

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“I have never been a weightlifter, lifting weights is bad for you, will make you muscle-bound, probably rupture you, ruin your heart, make you so slow that you could not punch your way out of a wet paper sack, shorten your life; but I have used weights to test my strength. How often? Well, usually three or four times a week. For how long? Oh, two or three hours usually.”

Charles Atlas

About the turn of the last century, a very wealthy man in New York, Bernarr McFadden, who owned an internationally distributed and very popular magazine called *Liberty*, as well as several other successful publications, published a several volume set of books that he named ‘The Encyclopedia Of Exercise.’ Later he published a magazine called ‘Physical Culture.’

McFadden knew very little of value on the subject of exercise, but he was greatly interested in the subject throughout his life, and had the money required to pursue his interests without regard for any profits. Past eighty years of age he married a very young girl and made parachute jumps in order to demonstrate just how fit he was.

In the early 1920s he decided to stage the first physique contest ever held in this country, probably the first in history anywhere; he rented Madison Square Garden in New York, spent a lot of money on advertising the event and offered big cash prizes to the winners. For the first place winner he coined the phrase, and copyrighted it, ‘The World’s Most Perfectly Developed Man.’

In those days professional football was a sick joke, players were paid only \$5.00 for each game and had to pay all of their own expenses out of that; most rode freight trains in order to get from one game to the next; and few if any of these men were athletes in any meaningful sense of the word, were usually out of condition beer hall bouncers, former professional wrestlers or retired piano movers. So the contestants in this first physique contest were a sorry lot indeed, not a single one of them should even have been in the contest; but McFadden could find nobody else for his contest.

The only man in that contest who had ever trained with weights was an illiterate Italian who later started calling himself Charles Atlas, and he denied the fact that he had ever used weights. His physique was pitiful by any reasonable standards, but he was, as the British say . . . “The best of a bad lot.” And somebody had to win, regardless of just how bad the contestants really were.

So he won; and then won again when McFadden held another contest the following year. But the contests proved to be very unpopular with the public, were outright flops; so after two attempts to stir up interest in such contests had failed, McFadden stopped conducting them. The next such contest was not held until 1939, and was then called the Mr. American contest. Today, hundreds of similar contests are held in this country every year.

After Atlas won those two contests, some promoter approached him, changed his name to Charles Atlas, and started a massive advertising campaign to promote a new, supposedly magic program of exercise that they called Dynamic Tension; a secret program of exercise supposedly discovered by Atlas, a secret they were willing to sell you by mail. Literally millions of such ads were published during the next fifty years or so, in practically every magazine and newspaper in this country. In these ads Atlas claimed to be . . . “The only winner, and still the holder, of the title The Most Perfectly Developed Man In The World.” Which, in a sense, was true; since the contests were never held again and because McFadden had copyrighted that title.

Atlas, in his ads, was still making that claim when he was a frail old man, and it was still being used after he died. There was little or no profit to be made by selling barbells, it being much more profitable to sell a very-crudely printed course of supposedly almost magic exercises; so Atlas, a weight trained man himself, although a very poorly developed one, always denied that he was a weightlifter. Millions of his exercise courses were sold all over the world; you could not open any sort of publication without seeing his ads.

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Then, sometime in the early thirties, a man named Bob Hoffman arrived on the scene; he was fairly well off from an oil heater business that he owned, but was nowhere near as wealthy as McFadden; and he too was interested in exercise, and did encourage people to lift weights. He started publishing a magazine called 'Strength and Health' and formed the York Barbell Club as a weightlifting team that he sponsored and supported for many years in local, national and Olympic competition. He sold magazines, books on exercise written by himself, and barbells; but there was little or no profit in it for anybody until the first so-called Health Foods were introduced in the 1950s. But then the sky opened up and the money came down in a virtual flood; since everybody was looking for the magic secret to instant, effortless success, and he offered it to them with his supposedly high-protein food supplements, which cost him about a nickel a box and sold for three dollars.

