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## WEEKLY MUSCLE BUILDING EXPERT *Interview Series*



### **Adam Glass Old-Time Strongman Interviewed by Mike T. Nelson**

MN: Hey, what's going on? Mike T. Nelson here from [ExtremeHumanPerformance.com](http://www.ExtremeHumanPerformance.com). I have a little bit of a frog in my throat, so I sound a little off. But, I'm on the phone today with professional Strongman and grip expert, Mr. Adam T. Glass. Hi, Adam.

AG: Hey, what's going on guys?

MN: I think it would be cool to talk today about some of the more, I guess you could say, physical culturists or old-time Strongman and just some of the stuff and exercises that they did and how it relates to peoples' training now a days. I don't think that there's probably really any "new" exercises. But, there's probably a lot of stuff that the average person in a gym hasn't really seen before that could be highly effective, too.

So, for those who don't know who you are, you want to introduce yourself there Adam, if people are living in a cave and never heard from you before?

AG: Yeah, I run [AdamTGlass.com](http://AdamTGlass.com) as well as [GripAndRip.com](http://GripAndRip.com). I'm a competitive grip athlete as well as a professional performing Strongman, right now holding the record for the 2" vertical bar lift as well as some bending endurance type feats and some things like that. I've been doing grip training now for ten years, doing demonstrations and shows for 3 ½ and competitions over the last year, as well as being a kettlebell instructor. I've done a lot of work with corrective exercise in the past and now being primarily focused on biomechanics instead of any particular system of training. Just looking at how the body moves and how it can move better.

MN: Nice. What are some typical things you would do in a show, since this is an audio format, we can't really run any video, just to give an idea. Like, if you're doing a performing show, what would be some typical things that you would do?

AG: So, the big thing is whenever you're doing a demonstration if you have to meet the audience where they're at. So, things you've seen in the past that people do, they'll come out and they'll lift different poundages and weights. I don't think that's particularly exciting.

So, one of the primary ways that I was taught to do shows, coming from Dennis Rogers and guys like Slim The Hammer Man and The Mighty Atom before that was object destruction. So, every person out there has held a wrench in their hand, an 8" crescent wrench. You have an idea of the weight, how hard the steel is. So, I'll come out with something like a crescent wrench and either snap it in half or bend it into a 'U'. I've taken draft horse shoes, twisted them out into 'S's or into hearts, picking up big weights with a finger.

Some of the things I've done in presentations, bend 500 pounds with my middle finger, 250 with my pinky, bending all kinds of different steel objects, different tools. Lifting up people, all kinds of different things. tearing decks of card and phone books, which is one that everybody enjoys, because everyone's held a phone book.

Most of the feats are centered, hand and arm strength, which is really the key things. There's a lot of guys out there who probably have the upper body strength to do some of the things that I do, but they don't have the lower arm strength. It's just like having a really, really crappy, bald-out tired on a high performance car. You've got all that horsepower going to the engine, into the tired, but the tired just spin and spin and spin. They can't grip the road.

MN: Cool.

AG: That's kind of one of the things, as we get talking about kind of the old-timers, grip training was really one of the fundamental things for them. But at the time, and I'll cover why in a little bit, they weren't necessarily focused on grip training. It was more out of necessity. So, when we talk about kind of the differences between then and today, I'm going to talk about why that was particularly important then.

MN: Cool. So, do you want to maybe just fill us in on some of the history, because there's a lot of people probably listening to the call who... They've probably seen maybe some old pictures of Reg Park or some of the older guys who've been around for a while. But, they may have never heard of more...like Slim The Hammer Man or some more of the, I don't really want to say obscure, but if you go back in history, like these people were actually entertaining crowds as sort of a... I don't really want to say a circus act, but kind of a Vaudeville type of entertainment. Do you want to fill us in a little bit on the background?

AG: It's kind of one of the things that have died-out in America. There are some people that are working to bring it back, but I'll give you an example. When The Atom and Slim performed at Madison Square Garden in the '70s there was 50,000 people there.

MN: Wow! Fifty-thousand?

AG: I mean, it was like packed to capacity.

MN: Wow!

AG: There were some performances that some of these other guys have done where it was absolutely...it was the sold-out event of the day. It's like boxing. Boxing has been on a decline for the last 20 years, being replaced by MMA. So, if one thing goes, another thing comes up. But, there's been nothing that has really come up that's replaced the performing angle.

People just don't really give a shit about powerlifting. They don't really give a shit about World's Strongest Man Competition. I look at it, it's pretty simple metric. If you and the family and the kids are all sitting around and it's a Friday evening and you're deciding where you're going to go, it would be a hard-sell to get somebody to agree to take their family to a powerlifting meet. And it's not that I'm dogging-out actual powerlifting competitors and their performance, but in terms of watching their sport, it's not interesting. It's not.

MN: Well, it's nothing you can relate to.

AG: Yeah, and that's exactly it. People just can't, especially now days. The guys are so fucking strong, people can't relate to 1,000 pound squat.

MN: No.

AG: You can't. So, it's completely lost in translation. So, some of the old-timers were really the premier entertainers of their time, where they're at. Some of the circuses, their strongman show used to be one of the headlining events of they'd have. Now days, there's a lot of circuses that still have that presentation., but it's just been eclipsed by how fantastic some other performance has been.

I mean, you'd be pretty hard-pressed if you were a performing strongman to top a presentation, something like Cirque de Soleil, which is both very, very artistic and entertaining, but also has some very incredible feats on body coordination and strength.

MN: Yeah, and I think there's something to that. I always have thought in the back of my head that...I think people on some level want to see something like this, but they don't know it exists, until like Cirque de Soleil came out and they had more of a traveling show outside Vegas and stuff.

Now, I've gone a couple of times and it's amazing, because they're doing acts that people can kind of relate to, guys balancing on their hands, their legs way up in the air, and acrobatics and guys running up poles and all this stuff. They're not out there trying to deadlift 500, 600, 700, 800 pounds, whatever. It's something about using their body and moving it through space. Because, everyone has sort of a body they can move around and they kind of know the limitations of what it is. So, to see someone else do things that you thought were pretty much impossible. Like, I saw guys running up poled just using their feet and hands and basically doing sort of the skinny man on the windy day, right? They're actually walking down the pole, only using their hands. Their body is like completely straight out.

When you see things like that it's kind of like, "Wow!" And like you're saying, like bending a wrench or things like that that people can relate to. It's like, "Oh, my gosh! That is kind of crazy."

AG: On the performing angle, and this true of many of the top performing strongmen, and I know almost all of the best guys in the world right now. We all have agreed on something, is that you're never actually showing people what you're strongest at, because most of the time, what really would make you, you know, when we use the word 'world class', you know, one of the best in the world at something, it's probably not one of your performing feats.

I'll give you a couple examples from a couple of the top guys in the world, too. So, Dennis Rogers is unquestionably the guy who's done the most. Dennis has been seen by the most amount of people, he's been on the most television shows. Dennis makes the most money per show. I mean, Dennis is the real deal.

So, at 168 pounds, Dennis could grab a 120 pound dumbbell, right now, and curl it with one arm. I mean, that is absolutely fantastic strength. But, Dennis doesn't do that in shows anymore. He may come out and do something else that requires a tremendous amount of arm strength, but even... And Dennis has done some things that no one else has ever done. But, even those things don't represent his limit strength at all.

In fact, what Dennis does in his show right now, there's not too many guys that could replicate it. I mean, some of us can replicate portions, but to do the entire show, not so much. And it's not even taxing him, I'd say not even close to his 60%.

Mike Bruce, a good friend of mine, Mike can rack-pull from the knee, oh God, somewhere around 1,400 - 1,500 pounds at a body weight of about 197. Same thing. I mean, imagine the amount of logistical trouble you would have setting that up, doing that much resistance and loaded up. He does some things with a special bar where he actually picks up people and it looks really cool. But, once again, it's nowhere near his max capacity.

For me, some of the things I can do are more impressive to the other strongmen just because if you see me bend a nail, well then, it's kind of the same thing as seeing me bend a piece of steel. So, it doesn't matter if it's a 60-penny nail or if it's a 3/8 piece of stainless steel. For most people, because they don't understand exactly how much power it takes. They can't tell the difference between something that's effortless for me and something that takes everything I've got. You've kind of got to meet people right in the middle.

