actively resist the progressive loss of muscle mass, strength and power. Combined research suggests approximately **1.0–1.2 g protein/kg/day**, obtainable from lentils, beans, tempeh, nuts and seeds ideally. This target should be individualised when medically appropriate. See <https://www.starkhealth.com/post/protein-101-how-and-why-high-protein-accelerates-aging-and-disease>



PILLAR 2

Physical Activity - Keep the Machine Moving

Mountain biking is close to a perfect exercise laboratory: cardiovascular work, balance, reaction time, leg strength, insulin sensitivity, coordination and a compelling reason to get outdoors.

Zone 2 - Endurance

Long, steady efforts where conversation remains possible. Aerobic capacity, mitochondrial density and capillary function.

Resistance training

Preserve strength, fast-twitch fibres and bone density—and maintain the ability to get off the ground after the inevitable indignity.

Mobility + flexibility

Regular work on hips, spine, shoulders and ankles to preserve range, control and comfort on the bike.



Trail building, incidentally, ticks several boxes at once—strength, mobility, purpose and tribe. Very efficient. And ending with a great asset for the local tribes.

PILLAR 3

Sleep — The Ultimate Recovery Tool

Ignoring sleep hygiene is the biological equivalent of leaving your mountain bike sitting in salt water overnight! Eventually, it's guaranteed something is going to break prematurely..

Sleep is an active recovery period for the brain, endocrine system, immune system, metabolism and musculoskeletal tissues. The glymphatic system is particularly active during sleep, helping clear metabolic waste from the brain.

Recovery is training. Sleep is where ultimate repair happens. Quality sleep is **very** important.

DR STARK'S

Sleep Hygiene Checklist

- Aim for roughly **7–8 hours** of good-quality sleep.
- Power down phones, tablets and bright screens **45–60 minutes before bed**.
- Keep the bedroom as free as practical from work, laptops and television.
- A cool room generally supports sleep onset and continuity.
- Choose the sleep position in which you breathe and sleep most comfortably.
- If sleep apnoea is suspected, **get evaluated**.
- Get outside into natural morning light for **10–15 minutes** soon after waking.

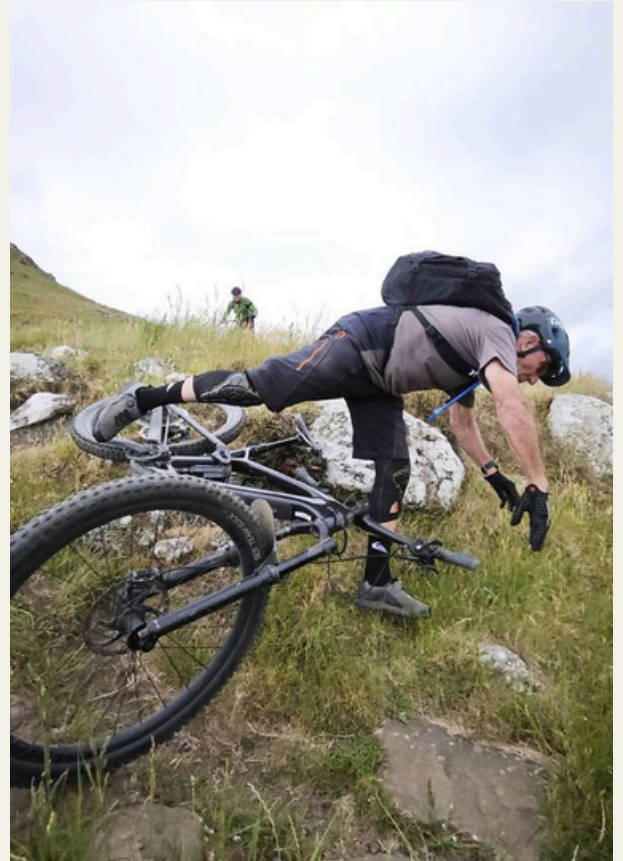
THE TEST: wake feeling restored often enough that the next day is not being financed by caffeine and willpower.