In the meantime a Jewish man named Joe Weider, and his brother Ben, both from Canada, started publishing magazines devoted to weightlifting and bodybuilding. And also started selling barbells. Their initial efforts were something less than pitiful, and most of their magazines quickly failed; but they kept trying, and eventually were very successful in a financial sense at least, although everything they ever published was pure bullshit, advice on exercise that was far more likely to kill you than it was to help you.

Today, and for many years earlier, Joe Weider advertises himself as the Trainer Of Champions Since 1936, at which time he was twelve years old; and frequently in the same issue of his magazine he changes the date to 1939. A much more appropriate title for him would be The Trainer Of Chimps, and the Bilker Of Chumps. He writes a great deal about the supposed Weider Research Clinic, which never existed, and claims to have personally discovered or invented everything of any slightest value in the field of exercise; while discovering or inventing nothing.

For years he and Bob Hoffman conducted nonstop published attacks on each other in every issue of their magazines, each one constantly accusing the other one of all sorts of terrible crimes and outrages. Finally, having trained for a while himself, Weider published a challenge to Hoffman; suggested that a two man physique contest be conducted in order to determine just who the greatest trainer really was. Hoffman accepted the challenge with one qualification only; said that they should be judged on a basis of their athletic ability as well as their physique, and suggested fist fighting as an appropriate sport for evaluating their athletic ability. A fight to be held before the physique contest. Hoffman, who was much older than Weider, but who was almost a giant, said that he believed that Weider's advantage of age would be more than compensated for by his appearance after the fight. So the contest was never held.

But a somewhat similar challenge did lead to a contest; Weider had been promoting a man who he called The Most Muscular Man In America for several years, a man named Dan Lurie who actually had a very poor physique, while Hoffman had been promoting John Grimek, who had one of the best physiques in history. But Grimek did not even bother to attend the contest, which was a joke; Lurie did show up and then lost to a much older man named Sigmund Klein who ran a weightlifting gym near Times Square in downtown New York City. Klein was one of the then few surviving men who had been one of the original German Strong Men around the turn of the century, and was old enough to be Lurie's father.

Over the years I got to know all of these men except McFadden, but I have read most of what he ever published on the subject of exercise. Another man named Perry Rader started publishing a magazine that he called IRONMAN from his home in Nebraska in the mid 1930s, and it was and is the best of such magazines that were ever published by anybody; was seldom right about much of anything but at least was honest. I contributed articles to that magazine for a period of many years and my articles are generally considered to be by far the best such articles ever published anywhere on the subject of exercise.

Hoffman published a few of my articles but Weider never would, instead published savage attacks on both me and my products, while trying to steal credit for my discoveries and developments; like Gideon Ariel, Weider claims to have invented everything from sex to money. Claims with a level of validity exactly equal to Gideon's claims: none.

Hoffman was an arrogant fool throughout most of his life, but he was solely responsible for the survival of weightlifting in this country; without his financial support the sport would have died worldwide sometime in the 1930s. During his last few years he was so senile that I doubt if he knew his own name. I took another of the then few still living original German Strong Men to a surprise birthday party in York, Pennsylvania, when he turned ninety years old,

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a man who was then living in Orlando, Florida, a man named Milo Steinborn who was literally a legend in his own time, and a man that I knew well for many years until he died at an age of almost a century. Hoffman had known Steinborn for sixty years, but did not recognize him at the party.

Steinborn had never flown at the age of ninety, and we practically had to fist fight with him to get him into my small jet for the trip to York, Pennsylvania. Most of the real old-timers from all over the world attended that party for Steinborn and I knew all of them. When he died, Steinborn left one of the largest collections of books and papers on the subject of exercise that ever existed anywhere; some of these being books published hundreds of years ago. I tried to get him to leave that collection to the University of Florida, but do not know what happened to it. But it was unique, and should have been preserved.

