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BECOMING JACK LALANNE

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Becoming Jack LaLanne

by

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Dedication

To Staci

Acknowledgements

Six years ago, I sent an email to my advisor, Jan Todd, explaining that I planned to go to business school, but that I *really* wanted to do what she did: learn, study, and write about strength. I was working at Google at the time – and making quite a bit of money – and yet, somehow, it wasn't hard to walk away from all of that to move to Texas and become Jan's student. I can actually recall the exact moment I made my decision. I was sitting at a bar on the Drag with Dominic Morais after a campus visit, and, looking back on the day, realized that maybe I had found a place where I could accomplish something that would be meaningful to me. But not even in my wildest dreams did I imagine that, six years later, I would find myself where I am today.

Jan and Dominic are, without a doubt, the two people to whom I am most in debt for what I have accomplished in that time. Jan, I am so sorry for the quality of the first two years of papers I gave you to read, and I want you to know that I truly appreciate the gentleness with which you edited them. Of course, I also truly appreciate everything else you have done for me – from my very email, to all the times where you invited me into your family to share the holidays, to your guidance on everything from writing to lifting to life. I can never repay you for that kindness. Dom, I think you already know how much I owe you, and I promise as soon as I get my next stipend check I'll settle up. In all seriousness: thank you for everything. Accomplishments aside, I would not be the person I am today without your friendship.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the enormous generosity of the LaLanne family, especially Elaine – who not only welcomed Jan and I into her home when the project began in January of 2016, but also allowed me to borrow

materials from the LaLanne archive for my research. I cannot thank Elaine enough for her help, and I am so grateful to the rest of her family as well: Danny, Jon, Yvonne, and Mark, thank you all so much for your kindness and willingness to share Jack's life with me. I hope that my work helps to contribute to the legacy that you have built with him.

Of course, I also wouldn't be here today if not for the help of my committee members. Dr. Tommy Hunt has been both a mentor and a friend, and the genuine care he puts into every interaction with students is something I've tried to emulate in my own teaching. I could say the same of every member on my committee, including Dr. John Fair, who has been enormously generous in sharing his own research, inviting me to speak to his classes, and offering feedback on my writing. Your help always made me want to do even better. Dr. John Hoberman taught one of my very first courses at Texas, and, even after all those other classes, I can still say that it was my favorite. The level of discussion in that class challenged me to think critically *and* creatively, and you have since continued to push me to grow as a scholar. Dr. Marlene Dixon and Dr. Emily Sparvero pushed me to grow as a scholar, as well, by reminding me that there's more to sport studies than just history – and more to academia than writing and research. Your generosity and openness means so much to me.

If I have one regret from my time as a graduate student, it's that I didn't spend more time learning from Terry Todd. I certainly learned plenty from his writing – and I suspect I've cited "The Myth of Muscle-Binding" more than any other book or article I've ever read. But I think Terry's wisdom runs a lot deeper than anything that could ever be written down, and Terry, I am truly grateful for how you somehow found ways to help me stay on course when it felt like I was starting to drift.

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The last two pages have been, by far, the hardest to write of this entire dissertation, because there's really no way to put into words how much all of these people mean to me. I haven't made my task any easier by saving my family for last. My parents haven't always agreed with the decisions I've made in life, but they have always supported them, and I love them for that. All the hard work and discipline I put into anything, I got from them.

Staci: thank you. Thank you, for being there through all the frustration, and ranting, and sleepless nights; all the last-minute schedule changes, the cross-country flights, waking up at four o'clock in the morning – *several* times; the pictures, the TV breaks, the never-ending encouragement. You mean everything to me.

Becoming Jack LaLanne

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Supervisor: Janice S. Todd

For 34 years between 1959 and 1983, Jack LaLanne displayed confidence and energy on *The Jack LaLanne Show*, the first nationally-syndicated exercise television program in history. The show attracted a huge following of fans who purchased from Jack thousands of fitness products and health foods. While building his business, LaLanne earned dozens of accolades for his work as one of America's best-known health and fitness entrepreneurs, including presidential recognition and a star on the Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame.

LaLanne's achievements become more impressive when viewed in light of their historical contexts. Together with his wife, Elaine, he built the majority of his commercialized fitness empire during the 1950s and early 1960s, when many Americans considered exercise unnecessary, unfamiliar, or even dangerous. Nevertheless, the LaLannes persisted, and convinced many of the benefits of working out and eating healthfully.

However, their success came at a price. To attract his listeners' attention and earn their trust, Jack molded himself into an attractive, patriarchal television persona whose advice reinforced the idea that women's lives should be centered in their homes, serving their families' needs and desires. Jack often motivated them through shame, insisting that

only physically attractive women were worthy of others' love and affection, and therefore capable of fulfilling a role in society. At the time, these sentiments typified the 1950s American family dynamic. But from a modern perspective, parts of Jack's career can be considered offensive, even misogynistic.

Much popular media has been produced about the LaLannes, but no scholar has given significant attention to Jack and Elaine's contributions to American fitness. This dissertation addresses that gap in scholarship by exploring Jack's complicated legacy and by framing his life and career within the context of twentieth-century fitness. This approach is inspired by the biography of another influential fitness entrepreneur: Bob Hoffman. In his book *MuscleTown USA*, historian John D. Fair describes Hoffman's life in a manner "neither prescriptive nor ideological," seeking "neither to condemn nor to glorify." Similarly, "Becoming Jack LaLanne" is, first and foremost, a biography, which will place into perspective the life of an American icon.

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Introduction

The morning of 20 November 1984 dawned clear and cool, and the breeze gusted lazily over the harbor at Long Beach, in Southern California.¹ An old British ocean liner, the *RMS Queen Mary*, bobbed peacefully in the chilly waters of the Queensway Bay, at the mouth of the Los Angeles River.² Years earlier, during World War II, the *Queen Mary* had ferried tens of thousands of troops across the Atlantic, and withstood stormy waters, outpacing the Germans' submarines. In 1967 the *Queen Mary* was retired from service, and, a few years later, Diners Club International purchased the ship, converting it into a tourist attraction. By 1984, it had made its last ocean voyage and was docked at Long Beach, where it boasted a hotel, restaurant, two shopping malls, a theater, smoking room, swimming pool, and a Hughes H-4 Hercules airlift boat encased inside a geodesic dome: an extravagant symbol of history and enterprise intertwined.³

On the harbor stood another symbol of history and enterprise – a living one. At 9:55 A.M., his still-muscular body wrapped in a striking patriotic red, white and blue swimsuit, fitness legend Jack LaLanne lowered himself into the bay and began his one-mile journey past the *Queen Mary*.⁴ LaLanne had celebrated his 70th birthday just weeks earlier, and, to prove his physical prowess over the inevitability of old age, the septuagenarian set off to swim through the harbor, while handcuffed, feet shackled, and towing 70 boats with 70 people aboard. “I want to prove to myself that anything is possible,” Jack said. “People believe in Jack LaLanne, and I want to show them anything

1 “Weather History for KLGB – November, 1984,” *Weather Underground*, accessed online at <https://www.wunderground.com/history/> on 14 June 2016.

2 “70-year-old LaLanne pulls 70 boats,” *Kenosha News*, 21 November 1984: 12.

3 “Our Story,” *The Queen Mary*,” accessed online at <http://www.queenmary.com/history/our-story/> on 14 June 2016.

4 Nancy Skelton, “La Lanne [sic] Hits 70 in the Swim,” *The Oregonian*, 21 November 1984: n.p. This article comes from the Jack LaLanne collection at the H.J. Lutcher Stark Center for Physical Culture and Sports, The University of Texas at Austin (hereafter “LaLanne Collection”), in the folder titled “Old Newspaper Articles Misc.”

is possible at any age.”⁵ In reality, he also wanted to promote his new line of Jack LaLanne health food products, in-home exercise videocassettes, and a new television series planned for the following year. Jack shrewdly omitted those motivations in his post-swim interviews, knowing that any diligent media outlet covering his feat would include mention of the new business ventures, without him having to seem like a pitch man. For half a decade, Jack’s body had always been his best advertisement, and it proved true again in Long Beach.⁶

To his credit, Jack left little about the swim to chance. He had trained for the feat for months, rising before dawn to train with weights for over an hour, and then swam for two miles in a custom-built resistance pool at his Morro Bay home. In the afternoon, he took a second swim, and he also endured hour-long ice baths to prepare himself for the shock of the icy water, which, in November in Southern California, measured around 60 degrees.⁷

Despite all his preparation, the situation quickly turned threatening when Jack entered the water. He had anticipated the swim to take only about an hour, even using a porpoise-style stroke to compensate for having his hands and feet bound. But as soon as he began to paddle, strong winds whipped up, and the 70-boat flotilla threatened to twist itself around the pilings of the Queensway Bridge. Meanwhile, a crowd of 200 onlookers gleefully chanted choruses of “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” blissfully unaware of Jack’s struggles. Jack’s wife, Elaine, paced nervously on the press boat; despite all she did to promote her husband’s business, she had never had much stomach for his stunts.⁸

5 “Age No Stone Around Neck of LaLanne,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 27 August 1984: A9.

6 Skelton, “LaLanne Hits 70;” and “LaLanne’s Style: Exercise Celebrity Joins the Home Video Generation,” *San Luis Obispo Telegram-Tribune*, 10 December 1984: B8.

7 Daniel Winkel, “Jack LaLanne at 70,” *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, 6 November 1984: L/S3; and “70-year-old LaLanne pulls 70 boats.” Sixty degree is close to what many competitive athletes use for restorative, 10- to 15-minute ice baths following an intensive workout.

8 *Ibid.*; Skelton, “LaLanne Hits 70;” and “LaLanne’s Style.”

Eventually, the harbor patrol managed to unravel the rowboats. Two hours and 25 minutes after his journey began, Jack finally emerged – dripping wet and shivering, but victorious. “The secret,” he declared to the crowd, eyes still blazing with adrenaline, “is to believe in something and do the best you can.”⁹ But privately, he admitted, “That was the most difficult thing I did in my life. The damn winds came up right in my face... [it was] as cold as a witch’s heart.”¹⁰

Jack often put on a brave face for the media, but away from the merciless gaze of cameras, he tended towards reticence. “Jack is a very private person,” his wife Elaine once confided. “He doesn’t like being analyzed, and he hates people prying into his personal life and thoughts – even me.”¹¹ In truth, much of Jack’s life was marked by a dichotomy between public bravado and private restraint. He suffered from “a terrific inferiority complex,” but for 34 years, nevertheless displayed confidence and energy on television during *The Jack LaLanne Show*, which aired nationwide in millions of American homes between 1959 and 1983.¹²

Along the way, LaLanne sold millions of dollars in fitness products, health foods, dumbbells, vitamins, swimming pools and even music records. He earned dozens of accolades for his work as one of America’s best-known health and fitness entrepreneurs following World War II, during the era that Stephen A. Marglin and Juliet B. Schor have termed “The Golden Age of Capitalism.”¹³ These included honors and awards from the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Medical Association; the Dwight D. Eisenhower Fitness Award; and the Lifetime Achievement

9 Skelton, “LaLanne Hits 70.”

10 “LaLanne’s Style.”

11 Gail Cottman, “Jack LaLanne Isn’t Kidding,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April 1971: 28.

12 Jeannine Stein, “LaLanne Presses On,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 1988: V6.

13 Stephen A. Marglin and Juliet B. Schor, *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Postwar Experience* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

Award from the President’s Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition. In 2002, he was also given a star on the Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame. Jack turned that into a teaching moment, too, by performing push-ups during the induction ceremony.

Although no one ever showered Jack’s wife, Elaine, with accolades like that, she certainly deserved them. Elaine began her career in show business as a young girl, won beauty pageants in her teenage years, and entered the broadcasting industry shortly after World War II, as television began to revolutionize modern media. Gender discrimination ran rampant in the industry then, but Elaine flourished, and when she met Jack in 1951, she slowly began directing her broadcast talents toward the promotion of his career. Following their marriage in 1959, as LaLanne became a nationally- and then internationally-known name, it was Elaine who managed the intricacies of their business and helped mold Jack’s image in the public eye.

Jack was born in 1914, just months after the outbreak of the First World War, and he came of age just as the nation entered the Great Depression. He and Elaine built the majority of their commercialized fitness empire amidst the backdrop of the Cold War. During this era, many Americans viewed exercise with suspicion, despite efforts to foster physical activity that began in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁴ “There was strong resistance in those days,” said Jack in 1981. “You can’t appreciate it now, in this era of Arnold Schwarzenegger... but it was a fact of the time. I would get a guy about half recruited and he would come back to me and say that his doctor wouldn’t let him join [Jack’s

14 Roberta J Park, “Setting the Scene—Bridging the Gap Between Knowledge and Practice: When Americans Really Built Programmes to Foster Healthy Lifestyles, 1918–1940,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 11 (2008): 1427–52; and Shelly McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (University Press of Kansas, 2013). For more on early physical education and physical culture, see James C Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton University Press, 2014); Harvey Green, *Fit for America: Fitness, Sport and American Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986); Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Harvard University Press, 2009); Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine: Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire* (New York University Press, 1997); Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (Mercer University Press, 1998); and Patricia Anne Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors, and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester University Press, 1990).

gym]. ‘You’ll get a hernia,’ all the doctors said then... Or, ‘You’ll get muscle-bound.’”¹⁵ He did not refer to ancient times: fitness myths, like that of the weakened “athlete’s heart,” persisted well into the twentieth century. The myth of muscle-binding lingered even into the 1960s.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the LaLannes persisted, with the evangelistic fervor of a Billy Graham, the optimism of a Norman Peale, and the steadfastness of a — well, of a Jack LaLanne. “Jack’s a missionary for good health,” remarked Walt Baker, who directed *The Jack LaLanne Show* in the early 1960s. “Like any totally dedicated missionary, Jack ignored the negative things and just kept telling people what they should do. Eventually people listened to him. He practices what he preaches... he so believes in the benefits of good health.”¹⁷ By the 1970s and ’80s, Americans no longer responded to the LaLannes’ message with such skepticism. Instead, they had begun exercising in droves.¹⁸ “Never before have so many Americans spent so much time, energy and money to get into shape and stay there,” wrote Marc Leepson, a researcher for *Congressional Quarterly*, in 1978. “Tens of millions of men and women have made physical fitness an integral part of their lives, regularly setting aside time for tennis, swimming, bicycling, jogging and the like.... Nearly all segments of American society are participating in the physical fitness boom.”¹⁹ Denver journalist Mark Wolf, writing in 1980, agreed that “If only they’d listened back

15 Bob Ottum, “Look, Mom, I’m an Institution,” *Sports Illustrated*, November 23, 1981: 64–75.

16 James C. Whorton, “‘Athlete’s Heart’: The Medical Debate over Athleticism, 1870-1920.” *Journal of Sport History* 9, no. 1 (1982): 30–52; Roberta J. Park, “History of Research on Physical Activity and Health: Selected Topics, 1867 to the 1950s,” *Quest* 47, no. 3 (1995): 274–287; Terry Todd, “Historical Perspective: The Myth of the Muscle-Bound Lifter,” *Strength & Conditioning Journal* 7, no. 3 (1985): 37–41; and Jason Shurley and Jan Todd, “If Anyone Gets Slower You’re Fired’: Boyd Epley and the Formation of the Strength Coaching Profession,” *Iron Game History* 11 (2011): 4–18.