Stress Management — Resetting the System

Chronic psychological or physical stress can keep the stress-response system activated, affecting sleep, glucose regulation, blood pressure, recovery and behaviour.

The ability to return toward baseline after a stress event is part of healthy resilience.

Fortunately, the Jets have built-in stress-busting rituals: time outdoors, vigorous exercise, deep laughter with close friends and the shared calamities and adventures of the trail.



Stress - yes or no? Sometimes gravity makes the decision for you. (Thanks to our “Stunt Double” Malcolm for demonstrating a gravity stress challenge for the Jets.)

THE DAILY RESET ·
5-20 MINUTES · STRESS
RELIEF

Three simple moves

1 · Right posture

Sit comfortably, spine upright, shoulders relaxed,
chest open.

2 · Right breath - observe and follow

3 · Right thought

Rest attention on the breath or a simple mantra.
When the mind wanders, bring it back without
judgement—not to the next bike repair.

The job is not to eliminate stress. It is to practise
recovery on purpose until that peaceful post-ride
Tuesday-night feeling becomes easier to access -
ALL WEEK LONG.

Avoid Harmful Substances

Balancing the Vices

Smoking, frequent ultra-processed food intake (**including bacon**) and heavy alcohol consumption damage vascular and metabolic health. The longevity principle is straightforward: reduce avoidable exposures and make conscious choices.

With a beer or maybe two after a hard Tuesday-night ride, or a glass of wine at the bach, let it be a deliberate pleasure rather than a health strategy.

The Jets have an established tradition of winding down together. **The social ritual matters. The alcohol is not the medicine.**

PILLAR 6

Social Connection

The Jets Advantage

Weekly rides provide far more than exercise: accountability, companionship, identity, shared memory and a place to belong.

“The ride is medicine. But the riders matter more.”

Research by Holt-Lunstad and colleagues has shown a strong relationship between social connection and survival. Whatever the exact number of years it adds, the direction is clear: relationships matter.

Strategic Fasting — The Stark Protocol



Periodic fasting has been an area of research and practical interest for me for close to a decade. Humans have experienced periods of food scarcity—and sometimes chosen fasting—for millennia.

Different fasting approaches place the body in a temporary low-energy state and can alter glucose, insulin and cellular signalling. Autophagy—the recycling of damaged cellular components—is part of the biological story, although exact human timing and magnitude remain active areas of research. In healthy older adults, Time-Respected Eating (TRE) or occasional fasted riding may be reasonable when medically appropriate; individual health, medications and recovery needs are to be considered.

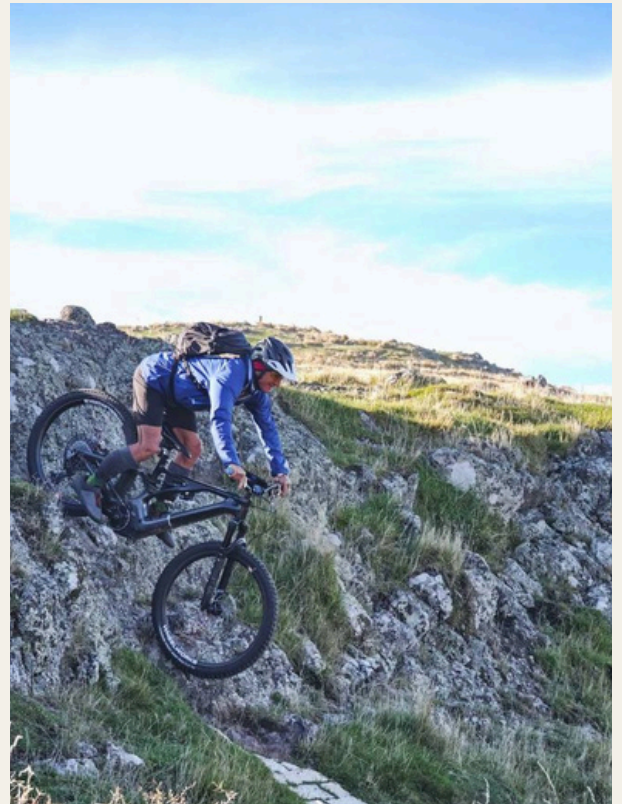
THE METAPHOR: take the machine apart, clean what needs cleaning, then put it back together intelligently.

