

# **Frank Zane**

**by**

**Alan Palmieri**

It was September 1967 and we just arrived at the Newark Airport, a rather short forty-five minute flight from Knoxville, Tennessee. Dad and I were on our way, as personal guests of “Bodybuilding’s Godfather” Joe Weider, to the Brooklyn Academy of Music for the big IFBB show. Armed with nothing more than the clothes on my back, a small camera, and my letter from Joe indicating Dad and I were to be his guests backstage for all the events and pre-judging.

Entrance ways into the building were guarded by New York’s finest. Today one might not even give the security appearance a second thought but back in 1967 it seemed rather heavy to me. Each entrance into the building had at least two officers and some had more. As we went to the back entrance there must have been a half dozen or more officers and a fairly large group of spectators mulling around. I found that also strange as it was still only mid morning, but a sizable crowd had gathered to get a glimpse of their favorite bodybuilders as they came in for the pre-judging.

As we walked up to the door an officer stopped us. “Sorry, no one is allowed past this point without the proper identification.” I handed him the letter pass from Joe and was told to go right in... that felt pretty good too. I guess you might say I was feeling my oats walking through the crowd and getting inside like that. Joe Weider was setting up the trophies and as he looked up he saw us standing there. “Hi”, Joe said. “Glad to see you, hope you’ll excuse me but I’ve got a lot to do”. Please, make yourself at home and feel free to roam around all you want”, “I’ll catch up with you later”.

As I roamed around the great building I was amazed at the beauty of the building itself and all the people already assembled back stage in all the various rooms the Academy had. Each room had a group of bodybuilders dressing, warming-up, sitting around talking, and also photographers.

Upon entering one of the rooms, I saw Frank Zane, wearing a long white robe, one like a doctor wears, warming-up performing one-arm rows with a rubber chest expander. One end was attached to a doorknob and he was performing rep after rep in a very strict and concentrated manner. He appeared very poised and comfortable as I walked up to him and asked, “Frank, would you mind if I got a quick picture of you”. “Not at all”, he responded and stopped his rowing, stood up and said, “Is this okay?”



Frank in his white “doctor’s robe”

This was the first time I ever met Frank Zane. Considering he was preparing for the pre-judging event, (he was entered in the 1967 Mr. American and Mr. Universe Contests), and already well know from all the coverage he received in the various magazines, his willingness to pose and be so gracious about it to a complete stranger was impressive. I’m not sure you could find many of today’s top competitors who would do the same.

Frank was also kind enough to answer all of my questions and it was evident he was very intelligent. I knew Frank was a middle school math teacher and in later years learned he holds two bachelor's degrees and a master's in experimental psychology. Not bad considering in those days everyone thought bodybuilders were nothing more than muscle-bound idiots. Frank shared his ideas on training and nutrition with me even though he was in preparation to do battle for two of bodybuilding's major titles.

A beautiful girl by the name of Christina Harris was a contestant in the Miss Americana Contest. I noticed Frank and Christina hanging around together throughout the day. I didn't know they were a couple until that evening. They were married, if not mistaken, later in 1967. They were two very attractive people. You know how some couples just look like they belong together... that's how Frank and Christina appeared to me.

To this day I remain impressed with the manner in which Frank allowed me to interrupt his very important day. Over the years I've watched as many bodybuilders with far less exposure and recognition than Frank had, treat fans and others rudely. I chalk it up to the sign of the times because there is absolutely no reason for some people to act like they do. Heck, some of today's bodybuilders would charge you just to take a snap shot of them! Give me a break. I realize people have a right to make money from all their hard work and efforts but really...



Frank next to Don Peters in afternoon pre-judging line-up

Frank didn't win the overall title that night. He did win his height class in the Mr. America and placed third in his height class for the Universe. I believe Christina won the Miss Americana Crown and might I add, she deserved to win. Franks competition was tough as some of the sports best-known names were also vying for the titles.