So, the hand balancing thing is something that used to be very, very popular. And I'm not the best historian of everything, but I know that guys can check out Logan Christopher's site. He has a lot of the history of it.

We'll jump onto it, too, because I want to talk about kind of the differences and why the way people used to train is kind of closer to how performers are doing it now a days and why it's all been lost. Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the only real physical training that you had anywhere in the world was the military and then sports like boxing and wrestling. The majority of other sports, the way that people got into them was more of an attrition-based thing.

So, you would come out to play soccer or football for the rest of the world with your buddies, and if you were good enough to keep playing without getting hurt, well then, you'd carry-on. And maybe if you played enough games, you'd get to be really good. But, they didn't have any type of sport training like we have now a days. And the majority of physical readiness was primarily a product of military training, which once again was mostly an attrition-based thing.

The first people to really pioneer a lot of strength training was primarily wrestlers, wrestlers and boxers. If you read back in books, you can see all these misconceptions about...for wrestlers it would be okay for them to swing 50 pound loaded maces, which is pretty damn incredible, but they would tell them, "Don't lift barbells." So, nobody really got it at the time.

The circus strongmen may have been some of the only people that were on the road, going around, that were showing different methods of training. In the Mighty Atom's book, he details that The Atom was...he was abandoned...well, he kind of ran away. But, he got picked up by a Russian circus strongman when he was very young. Being a Jew in Europe, he wasn't particularly treated very well, and one night he got really the shit kicked out of him by a guy. And this strongman had found out about it and kind of had a bit of revenge on the guy who beat him up as a kid and then took him under his wing.

They talk about his training methods that he used growing up, working under this guy. And it's kind of that...everything from Russia's got this kind of esoteric bullshit about it. But, there are some pretty solid, what I understand today to be foundation of modern training.

So, for a long time, there wasn't too many things...some weight lifting techniques started to pick up, and that will get into the first big difference. So, the primary difference you had back then versus now was equipment. It was a logistical problem. They didn't have plate-loaded dumbbells, for the most part. A lot of them were cast, where they were just lumping weights on. Gym sets were extremely hard to come by, and a lot of these guys would end up with dumbbell sets and it's kind of how people train with kettlebells today.

You have one that's too light, you have one you can kind of work with and you have one that's too heavy. So, you're using a lot of different techniques to get the most mileage out of the given piece of equipment.

MN: Yeah, because they didn't have like 30, 35, 40, 45s. I mean, they were closer to 10, 20, 30 pounds sometimes.

AG: I mean, you've got to remember, these were all pieces of equipment that were primarily made by hand. So, it was very, very expensive.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: A given lifter might have had couple of lighter weights and I can't even speculate on the poundages, but what we know is that most of them were probably between 20 and 50 pounds. And then, a lot of them had a heavier set of weights and then they

would usually have a challenge weight that they would have custom made once they hit a point. It's the same thing if you work on picking something up long enough, you will get there.

MN: Yeah.

AG: So, there wasn't a lot of gyms. You had athletic centers in some of the bigger cities, but most people, the only way they could train was a combination of body weight, odd objects and whenever they could get their hands on it, resistance. And as it became more popular, some types of weights became more available.

So, the first thing we see is a lot more one-handed lifting, which is what we don't see much of at all in a commercial gym. So, instead of working with an evenly-loaded barbell, most of these guys were doing a lot of one-handed deadlifting, one-handed swings, one-handed cleans, one-handed pressing. Going into the same equipment problem, you didn't have squat racks, you didn't have leg presses. Bench pressing never really caught-on until somewhere in the '40s or '50s. So, there weren't a lot of guys that had access to that. So, they had some other exercise they did on the floor, but it just wasn't nearly as popular.

The degree of gymnastics training that was present was much, much higher. There's a lot of misconceptions and myths on how strong some of these guys were, and I think a lot of it is a bit of bullshit. But, I do know that a lot of these guys were far, far more athletic than most other people, because they had a more diverse background in their training.

So, what we see today is we see people that are far more specialized and demonstrate superior power in limited ranges of movements. But, we don't see a lot of athleticism. Now days, the guys who bench presses 400 pounds and squats 600, he typically doesn't move very well.

MN: Yeah.

AG: We're not seeing that. We're not seeing a lot of guys that could walk around on their hands, maybe do some work on a set of parallel rings, go and do a long bike ride or a long swim. Wrestling was such a popular sport. One of the metrics they had was how long a given guy could go wrestle. The Atom, Hack, all those guys would go wrestle for hours at a time. These were documented as official things. Some of these guys that were going to wrestling tournaments, they would wrestle fifteen guys in a single day.

MN: Oh, geez.

AG: Yeah, very, very big difference from now days where, you know, I look at it like some of the MMA models where the guys are prepping for 12 weeks for a single fight. And even that's been a big shift from even 15 years ago where UFC used to be a tournament setup.

MN: Yeah.

AG: You know, a guy could go to UFC and have to fight three fights in one night. I'm not saying it's worse or anything like that, I'm just saying it's different. So, the logistics of training, people had to train differently. They had to use a wider variety of methods. There was a lot more one-handed lifting and there was a lot more training with more odd objects.

MN: Define an odd object for people who haven't heard of that. What were some of the common things that they used for odd objects?

AG: First, we'll talk about a simple definition to work with is this. We'll call an odd object anything that's not evenly balanced and loaded. So, when you're picking it up, it has an usual feel to it. So, now days, your precision-made dumbbells and some of these precision-made barbell sets, they're accurately loaded, left to right, within ounces.

MN: Yeah, especially competitions, for example. I did a power lifting meet and the weight sets all have to be like completely standardized and certified and individually weighed and all that kind of stuff.

AG: Yeah, and there's very, very low tolerance for variation.

MN: Yep.

AG: And then, on the same token, I have an original York Dumbbell Blob, which is half of a York. And it's half of a 100 pound dumbbell, and it weighs 54 pounds.

MN: That's only the one side of it.

AG: Yeah, that was one side of it. Maybe the other side weighed 42 pounds, or maybe the other side weighed 58 pounds. It's probably all over the map, because the manufacturer standards were very, very different.

So, for everyone who's listening, a simple definition of an odd object is something that is outside of spec to where it would be loaded. So, things that the guys used to use, one of them was dumbbells. Now, I talked about grip training earlier and I'll come back to it. Because of the way they were manufacturing, a lot of times, they had to go for a much thicker handle or a shaft on the weight. And there was no standardization.



Now days, one in 1/16 or one in 1/8 is kind of the standard for most barbells. There are a couple that are slightly thicker, but they're all pretty much the same. If you go to 100 gyms right now, you're probably going to see all the barbells within a very small tolerance.

MN: I've seen them all right around one inch.

AG: Yeah. They're all right around the same. Back then, they didn't have that. So, they had...they weren't all made from steel or iron, they were made from different types of metals, different standards. So, sometimes the easiest way for a manufacturer to make sure it was a safe lifting implement was to make a handle thicker. So, you'll see some old dumbbells, old barbells that have some pretty stout handles on them. And that was simply structural limitations at the time. So, you either had to be strong enough to hand onto it and work with it, or you weren't.

Additionally, the requirements of using things like heavy clubs, heavy maces, that would require a much, much stronger hands. Keg lifting, anvil lifting, some of them were more of stunts or kind of competition events the guys would get into. But, a lot of them took it pretty seriously.

Kettlebell training used to be a lot more popular, both in this country and in Europe. The kettlebell training, I think, back then was completely different with what it called kind of the legitimate kettlebell training or kettlebell sport, which is primarily the snatch and jerk for repetitions.

There was a time where it was more of either an all-around strength technique or for different demonstration. Juggling was very popular. Most of the old books where they refer to kettlebells, they specifically talk about juggling them.

MN: When you say juggling, you're just talking about...people who aren't familiar, just moving the kettlebell through space and then throwing it sort of with one hand and catching it with the other. So, you're not necessarily holding on and doing like exercises like we see pretty much everybody doing now. You're literally throwing the weight through space in different orientations and catching it with the other hand.

AG: Yeah, it's a lot of fun.

MN: Very, very fun.

AG: It's one of those things where you can kill 30 minutes throwing around a 40 pound piece of iron and not even realize it's going by. It's a good time.

MN: Yeah.

AG: So, that was one of the big things then. And if you look at how competitions were graded back then, it was happening differently around the world. But, there were some common things. One of the things that was very interesting was kind of where bodybuilding started at.