The aim is simple: keep the kit working well for as many decades as biology and good fortune allow.

Periodic metabolic discipline

Research on fasting and fasting-mimicking diets suggests potential improvements in metabolic risk factors and markers related to aging, although protocols, populations and outcomes vary. Valter Longo, PhD, and colleagues reported that three five-day fasting-mimicking diet cycles, once per month for three months, were associated with a median reduction of about 2.5 years in a validated biological-age estimate. This does not mean participants would live 2.5 years longer; it means the biomarker estimate shifted younger by that amount after three cycles. Show me a medicine that can do that?

For the Jets, the practical version proposed is a structured **five-day fasting-mimicking nutrition cycle several times per year**, used intelligently and only when medically appropriate.



Better than average odds are what you want against time & gravity.

The point is not punishment. It is periodic metabolic discipline in a harsh overfed, sedentary environment.

CHAPTER 5

The Great Debate

Analog vs. E-Bike

THE ANALOG PURISTS

“Real cyclists” should suffer the climbs under their own muscle power, earning every millimetre of the descent through sweat, pride and lactic acid.

VS

THE E-BIKE PIONEERS

“Smart cyclists” ride farther, explore deeper trails, tackle steeper technical climbs and finish with enormous smiles on their faces. (Author bias)

Jets in Active Debate

THE SCIENTIFIC VERDICT

Consistency wins

Sports-science evidence indicates that e-bike riders can still achieve substantial cardiovascular workloads on technical trails.

The more important longevity point is simpler: consistency matters enormously.

The best bike is the one that keeps you excited to get outside, week after week and year after year.

If electric assistance keeps an older rider in the tribe, on the hills and accumulating meaningful exercise, that is not a failure of cycling purity.

Let us officially call it a draw.



Night Jets Regrouping, E and Analog alike



Rider Physiology & The Longevity Ride Plan

VO₂ MAX

Cardiorespiratory fitness tends to decline with age in the general population. Lifelong training can markedly slow that decline and preserve independence and metabolic reserve.

SARCOPENIA

Cycling alone is not enough. Aging riders need resistance training, sufficient dietary protein, balance and mobility work to preserve strength, joint stability and physical independence.

THE JETS LONGEVITY RIDE PLAN

Operate the machine

DAILY

Whole-food, plant-based fuel ·
10–12 hour eating window ·
5–20 minute stress reset ·
protect 7–8 hours sleep.

WEEKLY

2–3 rides where life and
recovery allow · two focused
resistance sessions · regular
mobility and balance.

QUARTERLY

Where medically appropriate,
use a structured five-day
whole-food fasting-mimicking
cycle as outlined in the Stark
Protocol.

YEARLY

Age-appropriate preventive
care; review blood pressure,
glucose control, lipids and
relevant screening. Keep the
biological dashboard green.



The purpose of medical testing is not to become obsessed with numbers;
it is to find drift early enough to do something useful about it.

Scorecard · Part I

Rate yourself honestly from 1 to 5. This is not a diagnostic instrument; it is a practical self-audit.

1 · NUTRITION

1 processed-food dominant · 3
mixed diet with a reasonable
whole-food base · 5
predominantly whole-food,
plant-based and fibre-rich.

MY SCORE _____
/ 5

2 · PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

1 mostly sedentary · 3
consistent weekly
cardiovascular exercise · 5
mountain biking + strength +
mobility + balance.

MY SCORE _____
/ 5

3 · SLEEP

1 severe chronic disruption · 3
roughly 6–7 hours with variable
quality · 5 restorative, regular
sleep with strong hygiene.