17 Stein, “LaLanne Presses On.”

18 Benjamin G. Rader, “The Quest for Self-Sufficiency and the New Strenuousness: Reflections on the Strenuous Life of the 1970s and the 1980s,” *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 2 (1991): 255–66; and Patricia A. Eisenman and C. Robert Barnett, “Physical Fitness in the 1950s and 1970s: Why Did One Fail and the Other Boom?” *Quest* 31, no. 1 (1979): 114–22.

19 Marc Leepson, *Physical Fitness Boom* (Congressional Quarterly, 1978).

then, the fitness boom of the past 15 years might have flowered in the 1940s and 1950s.”²⁰

At the same time, while Jack’s early physical culture business ventures rejected prevailing medical theory and social beliefs with regard to exercise, his show largely *reinforced* those same shibboleths that marginalized the bodies, minds, and social roles of American women. For LaLanne, the success of his show proved that “the housewife is disgusted with the way she looks.”²¹ She was overpampered and oversoftened by the conveniences of modern life, he said. “Women are vain, thank God. They need to be vain to want to be beautiful. But they’re lazy, too.”²² Some modern journalists have criticized LaLanne for his patronizing and patriarchal attitudes. “Mr. LaLanne... found fame shaming Cold War-era housewives into living-room workouts,” wrote Jacquielynn Floyd in 1996.²³

Just as the reality of Jack’s advice to women is more complex than it might seem at first from our modern vantage point, so is the man himself. Jack fabricated a public image grounded in fact, but filled with exaggeration, half-truths, and outright lies to promote his show and sell his products. He obsessed over his legacy, which he inexplicably tied to the idea of claiming “firsts.” In fact, even today, four years after his death, his personal website devotes an entire section to Jack’s alleged originalities. “Jack LaLanne had a lot of firsts in the fitness and health industry,” it reads. “Here are some of the biggest!” The list follows:

Opened the **first** modern health spa; invented the **first** leg extension machine;
invented the **first** weight selector for cable machines... the **first** to have athletes

20 Mark Wolf, “Sultan of Sweat Gets Exercised About Flab,” *Rocky Mountain News*, April 1, 1988: n.p. (LaLanne Collection, “Old Newspaper Clippings 1987-1988”)

21 Jim Scott, “The Conscious of a Million Housewives,” n.d.: 23. Unidentified 5x7-inch stapled booklet from the LaLanne Collection, “Old Newspaper Clippings 1961-1964.”

22 Pamela Dugan, “Jack LaLanne Sees Physical Fitness as Key to Woman’s Beauty,” *The Fresno Bee*, October 3, 1968: n.p.

23 Jacquielynn Floyd, “Jack’s Still Jumpin’ at 82,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 18, 1996: 37A.

working out with weights; the **first** to have women working out with weights; the **first** to have the elderly working out with weights; the **first** to have a combination Health Food Bar and gym; the **first** to have a weight loss Instant Breakfast meal replacement drink; the **first** to have a coed health club; the **first** to combine weight training with nutrition; the **first** to have an edible snack nutrition bar....

These claims are all false. Professor Louis Attila opened the first modern “health spa” in 1893 in New York, which catered to athletes and women; James Chiosso invented the “Gymnastic Polymachinon,” the first modern cable-based exercise machine, even earlier, and published a book explaining its use in 1855; “edible snack nutrition bars” have, arguably, existed since the eighteenth century, when American explorers ground a mixture of meat, fat, and berries to make pemmican.²⁴

Focusing only on his exaggerations, however, causes us to lose sight of LaLanne’s larger and more important legacy. LaLanne’s life story requires the same kind of careful examination as Dr. John Fair did for York Barbell founder Bob Hoffman in his book *Muscle town USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell*. This biography aims, therefore, to provide a better understanding of Jack’s undeniably complicated legacy and to situate his life and his accomplishments within the larger story of post-World War II America. Using scholarship on American business, media, and culture, it attempts to explain LaLanne’s impact on today’s gendered and consumeristic constructions of fitness. The approach to connecting these sometimes disparate topics is, not surprisingly, inspired by Fair’s seminal biography of Hoffman. In *Muscle town USA*, Fair addresses the confluence of gender and consumption in a manner “neither prescriptive nor ideological,” seeking “neither to condemn nor to glorify.”²⁵ Following

24 Kim Beckwith and Jan Todd, “Requiem For a Strongman: Reassessing the Career of Professor Louis Attila,” *Iron Game History* 7, no. 2-3 (July 2002): 42-55; and Jan Todd and Jason Shurley, “Building American Muscle: A Brief History of Barbells, Dumbbells and Pulley Machines” (in press).

25 John Fair, *Muscle town USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (Penn State Press, 1999): 6.

Fair's lead, "Becoming Jack LaLanne" is, first and foremost, a biography that describes, interprets, and hopefully places into perspective the life of an American icon.

This research draws on two methodological approaches: a close textual analysis of archival material; and historical contextualization of that material using a broad, interdisciplinary range of secondary literature. It incorporates information from Jack's own writing (or at least, writing attributed to him); his on-air television performances; his personal business records and correspondence; interviews with relatives and prominent industry figures; articles from newspapers, magazines, and other popular media; and a close reading of LaLanne's personal collection of photographs. Much of this information was collected from the LaLannes' personal archives; and, as such, it represents a unique and valuable resource and research opportunity. Elaine LaLanne, and her family graciously permitted me to spend time at their home and business site in Morro Bay, California, where I had access to their personal scrapbooks, correspondence files, and scripts of *The Jack LaLanne Show*. They also allowed me to bring many of these primary documents back to The University of Texas to study at greater length. This unparalleled access to the private life of this American icon adds a richness and accuracy to this history that would not have been possible otherwise.

"Becoming Jack LaLanne" itself is organized around key moments in Jack's life and career, and is divided into three parts. It begins with his formative years: from his birth, in 1914, through his opening of one of America's first modern gymnasiums, in 1936. It then turns to an exploration of his contributions to the gym industry, including how he overcame widespread misconceptions about the dangers of exercise, and how he spread fitness culture during his tour with the Navy in World War II. Perhaps the most important period in Jack's life takes place in what historians sometimes call the "Long 50s," stretching from the end of World War II until the assassination of President John F.

Kennedy in 1963. It was during this era that Jack met Elaine, capitalized on the postwar boom in TV broadcasting, and built the core of his legacy. He began his TV show in 1951, and then with Elaine's help syndicated the show nation-wide and launched his fitness empire. "Becoming Jack LaLanne" concludes with the years following the Kennedy assassination, in which Jack consolidated his place as an American cultural icon.

Chapter one begins with a discussion of Jack's genealogy, describing how his forebears came to settle in California after arriving in the United States between 1889 and 1890. Because much of his life and career unfolds in Central and Southern California, chapter one also includes a description of the California landscape, geography, and culture around the time of his birth. It attempts to characterize Jack in his youth, to explain why he — a shy, sickly child — was so receptive to Paul Bragg's message of health. It also situates his formative years within the broader context of early twentieth-century physical culture in America.

To a large degree, chapter two explains how Jack formed his physical culture philosophies. It begins with his conversion to vegetarianism after hearing Paul Bragg's lecture, and his subsequent experiments with diet and exercise, guided by *Gray's Anatomy* and muscle magazines like *Physical Culture*. It includes details about his high school athletic career, and his first forays into entrepreneurship (selling whole-wheat bread in school, and opening a backyard gym in 1934). Finally, it introduces Jack's first real business: the gym he opened in 1936 with a small loan from his father, which he promoted through word-of-mouth advertising and with his own impressive physique and bodybuilding career.

The final chapter in part one chronicles Jack's service in the Navy during World War II. It focuses on how he continued his training during the war, and how he was able

to further promote his business during his time in the service. It will include Jack's time stationed in the south Pacific, in Sun Valley, Idaho, and on Treasure Island; and his first marriage, to Irma Navarre, in 1942. It explains his competitive bodybuilding career, a topic about which almost no contemporary author has written. Primarily, however, this chapter shows how Jack first began to shift his business from a strictly local one (his Oakland gym) to one that, eventually, reached a global scale.

Part two focuses on *The Jack LaLanne Show*. Chapter four reconstructs Jack's entrance into the television industry, which began with his appearance on the Les Malloy show in 1951 at the behest of Jack's future wife, Elaine Doyle. It unpacks the beginning of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, and attempts to explain, through an analysis of its construction and its historical contexts, why the show immediately resonated with so many viewers. Of equal importance, it explains how — despite his shyness and the generally ambivalent attitude towards diet and exercise in postwar America — Jack channeled his boundless energy, his gift for public speaking, and his knowledge of physical culture into a hugely successful television show. Accordingly, this chapter includes an explanation of the television industry in the early 1950s, as part of a broader view of American culture during that time.

Chapter five departs from the narrative of Jack's life to take a broader view of early fitness television in America. It briefly chronicles the lives and careers of three influential figures in that industry: Paul Fogarty, who starred in history's very first exercise program on television; Debbie Drake, Jack's most popular competitor during the 1960s; and Richard Hittleman, the first of the "alternative" television fitness gurus, who preached the benefits of yoga to a mainstream Western audience for the first time. While this chapter provides little insight into Jack's own life and career, the histories in it are

crucial to understanding the modern fitness industry in America, and, therefore, to understanding Jack's legacy.

Part three begins with chapter six, titled "Becoming Jack – and Elaine – LaLanne," and explains how Elaine Doyle becomes the central figure in Jack's life, and a cornerstone of the LaLanne business. The two first met in 1951, but this chapter begins earlier, and documents her early life and experience in broadcast media, and the circumstances by which she and Jack became romantically involved. It also explains how they first began working together to build the LaLanne brand – most notably, through Jack's death-defying athletic stunts, meant to garner media interest in him and his show.

The seventh chapter is one of the most important of the dissertation, as it explains how Jack and Elaine transitioned from television personalities into business owners – a strategic shift that required navigating the complexities of the television sponsorship system; of product development, production, and delivery; and of advertising. The pair excelled at all of these tasks, but their advertising efforts were the most notable. Thanks to Elaine's understanding of the media and Jack's personality and physical abilities, they were able to bring national media attention to what was, at the time, merely a popular local television show. In doing so, they built a foundation for their future as fitness entrepreneurs on a global scale.

The first step in "going global" brought Jack and Elaine south, to Los Angeles and to Hollywood. Chapter eight reconstructs the historical circumstances of that move, the logistical difficulties it presented, and how – despite those difficulties – the couple grew closer both personally and professionally. While it is the shortest in this dissertation, chapter eight is significant because it explains the significance of geography in a historical understanding of Jack and Elaine's life. In Hollywood, the LaLannes had

access to both the prestige and popularity of film stars and the power of major television production studios, and they used those tools to further enhance their own business.

Finally, chapter nine returns to the themes introduced in chapter seven, and explains how *The Jack LaLanne Show* grew into an international sensation that would sway the mind and transform the bodies of millions of unhealthy Americans, and earn the couple millions of dollars in the process. That process involved the formal organization of the LaLannes' business, the hiring of key personnel, a massive commercial and advertising expansion; and a keen understanding of the tides of popular culture at the time. Over the course of just three years, the principal players at LaLanne, Inc. leveraged Jack's show and brand image to create a multimillion-dollar company in just three years, between spring of 1959 and fall of 1962.

"Becoming Jack LaLanne" is concerned with the formation of that cultural icon, and the case will be made that Jack and Elaine had firmly established the brand as such by the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 and the beginning of a wave of cultural changes that swept over America beginning in the mid-1960s. Instead of continuing to reconstruct the company's growth and later its decline, this dissertation therefore ends with chapter seven. Nevertheless, so much of the life of an influential man and business surely deserves some mention, and so the epilogue briefly describes how LaLanne, Inc. continued to expand during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. This dissertation ends with the conclusion of *The Jack LaLanne Show* in 1984, after 34 years and thousands of episodes of success.

JACK LALANNE AND PHYSICAL CULTURE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Though he could not have realized it until much later, LaLanne's earliest years were also formative ones for physical culture in America. Interest in physical activity had emerged in the nineteenth century as urbanization raised concerns about the dangers of new, less active lifestyles. Many viewed exercise as a palliative, an escape from anxieties about health stemming from an increasingly urbanized and modernized culture.²⁶ The nineteenth and twentieth-century men – and the few women – who preached the need for health reform found an increasing receptive audience for their sermons.

Historian James Whorton has called the health reformer a “classic character” of American culture: the man who “eats what he doesn't want, drinks what he doesn't like, and does what he'd druther not, all the while smugly announcing himself to be energetic, joyful, and certain of long life, and exhorting his errant neighbor to reform.”²⁷ Men like Sylvester Graham, Horace Fletcher, and John Harvey Kellogg (and later, Jack LaLanne) shared several characteristics beside an extreme devotion to their cause. Whorton writes:

Most health reformers have had to reform themselves first. They have a standard biography, from which few have deviated. Due to a weak constitution and/or bad habits, the individual's early years are a steady descent through levels of vitality, until semi-invalidism is approached. A shock of realization of poor health at last fires a renunciation of self-indulgence and a search for hygienic truth. Reading and self-experimentation reveal one or a few dietary (or other physical) practices to be the required tool(s) with which to rebuild health. The well-being following his reform convinces the hygienist his program is the secret to all self and social improvement, and gives him the energy to compose the articles and books of health wisdom with which he philanthropically bombards the public until his death.... While it would be a glib exaggeration to say that if you have seen one health reformer you have seen them all, there is nevertheless a great deal of overlap between the philosophies of health extremists.²⁸

²⁶ Many scholars have addressed physical culture in the fin-de-siecle era. See, for example, Putney, *Muscular Christianity*; Green, *Fit for America*; Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*; and Budd, *The Sculpture Machine*.

²⁷ Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 3.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9, 11.

Whorton's characterization of health reformers as "extremists" reflects the nature of the ideas they espoused. Health reform movements, he explains, must be understood as "ideologies... that invite acceptance by incorporating both certain universal feelings about man and nature, as well as the popular aspirations and anxieties peculiar to distinct eras."²⁹ Like many ideologies, health movements often include both the radical and the visionary; leaders of health reform movements, as proponents of such ideas, often possess many of the same traits as might a monk or a prophet. Many health reformers, including Jack LaLanne, exhibited the fervor of religious zealots.