So, where bodybuilding started at was actually an athletic competition. Guys would come out and they would have to do different things. It might have been a clean and jerk, it might have been a press, it might have been some type of deadlift or some type of pickup of weight. There would be almost like a gymnastics floor routine of different hand balancing and stunts. Perhaps some sort of feat of strength for demonstration of strength. And then, they were awarded physique points on top of all that.

MN: I sort of think of it as kind of like a modern day strongman competition, but you also have to look the part, also, and then be able to do some gymnastics stuff, too.

AG: I think, actually, the closest thing to where it started is actually women's fitness routines now days, where the women do a routine and then they're judged on how they look and how they do things.

MN: Yeah, there's certain required moves they have to do and stuff, too.

AG: Yeah, and I think it was a lot like that. Of course, I don't know for certain, but from all the books I've read, it seems to be. And what that tells us is number one, being the strongest guy there didn't guarantee a win. But, nor did being the best looking guy.

MN: Yeah.

AG: And both sports started to change afterwards, because after they changed, it meant that you could go on and just find the biggest damn mastodon you could who could lift the most weight. Or, you could show up and just have been the best dieted guy, and you may not have been very strong at all, not related to the competition.

MN: Yeah.

AG: Another thing, another common trend that we see is the majority of the people that we kind of refer to as the Old Timers, almost all of them had started with a background of kind of the classic weight lifting. So, nearly all of them were at least competent in cleans, snatch, jerk, press.

MN: You're referring to almost Olympic weight lifting-ish.

AG: Yes. And back then, of course, the technique was not nearly as... Now days, I mean, it's a true science. It is a precision sport. There are so many things going on with it, but back then it wasn't quite the same. But, all the guys were doing things like

that. Which I think, I mean, ripping the weight off the floor to overhead builds a type of strength that's hard to build in other ways.

What killed weight lifting was dropping the press and not picking up the bench press. I think the bench press is probably what let power lifting take-off.

MN: That's probably true, yeah. I'm trying to think back, and I'm not the best historian on power lifting at all, but I think the bench press, in terms of the three power lifts, I mean, other than deadlifting, which has already been kind of sort of around, but I think that's probably one of the bigger contested lifts. Wasn't it? I could be wrong on that.

AG: It's one of those things, I think, for most people it's just...there would be so many people that get mad at me when they hear me say this. But, out of the three power lifts it's not the most technical of the three. The squat is infinitely more technical than the bench press. And the bench press is extremely primitive compared to what it takes to do a snatch or a jerk.

MN: That's true. I would agree with that.

AG: It's more of a lift that kind of any man or woman can get into and between removing the press, which was a strict strength event, not necessarily based on speed or technique. And then a new sport popped up that had an easier lift to get into. I think it killed it.

MN: And that's just saying it's a standing, overhead military press would be kind of considered now days.

AG: Yep, picking up a weight to the shoulder and then putting it overhead, using pretty much arm and shoulder strength.

MN: Yeah.

AG: One of the other things that was pretty substantial with a lot of the Old Timers was the diversity of different attributes they were pursuing. But, they also kind of understood that you had to stay limited as far as what you were doing to get there. And I know that's kind of a cloudy statement. But, you had guys that were going out and they were pursuing multiple sports at one time.

So, you'd have guys that would do, in a single year, they may do a weight lifting exhibition, they may have done a wrestling or boxing match, they may have done foot races, they may have done physique competition. They may have done a general demonstration. And they kind of had an idea of what was working for them, which, like I said, going back to a lot of it was pick up heavy shit, put it overhead, and a lot of one-handed lifting.

Now days, people are kind of all over the map. You watch your average person go to the gym and their plan is they're going to show up, they do five to fifty sets of bench press with 135. They curl some dumbbells, they hop on the leg extension for two or three sets. They might do some lunges or jog on the treadmill for 15 minutes. And then, they can't quite figure out why they're not getting the physique they want.

Or, you have people who completely omit leg and back training. They do hit shoulders, back and arms all the time, and they can't figure out why they've been 175 pounds for the last four years. Maybe all that muscle mass that goes unchallenged would have something to do with it.

MN: Yeah. Even if you just go to most commercial gyms, this may not be necessarily people listening to this call. But I mean, I've done deadlifts in just a commercial gym and I haven't done a ton of weight or whatever, but you get close to doing just two-times body weight and people look at you like you're a two-headed space alien. You know, and then picking stuff off the ground, many years ago, was just...that's what you did.

AG: Modern gym owners aren't doing us a lot of damn favors, and I own a damn gym. So, I'm going to tell you this. If you're a gym owner, your job is to provide a facility for people to come train in, hit their goals. It's not necessarily to tell people what they have to do or what they can't do.

If you have clients that want to lift overhead, then buy a platform and get bumper plates. If you have clients that want to pick up heavy weight, then have a proper deadlifting station. Don't run around... You know, I think we've talked on this on other calls, too. Did you know that there are gyms that are equipped with seismic alarms that will go off in the event a lifter drops weight on the floor?

MN: Yeah.

AG: It's like a siren goes off. They have to kick that lifter off the floor.

MN: What is it, like kind of Florida or somewhere? They called it the Lunk Alarm?

AG: There's a few.

MN: Is there really?

AG: There is one... They have gyms here in town. It's unbelievable to me.

MN: Oh, my God.

AG: My thing is this. If you own a gym, then you're agreeing that you have some vested interest in getting people better. Maybe stronger, leaner, more muscle, whatever. So, you should be letting them do the things that they need to get there.

What's amazing to me is people say, "I don't let people lift overhead in my gym because that's dangerous." But, at the exact same time, they'll allow some 14 year-old kid to put 2,000 pounds on a leg press, where his lower back is ready to freaking snap. Or, they'll have guys in there that are leg pressing until they're having nose bleeds and they blow out every single blood vessel in their eyeballs.

I'm not saying people can't do that either. If you want to do that, if you want to abuse yourself that way, go for it. But, you don't tell me that that is safe and deadlifting 405 is not.

MN: Yeah.

AG: It's amazing to me, the other thing, because I've also seen gyms where they don't allow any overhead lifting whatsoever. I got kicked out of a gym when I was in Mississippi a couple of years ago for doing some one-arm lifting overhead. And the same time, we're doing that, there was a group of gym men that are next to me. I was in the squat rack using to unrack for some bent presses. They're benching and they're basically letting the bar fall onto the guy, hitting him in the sternum. And then the spotter, who is really doing all the work himself, would pull the weight off the gym. I mean, it was pretty brutal looking. And once again, there was no contest to their behavior.

I know this, if I was an insurance agent and I was walking in the gym to determine where there was liability and risk is, I would be more concerned about that behavior than I would the guy who was putting a mere 135 overhead. Big deal.

MN: Oh, yeah. I mean, there's even gyms now, like the gym I work at during the day part time, they had to argue, because it's a big fitness chain that goes into corporations, to get a bench press in there that wasn't like a Smith Machine type thing. They had to argue for months and months because they felt it was unsafe. Which, I may be, but at the same point, you can't lift anything heavy off the ground. Or, if anything happens, you just drop it.

AG: The argument of safety, that's a slippery slope, because I guarantee this. If we pull enough people, there's been somebody hurt on every machine ever made. There's been somebody hurt doing every exercise. I guarantee it. I don't know where to look for this, but I guarantee there's been somebody who's been hurt doing kick-backs with a ten-pound dumbbell.

MN: Oh, I'm sure.

AG: So, the issue of what is safe and what is dangerous is a slippery slope. What makes more sense to me, though, is educate the people on look, this is probably what's going to get you to grow fastest.

For most people listening to this call, my opinion is this. Doing more unilaterally loaded lifting, so single limb, single arm, single leg, with a variety of poundages with the simple focus being picking shit up off the ground and trying to put shit overhead will make you far stronger than employing circuits of the newest machines in the gym.

You know, there are some machines out there that I really like. I'm a fan of hammer strength. I'm a fan of some of the things they make, man, they're really cool. They've got a really cool grip machine. I like their shoulder pressing machines, I like their bench press machines. I like their deadlift and their trap shrug machine. Great. But, I still think that most people do better just doing one-hand lifting, taking it up off the ground, putting it overhead in a variety of manners.

MN: Yeah. If you even want to start with two hands, that would be perfectly fine with that, too. Not saying that it's better or different, it's just... I think one hand allows you to work a different stimulus, especially comparing left to right. Most people don't even use two hands to pick anything up. So, I agree with you though.

