



# "i predict"

*In the July 1950 issue of YOUR PHYSIQUE, Joe Weider made 10 predictions concerning bodybuilding's impact on the future. A half-century later, M&F examines Joe's prognostications in light of subsequent developments in sports medicine, psychology and exercise physiology.*

**"I predict that civilization will speed up in every phase, and that the stresses and strains on mankind will continue to increase."**

Between 1950 and 1997, the world's population exploded from 2.5 billion to 5.9 billion. In 1985, eight out of every 1,000 people in the world owned a computer; by 2000, that number is expected to reach 90. The major technological advances of the early- to mid-1950s, such as the introduction of color television in the United States and large-scale production of transistors, have given way to the high-definition television, the Internet, virtual-reality technologies and artificial intelligence. The last half-century has arguably witnessed more technological change than everything that preceded it.

Progress has improved the quality of life for certain segments of society in certain respects, but it has been accompanied by economic and technological dislocations that have produced enormous psychological strains. Science has demonstrated that stress can deteriorate a healthy body, cause cancer and exacerbate psychosomatic illnesses such as ulcers and migraine headaches.

**"I predict that the resulting increase in mental and physical illness will force the world to recognize the importance of systematic exercise and physical activities."**

Back in the 1920s, medical investigation was primarily epidemiological, focusing on diseases such as polio and diabetes. As recently as 1940, medical research was still trying to understand the regulatory functions of various internal organs. The effects of weight training were hardly considered, let alone studied. "Medical doctors in the 1950s believed that weight training would break your back, tear your muscles and cause premature aging," says Joe. "They would never recommend it for health or rehabilitation."

Not until the late 1960s would the disciplines of exercise physiology and kinesiology coalesce and begin to chip away at these myths. An increasing number of experiments in the 1970s linked exercise with improved health, wellness and longevity. "The information age of the 1970s spurred on medical research, and then the popular fitness boom of the 1980s gave it the special-interest funding to push it forward and establish it as a viable science," says Gary Brazina, MD, an arthroscopic-surgery and sports-medicine specialist who has worked with the Joffrey Ballet and NFL Players Association. As far back as 1950, Joe foresaw the evolution described by Brazina.

**"I predict that bodybuilding will become the chief form of systematic exercise and physical activity, and that it will come to be looked upon as one of the greatest forces in the field of preventive medicine."**

The notion that diet and exercise are synonymous with good health, which now seems self-evident, is a fairly recent development. "In the 1950s, physicians didn't understand the ramifications of exercise or diet, nor their relationship to long-term health," says Blair Kranson, MD. "This

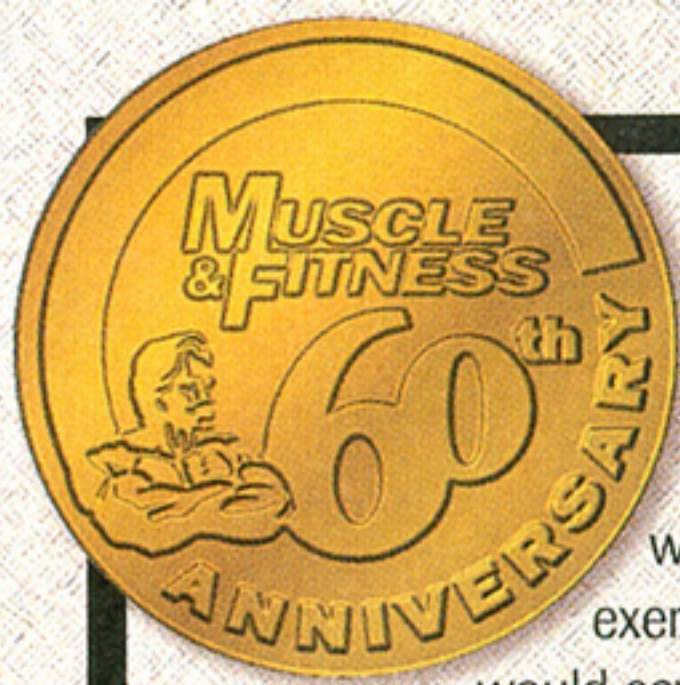


Joe Weider works with scientists at Weider Nutrition International's 425,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Salt Lake City.

