

Ronald heads to Gold's Gym to lift weights — and spirits

## ON BURGERS AND BICEPS

One's a tale of fries, the other's a story of flyes. One serves Shamrock Shakes, the other protein shakes. One offers to sell you a Big N' Tasty, the other to get you big and toned. But despite these opposite goals when it comes to the health of their clientele, the brainchildren of Ray Kroc and Joe Gold have some interesting similarities regarding the health of their businesses. In fact, it seems that the game plans to turn McDonald's and Gold's Gym into global icons came from the same playbook.

Take their nicknames, for instance. Gold's Gym members often shorten the name to just Gold's — and why wouldn't they? Who doesn't want to be associated with gold? It's one of the most precious metals on earth, it inspired a rush, and it even set its own standard. Yes, Joe Gold was lucky that his last name happened to be the same as that of a valuable element, but he had the smarts to capitalize on it. Consider this: None of the other major gym chains are mentioned in daily conversations outside of exercise. When talking about jewelry, nobody

refers to a 24-karat 24 Hour Fitness ring or a Bally's-plated watch. Gold using his own name for his gym was genius.

Dick and Mac McDonald (pre-Ray Kroc) didn't want to be left out in the cold when it came to gold either, so they constructed a stylized pair of yellow arches at each side of their first walk-up hamburger stand. The arches appeared as the letter M when seen from the street, and this vision was soon incorporated into the company logo. Billions and billions of burgers later, the term Golden Arches is now a part of pop culture. And the similari-

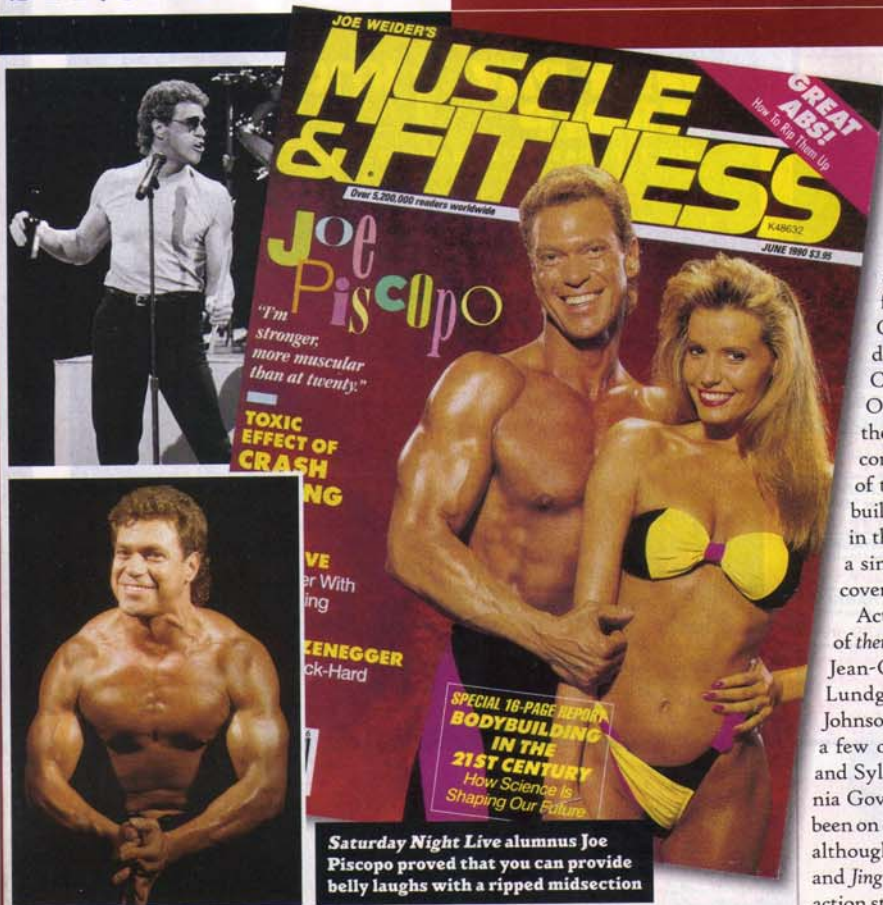
ties between the Golden Arches and Gold's don't end there. Where would our global empires be without their ubiquitous mascots, Ronald McDonald and the Bald Bodybuilder?

Seeing as Ronald is arguably the second most recognizable figure in the world aside from Santa Claus, there's no discussion over which mascot has more influence, but the Bald Bodybuilder and the crazy clown aren't really competing. In fact, you could make the case that they complement each other: Ronald guides us through our childhood Happy Meal years and the Bald Bodybuilder through our adult, happy real years — a passing of the torch, if you will.

When you consider that the age you can safely start lifting is about the same age that you start thinking Happy Meals are for little kids, this theory begins to hold some water. In addition, few moments in a young weight-trainer's life are more seminal than when he's old enough to get his own gym membership (it's a future musclehead's version of turning 21). More often than not, that first gym is a Gold's. With that, the Bald Bodybuilder enters your life.

And when he does, you stop wondering exactly how Mayor McCheese could let the Hamburglar get away with stealing all those sandwiches, and you start wondering how much weight the Bald Bodybuilder has on that bending bar.\* Then you start wondering how much weight you can put on the bar — and your transition into adulthood, and being a lifelong customer, is complete.