By the *fin-de-siecle* era, some reformers had begun to avail themselves of the financial opportunity that their (often equally zealous) constituency represented. These fitness entrepreneurs rejected the philanthropic and religio-centric worldview of Whorton's health reformers in favor of a staunch support of capitalism. Through ardent self-promotion and advertisement, using new and developing media, they sold a dizzying array of products and information to an American public that remained largely ignorant of the benefits, risks, and practices associated with physical culture.³⁰ Oftentimes using manipulative sales tactics, they amassed from their customers both tremendous fortunes and tremendous egos.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, a confluence of fortuitous circumstances fostered the efforts of these early fitness entrepreneurs, besides the aforementioned growing interest in exercise and a lack of readily available information on the subject.³¹ After World War I, Americans enjoyed a prosperous economy; and,

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

³⁰ For example, patent medicine – although distinct from physical culture, as it did not involve exercise in any way – could be included in a list of products and information.

³¹ Space precludes enumerating all of these fitness entrepreneurs, but among the most prominent were Eugen Sandow, Charles Atlas, Alan Calvert, George Jowett, Ottley Coulter, and Louis Attila. The best works on these men are David Chapman, *Sandow the Magnificent: Eugen Sandow and the Beginnings of Bodybuilding* (University of Illinois Press, 1994); Dominique Padurano, "Making American Men: Charles Atlas and the Business of Bodies, 1892-1945," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 2007; Jacqueline Reich, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man": Charles Atlas, Physical Culture, and the Inscription of American

following the hardships of war, were anxious to embrace “the good life.” The emergence of a hedonistic consumer culture and the glamour of the Roaring Twenties inspired, among other trends, a focus on physical appearance. Popular ads directed at men emphasized the importance of appearance as a means of distinguishing one person from another in the context of competition for jobs, and thus increasing earning potential and one’s position in society. The ideal masculine image of a muscular body became a symbol of socioeconomic status and, according to historian T. Jackson Lears, even “of civilization itself.”³² However, access to information regarding physical training remained limited, and many people still harbored deep suspicions of exercise.

Realizing this, many opportunistic businessmen began advertising and selling fitness literature and products – some more efficacious than others. Alan Calvert, who began manufacturing barbells and dumbbells with his Milo Barbell Company in 1902, also published an early physical culture magazine, *Strength*. His promotion of progressive resistance exercise through those two ventures, according to historian Kimberley Beckwith, launched “a new era of strength and muscularity for America.”³³ Dozens of less scrupulous “mail-order muscle” businessmen like Earle Liederman and

Masculinity," *Men and Masculinities* 12, no. 4 (June 2010): 444-461; Kimberly Ayn Beckwith, "Building Strength: Alan Calvert, The Milo Bar-Bell Company, and the Modernization of American Weight Training," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Texas at Austin, 2006); Kimberly Beckwith and Jan Todd, "Strength: America's First Muscle Magazine, 1914-1935," *Iron Game History* 9, no. 1 (August 2005): 11-28; John Fair, "Father-Figure or Phony? George Jowett, the ACWLA and the Milo Barbell Company, 1924-1927," *Iron Game History* 3, no. 5 (December 1994): 13-25 (as well as the other two articles in this series, previously cited); Jan Todd and Michael Murphy, "Portrait of a Strongman: The Circus Career of Ottley Russell Coulter, 1912-1916," *Iron Game History* 7, no. 1 (June 2001): 4-21; and Kimberly Beckwith and Jan Todd, "Requiem for a Strongman: Reassessing the Career of Professor Louis Attila," *Iron Game History* 7, no. 2 & 3 (July 2002): 42-55). Scholarship on physical culture entrepreneurship includes Mark Dyreson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s," *Journal of Sport History* 16, no. 3 (Winter, 1989): 261-281; Stephen Hardy, "Entrepreneurs, Organizations, and the Sport Marketplace: Subjects in Search of Historians," *Journal of Sport History* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 14-33; Hardy, Brian Norman, and Sarah Sceery, "Toward a History of Sport Branding," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4, no. 4 (2012): 482-509; Steven A. Riess, *Sport in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Harlan Davidson, 1995); and George Sage, "The Sporting Goods Industry: From Struggling Entrepreneurs to National Businesses to Transnational Corporations," in *The Commercialization of Sport*, edited by Trevor Slack (Routledge, 2004).

32 T. Jackson Lears, "American Advertising and the Reconstruction of the Body," in *Fitness in American Culture: Images of Health, Sport and the Body, 1830-1940*, edited by Kathryn Grover (University of Massachusetts Press, 1989):61. See also Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (Basic Books, 1976).

33 Beckwith, "Building Strength," vii. See also

Charles Atlas used aggressive advertising practices to push instructional correspondence courses that promised to help buyers build better bodies. These courses, however, usually consisted of simple calisthenics, and could not create the physiques their authors claimed – much less the wealth, social status, and the adoration of women that those physiques would purportedly attract.³⁴ Eugen Sandow predated all of them. Beginning with theatrical performances in 1887, Sandow soon became the preeminent entrepreneur of the physical culture world: an international symbol of strength and health. Often earning several thousand dollars per week for his performances, Sandow also ran several physical culture studios, published his own magazine, and sold a variety of exercise apparatus, books, and mail-order courses. His *Half-Crown Postal Course*, which was advertised and sold through his magazine beginning in 1906, garnered much interest; David Chapman credits it for contributing to the "physical culture craze" of the early twentieth century.³⁵

Two American fitness entrepreneurs more directly influenced Jack's own career: Bernarr Macfadden and Bob Hoffman. Macfadden was perhaps the most influential of American fitness entrepreneurs in the first half of the twentieth century, and a man who LaLanne once called a "way-out cat."³⁶ Despite LaLanne's reservations, Macfadden arguably did more to spread physical culture in America than any other individual before him. He was, according to Whorton, the first American to combine "faith in the power of exercise with an entrepreneurial talent" on a scale comparable to LaLanne's.³⁷

34 Ben Pollack, "The Kings of Mail-Order Muscle: Earle Liederman, Charles Atlas, and Physical Culture Correspondence Courses, 1888-1935," in press. Though Liederman's business remains understudied, considerable literature discusses Atlas's impact on the fitness industry. See Padurano, "Making American Men"; idem., "'Dear Friend': Charles Atlas, American Masculinity, and the Bodybuilding Testimonial, 1894-1944," in *Testimonial Advertising in the American Marketplace: Emulation, Identity, Community*, edited by Marina Moskowitz and Marlis Schweitzer (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Elizabeth Toon and Janet Lynne Golden, "'Live Clean, Think Clean, and Don't Go to Burlesque Shows': Charles Atlas as Health Advisor," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 57, no. 1 (January 2002): 39-60; idem., "Rethinking Charles Atlas," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice* 4, no. 1 (2000); and Reich, "'The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man.'"

35 Chapman, Sandow the Magnificent, 50; and Dominic Morais, "Branding Iron: Eugen Sandow's 'Modern' Marketing Strategies, 1887-1925," *Journal of Sport History* 40, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 193-214.

36 Terry Todd and Jan Todd, "Interview with Jack LaLanne" (Personal communication, n.d.).

37 Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 296.

Born Bernard Macfadden, he, like most health crusaders, he suffered a sickly childhood. After being stricken by a septic shock after his smallpox vaccination, he remained frail throughout his youth. Even his various foster parents, who cared for Bernard following his parents' death, expected the boy's early demise. But in his early teenage years, while working as an office assistant in St. Louis, Bernard purchased a pair of dumbbells and with them began an improvised exercise routine. He built his body up, and began practicing wrestling and gymnastics.

In 1893, Bernard attended the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, where he marveled at Sandow's displays of physical prowess. Inspired, he launched his own physical culture business, of a scale that would eventually exceed even Sandow's. He began by changing his name to the more imposing "Bernarr Macfadden," which sounded almost like a lion's roar. In 1898 he founded *Physical Culture* magazine, and within four years, he claimed, it had earned over a quarter of a million dollars. Over the next decade, Macfadden expanded his publishing empire, opened a restaurant chain, and founded two sanitariums and a utopian health community in New Jersey.

According to his biographer, Robert Ernst, Macfadden's "combativeness, organizational efforts, and penchant for publicity won him a host of followers among the weak and the ill, the advocates of unorthodox therapies, the food faddists and reformers attracted by his proclaimed goal, 'the physical emancipation of the human race.'"³⁸ In the pages of *Physical Culture*, he preached to that audience a message that promoted physical

38 Robert Ernst, *Weakness Is a Crime: The Life of Bernarr Macfadden* (Syracuse Univ Pr, 1991), 24. Ernst's is perhaps the best biography of Macfadden, but many authors have written about the influential man. See also Mary Williamson Macfadden and Emile Gauvreau, *Dumbbells and Carrot Strips: The Story of Bernarr Macfadden* (Holt, 1953); Jan Todd, "Bernarr Macfadden: Reformer of Feminine Form," *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 61-75; William H. Taft, "Bernarr Macfadden: One of a Kind," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (December 1, 1968): 627-633; William R Hunt, *Body Love: The Amazing Career of Bernarr Macfadden* (Popular Press, 1989); Andrea Dale Lapin, "A Body of Text: 'Physical Culture' and the Marketing of Mobility" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2013); Shanon Fitzpatrick, "Pulp Empire: Macfadden Publications, Transnational America, and the Global Popular" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2013); and Lisa Robin Grunberger, "Bernarr Macfadden's 'Physical Culture': Marketing Health by Selling, Bodies, Health, and Morals," in *Sex, Religion, Media* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 3-20.

training for health and strength; attention to diet and dress; and a progressive acceptance of human sexuality. Notably, Macfadden devoted a significant portion of *Physical Culture*'s content to women. According to several authors, his writing contributed much to the empowerment of women in American culture during the Progressive Era.³⁹ It is not a coincidence that Jack, who read *Physical Culture* magazine as a young man, also espoused the benefits of proper exercise and nutrition to a primarily female audience.

Most of Jack's instruction in physical culture, however, came not from Macfadden, but from another twentieth-century fitness entrepreneur: Bob Hoffman. For over fifty years, Hoffman preached the benefits of heavy weight training in the pages of his own muscle magazine, *Strength & Health*. Hoffman's interest in strength and athletics began at an early age, but it was not until 1923, at the age of 25, that he began training with weights. Nearly a decade later, in 1932, using proceeds from his successful oil-burning business, he founded the York Barbell Company; began sponsoring many of the members of the US Olympic weightlifting team; and began publishing *Strength & Health* magazine. His goal, Hoffman said, was to increase the popularity of weightlifting in the United States, and he filled *Strength & Health* with articles about training, nutrition, lifting news, and even philosophical reflections on the sport.⁴⁰ However, Hoffman also clearly wanted to enhance his own fortune and ego, as well.

According to historian John D. Fair, thanks to a "blend of his unique promotional skills in business and sport," Hoffman achieved tremendous financial success for most of

39 See Todd, "Bernarr Macfadden," and Kathleen L. Endres, "The Feminism of Bernarr Macfadden: Physical Culture Magazine and the Empowerment of Women," *Media History Monographs* 13, no. 2 (2011): 2-14.

40 John D. Fair has written the best biography of Hoffman, in his *Muscle USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (Penn State University Press, 1995). Many other scholars have addressed Hoffman and his impact on physical culture as part of other discussions, but outside of Dr. Fair, relatively few have focused on him exclusively. For two exceptions, see Dominic Morais, "Strength in Numbers: Strength & Health Brand Community from 1932-1964" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2015); Terry Todd, "Remembering Bob Hoffman," *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 18-23.

his career.⁴¹ Furthermore, “Hoffman’s patronage and organizational genius were almost singly responsible for the rise of American international weightlifting fortune,” writes William Mason Reynolds.⁴² But although Hoffman’s focus remained on weightlifting, and not bodybuilding, he filled pages of *Strength & Health* with images of muscular, developed bodies, implicitly connecting one’s physical prowess with success: physically, socially, sexually, and even financially.⁴³

Those same pictures undoubtedly inspired Jack’s repeated reliance on his own body as advertisement throughout his career. “Jack fills that polo shirt like Marilyn fills a sweater, only the bulges are in different places,” wrote journalist Jeanette Branin in 1961. Branin’s comparison to Marilyn Monroe, that iconic sex symbol of the 1950s, is apt. Like her, Jack – with his often-exposed physique and tight jumpsuit – exploited his body to generate publicity and promotion at a time when sexuality was “as much a cause of titillation as angst.”⁴⁴ Furthermore, Jack sold the chance at equally desirable body to his millions of customers. “My [business] idea was to have the best-looking body you could and be an athlete with it,” he said.⁴⁵ Jack was always quick to take the credit, but that idea was, originally, Bob Hoffman’s.⁴⁶

Of course, Hoffman was not the first fitness entrepreneur to use the built body (as a virilized image of American masculinity) to sell products; nor was he even the first to

41 John D. Fair, “Bob Hoffman, the York Barbell Company, and the Golden Age of American Weightlifting, 1945-1960,” *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 187.

42 William Mason Reynolds, “A History of Men’s Competitive Weightlifting in the United States from its Inception through 1972” (unpublished M.S. thesis, University of Washington, 1973): 234.

43 Morais, “Strength in Numbers,” 68.

44 Will Scheibel, “Marilyn Monroe, ‘Sex Symbol’: Film Performance, Gender Politics and 1950s Hollywood Celebrity,” *Celebrity Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 6.

45 David Abramson, “True West,” *Ultrasport* (April 1987): 40.

46 Jason Shurley and Jan Todd, “Joe Weider, All-American Athlete, and the Promotion of Strength Training for Sport: 1940-1969,” *Iron Game History* 12, no. 1 (August 2012): 4-27. Specifically, Shurley and Todd explain that “In the early decades of the magazine he [Hoffman] did not promote weight training solely for aesthetic reasons. Training solely for muscular size, or “beauty,” as [Joe] Weider had described it, mattered little to Hoffman unless there was some meaningful utility implicit in that size.”

publish an American magazine promoting weight training.⁴⁷ His emphasis here reflects the facts that, first, he was probably the most successful of these entrepreneurs at least for the period spanning between the Great Depression and World War II; and, second, Jack explicitly credited *Strength & Health* as part of his instruction in physical culture on more than once occasion.

It is obvious, even from these few examples, that fitness entrepreneurs shared an ability to connect with their customers. They crafted messages that appealed to the *zeitgeist* of twentieth-century America, and used the media to deliver that message to a broader audience than did the health reformers of the 19th century. They also suffered from an exaggerated sense of self-worth bordering on delusion. “Macfadden’s ego was overwhelming,” Ernst explained in his summary of the man’s life. “He craved publicity and reveled in adulation.”⁴⁸ Hoffman, Jowett, Liederman, Atlas, Sandow, and others did the same, but none went to quite the same lengths as Hoffman to satisfy their need for attention. Nearly every business decision Hoffman made in some way catered to this. “He is consumed with ego and undoubtedly eccentric,” wrote Jowett of Hoffman, who, deeply in debt during the Great Depression, continued to publish *Strength & Health* magazine at a cost of \$2,500 per month.⁴⁹ Whether his business succeeded despite or because of his ego remains unknown; but then, the question can be asked of nearly every entrepreneur. Similarly, while these men usually considered themselves advocates of *health*, in truth, their businesses could more accurately be described as selling a promise of sexuality and success through physical development.