Photo by Bob Gardner



Long before a consensus had formed on the hazards of smoking, Joe's magazine covers were sounding the alarm. (See highlighted caption.)



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also included most medical schools in the 1970s, which did not instruct in nutrition nor in any of the exercise sciences." Recalls Joe, "Doctors in the 1950s would say, 'Eat what you want; if it makes you sick, change to something else.'"

By 1970, however, journals in exercise physiology, sports medicine, cardiac research and nutritional health began publishing research contradicting that conventional wisdom. By the 1990s, these journals were advocating diet and exercise as the "new preventive medicine of the 20th century." In 1995, the American Heart Association (AHA) included resistance exercises in its prescription for cardiac health, saying, "There is a direct relationship between physical inactivity and cardio-vascular mortality." The AHA went on to recommend "developing and maintaining aerobic endurance, joint flexibility, and muscle strength [as being] especially important as people age." Similar views have been put forth by the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American College of Sports Medicine.

"Joe's greatest contributions were his predictions of exercise as supplemental medicine," says Armand Tanny, former Mr. USA and Mr. America. "His publishing efforts over the last 50 years have stimulated medical research in health and fitness."

**"I predict that a full realization of the importance of muscular development will sweep the world, and the sport of bodybuilding will grow by leaps and bounds."**

Medical opinion circa 1950 did not agree that muscular development would benefit rehabilitation, nor aid in maintaining the vigor and health of the elderly. "Medical schools in the 1940s advocated passive recovery, hydrotherapy and stretching for post-injury rehabilitation," says Tanny. "Weight training was absolutely contraindicated, because it was believed that it would injure the body. It would never be recommended as a course of treatment."

Based on his own experiences as a weightlifter and wrestler, Joe had discovered by 1940 that recovery from injury could be hastened by strengthening the traumatized area with weight training. "In 1941, Joe Weider insisted that weight training was critical to physical rehabilitation even before medical doctors were aware of its significance," says Tanny. Confirms Brazina: "Today, it has become the standard of care for injuries, as well as in post-surgical rehabilitation." As Joe predicted, resistance training is now recommended for young and old alike.

**"I predict that the principles of good bodybuilding — which include a balanced diet, adequate sleep, plenty of fresh air, ample sunshine and regular workouts — will become basic principles of living."**

Joe sums up the anti-exercise bias of the 1950s: "Whenever I get the urge to exercise, I lie down until it passes." Diets were characterized by fried chicken, cheeseburgers, french fries and high-fat desserts. "Role models from presidents, executives and doctors to actors were seen eating junk food, smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol," he recalls. "That was the wrong message to present to the public." As early as 1940, Joe offered what was then an alternative lifestyle, one that incorporated weight training and proper nutrition, including supplements.

The AMA documents the following beneficial effects of exercise: improved heart function, reduced blood pressure and reduced chances of suffering from adult-onset diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis.<sup>2</sup> The American Psychological Association credits exercise with helping to alleviate depression and anxiety, as well as aiding in the treatment of schizophrenia and manic-depressive illness.<sup>3</sup> To date, thousands of articles have documented the benefits of the fit lifestyle advocated by Joe.



Joe, shown here with six-time Mr. Olympia Dorian Yates, was decades ahead of his time in predicting that weight training and proper diet would be the preventive medicine of the 21st century.



Tony Duffy/The Sporting Image

As Joe predicted, weight training is now a prerequisite to improved performance in virtually all sports. Notice the phenomenal quad development of sprinter Gail Devers as she wins the semifinal heat in the 60-meter sprint at the 1999 USA indoor track meet.



Photo by Bob Gardner

Diets in the 1950s consisted of fried chicken, cheeseburgers, french fries and the like. Joe's alternative — a low-fat, high-quality diet rich in protein and complex carbs — is now recommended for nearly everyone.

