

# Passion for Health



A series of small steps brought him to the pinnacle of fitness



The way I started out, I could have been a poster child for fast food. We had no nutritional guidance around our house, and the kitchen was always well-stocked with sweets, ice cream, cookies, cake, potato chips, sugary cereals and soda. My genetics weren't that great, either, so the inevitable happened: I turned into a chubby kid.

In junior high I got on the wrestling team and went from pudgy to slender. Wrestling, however, started bad eating habits — bingeing after a match, then starving to make weight for the next contest. By the time I went to college, I was completely screwed up. I didn't participate in any sports and my subconscious fear of getting fat bordered on an eating disorder. At my thinnest, I had such a false image of myself that I thought my scrawny body looked good.

Things stayed like this through college and during a six-year stint overseas. After I got back to the States, I was going through a scrapbook of photos taken abroad and suddenly it hit me like a hammer. I looked sickly and malnourished. In one photo, my thigh looked about the same size as my calf. At that moment I knew I needed to do something. No more self-delusion. The photos confirmed that I was a skinny, unhealthy 25-year-old weighing 150 pounds at 5'9".

## Taking Action

My changes didn't occur overnight; it was a process of gradual steps. I knew that to change my self-image I had to change my body. Yes, I had to put on weight, but not just any kind of weight. I had to put on muscular weight.

I took action immediately by joining a gym. I started reading fitness magazines and books, anything that would help give me the knowledge I needed to attain my goal. What I didn't realize at the time was that this decision was going to change the quality of my life forever. I went from gaining some lean body mass to focusing on total health.

The more I learned about resistance training, the more disciplined I became. As time passed, I began to see results from lifting weights. It's hard to describe the feeling of elation when you start gaining body mass and strength. Seeing your body change motivates you to continue to the next level. Over time it becomes addictive.

In my case, I developed a passion for fitness and health. I've gone from being a 150-pound weakling to a totally healthy and fit, lean and muscular, 190-pound 47-year-old with a positive self-image. My blood pressure is an excellent 118 over 74; my resting heart rate is that of a long-distance runner (around 50) and my cholesterol is low. I rarely get ill, and haven't pulled or strained a muscle in years.

None of this happened by accident — it was a choice I

made consciously. I'm living proof that you can devote as little as seven hours a week to physical exercise and see fantastic results when you combine those efforts with a nutritious diet, some supplementation and plenty of rest.

Last May I decided to enter the Nevada State Bodybuilding Championships, my first competition. I hired Diana Dennis, one of the best in the business, to design my contest diet and posing routine, since I knew nothing about any of this. I won the masters (over-40) division and finished third in the open (all ages) light-heavy class against guys 20 years my junior. It was one of the most rewarding days of my life!

Today, I'm a self-professed health fanatic. I haven't missed more than two weeks at the gym in more than 25 years. Fitness is not my profession, it's my lifestyle. I'm passionate about health. My escape is hitting the gym and getting away from the tension of work and daily problems. I don't dread it; I look forward to it. Working out is fun, rewarding and stress-relieving.

Take it from me — strength training truly is the fountain of youth. **M&F**

*Success Stories is compiled and edited by Linda Henry. If you'd like to share your success story, send a letter (with your phone number) and photos to Success Stories, Jessica Travis, 21100 Erwin St., Woodland Hills, California 91367. If your story is chosen, we will pay \$100 upon publication. Any material submitted becomes the sole property of Jessica Travis and shall constitute a grant to the use of your name, likeness and story in any way deemed necessary. Materials cannot be returned.*

*Joe Weider and Jessica Travis constantly receive letters from readers asking of their success with bodybuilding. They are a tribute to the human spirit and what the Weider Bodybuilding Lifestyle of proper training and nutrition can accomplish, both physically and mentally. Do not be misled by before-and-after stories or advertisements that attribute almost magical properties to food supplements. Intense weight training coupled with proper diet is what builds muscle. Supplements were only to support your nutritional program. With that in mind, please share your success with us. Jessica Travis salutes you all!*

