

Larry Scott – The Passing of a Bodybuilding Legend

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BY JOHN ESPOSITO

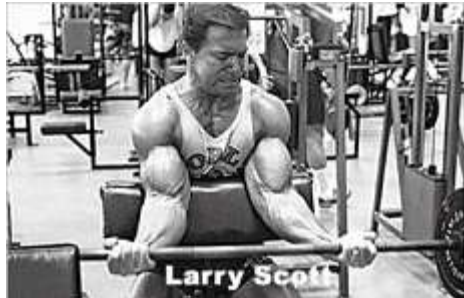
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Bodybuilding and weight training enthusiasts from across the globe were saddened recently to learn about the passing of legendary bodybuilder, Larry Scott (October 12, 1938-March 8, 2014) at age 75, from complications due to Alzheimer's disease. Scott was recognized as bodybuilding's top superstar for most of the 1960s until his retirement in 1966. This was by virtue of his numerous contest wins (including Mr. America - 1962; Mr. Universe - 1963 and 1964; and Mr. Olympia - 1965 and 1966), movie star looks, and countless physical fitness magazine cover stories exhibiting his incredible physique developed by lifting weights and adhering to good nutrition.

When considering Larry Scott's place in bodybuilding history, it is best to examine the evolution of physical exercise, strength training, conditioning and nutrition in the context of his own times. During the 1950s the need for physical fitness among America's youth was beginning to receive national attention. After a study indicated that American youths were less physically fit than European children, President Eisenhower founded the *President's Council on Youth Fitness* in 1955 to encourage American children to be healthy and active. The council's name was later changed by President Kennedy in 1963 to the *President's Council on Physical Fitness* signifying its role to serve all Americans. The fitness trend was slowly beginning to take hold, thanks in large measure to a vigorous, youthful President and his sports-minded family members, who were known to enjoy occasional touch football games on the White House lawn. Events such as these were often captured by the watchful lenses of intrigued photographers amidst a glow of public fascination by a young generation eager to embrace fitness. The council's name would subsequently change again during President Johnson's administration in 1968 to the *President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports*. It was now abundantly clear that physical fitness fever was snowballing in America and with that came an increased application of weight training in athletics, a greater understanding of nutritional needs and a rising popularity of bodybuilding.

The importance of exercise, conditioning and good health was not lost on a young Larry Scott. He personified the modern day Charles Atlas, starting out as a thin teenager with little apparent potential, who through hard work, dedication and determination, rose to the ranks of number one bodybuilder in the world. Reaching this lofty goal, however, was not only a testament to Scott's disciplined principles. Much of his success must be credited to the late Joe Weider (November 29, 1919-March 23, 2013), a Canadian bodybuilder, trainer and publisher, who became an entrepreneur extraordinaire and created a bodybuilding empire in the United States. Weider humbly began in Montreal, Canada with little money and a dream to promote bodybuilding and a healthy life style to the masses.

He eventually moved his business operations to the United States with offices in Jersey City, NJ and later Union City, NJ. As legend has it, the early Weider formula for success was to sign local bodybuilders to exclusive contracts. These young men were responsible for loading and unloading delivery trucks with Weider merchandise that included shipments of weightlifting equipment, bodybuilding magazines and health products (vitamins, minerals, protein powder, weight loss and weight gaining supplements, etc.) for local and ultimately national and international distribution. In exchange, the bodybuilders received free publicity and heavy promotion by the showcasing of their photos and exercise routines in Weider magazines, including articles written by the bodybuilders themselves explaining their training methods. All this exposure catapulted a number of these iron men to become national household names throughout bodybuilding circles. In the 1970s after finally establishing permanent headquarters in Woodland Hills, CA, the Weider Health and Fitness organization was well on its way to reaching the pinnacle of success and Joe Weider's realization of a lifelong dream.



With the entrance of the young Larry Scott and the untapped potential Weider saw in him, Scott emerged as the banner boy, the brightest new star in Joe Weider's cavalcade of budding strong men, and winner of the most prestigious bodybuilding contests (I.F.B.B. Mr. Universe; and Mr. Olympia - both events created by Joe Weider). In retrospect, there can be little disagreement that Scott acquired a legion of fans in large measure due to the platform given him by Weider, but in actuality each man ultimately contributed to the others' successful careers.