**"I predict that bodybuilding will become the steppingstone to every other sport and physical activity!"**

"In 1940, coaches would kick you off the team if you were caught lifting weights," recalls Joe. "They believed that weight training would make you muscle-bound, inflexible, slow and clumsy. They went so far as to say it would sap your strength, dull your senses and kill your sex drive." Joe countered that weight training would make athletes stronger, increase their performance on the field and help guard against injury. Today that view is considered self-evident.

In 1968, the first scientific journal dedicated to sports medicine appeared: *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, published by the American College of Sports Medicine. In 1973, *The Physician and Sports Medicine Monthly* appeared, followed in 1978 by the *National Strength*

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and Conditioning Association's *Journal of Applied Sports Science*. As of 1998, more than 30 sports-science journals were being published, and today you'd be hard-pressed to find a single pro sports franchise that doesn't employ a dedicated strength-and-conditioning coach. Professional and top amateur athletes in virtually all sports now consider weight training a prerequisite to improved performance.

**"I predict that the art of relaxation, one of the fundamental principles in bodybuilding, will become more and more important as tensions increase, and that relaxation will be universally taught and advocated."**

Most of the nation's leading health organizations, including the American Psychological Association, now prescribe exercise to help alleviate stress, reduce anxiety and promote mental health. "You must take personal responsibility and an active participation in your own health," says Joe, who advocated exercise as a weapon against stress as early as 1940. Today, stress management, hypnosis, biofeedback, meditation and psychotherapy are used to help short-circuit the destructive effects of stress.

Corporations have also jumped on the bandwagon by developing "wellness" programs for employees, complete with gyms and relaxation classes. Such programs appear to decrease absenteeism resulting from illness and stress. Again, Joe was a half-century ahead of his time.

**"I predict that bodybuilding will spread to every corner of the world and that it will one day be recognized as the king of all sports and physical activities."**

Since 1946, the International Federation of Bodybuilders (IFBB) has grown into the world's sixth-largest amateur sports federation. It now comprises 169 member nations and is a "medal" sport in 11 regional and international games recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and has earned official recognition from more than 100 national Olympic committees. On Jan. 30, 1998, the IFBB received provisional recognition from the IOC. Approximately 175,000 active amateur competitors are registered in the IFBB worldwide.

The growth of competitive bodybuilding tells only part of the story. In its annual "Tracking the Fitness Movement" report for 1998, the Fitness Products Council (North Palm Beach, Florida) estimated that exercise

equipment is owned and used in nearly one-third of all U.S. households. "Working out with free weights became the most popular fitness activity in America in 1995," the report said.

**"I predict that those who practice bodybuilding will live healthier, happier and more useful lives."**

"Aging doesn't mean preparing to die — not if you have the right mind-set," says Joe. "It's just another phase of life in which to live to the fullest." He should know — he was calling weight training and proper nutrition the "golden goose" of longevity as early as 1940. "That struck at the heart of social indifference and challenged cultural beliefs about aging," Joe says. One of his goals was to prove that men over 40 can be as strong and vital as 25-year-olds, a proposition Joe brought to life in 1994 when he presented the first Masters Olympia contest.

In 1999, longevity is big business. People now contemplate productive living beyond the age of 100, and Joe, for one, thinks it will happen. "By 2025, the possibility exists that we could live to be 125 years of age," he says. Unthinkable? In China and Tibet, low-fat diets of fish and rice, coupled with low stress and lifelong physical labor, have made living into one's 90s commonplace. Natural foods, exercise and relaxation equal a healthy lifestyle!

**"I predict that bodybuilding will one day become one of the greatest forces in existence, and that it may be hailed as the activity that actually saved civilization from itself."**

"Mere statement is not enough to make predictions come true; you must take action upon your beliefs," Joe says. Brazina adds: "Medical research will focus only upon what the public demands, or through private research funded by special interests. The trickle down of information on health and fitness was spurred by popular demand. This came from the fitness boom of the 1980s, which stimulated a spate of medical research."

Initially, the public wasn't necessarily looking to bodybuilding to improve their health as much as it was attracted to magazine portrayals of muscular, sexy bodies engaged in active lifestyles. Intuitively, Joe understood that the latter could help draw people to the former. **M&F**

— J.T. & J.O.

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