MY SCORE _____
/ 5

4 · STRESS MANAGEMENT

1 constantly overwhelmed · 3
moderate balance with some
recovery practices · 5 excellent
resilience with a deliberate
daily reset.

MY SCORE _____
/ 5

Scorecard · Part II

5 · HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

1 smoking/vaping and/or heavy daily alcohol · 3 moderate alcohol use ·
5 smoke-free, minimal alcohol and very low harmful exposure.

MY SCORE
/ 5

6 · SOCIAL CONNECTION

1 mostly isolated · 3 moderate connection · 5 active tribal connection:
showing up, contributing and maintaining deep bonds.

MY SCORE
/ 5

7 · METABOLIC RESET / FASTING

1 eating across most waking hours · 3 consistent overnight fast around
12 hours · 5 strategic fasting/FMD used appropriately.

MY SCORE
/ 5

TOTAL

 / 35

30–35 · ELITE LONGEVITY RIDER

24–29 · STRONG FOUNDATION

18–23 · ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

<18 · TIME TO UPGRADE THE ENGINE

As The Older Rider

I suggest the goal is to still be riding together twenty years from now.
Not simply to ride this season or conquer one more technical climb.
But that may just happen anyway!

Where do you want to be riding when you turn 80 or 90?

- On your local trails wherever they be or adventures yet to be had you now have a choice.
- For the Jets, Favourites are plentiful,
 - Hanmer Springs — cruising a new trail under the pine canopy.
 - Castle Hill — carving the sweeping technical singletracks.
 - Lake Clearwater — pausing beside glassy alpine water with snow-capped peaks behind you.
 - Somewhere entirely new — Patagonia, Verbier, or the outer frontiers of our collective health span.

THE EVIDENCE BEHIND THE SEVEN PILLARS

PILLAR 1 — Nutrition — Fuel for the Engine

Your body is a high-performance machine built from biological parts with a history stretching back billions of years. What goes in the tank influences tomorrow's performance—and how long the engine lasts.

A diet rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, whole grains, nuts and seeds supplies fibre, micronutrients and a wide range of phytonutrients. Modern epidemiology consistently associates dietary patterns lower in saturated fat and refined sugars, and richer in minimally processed plant foods, with lower risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and several other chronic conditions.

Practical target: make the default meal recognisably whole-food and plant-based. Perfection is not required; direction is.

PILLAR 2 — Physical Activity — Keep the Machine Moving

Mountain biking is close to a perfect exercise laboratory: cardiovascular work, balance, reaction time, leg strength, insulin sensitivity, coordination and a compelling reason to get outdoors.

Zone 2 endurance supports aerobic capacity, mitochondrial density and capillary function. Resistance training helps preserve strength, fast-twitch fibres and bone density. Mobility and flexibility work on the hips, spine, shoulders and ankles helps preserve range, control and comfort on the bike.

PILLAR 3 — Sleep — The Ultimate Recovery Tool

Sleep is an active recovery period for the brain, endocrine system, immune system, metabolism and musculoskeletal tissues.

The glymphatic system is particularly active during sleep, helping clear metabolic waste from the brain. Recovery is training.

Sleep is where much of it happens. Aim for roughly 7–8 hours of good-quality sleep, reduce bright-screen exposure before bed, keep the room cool, and get natural morning light soon after waking.

PILLAR 4 — Stress Management — Resetting the System

Chronic psychological or physical stress can keep the stress-response system activated, affecting sleep, glucose regulation, blood pressure, recovery and behaviour. The ability to return toward baseline after a stress event is part of healthy resilience. A simple daily reset can include comfortable upright posture, slow nasal breathing and focused attention on the breath or a simple mantra.

PILLAR 5 — Avoid Harmful Substances — Balancing the Vices

Smoking, frequent ultra-processed food intake and heavy alcohol consumption damage vascular and metabolic health. The principle is straightforward: reduce avoidable exposures and make conscious choices. The social ritual matters; alcohol is not the medicine.

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Weekly rides provide far more than exercise: accountability, companionship, identity, shared memory and a place to belong.