47 See, for example, Beckwith and Todd, “Strength;” Chapman, Sandow the Magnificent; and Pollack, “The Kings of Mail-Order Muscle.” Elizabeth Fraterrigo connects these muscle magazines to masculinity in postwar America in the introduction to her book, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

48 Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime*, xii.

49 Fair, *Muscle town USA*, 50.

The central theme of “Becoming Jack LaLanne” is Jack’s gradual conversion from health crusader to fitness entrepreneur. Jack desperately and repeatedly insisted that he counted himself among the former group; he ostensibly detested the latter. "I've never been interested in business," he said. "I let my associates take care of that.... Jesus had to have a little help, didn't he? He had those twelve cats working for him. Well, that's like me.... I never thought about money. *Money* – any ass can make money."⁵⁰ And it may be fair to argue that, prior to the nationwide syndication of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, the desire to partake in and share the benefits of exercise drove Jack more than did the allure of any financial gain. While he claimed to have earned an impressive living from his gymnasium business, the difficulties he undertook in establishing it certainly attest to the love he had for physical culture – as do the incredible lengths to which he went during his service in the Navy in World War II in order to continue working at his passion.

One might even argue that Jack’s altruistic motives drove the beginning of his television show; after all, the new medium allowed him to spread his message to exponentially larger audiences than was possible by word of mouth alone. But by 1959, despite having employees to handle daily operations, the fact remains that Jack’s business, LaLanne, Inc., was an overwhelmingly commercial venture. Jack peddled millions of dollars of fitness-related products on his show, to the point where reporters frequently mocked his “high-powered, musclebound pitchman-style commercials.”⁵¹ He insisted that his heavy-handed advertisements were necessary to support the show, but in truth, LaLanne, Inc. insisted that it turned a profit on the mere *broadcast* of the program, independent of any concurrent product sales – which themselves totaled in the millions of dollars every year during the 1960s and into the 1970s. And, as Jack’s presumptuous

50 Louise Farr, “The Exercist,” *New West*, 27 February 1978: 26-29.

51 Fred Danzig, “Inhale, Exhale, Smile,” *World Telegram*, 6 July 1961: n.p. (LaLanne Collection, “Old Newspaper Articles 1961-1964”)

comparison of himself to the Christian Messiah shows, his ego was certainly superhuman.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The dissertation that follows, then, is an attempt to “unpack” Jack: to tell what he did, suggest why he did it, why he changed, and explain his impact on the fitness industry today. First and foremost, it tells the story of a very human man who undeniably helped make fitness part of mainstream American life. Despite the growing interest in physical culture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, relatively few Americans exercised or ate healthful diets. Through his gyms, his feats, and his television show, LaLanne elevated health and fitness from the periphery of American culture to become an activity and lifestyle practiced by tens of millions. In doing so, he came to embody the American dream, building himself up from humble beginnings — both physically and fiscally — through indomitable discipline and willpower.

“Becoming Jack LaLanne” also contributes to the relatively scarce amount of literature about the history of physical culture in the “Long 50s,” which include the years following World War II through President John F. Kennedy’s assassination in 1963. James Patterson has characterized the Long 50s as a time of grand expectations. “No comparable period of United States history witnessed so much economic and civic progress,” he writes.⁵² Yet, despite its obvious importance, few studies about physical culture examine that era in American history. In his historiography “Exercise is

⁵² James T Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (Oxford University Press, 1996): vii–viii.

Medicine: A Historical Perspective,” for example, Jack Berryman devotes only one sentence to the Long 50s.⁵³ John Fair’s *Muscle town USA* focuses largely on Hoffman’s competitive weightlifting team during this time. Recent works have begun to do more to explain the evolution of the physical culture in the 1950s. Shelley McKenzie’s *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* does address this time period, as does Dominic Morais in his dissertation, “Strength in Numbers: *Strength & Health* Brand Community from 1932-1964.” However, a long and impactful portion of American history surely deserves more attention than just a few scholarly works. This project will, therefore, help to continue to fill this gap in the historical record by explaining how postwar phenomena like television, nationalism, and increasingly sedentary lifestyles all contributed to the increasing prevalence of exercise in the lives of Americans, and to Jack’s ability to connect with those people on a surprisingly deep level.

Furthermore, as Dominic Morais notes, relatively few authors have surveyed the connections between physical culture and business. Nevertheless, as historian Lizabeth Cohen argues, in our capitalist society, business has long been deeply intertwined in the lives of all American. The interaction between industry and individual, for Cohen, “reveals a great deal about who we are as individual Americans as well as about the virtue of the America we live in at any particular moment in time.”⁵⁴ In the process of exploring Jack’s life – and therefore both his business and the business of fitness in

⁵³ Jack Berryman, “Exercise is Medicine: A Historical Perspective,” *Current Sports Medicine Reports* 9, no. 4 (July/August 2010): 4. Some exceptions to the lack of scholarly research include McKenzie’s *Getting Physical*; and Patricia Eisenman and C. Robert Barnett, “Physical Fitness in the 1950s and 1970s: Why Did One Fail and the Other Boom?” *Quest* 31, no. 1 (1979): 114-122.

⁵⁴ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 15.

America – “Becoming Jack LaLanne” also unpacks a small part the essential nature of what the term “fitness” really means in modern America.

Admittedly, however, every individual is complex, perhaps impossible to define in just words; Jack, so boisterous on television but often reserved in his private life, is particularly inscrutable. Biography implies both reconstruction and interpretation, but not incontrovertible truth. Any insights this dissertation provides are therefore limited by the information Jack chose to share with the world when he was alive, and by how others have remembered him. And while LaLanne’s ideology of fitness could be considered straightforward or even simple, American fitness today has grown into an industry worth many billions of dollars. No single person and certainly no single piece of scholarship could ever paint an accurate picture of that industry in its entirety.

Above all else, “Becoming Jack LaLanne” strives to offer Jack’s students — the people who watched his show, followed his teachings, and admired his accomplishments, both now and in the past — insights into the life of an important, dynamic, and much-loved man. “The truth is that all of us owe him our deepest gratitude for working to make our lives better and healthier,” wrote journalist Kathy Smith in 1999.⁵⁵ Hopefully, this dissertation helps repay a bit of that debt by sharing his place in history with its readers.

A NOTE ON STYLE

Though this is a scholarly work, it is a long one, and reading it would be extremely unpleasant without the benefit of some stylistic choices. Most obvious are the references to Jack and Elaine by their first names, rather than their surnames, in an effort

⁵⁵ Kathy Smith, “Blazing a Trail for Fitness and Better Lives,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 March 1999: S5.

to both avoid confusion in distinguishing between the two, and to recreate the style with which Jack addressed his audiences. Much of his charm came from his directness with the camera, and he would frequently refer to hypothetical viewers by their imagined first names, imploring the Bettys of the world to sit up in their chairs and follow along with him. He preferred this sort of familiarity: “no one calls him anything but Jack,” one journalist explained.⁵⁶

Other stylistic choices are subtler. Countless journalists interviewed Jack over the course of his illustrious life, and in most occasions they revisited the same topics, again and again. Jack largely stuck to his script, even in interviews, but occasionally he included details in some stories that he omitted in others. When necessary for the flow of the narrative, quotes about the same topic from various interviews have been concatenated. These instances are clearly delineated in footnotes.

⁵⁶ Daniel Winkel, “Jack LaLanne at 70,” *Long Beach Press Telegram*, 6 November 1984, L/S1.

PART 1: THE HEALTH CRUSADE, 1914-1945

Chapter 1: The Early Years

The San Joaquin Valley lies in central California. It is bright, flat terrain, stretching for hundreds of miles in the shadows of the Sierra Nevada. Centuries ago, honey-bloom spread across the valley floor, and thick riparian forests grew along the banks of the San Joaquin River as it meandered from high in the Sierra Madre into the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. In winter and spring the river swelled with the rain, and its waters spread over the countryside, nourishing wild grapes, California roses, and creating a habitat for animals – the deer, rabbits, birds, bobcats and coyotes that lived among the rich vegetation.⁵⁷

The Spaniards came in 1774: tough, resilient men who crossed the mountains and the deserts. Their *ranchos* claimed jurisdiction over the grasslands; and their missions, over the land's native people. Then in 1849 the Americans came, in search of gold. Even those who found no gold, however, discovered a rural paradise, and mountain ranges that almost seemed to part for the American farmholds and the cities that spread over the Valley. The settlers felled the forests, using that woody vegetation for lumber and for fuel. The Forty-Niners needed food, so they raised sheep and cattle, and grew wheat and fruit. They built dams and levees on the rivers, and stemmed their flooding.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ P.M. Schiffman, "Ecology of Native Animals in California Grasslands," in Carla Marie D'Antonio, ed., *California Grasslands: Ecology and Management* (University of California Press, 2007): 180–190; Edwin F. Katibah, "A Brief History of Riparian Forests in the Central Valley of California," in Richard E. Warner and Kathleen M. Hendrix, ed., *California Riparian Systems: Ecology, Conservation, and Productive Management* (University of California Press, 1984): 23–29; and Leonard Nathan, "Central Valley, California," *Chicago Review* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1957): 33.

⁵⁸ Andrew Rolle and Arthur C Verge, *California: A History* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014): 105–106; Nathan, "Central Valley, California;" and Katibah, "A Brief History." Lawrence Jelinek rightly notes that California was not "agriculture's version of Eden"; besides coping with floods, settlers struggled with the need for labor and market organization. See Lawrence Jelinek, *Harvest Empire*:

In 1869, Southern Pacific laid its first railroad through the San Fernando Pass, connecting the burgeoning cities of Los Angeles in the south with San Francisco in the north.⁵⁹ Trains carried the farmers' harvests across the country, and the Valley entered a more modern age – but not all benefitted from the innovation. Few farmers could continue to enjoy idyllic, pastoral lives sustained only by the eggs, milk, honey, fruit, vegetables they once cultivated. And then, from about 1869 until the early 1900s, California suffered from a long-lasting and severe economic depression, led by the decline of mining. Agriculture fared no better. Farming became costly, and when combined with poor access to irrigation, pests, inclement weather, and unfavorable political, the economic climate in the Central Valley became unstable.⁶⁰

Jack LaLanne's maternal grandfather, Frank Garaig, came to the United States in 1890. He settled in a small agricultural town in the heart of California's Central Valley, in Kern County.⁶¹ He brought with him his wife, Mary, his son, Henry Steven, and his daughter, Jennie. Frank soon established himself as a rancher, raising sheep in the 12th township of Kern, and also in Delano, fifty miles to the north.⁶² Frank was a hard man. Toughened by his long voyage from Europe, by the California sun and by the hardships

A History of California Agriculture (Boyd & Fraser, 1979); and Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁵⁹ Richard J. Orsi, *Sunset Limited: The Southern Pacific Railroad and the Development of the American West, 1850-1930* (University of California Press, 2005): 19.

⁶⁰ Orsi, *Sunset Limited*, 48.

⁶¹ United States Department of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the United States," for California, Kern County, on 15-16 January 1920: 4A.

⁶² "Funeral for Frank Garaig Saturday," *The Bakersfield Californian*, 17 May 1923: 7. Though census data lists Frank's year of immigration as 1898, other records, including the *Californian*, contradict this. See especially "Inward Passenger List" for the H.S.S. *Bordeaux*, 10 March 1890. The *Bordeaux* was a passenger ship that had carried immigrant labor to the United States beginning as early as 1884. See Melody Lassalle, "S.S. *Bordeaux*," accessed online at <http://www.yourislandroutes.com/ships/bordeaux.shtml> on March 10, 2016.

of the agricultural industry, he tolerated neither laziness, nor insolence, nor misbehavior. “He was a mean old bastard,” said Jack.⁶³

Yet Frank’s hardness proved a good and necessary thing, and he had resided in Kern for just four years when the railroad men refused to work. The great Pullman Strike, as it came to be known, froze transportation across the entire West, and compounded the economic stress of the persistent depression in central California. “The bottom fell out of prices just for about everything,” wrote James Hickey, a relatively well-off resident from the small town of Elliott, in the northern San Joaquin Valley.⁶⁴ “In the next year or so, you could buy most anything at your own price.... [W]hen the hard times hit the country, just about everyone went broke.”⁶⁵ Hickey remembered the Pullman strike vibrantly, but the drought of the late 1890s sapped the farmers of San Joaquin even more: the amount of irrigated land declined by as much as two-thirds in some areas of the Valley.⁶⁶ The unforgiving times eventually broke the entire town of Elliott, late in the nineteenth century; by 1910, its population totaled just fifteen, and today, only memories and its cemetery still exist.⁶⁷ They suffered the same curses as had Elliot, but Kern and Frank Garaig proved more resilient.

Frank had been born Francois Garaig Labachotte, some thirty years prior to his arrival in America, on 9 January 1858, in Aquitaine, part of the French Basque Country

63 Elaine LaLanne, Jack 101, n.p.

64 Peggy Ward Engh, “Memories of Elliott, California,” *The San Joaquin Historian* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 8.

65 Ibid.

66 Donald J. Pisani, *From the Family Farm to Agribusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in California and the West, 1850-1931* (University of California Press, 1984): 286. As Pisani’s title suggests, most large farms and farmers depended on irrigation for their livelihoods, and so the lack of water in the 1890s proved especially devastating.

67 Engh, “Elliott, California,” 9.

near the rough-hewn foothills of the Pyrenees.⁶⁸ Marie Lasserre was four years younger; perhaps also from Aquitaine, as they were married there on 11 February 1884, when Francois was 26 and Marie 22.⁶⁹ That autumn, on 28 October, they celebrated the birth of their first child, Jeanne, in Pau, a city famous among wealthier European travelers for its warm, oceanic climate and sporting opportunities, but also home to a number of laborers.⁷⁰ Three years later, on 27 September 1887, Marie gave birth to their first son, Etienne.⁷¹

The Garaigs came from working-class stock. In the Basque Country – like in the Central Valley, some 6,000 miles away – most earned their living as shepherds or miners; and given his occupation in California, Francois probably counted among the former. At some point between 1887 and 1890 – perhaps because of the limited economic opportunities in their homeland, or perhaps because of the political turmoil in the early days of the Third Republic – the Garaigs found themselves unhappy with their lives in France.⁷² They decided to emigrate to the United States, and arrived in New Orleans aboard the *H.S.S. Bordeaux* on March 10, 1890.