Another old-timer, still alive and active at about eighty, is Tom DeLorme, M.D., who was at least until recently the Medical Director for Liberty Mutual Insurance Company of Boston; he is the author of the first scientific article ever published in a medical journal on the subject of rehabilitative exercise; an article that he published in 1944. An article that has now been used far more times as a reference by other scientific writers than any other scientific article in history; has been used as a reference more than 20,000 times by the authors of later articles; most of whom never read it, used it only because it was the first on the subject.

But long before any of these people were born, a man in Sweden named Dr. Gustav Zander developed a very sophisticated line of exercise machines before the American Civil War, in the 1850s; Zander clearly understood most of the requirements for proper exercise and provided solutions for many of the problems long before anybody else was even aware of either the requirements or the problems. Had I learned earlier about Zander's previous work I could have saved a lot of both time and money; but then being unaware of his work I had to discover the requirements and provide the solutions to the problems myself, and eventually I did. Now all that remains to be done is to shove it down the throats of the scientific community; which is not easy to do.

People still write me and call me every day seeking advice on the subject of proper exercise, and I always try to respond in a reasonable manner to these requests; but have found most of today's generation to be far too poorly educated to be able to understand even very simple things. They usually cannot see the trees for the forest; and are almost always seeking some almost magic solution to their problems. So just how should you exercise for best possible results? The need for exercise, and the tolerance of exercise, varies a great deal from one individual to another; but, in general, the best solution is to work harder but work less. More is seldom the solution, and is frequently the problem; because some exercise is good it does not follow that more is better. What is best for you can be determined only by trial and error; but I now believe that two weekly workouts is all that anybody really needs, and is more than some people can stand. So before trying anything else, try doing less exercise; and if that fails to produce the results you are after, then cut your workouts even more. Keeping it clearly in mind that the potential for results from exercise varies enormously on an individual basis; not everybody can look like Arnold, regardless of what they do. While Arnold's results appear to have been produced by his training, it should be clearly understood that he is nothing more nor less than a genetic freak. Playing basketball and eating Wheaties will not make you seven feet tall.

In May of 1973, I conducted a research program that I considered to be more in the way of a demonstration of just what was possible as a result of very brief but hard exercise than it was in the way of true research, in the Department of Physiology of Colorado State University, in Fort Collins, Colorado, in cooperation with Dr. Elliott Plese. We used only two subjects, Casey Viator and myself. Casey had won the annual Mr. America contest nearly two years earlier after I had trained him for a year, but had been seriously injured in an industrial accident, nearly died, and lost a lot of his previous weight. So he was replacing muscular mass that he had earlier, which is easier to do the second time than it is to build in the first place. I too was replacing an earlier level of muscular size and strength. So we expected dramatic results, and we got them.

From May 1, 1973, until the following May 29, a period of only twenty-eight days, four weeks to the minute, we trained in a gym in the lab in Fort Collins, a gym equipped exclusively with my Nautilus machines. We trained only twelve times, an average of three weekly workouts, with an average time of less than thirty minutes being devoted to each workout. Casey gained a total of more than 63 pounds of muscular mass; gained forty-five pounds in bodyweight while losing nineteen pounds of body fat, was far leaner at the end than he was at the start. In spite of my much greater

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age, I gained about forty pounds of muscular mass while doing no exercise for my legs or lower body at all. But Casey trained his entire body.

Some members of the Denver Broncos professional football team trained with us throughout that period, including Lyle Alzado; who appeared to me to be an outright idiot; later, when I checked his NFL records, I discovered that he had the lowest IQ for a white man in the history of the NFL; which may explain why he later died as a consequence of using illegal drugs.

A comparison of what Casey looked like at the start to what he looked like four weeks later makes it appear that such results were simply impossible, but in fact they were true results. But a veterinarian who watched what happened during that program, a man who was also interested in exercise, approached Dr. Plese and me afterwards and demanded to know our 'secret,' said that he knew we were up to something since Casey's results appeared to be impossible, adding that he had not yet figured out our secret but knew that we had one.