### **IFBB Mr. America 1967**

Overall Winner: Don Howorth

#### **Tall**

1. Don Howorth
2. Ken McCord
3. Don Peters

#### **Medium**

1. Frank Zane
2. Zabo Koszewski
3. Allen Keene

#### **Short**

1. Rock Stonewall
2. Joe Nista
3. Eddie Giuliani

### **IFBB Mr. Universe**

Overall Winner: Sergio Oliva

#### **Tall**

1. Sergio Oliva
2. Vic Downs
3. Frank Zane
4. Christopher Forde

#### **Short**

1. Rick Wayne
2. Rock Stonewall
3. Dennis Gauthier
4. T Kanazawa

Frank had a run as one of bodybuilding's great champions. In 1999 he was inducted into Joe Weider's Bodybuilding Hall of Fame. He has been on perhaps more than 60 bodybuilding covers. He has written many books including "Zane Way to a Beautiful Body", "Mind, Body, Spirit" and "Fabulously Fit Forever". He also has a string of major titles with his name on them and in case some may have forgotten, Frank defeated Arnold Schwarzenegger for the Mr. Universe title. A proportioned and defined Zane weighing in at less than 200 lbs became the "Giant Killer."

### **Some Of The Many Titles Won by Frank Zane.**

1983 Mr. Olympia 4th

1982 Mr. Olympia 2nd

1980 Mr. Olympia 3rd  
1979 Mr. Olympia 1st  
1978 Mr. Olympia 1st  
1977 Mr. Olympia 1st  
1976 Mr. Olympia 2nd  
1985 Mr. Olympia 4th  
1974 Mr. Olympia 2nd  
1972 Mr. Olympia 4th  
1972 Pro Mr. Universe Short 1st & Overall  
1971 NABBA Pro Mr. Universe Short 1st  
1970 Amateur Mr. Universe Winner  
1968 Mr. Universe Short 1st & Overall  
1968 IFBB Mr. America Medium 1st & Overall  
1967 IFBB Mr. Universe Tall 3rd  
1967 IFBB Mr. America Medium 1st  
1966 IFBB Mr. America Medium 1st  
1965 IFBB Mr. Universe Medium 1st  
1965 Mr. Sunshine State  
1963 Mr. Keystone 2nd  
1962 Mr. Keystone 1<sup>st</sup>  
1960 Teenage Mr. America 3rd  
Mr. Pennsylvania 13th



Frank's body style was not one of massiveness but rather symmetry, proportion, shape, and definition, in the mold of the Vince Gironda style. Frank was also a superb poser and knew how to place the accent on his strengths. For many, who seek the more natural and symmetrical body styles, Frank is the modern day example most turn to.

I remember a lot of things from my years and experiences in bodybuilding. The September 1967 IFBB show in Brooklyn is one that really stands out. One reason was the exchange I had with Frank Zane. He was a true gentleman and champion even then. I

know times have changed and so have people but there is something of real worth and value in being a recognized celebrity and showing kindness and manners to others like Frank did. It speaks volumes of the person and does a great deal more for the sport than you may realize. For those who are egotistical and money hungry remember, without fans and without the sport you wouldn't be where you are today. Learn a lesson from Frank Zane.

*In 1977, my good friend and noted bodybuilding author Dennis B. Weis interviewed Frank Zane shortly before his first Mr. Olympia win. Dennis has graciously granted me permission to include this fascinating and informative interview in my article.*

## **Frank Zane Interview**

**By**

**Dennis Weis**

**Dennis:** It has been noted that you are an ardent archer (shooting in the 400 field). Do you still practice this sport?

**Frank:** About the only practice I get is when I go shooting with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Dan Howard. I introduced both of them to archery. As a matter of fact, Dan is quite good at it because he's been shooting skeet and rifle for a long time. He is trying to get me to go shooting with him so that he can beat me, but I really haven't had time for archery because I've been training a lot lately. This summer I'll probably start shooting a little bit more because it's very relaxing and I enjoy it.

**Dennis:** Chuck Sipes told me once that cable training movements seem to make his performance in archery much steadier. Have you experienced anything along this line?

**Frank:** I've just noticed that when I've been training regularly and in really good shape I'm better at archery. I don't do too much cable training except before a show. Of course, the last month before a show I'm not doing any archery anyway, so I've never had a chance to make that observation. But years ago when I was doing archery in a big way, I did do some cable training to help strengthen my back because I was shooting relatively heavy poundage bows. I think either weight training or cable training is effective for strength to make you better at archery.

**Dennis:** A few years ago Muscle Builder Power magazine carried an article relating to the group training that you and Columbu, Draper, Jacobs, Arnold and Waller were into at Gold's Gym. What little things do you guys do to help each other in training?

**Frank:** Actually we weren't really training together – we were just in the gym at the same time. When we're in the gym at the same time it sort of creates what they call a collective atmosphere. Each person has his own intensity, which contributes to the total atmosphere of the gym. It just creates a special feeling in the gym that makes you train harder. There are a lot of guys in there training hard. What we do for each other is maybe comment on some guy's weight or maybe help him or watch him while he is doing a set. Let's say I'm doing a set and Arnold is watching me do it. I'm gonna just do more, just automatic, like him or anybody else being there who is a hard trainer would help me do more in my training. We criticize each other also; we may go through our posing routine after a workout and we'll see and mention what's good and what could be improved upon.