68 United States Department of Commerce, “Twelfth Census of the United States,” for California, Tulare Township, on 15 June 1900: 186A; and “Inward Passenger List” for the *H.S.S. Bordeaux*.

69 Member-submitted information for Marie Lassere, accessed online at <http://person.ancestry.com/tree/4163901/person/-1502200408/facts> on 21 June 21, 2016.

70 United States Department of Commerce, “Fourteenth Census of the United States,” for California, Kern County.

71 World War II Draft Registration Card for Henry Steven Garaig, 1942, card number U1263. Henry’s exact genealogy proves difficult to unravel. On his World War I registration card, he clearly indicates his birth date as 27 November 1887, not September; and, furthermore, on both cards he lists his birthplace as California. The *H.S.S. Bordeaux* records, however, clearly indicate that his parents did not come to the United States until several years after his birth, and his Social Security information corroborates the September birthdate.

72 Cameron Watson, *Modern Basque History: Eighteenth Century to Present* (University of Nevada Press, 2003); and Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, *Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration* (Columbia University Press, 2009). Watson explains that, in the late nineteenth century, conflict arose between the increasingly nationalistic French government and the rural laborers of the French Basque Country. He writes: “Between 1877 and 1914, Iparralde [French Basque Country] remained politically opposed to practically all central government policy, from its centralization and educational policies to the separation of church and state” (p.

The *Bordeaux* was a French ship, fast and modern. Built fewer than ten years earlier, she could make the trans-Atlantic journey relatively quickly. Nevertheless, the Garaigs' time aboard was almost certainly harrowing, because immigrant ships were often cramped to overflowing. To make the voyage from Europe to American necessitated a willingness to brave exposure and to forego fresh food and fresh water for the trip's duration, and, in the close quarters, diseases festered and spread.

The Garaig family endured their time aboard the *Bordeaux*, only to find themselves in a foreign land equipped with nothing more than the worldly belongings they could fit into their four suitcases. They spoke little English.⁷³ Because they were Caucasian, however, they probably had less difficulty assimilating into American society than did other immigrant groups that came to the United States in droves during the late 19th century.⁷⁴ To further that assimilation, the Garaigs chose – or were forced – to anglicize their names shortly after their arrival. Francois, Marie, Jeanne, and Etienne became Frank, Mary, Jennie, and Henry Steven Garaig. They joined about 20,000 other Basque immigrants who settled in the southern region of the Central Valley, where they could support themselves and their families with the trades they knew from their homeland.⁷⁵ They joined, too, a new rush of miners, anxious to make their fortunes in

216). Dinnerstein and Reimers, however, contend that “since generations of Basques produced larger families than the local economy could absorb, grown children frequently emigrated” (p. 59).

73 “Inward Passenger List” for the *H.S.S. Bordeaux*.

74 Dinnerstein and Reimers, *Ethnic Americans*, 59.

75 *Ibid.*; and Ching Lee, “Counting Sheep,” *California Country* (January/February 2011).

molasseslike oil that seeped up through bubbling craters in places in the Valley. They dug underneath the soil and hauled up the precious tar in buckets.⁷⁶

Fewer – far fewer – fortunes were earned on the farms. Though the Garaigs may have escaped prejudice, the California agricultural industry was not a kind one for laborers. California’s economic depression had, by that point, given rise to an agrarian system dominated by large-scale, industrialized “farm factories,” massive outfits that “embodied the commercial ethic of modern industrial America,” explains historian Cletus E. Daniel.⁷⁷ These agribusinesses could afford the costs of expansive irrigation, giving them a considerable advantage over smaller farmsteads, even in rainy years; and they could weather the turbulence of prices in the dry seasons more easily, too. Yet the mammoth farms and ranches that dominated agriculture in the Central Valley brought little wealth to the area itself. All too frequently, they were managed “by absentee owners from their offices in San Francisco, or by telephone from offices in neighboring towns; farmed often solely as the mine is worked,” lamented one farmer of the day.⁷⁸

Unlike the absentee owners, laborers on the farm factories lived hard lives. They were afforded none of the comforts of home that many longed for, and instead often slept on beds of straw and took their meals in the fields under the hot sun, all in exchange for just a few dollars each day. California farm hands had earned about \$60 per month in

⁷⁶ Jeremy Miller, “The Colonization of Kern County,” *Orion Magazine* (2011), accessed online at <https://orionmagazine.org/article/the-colonization-of-kern-county/>. Miners actually first came to the area in 1873, but until the 1890s, amounted to only “a few hundred people.” See Chris Brewer, *Historic Kern County: An Illustrated History of Bakersfield and Kern County* (HPN Books, 2001): 53.

⁷⁷ Cletus E. Daniel, *Bitter Harvest: A History of California Farmworkers, 1870-1941* (University of California Press, 1982): 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

1850, but that amount fell, sharply, after the Civil War, and it did not recover.⁷⁹ Frank Garaig probably found work, easily enough; the farm factories' demand for laborers was plentiful. Mary worked, too, as a cook, but the Garaig children, ages six and three, could not contribute to the household.⁸⁰ Yet somehow, despite all this, the Garaigs managed, at least for a short time.

On June 24, 1894, Mary gave birth to a third child, Andrew. Mary died during childbirth. This was not an altogether rare occurrence, especially in rural situations. Maternal mortality rates in the United States in the 1890s were high: more than six deaths per 1,000 births, twice as many as in some Western European countries at the time.⁸¹ But children imposed larger economic burdens in the late nineteenth century than they had fifty years prior, and Mary's death devastated the Garaig family economically as well as emotionally.⁸²

Without the income that Mary had brought to the family, Frank struggled to care for his children alone. For twenty months they scraped by, but the struggles of farm and home proved to be too great. In 1896 Frank gave Andrew away, to a family by the name of Conger.⁸³ The Congers, Sterling Price and Mary Ellen, lived in Fresno, to the north. Sterling had come to Fresno in 1881, and worked in logging, and he presumably earned a good living. In 1895 he married Mary Ellen, and, unable to have children of their own,

79 Ibid., 44; and Stanley Lebergott, "Wage Trends, 1800-1900," in *Trends in the American Economy in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Princeton Press, 1960): 452.

80 "Competent Married Couple" [classified advertisement], *San Francisco Call*, 21 May 1983: 4.

81 Irvine Loudon, "Maternal Mortality in the Past and Its Relevance to Developing Countries Today," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 72, no. 1 (2000): 241s-246s.

82 Steven Ruggles, *Prolonged Connections: The Rise of the Extended Family in Nineteenth-Century England and America* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), xviii; and Peter Stearns, *Encyclopedia of Social History* (Routledge, 1993): 259-60.

83 Adoption agreement between Frank Garaig and S.P. and Mary E. Conger, 28 November 1896.

the couple wished to adopt.⁸⁴ “As far as I can learn Mr. and Mrs. Conger are worthy people and can provide for a child,” wrote M.B. McWhirter, who oversaw the adoption process.⁸⁵ On 28 November 1896 the Congers provisionally adopted Andrew, with an agreement that the arrangement be reevaluated in five years, should they fail to properly care for the child.⁸⁶

Such would not be the case. The Congers, who called their new son Marvin, cared for him until he grew into a strong young man, with a powerful jaw and piercing eyes.⁸⁷ Marvin served in the military during World War I, and later married a woman from Washington, D.C. named Mary Peacock. Marvin and Mary had four children: Mary, Dorothy May, and Marvin Leroy.⁸⁸ In 1937, Sterling died, and Marvin inherited his 20-acre vineyard in Fresno.⁸⁹ The Conger family remained close with the Garaigs for some time, and Marvin’s wife, Mary, would eventually change Jack’s life in an unexpected, unintended, and important way.

After giving his son to the Congers, Frank he sent his daughter away, too. Unlike Marvin, Jennie was ten years old, and she could contribute to a household; so instead of being adopted, she boarded, trading housework for a place to live with another family in San Francisco. Henry and his father remained together, but they became borders as well, working on the sheep ranch of Gabriel Sinarle, a fellow Frenchman, in Tulare,

84 “S.P. Conger Dies of Heart Attack Tuesday,” unidentified newspaper clipping accessed online at Ancestry.com.

85 M.B. McWhirter to the Chair of the Board of Supervisors of Fresno City, California, 24 March 1896.

86 Adoption agreement.

87 Photograph of Marvin Conger, accessed online at Ancestry.com.

88 United States Department of Commerce, “Fifteenth Census of the United States,” for California, Tulare County, on 28 April 1930: 23A.

89 “S.P. Conger Dies.”

California.⁹⁰ As with other agricultural industries, large operators came to dominate sheep raising by the mid- to late-19th century. Fortunately for the Garaigs, the California and Wool Growers Association, founded in 1860, guarded smaller shepherds from the dangers of monopoly, and from exploitative wool buyers in the Northeast. Not even a union could protect against depression, though, and between 1880 and 1910 prices for wool and mutton fared no better than prices for crops. In 1897, sheep cost just \$1.50 per head, and in one year alone more than 200,000 were driven out of California in an effort to reduce supply and make land available for other use.⁹¹

Nevertheless, still Frank and Henry Garaig persisted, with only themselves to support; and eventually they even thrived, building for themselves over the course of the next twenty years a prominent position in the Central Valley ranching industry. In 1900, oil magnate John O'Neil of Wisconsin ventured into California agriculture together with partner John E. Bailey, purchasing a large tract of land in Bakersfield, in Kern County, about 60 miles south of Tulare.⁹² Some time thereafter, Frank and Henry left Sinarle's ranch to work for O'Neil and Bailey.⁹³ Later, they secured a loan from A.P. Giannini's Bank of Italy – a momentous occasion for an immigrant farmer.⁹⁴ In the early 20th century, most banks offered their services only to the wealthy. “It was hard for a man to borrow \$100 from a bank, particularly if he was a foreigner,” explain historians Marquis

90 United States Department of Commerce, “Twelfth Census of the United States,” for Tulare, California, on June 15, 1900; and LaLanne, Jack 101.

91 Robert F. Miller, “Sheep Production in California,” *California Agricultural Extension Service Circular* 49 (November 1930): 6-7; and Texas State Historical Association, “Sheep Ranching,” *The Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed online at <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/aus01> on 21 June 22, 2016.

92 “Commissioner’s Notice of Sale No. 22176,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, 29 March 1929: 25.

93 “Society,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, 7 May 1918: 3.

94 “Commissioner’s Notice of Sale No. 22176.”

and Bessie R. James, but Giannini despised the traditional banking industry and the predatory loan sharks who feasted upon those in need of a small loan. His was to be a bank for “the little fellow.”⁹⁵

Frank Garaig took the money he had borrowed from Giannini and invested in his own ranching operation, probably by leasing land from O’Neil and Bailey on a contract basis, as was common at the time. By 1918, Garaig had established himself as something of a partner with O’Neil, and the two raised sheep and cattle and developed extensive property holdings throughout the Central Valley.⁹⁶ Just over ten years later, in 1929, the Garaig property stretched across 200 acres of land.⁹⁷

Jennie had inherited a stoic work ethic and determination from her father, and she too survived in the absence of her mother. Sadly, most details of her early life have been lost to history. During her years as a border, she received little schooling, and earned only a fourth-grade education. But she was a sharp young woman, small but fierce with strong convictions towards both family and religion. Even during her time away from them, she kept in touch with Frank and Henry, as did Marvin Conger.⁹⁸

95 Marquis James and Bessie R. James, *The Story of Bank of America: Biography of a Bank* (Harper, 1954): 16. Giannini rose to fame in California when he used his bank’s lending power to help rebuild San Francisco after the devastating earthquake in 1906, making handshake loans to those contributing to the rebuilding effort. His financial philosophy proved successful, and in 1930, the Bank of Italy became Bank of America.

96 “Society.”

97 “Funeral for Frank Garaig Saturday,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, 17 May 1923: 7.

98 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.



Figure 1. A young Jennie Garaig. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)



Figure 2. John Ross Key, "Mt. Diablo, San Joaquin Valley" (1873). The simplicity of the artist's work highlights the area's natural beauty.

ENTER THE LALANNES

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the LaLanne family also traced its roots to Aquitaine. Like Frank and Mary Garaig, Cherese Saliou LaLanne came to the United States by way of New Orleans, aboard the *S.S. Nantes*, in 1887; and, like the Garaigs, she brought with them a child: Jean Francis, age six.⁹⁹ Upon arrival in America, they, like the Garaigs, anglicized their names, to Theresa and John, and travelled to California. In San Francisco, they met Theresa's husband, also named Jean, and daughter, Marie; both of whom presumably had immigrated before Theresa and John, though no record of the former pair's arrival can be found. Because Jean and Theresa LaLanne never rose to as

⁹⁹ "Ship's Manifest," for the *S.S. Nantes*," 7 November 1887: n.p. Jack said that his parents actually met on the ship, but evidence fails to support this claim; they arrived in the United States aboard different ships and several years apart. See Jack LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour* (Prentice Hall, 1961): 117.

much prominence as the Garaig family, relatively little historical evidence exists to describe their lives.

In San Francisco, Theresa gave birth to a third child, whom she named Eugene, in 1891.¹⁰⁰ Marie eventually married a man by the name of Wallace Eddy, from Michigan, and moved with him to a town there called Kalkaska.¹⁰¹ Eugene stayed close to his parents, in San Francisco, and opened a painting business there.¹⁰² By all accounts, neither Marie nor Eugene would play any significant role in the life of their nephew, Jack LaLanne.

The junior John LaLanne – Jack’s father-to-be – was a rather dark, reticent boy, slight of height and medium in build, like his future son.¹⁰³ Again, very little is known about John’s childhood. He was well-educated, having attended trade school to become an electrician, which suggests that the LaLanne family owned at least a modicum of wealth, or that John possessed the same steadfast determination that characterized the entire Garaig family. Indeed, it would come as little surprise to anyone who knew him that Jack’s parents would show enormous tenacity – even obstinacy – in the face of difficult circumstances.

By 1904 John LaLanne had taken a job with the Pacific States Telephone & Telegraph Company, precursor to Pacific Bell and, at the time, exclusive provider of

100 United States Department of Commerce, “Fifteenth Census of the United States,” for California, San Francisco City, on 9 April 1930: 12B.

101 United States Department of Commerce, “Sixteenth Census of the United States,” for Michigan, Kalkaska, on 15-16 April 1940: 8B.

102 United States Department of Commerce, “Fifteenth Census of the United States,” for California, San Francisco City, on 9 April 1930: 12B.