Research has shown a strong relationship between social connection and survival.

The ride is medicine. But the riders matter more.

PILLAR 7 — Strategic Fasting — The Stark Protocol

Different fasting approaches place the body in a temporary low-energy state and can alter glucose, insulin and cellular signalling. Autophagy—the recycling of damaged cellular components—is part of the biological story, although exact human timing and magnitude remain active areas of research. Research on fasting and fasting-mimicking diets suggests potential improvements in metabolic risk factors and markers related to aging, although protocols, populations and outcomes vary.

The practical version proposed for the Jets is a structured five-day fasting-mimicking nutrition cycle several times per year, with individual health, medications and recovery needs taken into account.

The point is not punishment. It is periodic metabolic discipline.

STARK LIFESTYLE MEDICINE RESEARCH LIBRARY
READER'S TRAIL MAP

THE TRAILHEAD

You do not need to read all of this research.

- Start with the pillar where your own scorecard is weakest.
- The objective is moving in the right direction - not perfection.
- More good riding years equals great living years.
- Fewer bad medical years equals great living years.
- And a better chance of still being out there with your mates, families and friends two decades from now.

The full scientific source catalogue is maintained separately and upgraded weekly in the Stark Lifestyle Medicine Research Library. Ask for a link if you want the deep dive.

Where to Go Deeper

If something in this little book has stirred your curiosity, follow the trail. The full Stark Lifestyle Medicine Research Library extends well beyond the handful of papers on the preceding page.

1 · NUTRITION — BUILD THE MACHINE WELL

Start with Willett and the broader nutritional epidemiology. Then explore Katz, Frame, Jaqua and Storz in the Research Library for dietary patterns, chronic disease prevention, cognition and the practical role of nutrition in Lifestyle Medicine.

2 · PHYSICAL ACTIVITY — KEEP THE MACHINE MOVING

Begin with Pedersen & Saltin and Warburton & Bredin. Then follow Thompson, Haskell, Joy and the physical-activity collection for cardiovascular fitness, strength, exercise prescription and healthy aging.

3 · SLEEP — DO THE REPAIR WORK

Start with St-Onge. Then explore Buysse, Dedhia & Maurer and the Library's sleep-health material for recovery, brain health, cardiometabolic function and restorative sleep.

4 · STRESS MANAGEMENT — LEARN TO COME BACK TO BASELINE

The Library includes work from Lianov, Merlo & Vela, Lee and Braun examining resilience, positive psychology, stress physiology and practical stress-reduction strategies.

5 · AVOID HARMFUL SUBSTANCES — STOP DIGGING THE HOLE

Look to the work of Storz, Kennard, Kolokotroni and Dalal for the evidence around tobacco, excessive alcohol and other avoidable exposures. Longevity is helped not only by **what we do—but by what we decide not to do.**

6 · SOCIAL CONNECTION — KEEP THE TRIBE CLOSE

Begin with Holt-Lunstad. Then explore Martino, Proctor, Burke & Dunne and the broader social-connection literature. For the Jets this may be our secret weapon: belonging, accountability, laughter and simply continuing to show up for one another.

7 · FASTING & TIME-RESPECTED EATING (TRE) — PERIODIC METABOLIC DISCIPLINE

Begin with Wei and Brandhorst. The Library then goes deeper through Brandhorst, Lee, Dorff, Di Biase, Buono, Bauersfeld and others examining short-term fasting, fasting-mimicking diets, metabolic signalling and related clinical applications. Fasting is not appropriate for everyone and should be individualised where health conditions, medications, frailty or nutritional risk are present. www.starkhealth.com has "how to safely fast" materials available.

A person wearing a white helmet and a backpack stands on a dark, rocky ridge. They are holding a smartphone in their right hand and looking out over a vast, hazy mountain range under a soft, orange-hued sky. The person is silhouetted against the light.

BENNIE AND THE JETS

See you out there

Keep showing up. Keep the machine moving. Keep the tribe close.