AG: I think that would be the first one. The next thing I think that would be very, very useful for most people is include more bodyweight training in their program. And closer to kind of the gymnastics angle. I'm not saying that every person should go out there and learn how to jump over pommel horse and do an iron cross, but most men... This is what I've been amazed of, particularly since I've been out of the military. Most men can't even do 20 pushups.

MN: Not good ones.

AG: No, no, not a true pushup. I'm talking all the way down to the deck, all the way back up. Most people can't even do that. And it seems, for some reason it seems like it would be good common sense that you'd be able to handle your own body weight for 20 pushups before you're trying to get out there and set some kind of new state bench press record. There are a lot of guys out there that can't even do a single pull-up. And there are far too many guys that can't do a single dip. So, it just makes sense to me that try to get on those things if they're there.

Bodyweight training, it can't get a person to all their goals. But for most people, concerning the direction they're going in, which is primarily aesthetics with maybe a little bit of functional strength or so-called functional fitness, bodyweight training would be much higher payoff than, once again, riding the machine circuit or basically playing these games that people are doing right now.

MN: That's always a kick in the nuts, too, like I remember when I first started training. I was the typical, sort of 18, I had no idea what the heck I was doing. You go in and they go, "Oh, you just do the machines like everybody else." So, I got stronger on the machines and then I did some more research and talked to people. "Oh, you should do free weight stuff." Okay.

So, the first time I go to do a bench press, I get flattened. The first time I try the freaking bodyweight squat, I was like, "Oh, my God! This is horrible! I was just leg pressing 500 pounds, what the heck?" So, you find that a lot of times the machine training doesn't necessarily translate into lifting or moving of free weights.

But, as I go stronger with free weights, every once in a while I'd try a machine and, oh, I was stronger on the machine. So, it was always very interesting that using free weights seems to transfer to more things where using machine-based stuff, has its place, seems to be a lot more specialized.

AG: You know, I think it was in one of Matt Furey when he put out the whole Combat Conditioning program.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: One of the things he talked about was he said, "Let's try an experiment. We're going to take one guy. We're going to put him on a machine-only program where he's going to do any machine he wants in a gym for as many sets and reps as he wants, for three months. We're going to take another guy and we're going to put him on a bodyweight training program where he's going to do all these different bodyweight movements, different pulls and pushes and flies. And then, we're going to have them flip at the end of three months and let's see who can do who's workout."

There's a lot of truth to that. I mean, you show me a guy who can do 20 pull-ups, who can do 50 dips, who can do 100 pushups, who can do two or three-hundred squats. Then, we put him in the weight room on the machines and he's going to do fairly well for himself.

You show me someone who can do leg extensions with 250 pounds, can do the nautilus fly machines with 100 pounds on the weight stack, leg press 700 pounds. That may not translate to very much. It typically doesn't.

If there are people out there, and you train that way, I'm not making fun of you. But, what I am saying is that if your goal is strength and you have an interest in doing much better than where you're at, I'm going to tell you, I just don't believe that machine training is where it's at. Until we start seeing guys that are trained strictly on machines do better in the strength sports, it's just hard for me to sign-off on it.

MN: Yeah, I agree with that. So, what are some other exercises that used to be rather routinely... If I remember correctly, there used to be...in competitions, there used to be a one-handed deadlift, I think. Correct?

AG: Yes. In fact, let's go over some of kind of the lost exercises and things that... I'm sorry about that, Mike. I've got somebody trying to call in. I'll get back to them later.

MN: Oh, that's all right.

AG: So, one of the...I don't want to say lost lifts, but of all the lost exercises, here's one that you'll probably never, ever see someone do intentionally. Although, they may do it unintentionally, is what's called the Continental clean.

So, when they talk about continental, what they're talking about was, there was a lifting style employed in Brittan and then there was a lifting style employed in the rest of Europe. The Continental clean was clean the bar basically in segments. So, the lifter may first lift the barbell up to their knee. Then, they would bring it up to their waist. And because you're allowed to wear lifting belts, a lot of the guys would set the bar on the waist for a second. Then, they would pull it up to their chest and then get it up to their neck and then finally they're in a clean position.

So, once somebody gets comfortable with a Continental style cleaning, they can typically clean way more weight than they could with the older style cleans. Now days, the Olympic clean is a very, very powerful technique with these guys dropping way under the bar. I'd imagine the ultimate potential for the clean is far higher today than it used to be. But, having to pull a bar up the body, sequentially like that, would make a person very, very strong. And it also would get them used to dealing with an awkward load and almost having to fight it the whole way up there. So, these guys were pretty damn strong to be able to Continental clean three or four-hundred pounds all the way up their body to get into position.

Now, for people listening, if you want to go out and do that, you've got to start easy, 75, 95-pounds and just get used to understanding kind of the phases of it. But later on, you can get quite strong.

So, the next thing was the standing press. That in itself...everybody seems to understand it when you say military press. But, I rarely see people, anybody doing it.

MN: I totally agree with that.

AG: Everybody says the standing press is bad for your back. But, if you notice, the back position of most people who are doing seated presses, they're putting their body in more biomechanical jeopardy than a standing press.



The danger of a standing press comes into play when a guys starts to lean back, who's not ready for it. And in fact, leaning back on the press would still...it's still a valid technique. There's a video that Jed Johnson and Jim Smith put on in 2005 that was called "The Shit You've Never Seen."

MN: Oh, I've got that.

AG: Yeah, I love it. It's these two big, beefy guys lifting in their garage. One of the things that Jed is really big on is Jed does almost a standing benchpress where he'll clean a weight, and he leans way back and presses it. He talks about it, he said, "A lot of people would think that would hurt, but for me, it feels real good."

So, the lean-back is where we may see danger. But, for most people, a vertical torso position, vertical spine with an overhead press is not any more dangerous than any other particular thing across the generic sample of the population. But, maybe people can't tolerate it. For those of you out there who shouldn't be doing it, if you have any questions, contact your doctor.

MN: Yeah.

AG: So, along with the two-arm presses, of course, one-arm pressing. When we get to one-arm pressing, we kind of get into another exercise that is very, very lost, which is the bent press, also called the screw press. It's not actually a press. What it is, it's a support feat.

So, a lifter would have the weight in one hand and they would have their elbow far out to the side, sitting back, almost on their hips. And then, they would do a sideways lean. As they would lean away from the weight, their arm would straighten out, because it was being held in position on their back.

I've got some videos on my site on my YouTube of me doing it. There's a couple of other guys that are pretty good at it. But, the bent press allows the lifter to lift a pretty substantial amount of weight with one hand. With the record being a guy who lifted somewhere around 350-pounds with one hand.

MN: That was hard to describe, too. It's almost like you push your body, actually, underneath the weight instead of pushing the weight overhead. If you can kind of visualize that.

AG: In a properly executed bent press, you never actually press the weight. There are some guys that were doing it very fast, where you fall away from it. There are other guys who did it slow, where you just bend away from it. But, if you can imagine the weight as a static position in space, your body moves under the weight to get it into position, versus moving the weight.

MN: Yeah.

AG: One-handed deadlifting, in the wide variety of types there were, were very, very popular. There were different types of straddle deadlifts, different types of suitcase deadlift, one-hand both conventionally and sumo-style. All different types of pick-ups with one weight. And that really is closer to life. And that's one of our goals, as a company. We want more people training closer to their life movement. Because, it doesn't make sense that you go to the gym and you lift with this precision deadlift form that would get the thumbs-up from every powerlifting coach in the world, but then when you're at home working around the garage, you're lifting with a rounded back all day and you can't figure out why your back hurts all the time.

Squatting technique, they are two in particular that you don't see any more. One of them was a Steinberg style squat, and that was where the weight was tilted up off the ground. So, you'd pick up one side of it, and lift it to where the bar was nearly vertical. And, you would basically duck underneath it and roll it onto your shoulders and squat.

MN: I haven't tried that one for years.

AG: I'll tell you why I like it, Mike. If you tell a guy to do a Steinberg squat, and the most weight he can get into position is 95-pounds, well then, you're fairly certain that he's not going to screw himself up by getting stuck.

MN: That is totally true. You'd never have got it there in the first place.

AG: You know, if the weight is too heavy, the guy can't even get in position to hurt himself. So, I kind of like that about the Steinberg style squat.

