

# BOOT CAMP in Manhattan

## LONG ISLAND GIRL WANTS YOU!

On a recent Friday night, in the heart of the flatiron district, I got my butt kicked ... by a girl! Don't get the wrong idea. I was looking for it. I had volunteered to accompany a friend to Pure Power Boot Camp - just a hop, skip and a subway ride from my office. It was until that night that I believed I was in decent shape. I thought running 3 times a week, thrown in with a couple of Body Sculpt classes and a Kickboxing class here and there was enough. However, in a camouflaged loft hidden above a color copier shop, I was shown otherwise. And it was all thanks to a very fit and very demanding young woman from Great Neck.

Lauren Brenner grew up like most of us over cultured island girls - shuttled from one after school lesson to another. She excelled in singing, dancing and acting, but most of all, tennis. She was so good; she scored a place in Division One Tennis at Syracuse University where she majored in English. But it was the business woman in her that led Lauren from the mountains to Wall Street. After almost 7 years on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange as a sales trader, Brenner says, "I had enough. I wanted to do something more; something that would impact people's lives in a positive way. I wanted something creative, not monotonous."

So she did what any young woman who wanted to change the world would do. she tested for the FBI. "After 9/11 I wanted to go through boot camp and fight terror." But there were certain aspects of the FBI that weren't for her, so Lauren looked for something else. She put her acting abilities to use in Tony and Tina's Wedding as Madelyn Monroe, but ended that run when she realized her dream. Her need was to combine the things she loved the most; sports, entertainment and business and voila! Pure Power Boot Camp was born. Well, it wasn't exactly voila! Lauren took a trip to Fort Knox in Louisville, Kentucky where she was granted permission to go through the Military Base's obstacle course. When she was sure the idea was a go, she came up with a business plan. Now the search was on. Remember it's all about location! Lauren needed a loft to allow for her design. It needed to be industrial so that her neighbors downstairs didn't suffer chronic headaches and it needed to be accessible. (Almost every subway line stops within a block and there's even a garage across the street!) After two months of searching seven days a week, Lauren made W. 21st Street her home. She took twelve ideas she got from Fort Knox and recreated them in her studio. It was important to her that each one had more than one use and that people of all shapes and sizes and fitness levels could handle them. She also wanted to assure that a workout would not become that word she abhors "monotonous." Lauren dedicated 20 hours a day for the next six weeks painting, decorating and building her obstacle course. And then she asked some Marines she knew who had just gotten back from Iraq to test the track.

When they gave her the thumbs up, she opened her doors. That was in February. The elevator doors opened on the 2nd floor and I thought I had gotten on in New York and landed in ... well, boot camp! Camouflaged netting hung from above the elevator and covered the ceiling. There were tents strewn to my left and an obstacle course covered in crushed rubber and lined with 50 lbs sand bags. (Later I learned those sand bags were not just decorative!) I signed in and was handed my fatigues, a long sleeved T-shirt, dog tags and a canteen (and you NEED that canteen!). I followed instructions and headed to my tent to change. As I exited dressed ready to... workout, I saw a well-dressed businessman step out of the elevator and drop to the floor for push-ups. All of a sudden this 30 year old beauty turned G.I. Jane belts out "You're late! Give me 10 more!" He gives her 10 more and a big smile as he stands up and heads to his tent. Scared, I plead with her not to do that to me. "You're not late," she says and winks. Class starts and there are about 8 comrades all cheering each other on to make it over walls and under hurdles. We swing from ropes reminiscent of 7th gym class, hang from monkey bars, crawl under "barbed wire" (which is really made from cotton!) and roll over logs. Most important we're having fun and building confidence. As I rested for a moment, one of my fellow brave hearts looked at me and said, "I'm not doin' so bad for 62, am I?"

I think Ms. Brenner has fulfilled her destiny.