**Dennis:** Give some of your impressions of these above mentioned men and their training programs.

**Frank:** O.K. Draper – Basically he trains short. He trains early in the morning, maybe at 7 a.m.; his workout is typically 1 hour and 15 minutes. He doesn't follow any set routine. What he sometimes does and what he used to do in the past, is to come into the gym and do a few sets with me and more or less go off on his own program. He trains very much in the instinctive fashion.

Waller – trains with very heavy weights and doesn't train real fast. He takes a long workout, like 3 or 4 hours. Waller is a big eater and likes to eat a lot of ice cream and just have a good time. He makes up for this by training extremely hard and long with heavy weights.

Columbu – is very strong and will never do bench presses with less than 350 pounds even when he's out of shape; he'll warm up with that. Because he's so strong this is what helps him have such muscle mass and muscularity. He doesn't train very hard most of the time, but in the summer before a show he always does. He has good metabolism and good leverages which is pertinent to handling heavy weights. He doesn't really have to stay on a very strict diet to get muscular so he's pretty fortunate in a lot of respects.

Arnold – is probably the hardest trainer that I know. When he was competing he trained extremely hard and it was very hard for anyone to train with him because he worked out so intensely. He really put a lot into it.

Mike Katz – long workouts – 6 to 8 hours. He was very strong. If he had paid more attention to his weak points he would have done much better in competition. He is still very good, however.

**Dennis:** What goes on behind the scene at the Mr. Olympia contest for a Super Star such as yourself?

**Frank:** I went over to the auditorium two hours early to find out what time we were to go on. After I found out I figured 20 minutes before, I would start getting ready; since I was two hours early I took a nap for one hour and then woke up and talked to a couple of people 20 minutes before time to go on. Nothing special happened.

**Dennis:** Being such a well known personality, have you had any intrusions on your privacy?

**Frank:** I have never had any gross intrusions on my privacy. My home life is very private. People recognize me at the gym. I will usually speak to them in more detail after my workout. Sometimes travel is very intense due to the environment and needing time to yourself. Sometimes the fans don't understand that. All they want to know is what I do to build arms, so when you are a little impatient because that question has been asked a thousand times on this trip alone, they don't understand. Generally people have been very nice to me wherever I go, so I really can't complain.

**Dennis:** What are your main reasons behind conducting bodybuilding seminars?

**Frank:** Number one: I do it to make more money, naturally. The main reason I do seminars I think at this time bodybuilding is getting more publicity and people want firsthand information on how the top guys train, how they approach their workouts, etc. So with this thought I am putting out firsthand information on how I train. This approach seems to get around some of the misconceptions that people have about bodybuilding.

**Dennis:** Why did you pick bodybuilding rather than powerlifting to compete in?

**Frank:** I did powerlift years ago when I was coming up. I was living in Pennsylvania and it was popular at the time, but I don't really have the structure for it. I chose bodybuilding because I felt that I had the structure and should maximize on that potential.

**Dennis:** Do you like to train at home or at a health studio?

**Frank:** Home gym training is convenient, but I would never do it again. The atmosphere is just not the same as a place such as the World Gym where I train.

**Dennis:** Are there any foods which tend to smooth you out over a period of time?

**Frank:** Simple sugars (ice cream, milk), bread, potatoes. Carbohydrates in great amounts would smooth me out in a week or so. I never go overboard on any of these. I have always been closely in touch with my body so that I receive a signal from overtraining or overeating and then I cut back accordingly.

**Dennis:** Have you ever gotten seriously ill to the point that you had to terminate all training?

**Frank:** A few years ago I came down with the flu. I got an antibiotic injection at somebody else's recommendation. I got a violent skin reaction and lost 35 pounds in one month. I was down to 160 pounds. I was in bed for a month and after I recovered I started training again and gained 25 pounds in two weeks (up to 185). Shortly after that I was back to normal. Other than that time I have never been seriously ill.

**Dennis:** Do you have any tips for the bodybuilder entering his first contest?

**Frank:** Practice posing, be in as good a shape as possible. Be CONFIDENT in yourself. Project a good IMAGE on the stage. Read some of my courses about POSING.