103 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*: 117; and United States Selective Service System, “Registration Card No. 3127 for John LaLanne,” *World War I Draft Registration Cards*, 1917–1918.

telephone services in the San Francisco Bay area.¹⁰⁴ John installed phone lines for a rapidly growing customer base, doing everything from mounting switchboards and inspecting circuitry to trimming trees and replacing telephone poles. As demand for phones grew, John's job became increasingly hectic and stressful.¹⁰⁵

He escaped that stress by going out for evenings full of dancing and drinking. John loved to dance, and he met Jennie Garaig at a dance in San Francisco in the early 1900s.¹⁰⁶ They were married soon after, on February 18, 1906.¹⁰⁷ They were a young couple by modern standards: Jennie had turned 21 years old just months before, and John was 25. Yet even with his new wife, and his passion for dance, John remained troubled; and, unlike his dancing, John's drinking became an unhealthy retreat. His parents had enjoyed wine, but John liked liquor, and he struggled with restraint. When he drank too much he was violent and mean, and his marriage to Jennie would not be an easy one because of it.¹⁰⁸

As it happened, exactly two months after saying their vows, the couple faced their first challenge together: one totally unrelated to John's vices, and far, far more destructive. On the morning of 18 April 1906, San Francisco was struck by a massive earthquake, one of the most cataclysmic natural disasters in the history of the United States. Historians Andrew Rolle and Arthur Verge describe the horrific scene:

104 Crocker-Langley city directory for San Francisco (1904): 1080.

105 For the history of the telephone in the Bay area, see Beth Bagwell, *Oakland: The Story of a City* (Presido, 1982): 148.

106 Hal Reynolds, "Interview with Jack LaLanne," March 2009, accessed online at <http://mshhig.com/jack-lalanne.php> on 10 March 2016.

107 Marriage license for John LaLanne and Jennie Garaig, 18 February 1906.

108 "Patient No. 23533," commitment register for the Stockton, California State Hospital, 15 February 1919.

A loud, rumbling noise awakened thousands at San Francisco. Then came a terrifying creaking and grinding sound as flimsy buildings were suddenly twisted off their foundations. More substantial multistoried brick structures cascaded into the streets. Yawning fissures opened up in the earth. Almost every chimney in the city was so badly cracked that passersby were in constant danger. Short-circuited electric wires, which fell into the city's streets, set off fires that swept through block after block of apartments and residences. When volunteer fireman attached their hoses to hydrants, no water came out of the mains. Not only were pipes broken, but in some instances it was discovered that the city's fire hydrants had never been hooked up to its water system.... As the fire continued to spread, General Frederick Funston, commandant of the Presidio of San Francisco, charged into the city and proceeded to dynamite more than a quarter mile of wooden and stone mansions along Van Ness, one of its most beautiful streets. Explosion as well as fire therefore took an awesome toll in the fire, which raged for three days and two nights before it burned itself out.¹⁰⁹

The earthquake destroyed over five hundred blocks of the city, and \$200,000,000 in property. John and Jennie lost everything they owned in its wake.¹¹⁰

Happily, reconstruction invigorated San Francisco's economy. Only A.P. Giannini's Bank of Italy – the same bank from which Frank Garaig borrowed – survived the quake, and the magnanimous Giannini offered generous lending terms to those invested in the rebuilding effort.¹¹¹ John's employer, Pacific States Telephone and Telegraph, also contributed, pouring a million dollars into the construction of a magnificent 26-story skyscraper to replace the much smaller one that had been destroyed. "In erecting this monument to western progress and foresight, the telephone company brings home a definite realization of the tremendous importance and extent of our

109 Rolle and Verge, *California: A History*: 449–50.

110 Reynolds, "Interview with Jack LaLanne."

111 "Italian American Hero – A.P. Giannini," *Altre Voci* 29, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 1.

communication facilities,” wrote Richard C. Smith in the *San Francisco News Letter* upon the building’s completion, nearly two decades later.¹¹²

The LaLannes, for their part, appear to have taken on extra work to make ends meet. What they did for housing remains unclear, but they may have fled the devastation of the great earthquake to the fledgling city of Oakland, along with thousands of other San Franciscan refugees. Quake victims, in fact, soon comprised half of the East Bay’s population. It is also possible that they remained in San Francisco, and that John began commuting across the Bay to work in Oakland.¹¹³ John, in addition to his work with the telephone company, began teaching dancing lessons at night to earn extra money. Jennie found work as a maid, earning a living through housework, as she had done for so many years as a child.¹¹⁴ Life went on.

On 31 August 1908, Jennie gave birth to their first son, whom they named Norman; and, some six years later, to their second son, Jack.¹¹⁵

JACK’S CHILDHOOD: 1914-1929

Jack LaLanne was born on September 26, 1914, in San Francisco, on Green Street, close to the water.¹¹⁶ According to the family legend, Jack’s given name was Francois Henri LaLanne, but “Francois” proved too difficult for six-year-old Norman to

112 Richard C. Smith, “The News Letter and the Telephone,” *San Francisco News Letter* (September 1925): n.p.

113 The 1907 Oakland City directory lists John’s address as 821 60th Street. However, most sources assert that both Norman and Jack were born in San Francisco. See LaLanne, John, “Oakland City Directory (1907): 538; Michael Taylor, “Norman LaLanne – Well-Known Waterfront Businessman” [obituary], *SF Gate*, 7 October 2005: n.p.; and “Episode 129,” The Jack LaLanne Show, n.d. For more on the earthquake’s impact on Oakland, see Kevin Fagan, “The Great Quake: 1906-2006/Quake Sparked Boom in East Bay,” *SF Gate*, 14 April 2006, n.p.; and “Refugees Go To Oakland,” *The Call-Chronicle-Examiner*, 19 April 1906.

114 “Will Hold Services for John LaLanne,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, September 18, 1939: 13; and Donald Katz, “Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal,” *Outside*, November 1995: 78–82, 162.

115 “Norman LaLanne,” U.S. Social Security Death Index, n.d.

116 “Jack LaLanne,” California Birth Index; and “Episode 129,” The Jack LaLanne Show, n.d.

pronounce — although the LaLannes usually spoke French at home — and so, somehow, Francois Henri became Jack.¹¹⁷ As an infant, Jack was quick to tell interviewers, he was small and sickly – though in pictures, he appears healthy, and perhaps a bit on the chubby side – and suffered from colic. Jennie pacified her crying child with cheesecloth soaked in sugar, a sin upon which Jack later blamed his insatiable sweet tooth.¹¹⁸

She had little other choice, though, because according to Jack’s memories, his earliest years were spent in destitution, and his parents could not afford a more conventional pacifier. Given John’s employment with Pacific States Telephone and Telegraph, the LaLanne’s financial situation was probably not as dire as Jack later painted it. However, during World War I, all Americans were encouraged to practice frugality. Government propaganda touted the slogan “Food Will Win the War,” and encouraged Americans to conserve as much as possible. “Everything,” according to historian Heather Addison, “was sacrificed to efficiency, production, and health.”¹¹⁹ Perhaps, decades later, Jack confused his family’s wartime prudence with poverty, and perhaps those bitter memories later fueled his drive to build his own fortune, during the 1950s and 1960s. Or perhaps he simply claimed childhood hardships to better fit the mold of the fitness entrepreneur and American dream come true, having built himself up

117 “Interview with Jack LaLanne,” n.d.; and Reynolds, “Interview with Jack LaLanne.” The story is probably not true. Jack says that he later legally changed his name, but no record of this can be found. Furthermore, the 1920 census lists his name as Jack. See United States Department of Commerce, “Fourteenth Census of the United States,” for California, Kern County, on 15-16 January 1920: 4A.

118 Dee Dunheim, “Jack LaLanne: America’s Godfather of Fitness and Good Health,” *Senior News*, May 1998: n.p.; and digital photographs from the LaLanne collection, on the external hard drive titled “LaLane_drives,” in the folder titled “Great Old Pix.”

119 Heather Addison, *Hollywood and the Rise of Physical Culture* (Psychology Press, 2003): 10; and Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies, and Fat* (Free Press, 1986).

from humble, disadvantaged beginnings. To be sure, many entrepreneurial figures in physical culture history fit that same mold (or, at least, claimed they did).¹²⁰

Regardless of their financial situation, the LaLanne family suffered during the war years. When the United States formally entered World War I by declaring war on the German Empire on April 6, 1917, Jack's father registered for the draft, but John never entered the service.¹²¹ Instead – perhaps from the stress of his job; or the pressures of wartime life – he began to turn more to liquor, and his behavior became more and more erratic. Thrice he drank himself into a stupor, and was increasingly violent, destructive, and even began suffering delusions. He threatened to kill himself. Finally, in July of 1917, his brother Eugene committed him to the state hospital in Stockton for alcoholism. “He has lost all will power and self control,” Eugene explained sadly.¹²²

In the early 1900s, as the Prohibition movement gathered momentum, many considered alcoholism the result of a moral deficiency. Even advocates for medical treatment of alcoholism maintained that “inebriety, though a disease, has been produced by vice and leads to crime.... Drunkenness is a sin and the drunkard is a sinner.”¹²³ Eugene LaLanne's decision to commit his brother to the Stockton asylum therefore

120 Besides Bernarr MacFadden and Eugen Sandow, both mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, two important contemporaries of Jack claimed the same unceremonious beginnings. Earle E. Liederman and Charles Atlas, the most successful mail-order physical culture entrepreneurs of the late 1910s through the 1930s, both lived in poverty during their youths. See Ben Pollack and Jan Todd, “The Kings of Mail-Order Muscle: Earle Liederman, Charles Atlas, and Physical Culture Correspondence Courses, 1888-1935,” in press.

121 Selective Service System, “Registration Card No. 3127 for John LaLanne,” World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917–1918.

122 “Patient No. 23533,” commitment register for the Stockton, California State Hospital, February 15, 1919. The Stockton hospital had been established in 1851 to care for the mentally ill of central California, though by the end of the century it also admitted patients from neighboring states. It somewhat resembled a sanitarium, providing housing facilities on over 1,000 acres of farmland. See Neal Starr, “Stockton State Hospital: A Century and a Quarter of Service,” *San Joaquin Historian* 12, no. 3 (July-September 1976): 115–22.

123 Lyman Abbott, “Inebriety, a Disease? Or a Sin?” *New Outlook*, 12 August 1911: 816. For more on the history of alcoholism, see Sarah W. Tracey, *Alcoholism in America: From Reconstruction to Prohibition* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

indicates that John's situation was truly dire; it had, at the time, the potential to expose the family to ridicule, and John himself to great shame.

Not surprisingly, Jack never spoke of his father's struggles; nor should one expect him to have done. As for himself, Jack was known to love a drink, especially later in life, and sometimes drank to excess. He had an arrest for DUI in 1991, to which he pled no contest. On another occasion he drove his new Porsche off the road and into a tree, claiming to have fallen asleep at the wheel.¹²⁴ When journalists noticed his overindulgences at restaurants, he defended himself: "Vices keep you sane," he argued. However, Jack built much of his career and reputation by enthusiastically denouncing overindulgence in other vices, like sugar, which makes his defense of alcohol seem somewhat hypocritical.

With John at Stockton, Jennie was left alone to provide for her two children; overwhelmed, she returned with Jack to the family ranch, where they sought the support of her father, Frank Garaig. Over the past quarter-century since Jennie had left, Frank and his son Henry had turned the hot, dry hills of central California into a comfortable homestead. There they grew prize-winning pumpkins and pears, and raised grass- and raisin-fed livestock that commanded premium prices from buyers throughout the state. They traded eggs, corn, and fruit in nearby Bakersfield for fresh bread and pastries.¹²⁵ Later in his life, Jack would reminisce about the summer days he and Norman spent

¹²⁴ "Jack LaLanne Arrested on Suspicion of DUI," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 1991; "LaLanne Fined in Reckless Driving Case," *Los Angeles Times*, 31 August 1991; and Katz, "LaLanne is Still an Animal." Jack's blood-alcohol level was 0.08%, and, under California law, was legally considered intoxicated during the 1991 arrest. However, he eventually pleaded no contest to a charge of alcohol-related reckless driving.

¹²⁵ LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*: 82–84.

swimming in the deep irrigation canal running through the center of the property, and playing with footballs fashioned from barley sacks and twine. They rolled about in the haystacks and shot air rifles, and happily adjusted to their new rural lifestyles.¹²⁶ Despite the glamour of Los Angeles that Jack would endure during his television years, it seems a part of him always wanted to return to that small-town calm.

But childhood life on the ranch was not always idyllic, according to Jack. As an adult, he often reminisced of cold winter mornings with no heat or running water – the type of stark environment that would produce a strong, resilient individual. It is true that agricultural prices fell following the end of World War I, sparking an industrial depression that lasted even into the general economic prosperity of the 1920s.¹²⁷ Very probably, the Garaigs were not as financially well-off as they had been prior to the wartime years. Nevertheless, the historical record suggests that the Garaigs enjoyed niceties their neighbors could not afford. Newspapers noted when Frank bought expensive new cars and purchased a considerable amount of ranching acreage. The Garaigs were generally recognized as a prosperous family into the 1920s, and so there is reason to be skeptical of Jack’s claim to outright poverty.¹²⁸

Wealth aside, both of the LaLanne boys abided stringent rules at home. Frank Garaig was “a tough old bastard,” Jack remembered. “He was a tyrant. When he wanted me to do something he would twist my ear and it was unbearable.” Nor did Jack’s uncle Henry tolerate any misbehavior. The Garaig men put the LaLanne boys to work with

¹²⁶ LaLanne, Jack 101.

¹²⁷ Wyn Derbyshire, *Dark Realities: America’s Great Depression* (Spiramus Press, 2013): 1.

¹²⁸ “Delano,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, January 26, 1917: 5; “Funeral for Frank Garaig Saturday,” *Bakersfield Californian*, May 17, 1923: 7; and “Commissioner’s Notice of Sale No. 22176.”

small chores, like bringing the cows to be milked and driving away the rabbits and squirrels that stole vegetables. The chores annoyed Jack, but he did them anyway.¹²⁹

His mother offered little reprieve. Jennie's austerity forbade many modern pleasures: "No lipstick, no radio, no nothin.' I was afraid to look at my penis because that was a sin," Jack said.¹³⁰ In fact, both the LaLanne and the Garaig families were religious, having brought their Roman Catholic faith with them from the Basque Country. And in his father's absence, Jennie became the dominating force in Jack's life. She was militant, perhaps even controlling, but steadfastly convinced of a greater purpose in her life.¹³¹ Jack inherited many of those same qualities, and it is little surprise that his dispositions, together with his strict upbringing, eventually led Jack to follow a life marked by incredible discipline.

But Jennie had a softer side, as well, and she often pampered Jack with sweet treats. He loved candy and soft drinks, craved cakes and pies and chocolate. Of course, the junk food caused cavities and acne, he later claimed, and for these maladies Jack was teased mercilessly. He never stood any taller than five feet, four inches, and as a child his physique was anything but intimidating; so he could do little to defend himself from such attacks.¹³² The teasing compounded his problem: "I became a psychological eater," he wrote, and stole money from his mother's purse for candy and ice cream, in the process worsening the complexion that had vexed him in the first place.¹³³

129 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

130 Katz, "Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal."

131 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

132 Naomi Dillon, "A Winning Spokesman," *Yakima Herald-Republic*, September 18, 1998: 1A, 10A.

133 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*: 85.