The other one was the Hack squats, which is holding a weight behind the back and it's almost a ball of the foot squat, or you're on the toes. A lot of people now days, they refuse to squat on their toes in the gym. But, every time I go to the supermarket, I see people, men and women, squatting on their toes all the time.

MN: Yeah.

AG: So, once again, if we're going to do it in a real world, let's do it in training.

MN: The Steinberg, correct me if I'm wrong, came about because people didn't have squat racks. If you want to squat, you've got to figure out how to get the freakin' weight on our back.

AG: You used to have one of two options. Either A, you had a couple of guys around and you could have those guys get the weight into position for you. You could clean the weight, jerk it overhead and then lower it behind the neck. Or, you could fall underneath it that way.

MN: Yeah.

AG: I don't know when the first squat racks were put into effect, but I know that I have not seen any photographs of a squat rack that are pre-1940s.

MN: Yeah, I was thinking... Correct me if I'm wrong, but wasn't York dumbbell kind of the first major company that even started making sort of mass equipment, I guess you could say, that I know of. So, maybe sometime around there.

AG: I would hazard a guess that's probably accurate.

MN: Yeah.

AG: A lot of what has become modern kind of feats of strength in the grip realm started off as a practice that used to be quite common. A lot of different types of pinch lifting used to be very, very common.

MN: Can you explain a pinch lift, for people who may not know what that is.

AG: So, when I say pinch lift I mean you're taking your hand and your thumb is going on one side of the object, your fingers on the other and you're lifting it. And the reason you're able to lift it is by the force that's the power of the thumb, so the strength of your thumb.

A lot of people out there, and some of you listening to this call, you may have never thought about this, that you should be training your thumb to be stronger. Real quick, I'll segue into that. When your thumb is stronger, you're more injury resistant. So, almost everyone out there has experienced what happens when you jam your thumb. It really sucks. It can be a painful endeavor for several weeks. And most of the time in life, when your grip is limited, you're limited specifically by your thumb. When you find you're unable to do things using your hands, a lot of times it's because the thumb is not strong enough to complete the task.

Everybody emails me and always asking, what is the one thing I can do for my grip right now that will make the biggest difference? Here it is: do pinch lifting. Go to the gym, take two plates, have the plates turned smooth-side out, sandwich them together and just take both hands, put them on top and deadlift them.

It's pretty substantial how this can be worked up. David Horn, Steve Gardner, Jed Johnson, all those guys pinch upwards of 250 pounds. You can move some pretty big weight that way.

Some other very, very popular things was object destruction. So, steel bending, very popular for demonstration. Guys would make a lot of artistic patterns out of bars

and they kind of had their signature bends that they would do. Older style book tearing, card tearing. Spike bending, driving nails through objects with their hand.

Another one you don't see any more, even though everyone's seen this piece of equipment. So, everyone out there has probably seen a Roman chair. It's the old device, you hook your feet on it, you lean back and you do sit-ups. Now days, nobody in the gym would do a Roman chair sit-up, because they're so convinced it's bad for the back. I have photographs of old lifters who were doing Roman chair sit-ups with a barbell, several hundred pounds, across the chest.

Bridging, spinal extension drills, very, very popular. A lot of people have probably seen an older photo of a strongman who would be in a bridge position with perhaps a bunch of people sitting on his chest and on his legs. That was a very popular feat of strength.

MN: There's some stuff where you're basically doing a bridge type lift where your backs on the ground or up against the bench or for more experienced people, up against your neck. That's just an extension of those lifts that used to be very commonplace.

AG: You know, if I had to make a really broad statement pertaining to the difference between the majority of lifters now and the great lifters of the past, the lifters of today have bigger chests, bigger arms, bigger legs, as far as bigger quads, and the lifters of the past had stronger shoulders, stronger back and stronger hands. I think they look better today, and I think they perform shittier now days.

MN: Yeah. It's kind of ironic.

AG: I mean, it's interesting. You look at a guy like Arthur Saxon. Saxon was one of the very best lifters of his day. He was a great wrestler, great athlete, incredibly strong. Saxon had 16 ½ inch arms, a 48 inch chest and then a six-pack with what would be considered fairly scrawny legs, pretty skinny legs.

And yet, he could press 350 pounds in one hand. He could pinch lift on his...he had a big log that estimated to be about 180 pounds that he could pinch lift and snatch. He did a feat where he would have a board, a large plank placed across his legs, in almost like a leg press position, and he would hold up to 2,000 pounds on his feet. He'd go to these wrestling matches and wrestle for several hours at a time.

If Arthur Saxon was in a gym today, you would not think too much of him, unless you saw him actually lifting. By the same token, I look at lifters today and they're only impressive to me until they start lifting. And then, it's like, oh, that's all you do.

MN: Yeah.

AG: Me, I mean, I weigh 209 pounds, probably 16 ¾ inch arms, 52 inch shoulders, 49 inch chest, not the biggest guy you've ever seen, until I start lifting. And then it changes the game quite a bit. With most of the things I do, particularly grip and steel bending, there are not too many guys that can do the majority of the things I do, and I don't know anybody who has the same bodyweight or age can do what I do in its entirety.

And every person out there, in my opinion, could develop that same statement. They could be the most impressive person at whatever things they choose to do. But, what they've got to start doing is they've got to start training in a way, if you want to have an unusually high amount of strength, you probably need to do some unusual exercises.

MN: Yeah. And I think the biggest thing, too, is that people need to pick a goal. it's like you go to most gyms and you poll people, "What's your goal?" "I want to get a little bigger." Okay, that's cool. "How do you define bigger? Do you actually have measurements taken? How do you equate to that?" Or, "I want to lift more." Okay, that's cool. "How much more, on what lift?"

I think most people are just kind of wandering, thinking that oh, it'll just start to kind of happen. I'm just going to do some more bicep curls. They seem to be a little bit lost in terms of what actually it is that they want to achieve in what it is.

AG: A lot of people have got kind of some strange believe systems. One of the ones that I hear from guys is they say, "You know, I'm not really interested in getting stronger, I just want to be bigger." My question is, what makes you think getting stronger would prevent you from getting bigger?

MN: Yeah.

AG: Now, obviously you can develop some pretty unusual strength and not look as big. But, for most of you out there, pursuing more strength is going to make you bigger.

MN: Yes.

AG: And then other people say, I don't want to get bigger, I just want to get stronger. Well, the same token. It's unlikely you're going to be able to only get stronger and not get bigger.

One of the most entertaining things to me that's come about kind of from Pavel's influence and the Dragon Door Community is this legion of 140-pound guys who think that their thighs are too big, which is absolutely hilarious.

MN: Yeah.

AG: So, you've got these guys that are afraid to lift because they think they're going to get bigger. Well, you're not going to be able to get strong unless you get a little bit bigger. That's going to happen. But, you're not going to out-squat Kirk Karwoski unless you get bigger legs. And you're not going to out-lift Donny Thompson if you don't get a bigger back.

MN: Yeah.

AG: What you just said is really profound, too, because specialization of one direction is going to get you guys a lot farther than random shots in the dark all over the damn place.

MN: Oh, yeah. I mean, that was the biggest mistake I made when I was training. One, I had no freakin' idea what the Hell I was doing. Two, I kept destroying myself in the gym, like literally. And then three, it was like I had no specific goal and I had no timeline at all. So, even now, the only real reason I ever compete is just because it has a timeline and a definitive goal and it's highly objective. Either you did better on that day or you didn't. You can't argue with that. And if you didn't, well, go figure out what happened.

AG: I think competition is critical. You don't have to go out... In order to compete, you don't have to go out and do a powerlifting meet. You don't have to do a bodybuilding contest or something. Here's how we can define competition. Take two men and say that one of you has to do better than the other one, and you just started a competition.

MN: Yep.

AG: You and your buddy are going to have competition to see who can curl and most amount of weight by the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

MN: We used to do that all the time.

AG: Oh, and look at what it gave the world! Arnold, you could easily say, built the best physique in bodybuilding and if you read back on his dialogue and his memoires, they treated every day in the gym as a bit of a competition.

MN: Yep.

AG: And there's a lot to be said about that. I'm talking primarily about the mental aspect of it, not necessarily the physical. Every day he came out and it was either he bested himself and someone else, or he didn't. It doesn't matter necessarily if you win or lose, but at least being in that competition mindset, you have something to aim for.

MN: Yeah.