**Dennis:** How does a man such as yourself maintain a positive family relationship when engaged in contest preparation?

**Frank:** It is difficult to maintain a good family relationship especially the last month before a contest. With me it's only my wife and I; she is very understanding and knows what I am going through. She is an excellent photographer and helps me in this way. The best thing about my wife (relating to training) is that she gives me very severe criticism; she has never really told me that I look fantastic, but maybe one day she will. I've done all my best training and contest wins after I got married. You have to be around understanding people when training for a contest. I always look at it this way ? I realize that my wife is going out of her way to help me train. You really can become quite insensitive to what other peoples' needs are because all of your attention is directed on yourself. So you should realize that you OWE them something, and make it up to them when the competition is over. Don't be selfish in this respect.

**Dennis:** Is there some reason why some bodybuilders seem to win various body parts awards at the contests they frequently enter, but never win the overall title?

**Frank:** They have made up what I call a personal fiction of themselves – some myth or fable they live by – so these people never win big contests. If you aren't winning you should train more seriously and come back looking totally different. You can do it if you put your wits to it.

**Dennis:** Do you notice that some contestants in various contests have a sourball attitude about their placings in the contest?

**Frank:** There are some sore losers at contests. They can only see themselves from their own point of view. They see no wrong when they look into the mirror. In their wives' and mothers' eyes they are the best. What they need to do is have someone who is knowledgeable in the physique standards evaluate them; have someone take some pictures of them and show them what they really look like. Only when one knows what his faults are will he be able to improve.

**Dennis:** What do you feel the future holds for competitive bodybuilding?

**Frank:** First, the influence of the book Pumping Iron and lately the film and the publicity that Arnold Schwarzenegger has received is helping this greatly. Arnold has always upgraded bodybuilding wherever he has gone.

**Dennis:** Typically give the readers an idea of how you train in the Off Season.

**Frank:** The off season for me is the months of November and December. I don't have any special training ideas in mind at this time. I will go to the gym once or twice per week. I will never use heavy weights during this time, maybe 60 percent maximum. I train for total enjoyment and to get a pump, and that's all. I train fast and maintain whatever I can. I do 8 to 10 sets per body part. My reps might run 10-8-7 on three sets per exercise. It's very loose. I try to keep very little structure to my off season training. What I do in the off season is to concentrate primarily on my weak body parts. I may take a total layoff on the rest of my body and just work my weak points. I might, for example, work the back three times per week and nothing else, or calves or whatever body part I want to get up. So when I am ready to train seriously those areas (weak) have stayed good. The strong areas have gone down but then when I train regular all the areas come up together. For me this is how I feel the off season should be used. My bodyweight generally goes down in the off season, as much as 15 pounds from my best contest weight of 195.

**Dennis:** How about showing us how you begin preparing for the Mr. Olympia title?

**Frank:** This usually begins in January. This gives me 9 months with which to prepare. I come in fairly light, weighing about 180. Gradually over the months I will increase up to around 200 one month before the show. During the last month when I am training for muscularity, I will lose 4 or 5 pounds. So while it may seem as though I am bulking up over the months, I am really not; it is a gradual consequence of my overall training. Sometimes I feel a body part is not up to par during this training, so I will bring it up. Using the back for an example: I will take a heavy back workout on Monday, doing as many as 25 sets. On Tuesday (using different exercises) I will do 15 sets. Wednesday, 10 to 15 sets. Rest Thursday. Friday is another heavy back workout much like Monday's schedule. Saturday: just a very little amount of back work. Hitting it 5 days a week for two weeks I find the back really comes up. You can see how this could apply to other body parts as well. I never use specialization of this type any longer than a two week period.

**Dennis:** Allowing for long distance travel to contest sites in the U.S. or other countries, how do you adjust your training and nutritional program so that you don't lose your PEAK for the show?

**Frank:** I had an interesting experience in my trip to the 1970 Mr. Universe in London. The first time I went over there it was a disaster. I got in extremely good shape and looked fantastic when I left. The contest was on a Saturday so I left on Wednesday. While in the process of flying over there I lost some bodyweight and a lot of sleep. So, on the evening of the show I was drained and lacking in energy. I learned from that

experience and made adjustments in '72 by keeping my body a little heavier, and I left a week earlier. All of this resulted in my being peaked out properly for the show. I think when you are going to a city you should take into account how far it is, what the plane ride is like, when you should arrive, when to end your training. Arnold put it into very good words. He said when he leaves he is already on vacation. He is relaxed and eats whatever he wants because all of the aspects of contest preparation are over with. This is the way it should be.

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