In pictures from Jack's childhood, however, one is drawn to neither his complexion (flawless), nor his physique (lean and muscular). Instead, one notices Jack's charming smile, his dimples and strong jaw; his piercing, dark eyes, and his fine clothing.¹³⁴ In short, the youthful good looks that carried Jack far in life stand out even at an early age, and he grew from an adorable young boy into a wholesome young man. Everyone has their own insecurities, but few observers would have reproached Jack for his physical appearance.

In 1919, Jack's father John was released from the Stockton State Hospital.¹³⁵ He travelled south, and joined his family on the Garaig's ranch.¹³⁶ He stayed there only a short period before returning to San Francisco to resume his job at the telephone company, where he worked for the rest of his life. Jennie occasionally brought her two sons to visit John in San Francisco, a three-hundred-mile journey that must have seemed very long to a young boy like Jack.¹³⁷

In his father's absence, and under the strangling hold of so many rules and his sugar "addiction", Jack struggled to behave. In school, he spoke back to his teachers; bickered with the fellow children; and had little patience for reading, writing, and arithmetic.¹³⁸ When he got into trouble at home — which he did, often — his grandfather Frank beat him with a switch. Jennie affectionately nicknamed him *tete de mulet* —

134 Digital photographs from the LaLanne collection, on the external hard drive titled "LaLane_drives," in the folder titled "LaLanne Fixed Old Photos."

135 "Patient No. 23533." The rationale for John's release is vague: "Not to be benefited by further treatment." Because Jack never spoke of his father's problems with alcohol, it is unclear whether John ever fully recovered from his addiction.

136 United States Department of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the United States," for California, Kern County, on January 15-16, 1920.

137 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

138 *Ibid.*, 85; and LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

“mule head” — a term of endearment that belied the seriousness of Jack’s misbehavior and his tendencies towards violence.¹³⁹ “I was psychotic,” Jack admitted. Twice he attacked his brother, once with an axe and once with a knife. “[Jack] had a bad temper, he was fearless, and didn’t give a damn about anything.... he would have split my head open,” Norman said.¹⁴⁰

Jack would later use these outbursts of anger and disobedience as evidence of the importance of a healthy diet. “I was a sugarholic. It made me weak and it made me mean. It made me sick. Little girls used to beat me up,” he said.¹⁴¹ “My life was hell.”¹⁴² Jack’s emotional distress suggests that he may have suffered from some sort of attention-deficit disorder, that, in the 1920s, went undiagnosed; and his diet, heavy in sweets, would have only exacerbated this condition. Dr. Mark Rubenstein, Jack’s future son-in-law and a pediatrics specialist in Walnut Creek, California, explained in an interview that

Jack always explained his hyperactivity on his sugar intake.... The likelihood is that Jack was probably right. It has been pretty well shown that anyone with a high sugar diet, has more energy because when you take sugar, your body has to use up all of the energy it produces to get it out of the bloodstream. So I think it is much more likely that Jack was right. That it was basically the trouble with his nutrition that made him act as he did.¹⁴³

139 Reynolds, “Interview with Jack LaLanne.”

140 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

141 Deborah Manfredini, “Famed ‘Charlatan’ Fitness Guru Comes to Sherwood,” *Sherwood Voice*, n.d., n.p.

142 Dunheim, “Jack LaLanne.”

143 Interview with Dr. Mark Rubenstein, from the LaLanne collection, on the external hard drive titled “LaLane_drives,” in the folder titled “Jack Interviews.”

Recent studies agree that a chronic intake of excessive sugar can exacerbate symptoms like the ones Jack describes, due to a genetic disorder in the body's response to dopamine – a disorder also associated with alcohol addiction, from which Jack's father suffered.¹⁴⁴

When he was about seven or eight, Jack began to suffer from massive headaches and earaches, and the ringing pain only caused him to act out more.¹⁴⁵ This went on for some time, until, one day, Jack fell from a haystack and struck his ear. It swelled, badly, and the pain became truly unbearable. Jennie rushed her son to a doctor in Bakersfield, who soon diagnosed Jack with mastoiditis, an infection of a small bone behind the ear that causes painful swelling. Without modern antibiotics, mastoiditis required a dangerous operation to cut open the offending bone and drain the fluid that had accumulated because of the infection.¹⁴⁶ It was, according to the doctor, Jack's first brush with death: had the infection been allowed to worsen, it could easily have become fatal.¹⁴⁷

After that, tragedies continued to befall the Garaig household; it seemed as if misfortune was drawn to the farm. A few months after the operation, when Jack was almost nine, his grandfather fell ill. Jennie and Henry took their father to a nearby hospital, in Bakersfield, but despite their care, on May 23, 1923, Frank Garaig died. He was only 66 years old. The family buried him in Union Cemetery, the resting place of

144 Richard J. Johnson, et al., "Attention-Deficity/Hyperactivity Disorder: Is it Time to Reappraise the Role of Sugar Consumption?" *Postgrad Medicine* 123, no. 5 (September 2011): 39-49.

145 Ibid.

146 Today, mastoiditis occurs only rarely, but until the 1940s, it often required surgical intervention. For more, see Ricardo Ferriera Bento and Anna Carolina de Oliveira Fonseca, "A Brief History of Mastoideotomy," *International Archives of Otorhinolaryngology* 17, no. 2 (June 2013): 168-178. (Despite the journal's intimidating name, the article is very readable even for those unversed in medical terminology.)

147 LaLanne, *Jack* 101.

many prominent families from central California.¹⁴⁸ Frank had named Jennie administrator of his estate, and she hired two attorneys, F.E. Borton and James Petrini, to settle his remaining debts.¹⁴⁹ For his part, Henry continued to manage the ranch in his father's absence; but without Frank's guidance, the homestead would not last much longer.

The following year brought more woe. The days burned hot and dry, and many feared a drought. The San Joaquin receives scant rainfall, often just ten inches per year; and any time the rainy season failed to transpire, farmsteads suffered. The lack of rain became so worrisome that the state railroad commission offered steep discounts to farmers from the San Joaquin, in hopes of encouraging them to evacuate their cattle to the wetter north and save what they could of their herd.¹⁵⁰ The Garaigs, who raised sheep, did not leave. Finally, when the rains did begin to fall, they brought with them an insidious passenger: the highly contagious bacteria *Apthae epizooticae*, which causes hoof-and-mouth disease. "Within weeks," writes California historian Kendrick Clements, "a full-blown epidemic gripped northern California," and the disease quickly spread throughout the state, and into Kern County.¹⁵¹ The federal government dedicated \$1.5 million to combating the disease, mainly through the mass slaughter of infected and exposed

148 "Funeral for Frank Garaig."

149 "Notice to Creditors No. 3312, Dept. 1," *The Bakersfield Californian*, 7 January 1924: 10. Borton and Petrini had founded a small but rapidly-growing practice in Bakersfield, and had handled the estate sales of other prominent locals; their firm later became one of the state's largest. See "Papers Filed with County Clerk," *The Bakersfield Californian*, 4 February 1913, 3; correspondence with Diana Christian, partner at Borton Petrini, from 27 October 2016 (email in author's possession); and "Borton Petrini, LLP," accessed online at <http://www.bortonpetrini.com>.

150 "Rates Reduced on Removal of Stock," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 March 1924: E13.

151 Kendrick A Clements, "Managing a National Crisis: The 1924 Foot-and-Mouth Disease Outbreak in California," *California History* 84, no. 3 (2007): 23–42.

livestock. Between 1924 and 1925, more than 100,000 cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, and deer were killed, including many of the Garaig's own 3,000 sheep.¹⁵²

Around this same time, Jack suffered another major illness. His temperature soared to 105 degrees, he recalled, and he began to hallucinate. After a week, many of his symptoms still persisted, and Jack showed little or no signs of recovery. In desperation, Jennie turned to her faith, begging God to save Jack's life; but it was Mary Conger, the adoptive mother of Jennie's brother Marvin, who gathered a congregation of Seventh-Day Adventists to hold a nightlong vigil on Jack's behalf. They gathered all through the night in prayer; Jennie, in her despondency, promised God her life in exchange for Jack's. That morning, after the vigil's end, Jack's fever broke. Jennie joyfully held herself to the promise she had made, and converted to Seventh-Day Adventism herself, embracing even the fundamentalist religion's pledge of strict vegetarianism. She abstained from meat for the rest of her life.¹⁵³ In fact, Jennie's conversion to a vegetarian diet marked Jack's first exposure to healthful living, but he continued to eat poorly himself; his mother, undoubtedly distracted by the farm's perilous situation, did nothing to correct Jack's eating habits.¹⁵⁴

In 1928, the Garaig ranch was again besieged by hoof-and-mouth disease; and this time, the virus proved fatal not only for the livestock, but the entire business. The government slaughtered what remained of the herd, and left the Garaigs with no future

¹⁵² Ibid.; and Reynolds, "Interview with Jack LaLanne."

¹⁵³ LaLanne, *Jack 101*; and Seventh-Day Adventist Church, "Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs," 2015, 4.

¹⁵⁴ While vegetarianism itself is not inherently more healthful than a diet including meat, Seventh-Day Adventist vegetarianism is part of the religion's larger message of health, which includes abstinence from caffeine, alcohol and tobacco, and adherence to kosher laws.

source of income. The following year, the Bank of Italy foreclosed on the Garaig property to pay for their debts of \$31,377.89 (the equivalent of about \$400,000 in 2018 dollars).¹⁵⁵ Jennie took her children and returned to northern California, to rejoin John, at the home he rented on Spaulding Avenue in Berkeley.¹⁵⁶ Henry remained in Bakersfield, alone, for a few years; but when the Depression hit, he too, moved north.¹⁵⁷ In this time of hardship, the LaLannes invited Henry to share their home, which he did for quite some time.¹⁵⁸

Although no records show exactly what John LaLanne was doing in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the family was well off enough to afford a private school for Jack. Jennie chose the Golden Gate Academy, which had been established five years earlier, in 1923, to educate the children of Seventh-Day Adventists. Its inaugural class comprised just 56 students in four schoolrooms; and by the time Jack arrived, it was not much bigger.¹⁵⁹ Its few students followed the strict holistic practices of the religion, which forbade anything not considered within the highest standards of Christian morals – including supposed vices like jewelry, dancing, tobacco and alcohol.

Not surprisingly, Jack struggled to adhere to the Academy's strict standards for student conduct. By the time he entered high school, his adolescent angst had made him self-conscious and shy: characteristics he tried to suppress throughout his entire life.

¹⁵⁵ "Commissioner's Notice of Sale No. 22176."

¹⁵⁶ United States Department of Commerce, "Fifteenth Census of the United States," for California, Berkeley City, on 21-22 April 1930: 24A; and LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

¹⁵⁷ United States Department of Commerce, "Fifteenth Census of the United States," for California, Kern County, on 7 May 1930: 29B.

¹⁵⁸ United States Department of Commerce, "Sixteenth Census of the United States," for California, Berkeley, on 18 April 1930: 16B.

¹⁵⁹ Golden Gate Academy, "A Brief History," accessed online at <http://goldengateacademy.org/about-us/our-history> on March 10, 2016.

“I’ve always had a terrific inferiority complex,” he admitted.¹⁶⁰ As teen, he often felt terribly lonely, longing to find his place in the world; but filled with self-pity and self-doubt.¹⁶¹ His stabbing headaches persisted, too. Unable to control his physical and emotional feelings, Jack lashed out. “I walked into the principal’s office,” he boasted, “and told him to kiss my ass!” Jack’s efforts got him expelled from the Golden Gate Academy, probably to Jennie’s dismay; but even in the public school he later attended, he continued to misbehave.¹⁶²

It is tempting to attribute Jack’s actions to typical teenage rebelliousness, but it is worth considering the compounding impact of his lifestyle on his behavior. Considerable evidence shows that diet and exercise can moderate a person’s emotion and behavior. Dr. Robert Epstein, founder of the Cambridge Center for Behavior Studies and former editor-in-chief of *Psychology Today*, suggests that these and other factors, including excessive restrictions on behavior, may result in the “artificial extension of childhood” into and past puberty.¹⁶³ It is therefore very possible that, as Jack insisted later in life, his sedentary habits and sugar-filled diet still contributed significantly to his truculence, even several years later in his life. At the same time, alternate explanations also need to be considered. Jack’s very short stature probably contributed to his shyness, as might have his unsteady family life (with his father’s intermittent absence and grandfather’s death). He may well have acted out in an attempt to hide or cover that shyness.

¹⁶⁰ Jeannine Stein, “LaLanne Presses on,” *LA Times*, May 24, 1988: V1–2, 6.

¹⁶¹ LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*: 82.

¹⁶² LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

¹⁶³ Robert Epstein, “The Myth of the Teenage Brain,” *Scientific American* 17, 1 June 2007: 59.

Regardless, Jack's behavior did not improve. In 1929, when he was fifteen years old, he found himself once again suspended from school. His mother had, finally, run out of patience with her intractable child. On the recommendation of a neighbor, Jennie took Jack to see health advocate "Professor" Paul C. Bragg lecture at the Oakland Women's City Club Theater in Oakland, who claimed that he knew the secrets of living a happy, health life – and was willing to share them.¹⁶⁴ Jack, obdurate as ever, resisted at first, but eventually he acquiesced. "She was a pretty good salesgirl," Jack remembered.¹⁶⁵ Though neither Jennie nor Jack knew it at the time, that lecture would, indeed, change their lives — and the lives of the millions of people who Jack inspired over the rest of the century.

¹⁶⁴ Paul Bragg, "These Free Health Lectures May Save Your Life (Advertisement)," *Oakland Tribune*, October 6, 1930: 6B.

¹⁶⁵ Andrew Cohen, "Isn't Life Just Great! An Interview with Jack LaLanne," *What Is Enlightenment* (Spring/Summer 1999): 46.