AG: I mean, I would be like Van Wilder college example of a guy who just goes to college with no plan. You could be in college for a long time.

MN: Oh, yeah, I know that.

AG: So, I try with everything that I do, to have some type of timeline that I'm shooting for, everything: fat loss, hypertrophy, number that I want to hit on a bar, number of repetitions, whatever it is. I always try to have a timeline. Most of the time I'm able to meet or exceed that timeline. Very rarely do I miss.

The only time in my training that I ever feel like I'm floundering in a given area is when I'm unable to establish what I want to do with it. I didn't do pull-ups for quite a long time, and there's a lot of reasons why I didn't do pull-ups. One of them probably being that I already do so much pulling through my one-hand lifting that it didn't seem like it would be that good of an idea, until I asked myself one day, well, what would it be like if you could do a pull-up with bodyweight? What would it be like if you could do like 20 bodyweight pull-ups?

There's nothing magical about it either one of those numbers. Nobody else in the world is going to give a shit if I can do 20 pull-ups with bodyweight. No one cares. But, at least it gave me something to shoot for. So now, I do pull-ups quite routinely. And this is a big thing. It feels good to hit your goals.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: It feels good to say, "I'm going to do X," and then you go out and you do X. It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks about it.

I own a world record in a lift that is fairly obscure. I've lifted more weight than has ever been documented lifting in it. Most people if I tell them, "Yeah, I can crush on the 2" vertical bar." They have no idea what that means. But, what it means to me is that I've worked. It doesn't matter why, I can lift the most weight on it. So, that makes me feel happy inside. There's my gold sun sticker for the day.

MN: Yeah. I've even literally changed my training recently just to look and go, well, what do I actually want to get better at? And it's usually too many things. So, it's usually like, all right, I'm going to take this period of time, four to eight weeks or whatever, and I'm going to really work on this, this and this. So, it's kind of like you have your overall goals for the year and then, I think Zercher squats are going to help increase my squat and my deadlift. So, I'm going to work and try to get really good at Zercher squats for eight weeks and see what happens.

Instead of trying to pick like 15 goals that you're trying to get to all the time. Just pick a couple or even one main one, and then just kind of go from there and go for it.

Even if you completely miss, you've probably still made more progress by doing that than just kind of going in and going, Monday must be bench day again.

AG: You know, Mike, I'm going to take an opportunity here to shamelessly plug one of our key principles that we're working towards as a gym movement. For everyone out there, one of the things that we would like to see more people do is what we call aligning the psychology with your biology.

What that means is this. Instead of playing this game where anybody can do anything they want, let's be a little bit more realistic and we'll take a look at your body, your structure and what your actual potential is in and see if we could line up your fitness goals with it.

So, I'm going to give you a couple of examples. I'm going to pick on myself and I'm going to pick on Mike. With me, I cannot do an overhead squat. I cannot do it. I've got a bone in my spine that doesn't move anymore because it was crushed in an accident a couple of years ago, and it causes me some unique movement restrictions. I have done the corrective exercises with the best corrective specialists in the world. They managed to equal zero improvement in that one area. So, that is one thing that just will not go. I get in that position and it's like zero improvement for me.

So, what that means is there's a lot of things I can do, but one thing I'll probably never be particularly good at would be an Olympic lifter. Because, one of the competition events for the snatch is you pretty much have to catch that bar at the bottom of an overhead squat and stand up.

MN: Yeah.

AG: So, I can either try to be the square peg and jam myself in the round hole, or I can look at it and say, for some reason, I have an unusually high strength to weight ration, particularly related to my grip, and I can pursue grip sports.

For Mike, Mike does not have stereo vision. Mike doesn't see in 3D. So, Mike could go out and try to play handball or lacrosse or basketball, and always be the guy who feels that he's having to play catch-up. Or, he can do what he does now and he can do powerlifting, which does not involve him having to visually track an object in motion.

So, for those of you out there, if you weigh 230 pounds and you're 6'4", gymnastics might not be the right direction for you. You might be built to go out and flip some heavy tired and pick up stones. And if you're 5'6" and you weigh 140 pounds, heavy events and strongman may not be your best bet. And I'm not saying you can't go



out there and be good, and that's why they have weight classes. But, I would imagine you'd be much happier if you were chasing a goal that's going to give you faster results.

It's a very American thought process of, 'I want it now'. But, the reality is this. If you do want it now, instead of me trying to toss you out of that mentality, I would rather just give you something where you're going to get your results much faster.

MN: Oh, yeah, I totally agree with that. It's one thing to try to be better than where you're at currently, and it's another thing to also be completely realistic with your structure and what you have and the timeframe that you have to work with it. To say, well, I'm going to do this. I may not ever be the best in the world, but I enjoy it, so I'm going to get better at it. That's cool.

But, like you said, it's completely different to go, well, I want to be a world class, in my case, I want to be a world class baseball player. I can't see objects that move very fast. This probably is going to be a very hard road and probably not the best place to go for in terms of if I want to be the best in the world at it. So, yeah, I agree with what you're saying.

AG: I'll use Hanagarne as an example. Mike and I have a friend, Josh Hanagarne. He's 6'8". He's 250 pounds. So, at 6'8", I want you to try to imagine the mechanics of the human spine trying to lift the barbell off the ground. Let's make something very clear. The height of a set of 45-pound plates was not determined by a biomechanics expert, and the optimal height for a person to dip down and pick up weight off the floor.

So, the fact that the deadlift starts where it's at in competition has nothing to do with biomechanics and everything to do with manufacturing standards from like 50 years ago. So, a guy Josh's height has a Hell of a time picking up a weight off the ground when it's heavy.

So, Josh breaking 500 pounds was a very substantial achievement for him, despite the fact that it was a double bodyweight pull. And then we've got a guy who's built to pull...he will pick up 700 pounds before he's 30. There's no two ways about it.

MN: Oh, yeah, shorter femur and arm length and stuff. Yeah.

AG: So, what we're saying there is that number one, not all men are created equally. And number two, not all sports are designed with all body types. And every sport has done its best to try to be as fair across the board as they can, but there's no coincidence that when you look at the best of every sport, they all are kind of built the same.

You look at the NBA. Most basketball players in a given position are roughly the same size. In powerlifting, in every weight class, in that particular weight class, all the

guys, more or less, are built the same. it's very rare that a guy, at the high level competition, who's structurally dramatically different than everyone in his weight class.

We see the example over and over and over. Kettlebell lifting, is a sport I have an interest in. Most of the high level guys that are in the 9,500 kilo weight class are all about 6'2", 6'3" with that same lanky-assed build, because we have better lifting mechanics for the particular competition feat.

So, what I think a lot of people would be happy with, and this has kind of diverted a bit from where we started. But, I do think it's an important thing to hit on. Is instead of pleasing everyone else, pick a sport that is going to be suited more for your body and chase it that way. I think you'll get there a lot farther. You'll do much, much better.

MN: I definitely agree with that. And the caveat I would add to that is, do something you actually enjoy, too. It's like, even if you're not... Like, I like playing volleyball. I love playing volleyball. I've actually gotten better at tracking the ball in motion and all that kind of stuff. But, I also realize that if I want to get better at it, I need to fix my vision. But, I enjoy it, so I'm still going to keep playing it. At the same level, I don't expect I'm going to be a world class competitive volleyball player in the next couple of years.

AG: You do have the height for it, though.

MN: I do have the height. That it true. So, people will pick me on their teams until they actually see me play.

AG: You guys probably don't realize how tall Mike Nelson is from the videos, because he's usually by himself. But, Mike is about 2 ½ inches taller than me. Mike's quite large.

MN: Yes, I'm like 6'3 ½". How tall are you?

AG: You're taller than me. So, I always like to think I'm 6'3", but maybe I'm 6'1".

One more thing I want to hit on that I think is relevant, too. One of the things that the old timers that I really liked was they always were getting better. If you look at their development, most of the guys had become famous in their day in their late 20s. And part of that was because with gyms not being readily available to the population and then physical culture and true weight lifting not even being on the table for most people, your average American or your average European was kind of stuck in what their physique looked like.

Basically, if you did a given job, you looked like a man or woman who did that job. So, if you were a blacksmith, you were built like a blacksmith. If you were a barber you were built like a barber. So on and so forth.

It wasn't like today where the guy who works at the Gap might also be an aspiring bodybuilder and he's super yoked-up. Or, an accountant might also be a state record holder in powerlifting.

