



C.T. Fletcher...

I thought it would be interesting to ask you some of the same questions as I did in Dr. Nerenberg's interview and then add a few others for contrast.

What is your resume, as far as powerlifting and strength sports are concerned?

Here is the short list of my achievements as a strength athlete. I won several small bodybuilding contests in the early eighties and turned to powerlifting in 1982. I set the NASA world bench record in the 275s in 1991 at 575 raw. I set the NASA world record in the SHWs in 1993—I weighed 286 and benched 611—at the time it was the highest drug-free bench in their history. Later I went on to bench 650 at Venice in 1994, which got me ranked in your magazine. I was number 6 in the world—one of my proudest moments—and that's not just amongst drug-free lifters; that was everybody included. It was my goal to beat Big Mike Hall's 630 plus lift and become the ALL TIME biggest drug-free bencher—and I did that, but it was short lived because Big Hollywood James Henderson erased me off the map, so I set my sights on him. I performed as a strongman on occasions, lifting with such greats as Chief IRONBEAR Collins, shared the stage with the greatest benchers of my time at John Inzer's Greatest Bench in America Contest, my bomb with 705 raw, which I still consider my best bench ever!! I was RAW, DRUG-FREE, and on the biggest stage, with the biggest lifters. Everybody but big James was there. Had he been there, I think I would have done it...

Do you have a background in sports other than lifting related disciplines?

This is going to sound funny coming from me, but boxing is, and always will be, my first love. My dad taught me how to box when I was around 10 or so, as he boxed in the army. I love it!! Ali was my idol coming up. I boxed nothing like him though—I had no finesse, I came forward with no reverse gear. "Knockin' on your door, until you had to let me in." I

boxed until the age of forty-nine. At forty-nine I had two bareknuckled brawls which both ended in the first round. It took my doctors a whole lot of talking and telling me how crazy I was to convince me to put down the gloves. I REALLY wanted to fight KIMBO SLICE—I always felt I could woop'em, but a lot of guys probably thought that until they ended up looking up at the lights.

What is your professional and academic background?

Academically, just your average high school grad. Professionally, 28 years with the U.S. Postal Service.

Tell us about your involvement in the World League of Power (WLOP).

Dr. Nerenberg—I just call him "Arnie"—started the WLOP as a joint effort. We were in an airport in Canada, after a meet. Arnie was "crying" about some lift he got taken away from him because uneven extension or something dumb like that. Arnie is like a brother to me; I kid him a lot about over-intellectualizing stuff. So, here we are in the airport, yelling at each other. He's going on and on about contests being "trivial" and of no real value. I consider my world titles, apart from my kids, my life's greatest achievements, so saying they are trivial is the wrong statement to make to me. We are near screaming at this point, so I says to my brother, "Why don't you start your own organization then, Arnold!" He thought it was a magnificent idea, and the WLOP was born. I always wanted an organization for drug-free guys, where I had some say-so in the rules, and every meet is raw and drug-free.

Of all your accomplishments in the world of strength, which has been the most satisfying, and which has been the most difficult personally?

The greatest moment of my powerlifting career came at the Greatest Bench in America contest, even though I missed 705. I missed it on the stage where I had been invited to participate