*\* Upon close inspection, the little gold guy is holding a bar with four plates on each end. Assuming the largest is a 45-pounder, that would make the next one a 35, then a 25, then a 10, which would make it 115 pounds per side. So, that's 230 pounds plus the 45-pound bar, which gives us a grand total of 275 pounds. This makes no sense because the bar is bending like there are two Cadillac Escalades on each end. But whatever, it's a T-shirt.*



Saturday Night Live alumnus Joe Piscopo proved that you can provide belly laughs with a ripped midsection

## AN ODE TO PISCOPO

Comedians have the same chance of appearing on the cover of *MUSCLE & FITNESS* as Will Ferrell does of starring in *Schindler's List II*. It could happen, it's just not likely. Why? Well, after studying the history of our covers and the history of comedy, I've come up against an insuperable fact: Fit isn't funny. From Fatty Arbuckle to Fat Albert to Ferrell, comedy seems to have no room for muscular physiques. Take a look:

Laurel was lanky and Hardy was heavy. The Marx Brothers could be beaten up by the Williams sisters. Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton dominated silent films but together still weighed less than Silent Bob. The Three Stooges would never be mistaken for the Three Musketeers. Richard Pryor? Puny. Eddie Murphy?

Meager. Chris Rock? Rangy. Jim Carrey? Gangly. Vince Vaughn? Doughy. Ben Stiller? Maybe. Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, Adam Sandler, Steve Carell, Jerry Seinfeld and Ray Romano are six of the funniest guys in the history of television and cinema, yet they don't have a six-pack between them.

And let's not forget the men known

for their girth as well as their mirth: John Candy, John Belushi, John Goodman and Chris Farley. This isn't to say that their lack of definition defined them, but as evidenced by Farley's famous *Saturday Night Live* Chippendales dancer showdown with Patrick Swayze, or Candy's consumption of the Old 96er in *The Great Outdoors*, they used their weight to their comedic advantage. Yet while all of these men had the brains and builds to make them virtual locks in the Comedy Hall of Fame, not a single one was able to grace the cover of *MUSCLE & FITNESS*.

Action heroes? We've had plenty of them on our cover: Chuck Norris, Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Oscar winners? We've had a few of those, too: Clint Eastwood and Sylvester Stallone. Even California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has been on our cover countless times. And although he headlined *Twins*, *Junior* and *Jingle All the Way*, Arnold was an action star who dabbled in comedy, not the other way around.

So that leaves us with only one man who had the talent to straddle the fence of humor and health — one man who embraced comedy and calf raises, who cared about laughs and lats. And that man is none other than the riotous, the risible and the ripped Joe Piscopo.

Joe graced the cover of *MUSCLE & FITNESS* in April 1988 and again in June 1990. If *Saturday Night Live* is the Mount Everest of comedy, then Joe is our Sir Edmund Hillary — the first ironhead to scale the comedy summit. Some may say it has been all downhill from there for Joe, having spent the latter half of his career as a Miller Lite pitchman and a guest star on *Law & Order*, but at least he established the fact that you can flex and be funny, a feat Stallone almost proved impossible with *Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot*. For that, we salute you, Joe.

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: HARRY LANGDON; © LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS; © NEAL PRESTON/CORBIS

# STRONG WORDS

BY JON FINKEL



Following in the footsteps of Eugen Sandow (above), modern strongmen will lift anything they can get their hands — or ears — on



## WHEN WEIGHTS ARE NOT ENOUGH

We use the term “feats of strength” because “examples of strength” and “acts of strength” simply don’t cut it. They’re too understated. It’s like saying *Terminator 2* was merely an “example” of special effects when we all know it was a feat of modern computer graphics. The implication is that a conquest has taken place, that a standard has been set. This is why, when it comes to displays of strength, only the word “feat” will do.

To that end, this magazine is filled with large men lifting large amounts of weight. You know you’ve looked at some of our ads and asked yourself, “Is Jay Cutler really doing concentration curls with 100 pounds?” The answer, amazingly, is “Yes.” Now, he may not do it all the time, and he may not even

use that weight in his workout, but the fact is that he *can* lift that much — and maybe even more. Which got me thinking that it’s pretty easy to look up who holds the world record in the bench press (Ryan Kennelly, 1,050 pounds) or who can clean and jerk an astonishing 551 pounds (Latvian Vik-

tors Scerbatih), but what about the guys who are too strong for weights?

Guys like David Huxley, who pulled a Boeing 747-400, weighing 187 tons, almost 300 feet in one minute and 27 seconds. Or what about those who might not have the strongest chest but have incredibly strong ears, like Zafar Gill from Pakistan, who lifted 136 pounds of gym weights hanging from a clamp attached to his right earlobe? Where do these guys fit into the pantheon of strongmen?

I say, right at the top. After all, every major college campus has a handful of guys who can bench 500, but you could scour the locker rooms of every ACC, SEC and Pac-10 football team and you likely wouldn’t find one lineman strong enough to have a helicopter land on his back the way Franz Mullner of Austria did.

Clearly tired of using the Smith machine, Mullner supported 1,144 pounds on his shoulders for 30 seconds when a 4,400-pound helicopter landed on a frame he was supporting with his back. Don’t have access to a chopper? Why not lift something more accessible, like people?

Eugen Sandow, the man for whom the term “strongman” was invented, once supported 19 vaudeville performers on his back at the same time on Dec. 21, 1895. He also routinely put two grown men in wicker baskets and lifted them overhead with one hand.

And if merely lifting people in the air seems boring to you, maybe you’d like to try throwing them. For expertise in this area, you’d need to talk to Jaha Rasanon from Finland.

Rasanon earned the world record for “people tossing” a few years ago when he threw a 132-pound individual a distance of 12 feet, 8 inches onto a pre-marked mattress. Which means that if you really want to prove your strength, get out of the weight room and head to a waiting room, grab someone and throw him as far as you can. If you break 12’8”, congratulations are in order — you’ve officially performed a “feat of strength.” **M&F**