So, those guys had an easier time getting noticed early-on. But, what you see as a trend throughout their life are performance. Larry Scott, how old is Larry now?

MN: Oh, man...

AG: Nearly 80?

MN: I don't know to be honest.

AG: I hope I look as good as Larry when I'm...

MN: Oh, yeah. Have you see photos of Bill Pearl recently? Holy crap!

AG: Incredible. They never really burned out. Now days, most guys start training at 14 or 15, maybe 16 and typically it comes in one of two ways. They either played a sport in high school, they wrestled, they played baseball, they played football, whatever. They went to college and then they went one of two ways. They either gained weight because they drank their ass off and chased girls. They did somewhat stick to their fitness program. In their early 20s most guys are most likely to keep in the gym then, and then there's this stagnation period from probably 24 to mid 30, which correlates, most of the time, with them finding a girlfriend, getting married and thinking that it doesn't matter anymore.

You wake up one day and they've got a potbelly and they move like shit and they're weak, and they decide they're going to get back in the gym. Then, they'll train for maybe six to ten more years and they either get burned-out from accumulated injuries or they hang it up and decide that they're a hard-gainer. And man, it doesn't have to be that way.

If people would work within their limits, not be out there trying to kick their own ass every single day and not do things that are getting them hurt. You're lifting career is, by my definition, your life. When we look at these guys....don't look at the bodybuilders, now. I'm not talking about the guys who are juicing it for 30 years, because they have kind of a hard way out the door. But, for most of the guys who are true physical culturists, most of them have an extremely active life, all the way up until the end.

Those guys seem to be, based on what we're seeing, as kind of that golden age of physical culturists, they're kind of all going out the door, is a lot of them go kind of fast and less painful than the decay of ten years or something. I've had to watch family members of mine pass. All the people in my family live very, very long. Almost all of them are in their 90s. But, unfortunately, a lot of them never really did anything after they hit 60. Their last 30 years, I mean man, it doesn't seem to be a very good life to me when it's a continuing breakdown, over and over and over.

I look at it as if they would have had a physical practice that was scalable that they could maintain, many of them would have been extremely active all the way up until the very end. And isn't that what we all want? I mean, provided... I'm saying that everyone has an option here to choose, you can choose to be very active or you can choose to die-off slowly. Which one do you want? I'll take very active until the end.

MN: Definitely. I agree. The more I learn about physiology is the more that exercise and good movement just in general affects virtually everything. It's unfortunately even worse once exercise and good movement is removed from the equation. Everything else just goes to Hell so much faster.

The body is designed to move and to be challenged in the right way. It adapts to that and you start removing that, whether you look at studies on bed-rest or even zero-gravity where they've launched people into space. Man, it just goes in reverse so fast because the stimulus has been completely removed then.

AG: You know, I think everyone who's going to hear this call has either owned a dog or a cat during their life. If you own a dog or you own a cat, you know that you're going to lose your pet pretty soon when that pet quits moving around.

MN: Yep.

AG: When your dog starts sleeping for 20-plus hours a day and it doesn't want to play anymore and it's very lethargic, you know that your dog's days are really, really numbered. So, with that being said, all of us have seen that in our life at some point. Why is it that so many people in the world agree to subject themselves to the exact same thing?

It's a very sad statistic that most people, particularly as we're really... I mean, we're done with the industrial age completely. But, kind of those final people who are retiring out of it right now, this year, 2010, it's a very sad thing, but most of these men hit 63, 64, they retired and they're done within two years. They pass as soon as they're done working.

I know some guys that they would get up at 5AM every day, they'd go to work at 6:30, they'd work until 7 o'clock at night. And these were not easy jobs. They would come home and then work in the yard or work on the farm or spend time with their family, working 5-6 days a week. And on the weekends they're incredibly active. They retire and then it's like they burn-out. Now that there's nothing to do, then there's nothing left to do.

So, what we're saying is, you can re-set... Well, you'd kind of hold the grim reaper at bay, quite a bit, and enjoy a much more full life as you exercise. And that's another lesson of the old timers.

MN: Those guys are still around and very active.

AG: Modern athletes do not age very gracefully. Look at the NFL. Here's the lifecycle of a quarterback. Play ten seasons, maybe 15 if you're good, retire, do a Campbell Soup commercial, do a Wheaties commercial, nail a job to become an announcer on one of the football shows and then we watch you get a fatter ass every season.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: What that Hell is that, guys? You spent 15 years of your life being in an elite, world class athlete in the NFL. And then, the season after you're done you put on all this weight. It's incredible to me.

MN: And you look at the exceptions to that, like say Herschel Walker or other people that have kept up their exercise routine after they've left. And even with all the accumulated trauma that they've had over the years, they are still pretty good.

AG: And that really comes down to kind of managing expectations. Some of you out there, you're listening, you're in your 40s, you may be in your 50s, and you say, "Oh, I don't care what these guys are saying. These guys are young." Hey, I'm not saying that I expect you...I have some kind of measuring stick I'm holding up to you. I'm saying that if you're not in the gym deadlifting 500-pounds and squatting 500-pounds that you're weak. What I'm saying is, if you're not in the gym squatting something and deadlifting something, you're short-changing yourself.

There are a couple of guys that I've worked with closely and one of my frustrations in dealing with them is they want to use their age like a crutch. They want to tell me how, "Well, you know, Adam, I'm 50 and I'm not interested in being strong." Okay, are you interested in having a back injury for the rest of your days? Are you interested in a hip replacement? Are you interested in having to go to assisted living because you're not physically strong enough to take care of your day-to-day duties and

dress yourself? Because, I know this, that when we see someone who's in very, very good shape, the end of the line looks a lot better than those who are not.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: I hope, Mike, that 50 years from now, you're there to fucking remind me to keep going. I can't imagine I'd stop. I can't imagine what would make me stop. Even if the only thing I could do was squeeze grippers and curls a 10-pound dumbbell, I'd still do it.

MN: Yeah. I think it was an interview with Bill Pearl I was listening to, and he's got a little shed...I'm pretty sure it's him...behind his house, him and his wife get up every morning, go exercise, six or seven days a week. They asked him, "Why are you doing this?" He's like, "Well, I enjoy it. That's what I've done all my life. I feel like it's my responsibility to take care of myself. It's my responsibility to be healthy and active so that I can take care of myself as I age and that I'm not dependent upon others because I didn't do what I was supposed to do." I thought that was pretty cool.

AG: Wasn't that in one of Marty Gallagher's newsletters that Marty has spent some time here in 2010 where he went out to Oregon to train with him? Marty was saying, too, that not only is he working, but his workouts would actually kick the shit out of most guys that are...

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: He's not up there lifting like a Nancy. He's out there training.

MN: Yeah, pretty cool. So, if we wrap-up the little summary, that you'd want...the three take-aways for people to take away from this call, what would they be?

AG: Okay, the first take-away I'd like people to do is include more standing unilateral movement, so single arm, single leg movements, primarily picking weight up and putting weight overhead. So, deadlifting, cleaning, rowing, snatching, pressing, push, pressing, jerking, putting weight overhead, that's the very first take-away. That is going to be a big change for you.

Don't go out there tomorrow if you've never done it before and try to snatch 150-pound dumbbell. Start easy. It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. So, don't get crazy with it. But, there's a lot of good to be done there.

The second thing is, include more variety in your training. Part of it being it's going to increase your adaptability, it's going to give you a greater sum of your fitness results. The other thing it's going to allow you to do, it's going to allow you to find out what you're truly good at.

You're not going to find out what you're good at just going to the gym and running through the Cybex circle. You may find out that you are quite bass-assed squatting or you're very, very bad asses running obstacle courses, or lifting kettlebells, whatever it may be. But, do that variety and once you find out what you're really skilled at, pursue that. Play your strength.

The third thing is, adopting a fitness practice that you can do from now until the end of your days. So, if your current fitness practice is something that you know you can only maintain for a couple of years, okay, enjoy it, but understand you're going to pay a price and be prepared to change gears, hopefully, before you're broke.

So, there probably are some guys who could powerlift for 20 or 30 years. There haven't been very many. There probably are some guys who could handle doing Crossfit for more than three weeks. There doesn't seem to be that many. I had to do it; I had to say it. I couldn't stop it.

