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A Realistic Goal

Exercise is certainly a requirement for normal health – yet, over the years, an outright mythology concerning exercise has arisen; in the opinion of the average person, the results produced by exercise are somehow "different" from muscular size-strength that comes from regular work. Thus we commonly hear the terms "real strength" and "natural strength" – and the size-strength produced by exercise is looked upon as temporary, or useless, or even dangerous.

Part of such opinions are an expectable result of jealousy – perhaps brought into the open by the fact that outstanding muscular size, unlike high intelligence or great wealth, cannot easily be hidden from the view of others. Comic strip characters are almost invariably given the physiques of advanced bodybuilders – but such development is always presented as "natural" – supposedly, they just grew to such proportions; if they were required to train in order to build or even maintain their muscular size, then that would somehow change their image in the public mind.

Because of this widespread feeling, most advanced bodybuilders soon find themselves living apart, confined to the company of other bodybuilders or of people attracted to bodybuilders for some reason. In our present society, it is almost impossible for the average person to stand out in any way – yet most people are encouraged to stand out, and then considered freaks if they do. A lot depends upon your individual desires – how much attention you want, or can stand – and a lot depends upon your ability to view things in a practical light; I am reminded of Mark Twain's "two-headed stranger" –upon seeing him, one boy remarked that he wouldn't want to be like that, but another boy viewed the possibilities in a more practical light, he said, ". . . Oh, that would be dandy, eat for two but only stump toes for one."

Twenty-odd years ago, when I was in hard muscular condition at a weight of over 200 pounds at a height of just under 5 feet 8 inches, I made it a point to NEVER appear in public in anything except loose-fitting, long sleeved shirts – and as a result, most of the people who knew me were unaware that I had ever trained; a friend of mine surprised me one day when I was loading a film magazine – with my shirt off – and he was literally shocked. We had flown together, traveled together, and he had know me for years – yet he never suspected that I trained with weights. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bill Pearl both make a habit of wearing loose-fitting clothing – and in spite of their size, these men can and do pass in a crowd unnoticed. But most advanced bodybuilders do everything they can to call attention to their size – and then seem to be surprised by the reactions they produce.

In general, unusual muscular size will NOT attract favorable attention; thus, if your well-being depends upon the opinion of others, then attracting attention because of your physique will almost always hurt you far more than it will help you – in the public mind, a man with an outstanding physique "has nothing else," or, even, "can have nothing else." Which, of course, is outright stupidity – but stupidity that can and will hurt you if you are unaware of it.

Attracting actually favorable attention – untainted by jealousy – seems to be almost impossible; so, in the end, it comes down to what you desire –or can stand. But it should be remembered that the price of attracting attention as a result of your physique is always high.

The Arthur Jones Collection

Insofar as "just how much" muscular size-strength you can build – which seems to be the only question of importance to most trainees – it does not now appear that anybody has ever reached his actual limits; and, paradoxically, it appears that most trainees literally prevent themselves from closely approaching their limits of muscular size – primarily by overtraining.

Almost without regard for your starting condition, size of bones, or even your age (within reasonable limits), you should be able to quickly build a level of muscular size-strength that will amaze most people – and some few individuals can reach a muscular size that would amaze anybody; but it now seems to be clear that quickly reaching such a degree of development requires an actually very small amount of training – and please note that word "requires", since it should be clearly understood that more training will literally prevent better final results.

Without single exception up to this point, we have been able to add from 3/8 of an inch to 1/2 inch to the cold measurement of the upper arms of advanced bodybuilders within a matter of a very few days of proper training – even when these same individuals have been unable to add as much as 1/8 inches to their arms as a result of several years of steady training. Having reached what they consider their maximum-possible muscular size, such men are literally shocked to find themselves suddenly growing again – growing fast. Sergio Oliva's arms were huge before he ever heard of DeLand, Florida – but look at the picture of him on page 593; his arms were never before "that big." Franco Columbu was one of the strongest men in the world before he came to DeLand for two weeks of training, but his arms were not as large as they should have been to be in proportion to his other muscular structures – ten months later, when I saw him in New York, his arms were a full inch and a quarter larger. After ten years of steady training – two years with no gains at all – Chuck Amato has gained nearly two full inches in arm size. Casey Viator, starting with arms that were already huge, added a full inch and a quarter to his cold upper-arm measurement. Dozens of other men have done as well – or better; from very brief training.

Eventually, somebody with outstanding potential will start training properly right from the start of his career – and two or three years later, we will see an example of muscular size far beyond anything ever produced up to this point. Will such size be attractive – or even desirable? Attractive? To the average person, certainly not. Desirable? That, of course, is a matter of individual taste; but such an example will be, at least, valuable for scientific purposes – as an example of what can be done. At this point, we don't even know what such a man will look like; since changing the size of a muscle unavoidably changes the shape of the muscle, nobody can yet say just what a fully-developed muscle will look like.

But I can tell you at least this much; if an advanced bodybuilder had suddenly appeared on the scene 400 years ago, he would probably have been burned at the stake – and if you have the potential for unusual muscular size, and if you actually build such size to a maximum-possible degree, you will undoubtedly be looked upon as an outright freak.

In my opinion, a realistic goal is far better – build as much size as you need, but not enough to put you in a class with the freaks; but if becoming a freak is your goal, then there is only one way to do it – and overtraining is NOT the way.