amongst the elite lifters of my day. If you were there, you had to be the BEST—period. I was flown there by Inzer himself. Me—a poor boy from Compton, CA—sharing the stage with the BEST lifters in the world. I had only seen the guys in the pages of *Powerlifting USA*. I was the only guy in the entire contest who lifted RAW—705 RAW!! I am proud of that!! The most difficult time of my entire lifting career was easily the 1981 Mr. America. I had won several local shows, one after which the head judge came over to me, told me what great 'potential' I had, and asked me what I was taking. I said, "Wheat germ, dessicated liver...the same thing everybody else is taking." He said "No, I mean what are you TAKING?" I said "What do you mean?" He said "You are not going to tell me you got 20-inch arms taking dessicated liver." I said "YEP!!" He looked me in the eye and said "you could be the next 'Sergio.'" My eyes got real big, because, even more than Arnold, I thought the Myth was the greatest bodybuilder of all time. I said "Tell me more..." He gave me the address of a doctor, who shall remain nameless. I went to visit him, and walked out with a prescription for Deca Durabolin. This is why I never condemn guys who make the decision to use; I would be a HYPOCRITE if I did. I tried them, and brother, they worked!! I was ripped to shreds. Keep in mind, they were NOT illegal, I got them from my HMO at Kaiser Permanente. I was ripped, but I felt HORRIBLE. I was raised very, very religious, and the thought of taking any kind of drug would have killed my mom, so I snuck around and did everything to hide it from her. Also, my oldest son was born that year and I kept thinking, 'I don't ever want him to know his daddy is a drug addict.' But the final straw came after about six months, two three-month cycles (that was the extent of my steroid experiment) when my wife—whom I very much loved, more than life itself—came home ten minutes late from work. I stood in the driveway of our home, pacing back and forth, just waiting on her. I had made up my mind to knock the "bleep" out of her, for being ten minutes late!! Thank God she knew something was wrong. She wouldn't get out of the car, no matter how I pleaded, and told her, "I'm not going to do anything." I looked at my wife, who was trembling in fear, with tears in her eyes, pleading with me to get help. Mind you, I HAD NEVER, WOULD NEVER, LAY A HAND ON THIS WOMAN. I'd rather kill myself than hurt her. I was berserk, I can't speak on what it does for others—only myself—but this was enough to make me vow to NEVER mess with 'roids again. I made a promise to my God, and twenty-nine years later, I have kept that promise. This, without question, was the lowest point in my lifting career.

Who have been the mentors in your life as an athlete, and to whom have you been a personal role model?

My personal mentors is a short list. One, Dr. Arnold Nerenberg "the Hebrew Hammer," is the only real mentor I have had. Before Arnie, I was a PURE NEANDERTHOL, and proud of it. Only one gear—FORWARD, "KILL 'EM ALL,

AND LET GOD SORT OUT THE REST." I try to be an example by letting people know, I'm not perfect, not by a long shot. I've made plenty of mistakes, but thanks to someone far greater than I, I can try to help them avoid some of the lessons having a hard head has taught me. The only people I really try to be a role model for are my kids, but I would hope my life serves as an example of an unworthy messenger, in all his imperfections, turned out to be a decent human being.

Tell us about your arm development. How big have you gotten them, and did you start out as a youngster with big arms? Dr. Nerenberg related to us that you recently, just over 50 years of age, won "best arms" at the International Natural Bodybuilding Association MR. UNIVERSE competition.

Well, my dad had really big forearms, and was known in Little Rock, AR, for being SUPER STRONG. Legend has it, he once pulled a tree out of the ground with his bare hands. Imagine what that did to me as a kid hearing that story. My mom was also VERY strong, she used to swing me and my brother and one of the neighbor kids around on her biceps, and her dad, my grandpa—whom I never met—was rumored to have pulled a fully loaded wagon out of a ditch by himself because the horses weren't strong enough. I grew up hearing stories like this, and I believed every word, and still do. So, I patterned my life after these strength giants. I was always stronger than the other boys. My older brother Walt was the only kid at school stronger than me. My arms were 20 inches at 20 years old, 21 inches at 21 years old, and the highest measurement was 24 inches at 35 years old. By then I weighed 315 pounds, not cut, but not a complete slob either. I went to Gold's Gym in Venice one day to train, and Bob Kennedy photographed me, and the caption read, "I'm not sure who has the biggest arms in the world, but C.T. Fletcher is in the running." Vic Richards, Rory Leidelmeier, and Lou Ferrigno were all there that day, and he chose to pick me out for my ARMS—WOW. I had good genetics, yes, but I worked SUPER HARD on these arms. The first two years of my career was practically nothing but arm training, everything else was an afterthought. I'd throw up a "Sergio" pose at a contest and get the crowd screamin'—no matter that my legs were matchsticks at the time. Everybody teased me about how my arms were bigger than my legs!! I set the world record in the strict-curl in 1992 at 225 pounds. My arms measure 22 inches to this day. At 51 I won the best arms in the 2009 INBA Mr. Universe, and that included the pros and the ppen classes. This old man showed them that I ain't dead yet!!