But, you've got to find a physical practice that is scalable that is going to be enjoyable that you can do throughout the duration of your life. Because, I think that really is what physical culture is, is it's movement throughout your life in a way that you find rewarding and the appropriate amount of challenge that keeps you engaged in it. It can't be too easy or you're not going to like it, and it can't be too hard, or it's going to break you. But, finding that middle ground, wherever it is for every person, that's what's going to make your life more enjoyable.

MN: That's almost sort of the definition of flow. It's trying to do something that is a little bit more difficult, but still within your limits. So, it's not too easy. Finding that...and I'm everyone on this call have had that where you go to the gym and you did a good session, you leave, you don't feel like you got run over by a truck. But, everything just went real well, all your lifts went up. It felt relatively easy, but you still had to put a fair amount of effort into it. But, it was still definitely within your realm of what you can do. To me, those are always sort of like the best sessions.

I do a lot of kiteboarding, so going out and being able to ride for four hours, where the time just disappears. You're concentrating, but you're working within your limits. You're not getting thrown all over the lake or whatever and you're leaving your training session dragging your back leg. You're leaving feeling like, oh, that was good. Those are, I think, the kind of days that make you want to go back and try to recreate that on a daily basis.

AG: If I could say that... I think that's it right there, Mike. If I could define what is a perfect workout, it's the one that everything goes good and at least you're feeling better than when you started.

MN: Yeah, yeah.

AG: So, I don't think the perfect workout involves any particular tool. I don't think it involves any particular set of exercises. I don't even know if it encapsulates a specific goal. I think it might be more on the way it leave you feeling at the end. Because, I know that if I can make you feel good today, I can probably have you come back tomorrow. And if I can have you come back tomorrow and leave feeling good, then I can probably get you to come back again. And pretty soon, I've got a pattern to where even if you wanted to quit, you won't do it. And then, that's where we get that lifetime fitness benefit.

MN: Yeah, and I think in the Register they said that... I could be wrong on this. But, I think for someone to be considered what they call life time exerciser, I think, and I could be wrong on this, they had to do it consistently, I believe, for five years. Two to five years.

AG: That really isn't that long.

MN: Right, if you think about it, if you're going to lift and train for most of your life, even if it's five years, it's really not that bad. So, if you can invest five years of your life doing it relatively consistently, which some younger people listening on the call are going, "Oh, my God!" But, considering the course of your life, it's really not that much of an amount of time. Most people spend that long in college. Most people, not me.

AG: I've got a quick story about the power of that too, Mike. So, my uncle, Joe Glass, was on the junior Olympics team for wrestling for both Greco and freestyle. So, from the time he was 13 to 18, he had been to 40 different countries wrestling. He's got an entire box full of medals. There's not too many bronzes in there. They're almost all golds and silvers.

He was in Iraq the week before all the hostage shit went down. He'd been all over Germany. There are just so many newspaper ads that our family has of him. When he hit 19 his pancreas completely shut down, his body completely quit producing insulin and his life has been very, very hard since then. He's in his 50s now.

Now, in my opinion, the only reason he's still alive today was because of the physical condition he was in as a young man. At 18, at 150-pounds, he was bench pressing 300 pounds. He could run for 30 miles. He would go to wrestling tournaments where he would do a Greco match, walk off the mat to a freestyle match, walk off the mat, back to a Greco. He went to 15 different tournaments in two years where he took the gold medal for both Greco and freestyle in the same day. This is all documented shit that's been in my family's history.



So, the point is, that was basically his five years of exercise, 13 to 18, which carried over to him surviving something that would kill most people. He's never had to have a limb amputated. He didn't have to have nearly as many surgeries as people who've had the same series of disorders.

I would be interested to see what would happen to people if they were in a productive exercise routine for five years, what it does to the rest of their life. And then imagine if they would actually continue.

I don't see five years as a very long time when we talk about the health investment that you get out of it. Provided that it's all doing things the right way, not you going out there and breaking yourself.

I haven't gone five weeks without exercising in the last ten years. And I can't imagine a circumstance, considering how much time I spend deployed in the military, I was able to train nearly every day. There's not too many things I can think of that come up in my life, besides maybe a crippling injury, that would stop me from training for any length of time. It seems impossible to me.

MN: I'm at the same point. I'm sure the people listening know that, too. I mean, about five years ago I completely ripped my ankle snowboarding. So, it was my right ankle. So, I couldn't drive and everything. I had a guy drop me off at the gym. I took a cab a couple of times. You're walking around on crutches. I'm like, well, I can still do upper body stuff. People were like, "Why don't you just...just don't train for a couple of weeks." I'm like, "What, are you crazy?" It's like the thought of not training is just like, eww. It's not an option.

I've gone here lately, a couple of weeks ago, and lifted after being awake for 38 hours in a row. It wasn't by choice, per se, and it went okay. It's not something I'd recommend people do. But, at the same point, you can... If it's a high enough priority, you'll find a way to do it. Once you get to that point, you don't ever have to worry about, I think I'm just going to quit and never do it again. It just becomes so ingrained in you that you'll just find a way to have it.

AG: There's a final thing on that that's worth bringing up, too. Those of you who have kids, I hear guys tell me, "I'd like to go to the gym. I'd like to train, but my kids take all my time." So, I'm going to offer a counter-argument. You want to be the dad who is the first guy to play a sport with your kid. You want to be the dad who can keep up with your kid when he's a teenager, when it gets to be really fun. I'd imagine you'd want to be the dad who's physically active enough to enjoy and become the type of father that most children want. And it's not going to happen with you sitting on your ass watching TV from 7 to 9 every night, calling that quality time.

With all the things you can do with your time, 30 minutes every evening is going to give you much higher payoff in your dad capacity than it would be sitting in front of the TV watching a cartoon or some kind of program with them. As soon as your kids are five or six, have them jump in with you.

MN: Oh, yeah.

AG: Say, "Come on down here." I went to see Ryan Pitts who owns StrongerGrip.com a couple of years ago and it was so entertaining to me that Ryan's son, we're out there in the back yard throwing maces and kettlebells around and Ryan's son is climbing on a tree and doing pull-ups off the tree and he's sprinting around and just being a kid, having fun.

I have yet to see a kid who would not enjoy having that opportunity with their dad to be able to get into some kind of physical practice. Or, daughter. I would imagine most daughters would be the same way. I don't know for certain. I don't have children, but that's my guess. But, I know this. You're going to be a lot more valuable to your kids when you are physically active and healthy, than if you get fat and broke too early.

MN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, the amount of payoffs, it's just like long term investing. The amount of time you put in just to exercise compared to the amount of payoff that you get from it in multiple different arrays of factors is a pretty good investment, to me. Sometimes it takes convincing of that to others.

AG: It's very high payoff.

MN: Yeah.

Cool! Well, hopefully people got a lot of good stuff out of there. So, briefly, tour exercises to do and stuff that they can do in the gym. Have them pick a goal and go towards that by working an area that they want to definitely be performing rather well at, in terms of if they have an option to decide. Hopefully, a little motivational portion there that if people aren't currently exercising, they may want to start soon. Or, if they are, just more motivation just to keep going.

So, where can they find out more information about you, Mr. Adam?

AG: They can jump onto my website, AdamCGlass.com. I have been running that page for some years. There's a lot of different articles, lot of information. You'll see information for me, for Mike Nelson, Frankie Ferris, Logan Christopher, Josh Hanagarne, a lot of really good guys, a lot of stuff that will entertain you.

You can check out my DVD, Grip and Rip 2.1, which will teach you how to program a file-feedback, which is an organization that both Mike and I are involved with.

I have a new grip product that is coming out next month, "Industrial Strength Hand". It's going to teach you a wide variety of those old timer tactics on how to build very, very strong hand, very, very simple. It's not going to take a lot of time, and it's going to be high payoff.

MN: Nice. I'm Mike T. Nelson. I'm a PhD candidate in exercise physiology at the University of Minnesota. I teach around here and I also run [ExtremeHumanPerformance.com](http://ExtremeHumanPerformance.com). So, you can go there, sign up for my newsletter, tons of cool stuff on there, blogs been up for 3 ½ years now. I have Grip and Rip for sale there, too. I highly recommend it, excellent product. So, you can just go up there under the top, under products, and be able to find it there, too.

So, thank you very much today, Adam. I greatly appreciate it.

AG: It's been a pleasure, Mike. Thank you for having me out.

MN: Great. Thank you very much. Take care guys.



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