So I gave Dr. Plese a wink, and then told the veterinarian . . . "All right, you have caught us; but I will not reveal our secret unless you swear to keep it secret, because we want to get it onto the market before Joe Weider tries to steal credit for our discovery." And he readily agreed to guard our secret with his life if necessary.

Then I told him . . . "I am sure that you are aware that I spent many years in central Africa, sometimes in places where no other white man ever went earlier. Well, a couple of years ago, on a trip up the Great, Green, Greasy Limpopo river, as a famous author described it years ago, I found a place that had never previously been visited by white men. An island in the middle of the river; and on that island I found a race of giant black men, the largest and by far the most muscular men I had ever seen in my life. The size and appearance of these men, but only the men and not the women, made it obvious that they were a simply extraordinary race of men, utterly unique; so there had to be a reason for their size and obvious strength. And there were only three possibilities: genetics, exercise or nutrition. So I decided to investigate all three possibilities.

"And, when I did so, I immediately eliminated any genetic factor, because these men were from the same race that lived along the banks of the river, and these others looked like average, typical African natives. Next I looked at the possible influence of their exercise or work; but that was also negative, because they did no exercise of any kind, and did exactly the same amount and kind of work as all of the other natives, that is to say none.

"Which left only one possibility: some difference in nutrition. But it turned out that the men on the island ate exactly the same things as the men on the shore, lived on a diet of fish and corn. So I suspected that perhaps the soil on the island was somehow different and that this changed the nutritional value of the corn. But that also turned out to be wrong; both the soil and the corn were identical in both places, on the island and ashore. I knew there had to be an explanation, but initially could not discover it.

"Then, a bit later, purely by accident, I discovered their secret; it was a nutritional factor that resulted from a difference in religion. The men on the shore worshipped a giant snake, while the men on the island had a different God; they worshipped the giant Bull Elephant, and in their nightly conducted religious services, which were not attended by the women, these men consumed the feces of the big elephants in order to demonstrate their subservience to their God.

"So quite obviously that had to be the secret that was responsible for their almost unbelievable muscular development; obviously there were critical differences between snake shit and elephant shit; the snake shit did not seem to help much, but the elephant shit obviously did have a very powerful component. So we tried to determine just which part of the elephant shit was so effective; but failed in those efforts; eventually we realized that only pure elephant shit produced the results we were after, if you broke it down into the various components it failed to work.

"So that is what we have been feeding Casey these last four weeks, and you saw the results for yourself; so you cannot dispute just how well it actually works."

Whereupon he asked us if we had any elephant shit left, and offered to buy it from us for his own use. So I winked at Dr. Plese again, and said . . . "Well, I think we have some left; don't we, Dr. Plese? It is expensive as Hell but we will sell it to you for what we paid for it."

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And he was ready to buy it, regardless of the price.

But, eventually, I got tired of pulling his leg, and then told him that the whole story was simply a joke. Whereupon he went into a rage, called us every dirty name he could think of and stormed out of the lab.

But, a week later, he came back to see Dr. Plese, and asked him . . . “You were just joking with me last week, weren’t you, Dr. Plese?”

And Plese told him . . . “Well, it’s about fucking time that you woke up; of course we were joking.”

To which the veterinarian replied . . . “No, you misunderstood me; what I mean is that you were joking when you told me you were joking; it really works, doesn’t it?”

So, if you are ever in Honolulu, where this veterinarian is now practicing, and if your dog gets sick, then shoot him; you would not want him to fall into the hands of that guy.

But if I had ever published that elephant shit story as fact in a muscle magazine, the bodybuilders would buy it by the ton, at any price; and the worse it tasted the better they would like it. I also told that veterinarian that the elephant shit always made you very sick, but he assured me that he was more than willing to put up with that.

And if I had published that story as fact, within a few weeks Weider would have been offering what he would have claimed was the only source of pure elephant shit.