Do you remember the first time you ever went to Muscle Beach? And how about the last time? What was the best time you ever had there in between?

I remember the first time very well. All I wanted to do was train at the "Pit." John Brown was Mr. Universe back then and he was there signing autographs. I was reppin' 500 on the bench in front of the crowd that had gathered to see

him. I signed my first autograph that day, and that's why it sticks in my memory. I was, and still am, a nobody. My last trip to Venice was to check out a contest that was supposed to be honoring "ME," and although I was on the flyer as the guest star, I hadn't heard a thing about it. I thought this was strange, but I got a hold of the flyer and showed up, just in case somebody actually came to meet me. The promoter almost fell over when he looked up and saw me. That was my last trip to Venice. The best time I had at Venice was when I got to lift with a MON-STER named Craig Munson. This guy was UNBELIEVABLE. I weighed in around 250 or so, 22-inch arms, I was young and feeling pretty good about myself, and then I looked over and saw this HALF MAN/HALF BEAST flexin' in the pit. aamy arms were 22 inches, but his made mine look like I had never even thought about liftin' weights. He shook my hand and my hand dissappeared in his, and I have large hands. He was interviewed by a sportscaster named Stu Nahan, who did the whole interview while Craig held him over his head—true story. I later saw Craig at a bodybuilding contest. Sergio was the guest poser, and Craig made the Myth look like a "TINKER TOY." Years later, my greatest compliment came when somebody, who was old enough to remember, said, "You look like Craig Munson." Only people who knew Craig could appreciate that.

What is your philosophy regarding the use of performance enhancing substances for sports?

My philosophy about drugs is simple. This is a very individual decision that every young athlete must make for him- or herself. It seems odd that a guy who has fought long and hard for the drug-free movement would have this philosophy. My reason is, how can I condemn anyone for something I've tried myself? I can't—no matter how long ago it was. At one point in my life, I was given an opportunity. I had a choice. I had been told I would be able to make a living, and support my family, doing something I would do for nothing. I was told I would go down in history as one of the greatest bodybuilders of all time. I was a 21 year old kid, and this appealed to me VERY MUCH. To all the self-righteous guys who say "I would never," I'll guarantee you they have NEVER had the "world on a platter" speech given to them. How many young baseball players, football players, basketball stars, and olympic athletes have had to make that decision? You armchair athletes who rode the bench all your life, it's easy for you to say what you would never do, since nobody ever told you that you could be a millionaire for playin' a sport. So, I don't condemn anyone

for making that choice. I just try to let everyone know that there is an alternative now. Drug-free is all over the place now, but there wasn't a drug-free bodybuilding organization back in my day. We must work to make drug-free events as appealing as non tested events, and the only way to do that is offer MONEY to the top athletes in our field. Some of the natural bodybuilding associations are doing that. It's not Olympia money, but it's a start. I will spend the rest of my life fighting to get recognition for these deserving athletes, and my dream is to have powerlifting included in the Olympics.

Who is your favorite cartoon character?

I like this question, I'm a cartoon nut to this day—big FAMILY GUY fan, but I would say, of course, in true powerlifting fashion, THE HULK. I used him when I psyched up for a lift. Second would be the SUBMARINER. A lot of you youngsters don't even know Prince Namor; he was a bad dude. Sorry I went on so loooooong, but, hey man, I can cross this off my "BUCKET LIST" now. I made one after having open-heart surgery in 2005. Thanks for that, Mr. Lambert, and special thanks to my big brother Arnie Nerenberg, "The Hebrew Hammer." «