The Larry Scott championship years were nestled between the reigns of the two most famous bodybuilding icons of all-time: Steve Reeves, who arguably placed bodybuilding on the proverbial map beginning in the late 1940s through 1950s (films included: *Hercules*, *Morgan the Pirate*, *The Thief of Bagdad*); and Arnold Schwarzenegger, the recognized number one bodybuilder in the world from 1967 through 1980 (films included: *Pumping Iron*, *Conan*, *The Barbarian*, *The Terminator*), who served as Governor of California from 2003-2011. While Scott never achieved anywhere near the recognition and success of these two stars, he acquired an incredibly large fan base that remained loyal throughout the years. As a result of his many championship titles and professionalism, Larry Scott established himself as one of the greatest champions in the annals of bodybuilding. Scott aficionados will remember that the Idaho native completely eclipsed all the top bodybuilders of his era, such as Dave Draper, Harold Poole, Freddie Ortiz, Chuck Sipes and Sergio Oliva. This was no small feat. Larry Scott was inducted into the International Federation of Bodybuilders (IFBB) Hall of Fame in 1999.

Larry Scott will be especially remembered for the incredible size and long length of his peaked biceps. He held the distinction of being one of the first bodybuilders to have 20 inch upper arms and was equally famous for his deltoid and forearm development. As part of his biceps training regimen, he advocated the use of the Preacher Bench Curl for developing maximum arm size to such an extent that it has become almost equally well known today as the Scott Bench Curl.

As part of his resume, Scott had a minor role as a bodybuilder named Rock in the 1964 film, *Muscle Beach Party*. This was but one of several popular teenage movies of the era that capitalized on the beach and surfing craze starring Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello.

Larry Scott's reign as a bodybuilding champion is all the more spectacular when considering that for the greater part of his career, bodybuilding was not held with the same respect as it is today. In its early years, it was viewed as a somewhat tainted spectacle, more like a woman's beauty contest, or at best, an art form emphasizing body sculpture, but definitely not an exhibition of skill or athleticism and certainly not construed in any way as a sport. It is questionable whether bodybuilding will ever achieve the status of an actual bona fide sport. There are valid arguments on both sides of the aisle to allow for a lively debate on this topic. This is not meant for discussion here. What can be unequivocally stated is that bodybuilding has made giant strides towards public acceptance, whether

considered an art form, strength building or a sport, by advocating and promoting the importance of weight training and nutrition as a means of improving the physical health and conditioning of young and old alike.

Gone are the days when bodybuilding magazines were relegated to the back aisles of convenience stores. Now there are scores of bodybuilding, weight training and health and fitness magazines (for men and women) that take their rightful place alongside *Time*, *People*, *Rolling Stone*, *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker* at checkout counters in grocery stores, pharmacies, newsstands and book stores. Weight training is now utilized in most fields of athletics as a means to increasing strength, power and agility, thus providing a competitive edge needed for success in a particular sport. The muscle bound myth has been safely put to rest forever!

I had the pleasure of meeting Larry Scott in the late 1970s at a bodybuilding clinic he gave at Roxbury High School in Morris County, NJ. By that time, he was officially retired from bodybuilding for a number of years, approximately 40 years old, in excellent physical condition and maintained the same massive championship arms. He presented himself as a warm, friendly man, who was well versed in his craft, and in return appreciated by the audience. He continued to promote bodybuilding and nutrition for the remainder of his life by personal appearances throughout the country, operating a personal training company, selling health supplements and custom designed weight training equipment, which were all sold through his website, larryscott.com.

Larry Scott was known to be a devout Mormon. He lived his final years in Salt Lake City, Utah with his wife, Rachel Scott. The Scotts had five children: a daughter, Susan, and sons, Erin and Nathan, who survived Scott. Their son, Derek died in a motorcycle accident in 1992, and son, Michael died in 1993.

Rest in peace, Larry, and thanks for providing us with great memories and the inspiration for leading productive lives through health and fitness.

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