

Growing Symmetry and Proportion

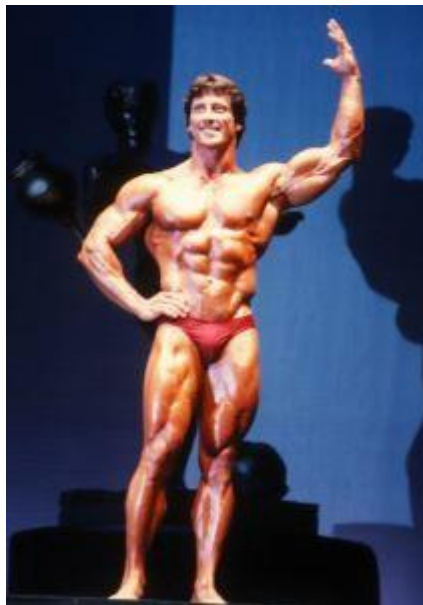
If you are concerned about how you look, then don't become obsessed with gaining weight quickly. Quality muscle takes time to develop and can't be fairly judged by what a scale reads. It's all about how you look and to learn this and improve you need to take photos.

Look at these two double biceps shots, this one taken in 1964 weighing 185 pounds and the one on opposite page taken 15 years later in 1979 weighing 195. What happened during those 15 years (and you can see photos of this in my *Symmetry* book (2) is I trained for muscle shape and definition.

Would have been better if I didn't bulk up to 210 the following year 1965. I built big thighs (over 27 inches) by doing heavy squats. I was doing 3 sets of 10 reps with 300 pounds in squats when I was 18 and eventually did 10 reps with 405. Built big thighs and a thick lower back but it also made my waist bigger. Although I gained size in thighs and waist, I gained very little size in chest and arms. Bulking up this way proved to be a waste of time, I lost about a year on this experiment.

As you descend in the squat to the low position your stomach is forced outward and over time as heavy squatting continues the gut gets bigger. Also holding a heavy barbell on your shoulders causes a slight side to side bending as you go up and down and the obliques grow too.

You can see that in the 1979 image there is much more muscular development and definition because that's what I deliberately worked for in my training and eating. My upper body and calves are bigger & my thighs are about the same size but more defined. The lats are wider, there's more serratus, and the waist is more detailed.



The pose was taken during my posing at the 79 Olympia. I did no squats in the 6 weeks preceding the competition, but I did do heavy leg extensions working up to 10 reps with 275 on my trusty Nautilus machine. At night I ran 1.5 miles @ 8 miles per hour and my legs became very defined from this.

All the ab work prior to the show gave me deeper defined upper quads as well as lower ab development. My favorite aside from hanging knee ups was pulley knee in lying on the floor of my gym with ankle straps attached to a low pulley. I'd lie there until I completed a total of 100 reps pulling the attached weight into my chest, did something like 30 pounds 30 reps, rest, 40 pounds 25 reps, 50 pounds 20 reps, 60 pounds 15 reps, 70 pounds 10 reps. Using weight on lower ab exercise gives abs and upper quads a chiseled look.

I did no weighted work for upper abs (except for 2 arm cable crunches), nothing like Roman chair sit-up or incline sit-up holding a weight. This builds the upper row of abs which

attaches to the ribcage. Build upper abs and your waist may protrude. You might never be able to do the stomach vacuum!

Every year in winter season after I've reached my peak for the year, I take a look at my overall development and ask myself what needs to improve. The answer to this question has changed over time. Years ago, it was more upper body and calf development, less thigh size with more definition and leg biceps. Today my goal in this maintenance season is to keep definition and ab development.

So, if you bulk up and gain weight rapidly the bulk will go to the wrong places. It will navigate and dwell in the central areas of your body: waist, butt, thighs, pecs. In other words when you bulk up you gain weight by building central mass. But this doesn't create a more proportionate look to the body. The way to build this esthetic look is to build the peripheral muscle groups, i.e., calves, forearms, deltoids, and develop a small muscular waistline and wide lats.

If you want to look your best do not gain more than 5 pounds of bodyweight a year. This is a lot of muscle. Do you know how big a 5-pound steak is? Imagine cutting this up and adding it to your delts, lats, arms, calves. You'd look totally different and impressive. Fast weight gains are much more fat and water retention than solid muscle.

There is no rush to build a symmetrical proportionate body. Take your time, do a good job based on feedback from photos and enjoy your training. Remember it's not about numbers. The scale and tape measure don't translate into visual impressiveness. So be sure to keep growing in the right places.