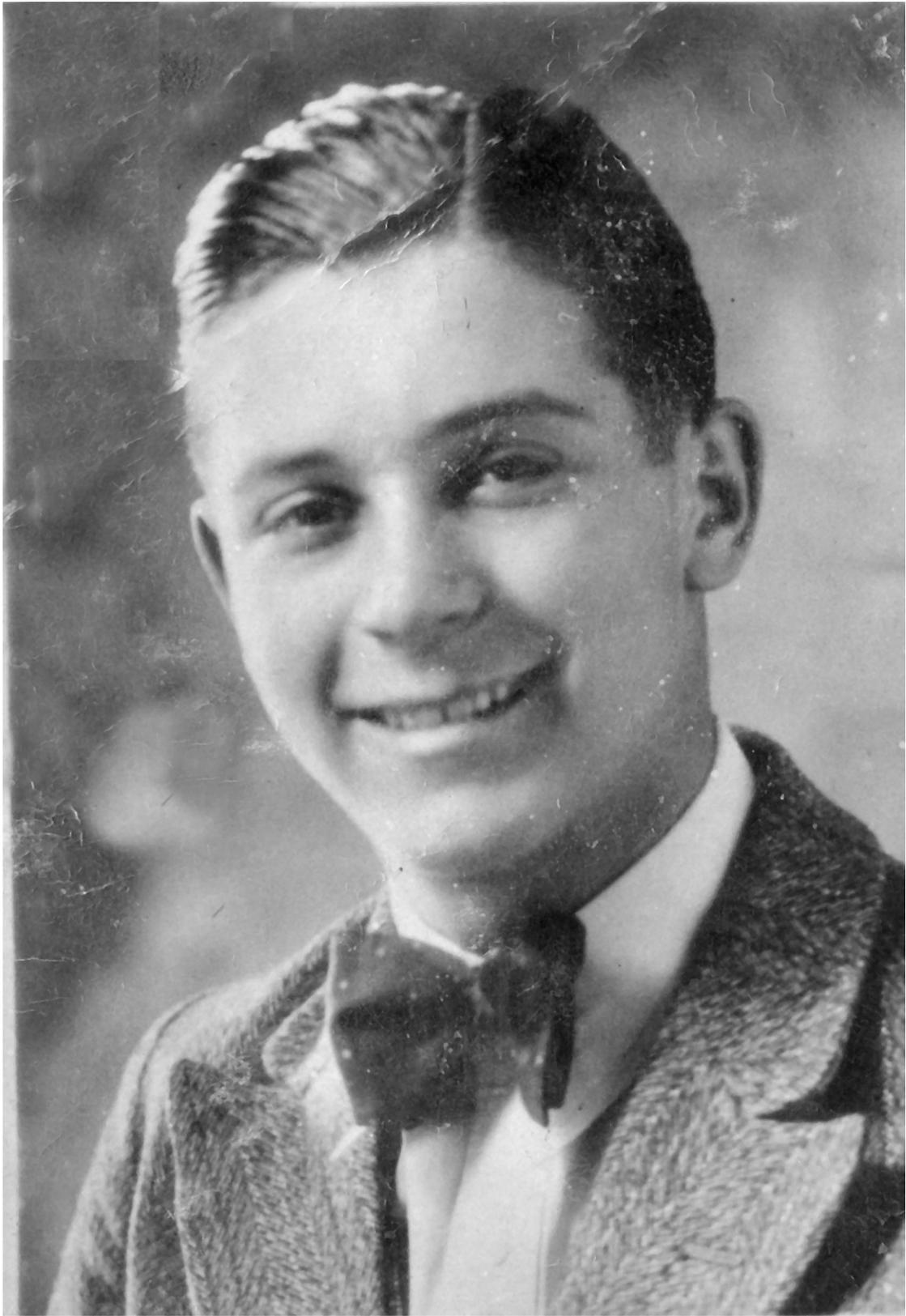


Figure 3. A young Jack LaLanne.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY PHYSICAL CULTURE

If that claim seems bold, one must consider that, in the interwar era, many Americans considered exercise circumspect at best — and dangerous at worst. Indulgence in strenuous physical activity, they believed, could weaken the immune system, the heart, the sexual organs, and lead to mental breakdown.¹⁶⁶ Even as “reducing,” or dieting, became a popular trend – due in part to new streamlined women’s fashions and the influence of Bernarr Macfadden – most men and women who wanted to control their weight focused on diet, not exercise. The American Medical Association cautioned against overexertion; even Dr. Dudley Allen Sargent, the renowned and progressive Harvard physical educator, recommended a sedentary lifestyle for those with cardiac-related ailments.¹⁶⁷ Women especially were especially discouraged from exercise, as it posed “a menace to motherhood,” and therefore risked, according to popular eugenicist theories, the very fate of the nation.¹⁶⁸ Those who wanted to exercise in spite of the notoriety of strenuous physical activity were often stymied by the lack of access to instruction and facilities.¹⁶⁹

And yet, while exercise was far from a universal practice, neither was it a complete anomaly. As historian Harvey Green has argued, people began to exercise in the late 1800s to improve their lives. Physical activity offered an escape from anxieties

¹⁶⁶ James Whorton, “‘Athlete’s Heart’: The Medical Debate over Athleticism, 1870-1920,” *Journal of Sport History* 9, no. 1 (1982): 33–34.

¹⁶⁷ Peter N. Stearns, *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West* (New York University Press, 1997): 104-106; and John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (Hill & Wang, 2001): 2.

¹⁶⁸ Martha Verbrugge, “Gender, Science & Fitness: Perspectives on Women’s Exercise in the United States in the 20th Century,” *Health and History* 4, no. 1 (2002): 52–53.

¹⁶⁹ Benjamin Pollack, “The King of Mail-Order Muscle: Earle Liederman,” n.d.

about health stemming from an increasingly urbanized and modernized culture.¹⁷⁰ Around 1900, this interest in physical activity developed into a trend towards slimming, perhaps driven by American's admiration for the efficiency of new methods in industrialization, mechanization, and mass production. These advancements coincided with the beginning of America's consumer culture, and advertisements that conflated happiness with youth and beauty; the waning of Victorian codes of sexual morality and new dictates in fashion that favored attractive bodies; and a growing faith in science that prescribed practices like calorie-counting in the pursuit of health.¹⁷¹

World War I continued to change cultural standards for diet, exercise, and the body. Rationing taught Americans to limit their use of meat, fats and sugars, and instead eat more fruits, vegetables, and grains – and, importantly, framed the dieter's self-control as patriotic. "Food policy in the United States," declared Food Administrator and future President Herbert Hoover in 1917, would be "based on an entirely different conception from that of Europe.... We should assemble the voluntary effort of the people.... We propose to mobilize the spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice in this country."¹⁷² Furthermore, to support the war effort, some women took jobs outside their homes, performing strenuous physical work; and, after the war, bicycles, consumer photography, and continually progressive fashion trends all furthered the cultural value of a fit body.¹⁷³

170 Harvey Green, *Fit for America: Health, Fitness, Sport, and American Society* (Pantheon, 1986).

171 Addison, *Hollywood and the Rise of Physical Culture*: 10–18; and Roberta Pollack Seid, *Never Too Thin: Why Women Are at War with Their Bodies* (Prentice Hall Press, 1989): 81–83.

172 David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford University Press, 2004): 118.

173 Seid, *Never Too Thin*; and Kimberly Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Illinois University Press, 2008): 144.

Predictably, these cultural patterns were followed by an increase in the sale of dieting books; calorie counting; and fat-busting creams, supplements, and even surgeries. One journalist quipped in 1925 that “Reducing has become a national pastime... a craze, a national fanaticism, a frenzy. People now converse in pounds, ounces, and calories.”¹⁷⁴ Yet, then as now, Americans engaged in excesses that threatened their health and bodies: “Too much smoking, too much drinking, too much worrying, too much working... make a man old before his time,” observed a doctor in 1908.¹⁷⁵ Early health advocates, including Seventh-Day Adventists, often justified abstinence from such excesses with Christian rhetoric. Crusaders like Sylvester Graham, Horace Fletcher, and John Harvey Kellogg conflated physical fitness with spiritual salvation.¹⁷⁶ But others – not health crusaders, but fitness entrepreneurs – saw, in the separation between American desires and habits, a lucrative business opportunity. Men like Bernarr Macfadden, Charles Atlas and even Paul Bragg sold the promise of more attractive, vibrant, active, healthy bodies, along a dizzying array of products and information, to an American public that remained largely ignorant of the benefits, risks, and practices associated with diet and exercise.

Paul Bragg: A Health Food Pioneer

Paul Chappius Bragg has been acclaimed as an author, lecturer, nutritionist, health food purveyor and physical instructor, but he may be known best for introducing Jack

174 Schwartz, *Never Satisfied*: 183.

175 Howard Leichter, “‘Evil Habits’ and ‘Personal Choices’: Assigning Responsibility for Health in the 20th Century,” *Milbank Quarterly* 81, no. 4 (2003): 603–26.

176 Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness: The History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton University Press, 2014).

LaLanne to health and fitness.¹⁷⁷ Bragg was an athletic man, of medium height and build; but strikingly handsome, with deep, dark eyes and a bright smile. By modern standards, his physique lacked muscle and held too much fat, but – like Macfadden – he nevertheless displayed it boldly. Like Macfadden and countless other fitness entrepreneurs, including Jack, Bragg possessed a talent for shameless self-promotion and aggrandizement. Persuasive and passionate, Bragg was a master salesman. As Jack liked to say, Bragg “could sell shoelaces to barefooted people.”¹⁷⁸

Of course, he claimed to have suffered from an unhealthy childhood, but Bragg’s autobiography strays very far from the facts, even when compared to the exaggerated tales of other fitness entrepreneurs. In several books and interviews later in his life, Bragg claimed he was born in 1881, in Fairfax County, Virginia, just a few miles from the nation’s Capitol.¹⁷⁹ There his parents raised him on a “typical southern diet” of fried foods, fatty meats, and heavy pastries. He slept too much and exercised too little. He suffered “every known childhood disease:”

I was a hopeless invalid, doomed to death... From birth I suffered from chronic catarrh and asthma... at one time my left breast almost caved in. Constipation poisoned my blood stream [*sic*] to such an extent that I was practically blind in the left eye, and for days could not see out of either eye. At twenty I was thirty-five pounds underweight and so crippled with rheumatism that at times I could hardly walk.¹⁸⁰

177 “Paul Bragg, N.D., Ph.D., Lifestyle Extension Specialist, Health Crusader,” accessed online at <http://bragg.com/about/paul.html> on March 9, 2016.

178 Christine Gustafson, “Jack LaLanne: Fitness Immortal,” *San Luis Obispo Country Telegram-Tribune*, September 30, 1994: n.p.

179 Anthony K. Roberts, “Dr. Paul Bragg, 94, Turns the Actuarial Tables: ‘I Have an Ageless, Tireless, Painless Body,’” *People* 4, no. 6 (August 11, 1975).

180 Paul Bragg, *Cure Yourself* (self-published, 1929): 13.

At 16, he contracted tuberculosis, and doctors told him he had no hope for survival.

“They put me in a small, dark room and told me to lie there until I died,” he said.¹⁸¹

Rejecting their wholly unhelpful advice, Bragg claimed that he decided to instead travel to Dr. August Rollier’s Sanitarium in Leysen, Switzerland. Rollier was one of the first to popularize “heliotherapy,” a method of treating various diseases by exposing a patient to gradually increasing amounts of sunlight. He opened “solaria,” buildings with south-facing balconies designed to maximize exposure to the sun’s rays. Rollier’s patients sunbathed on the balconies, under the cool air of the Swiss mountains, for several weeks; and they followed a strict regimen of fasting, exercise, and natural foods. Some recovered.¹⁸²

Under Rollier’s care, Bragg said, he conquered consumption. “In 2 short years I was transformed from a bed-ridden invalid to a strong, healthy, young man,” he wrote.¹⁸³ Inspired by Rollier and by his own seemingly miraculous recovery, Bragg launched his own health career. Over the next twelve years, he often said in interviews, he earned two doctorates; wrestled in both the London and Stockholm Olympic Games, in 1908 and 1912; and opened his (and America’s) first health food store.

In reality, however, genealogical records show Bragg was born on 6 February 1895, in Batesville, Indiana.¹⁸⁴ His father, Robert Elton Bragg, published the *Catholic Herald* in Batesville, but did not own the paper; and by 1900 he had taken another

181 Paul Bragg and Patricia Bragg, *The Miracle of Fasting: Proven Throughout History* (Health Science, 1976): 33, 76.

182 Elena Conis, “The Rise and Fall of Sunlight Therapy,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 2007.

183 Bragg, *The Miracle of Fasting*, 143.

184 Draft registration card for Paul C. Bragg, 5 June 1917.

printing job with the U.S. government, in Washington, D.C.¹⁸⁵ Paul himself worked as a life insurance salesman until at least 1917, and then as director of a YMCA.¹⁸⁶ His academic achievement consisted not of two doctorates, but, rather, a single year of high school. Amateur historian and alternative medicine advocate Wade Frazier has investigated Bragg's claims at length, and doubts that Bragg ever contracted tuberculosis, resided at Rollier's Sanitarium, or competed in any Olympiad.¹⁸⁷

What can be verified about Bragg's "credentials" is that, besides his work with the YMCA, Bragg served as a physical training instructor for the Northwestern Military and Naval Academy in Chicago and in New York City public schools. He earned the rank of captain in the National Guard; and wrestled successfully at an amateur level.¹⁸⁸ In 1921 Bragg moved to Los Angeles, again working for the YMCA; and wrestling and boxing at various levels.¹⁸⁹ Three years later, in July 1924, he began offering free lessons in physical culture, under the *nom de guerre* "Health Food Products Co."¹⁹⁰ By 1926 he had opened the "Health Center of Los Angeles," where he served as "Chief Clinician," and claimed to treat a wide variety of diseases, from ulcers to paralysis, and included endorsements from Bernarr Macfadden in his advertisements.¹⁹¹ In 1929, he began

185 "Protestant Knights," *Batesville Tribune*, 17 January 1895: 4; and United States Department of Commerce, "Twelfth Census of the United States" for the District of Columbia, on 5 June 1900: B10.

186 United States Department of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the United States" for Maryland, Frederick County, on 15 January 1920: 16B; and draft registration card for Paul C. Bragg.

187 Wade Frazier, "Paul Bragg's Tarnished Legacy," accessed online http://ahealedplanet.net/bragg.htm#_edn2 on 9 March 2016.

188 "Praises Local School System," *Boone County Progressive*, 27 August 1914: 9.

189 "'Y' Announces New Courses, Teachers," *Los Angeles Times*, 28 September 1921: H12; "Jackie Sherman Boxes Young Jarga," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 March 1924: E13; and "Club Notes," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 December 1929: E11.

190 "Prof. Paul Bragg" [advertisement], *Los Angeles Times*, 20 July 1924: I30.

191 Paul Bragg, "Health Center Newslets," *Los Angeles Times*, 19 December 1926: K27. Macfadden and Bragg likely had some sort of professional relationship, as in 1937, Bragg acknowledged Macfadden as his inspiration for entering the physical culture industry. See "Dynamic Lecturer," P.C. Hotel Pictorial, from the H.J. Lutchter Stark Center at the University Texas at Austin.

travelling to major metropolitan areas across the United States to give public lectures, bringing his business to a significantly wider audience.

Bragg's work as a life insurance salesman may explain some of the motivation behind that lecture circuit. Since the 19th century, life insurance agents had preyed on working-class customers, "presenting themselves first as angels of mercy, next as emissaries of a lost community in an unfeeling world, finally as hard-nosed ministers from the Church of Thrift," according to historian Hillel Schwartz.¹⁹² Bragg therefore would have been familiar with the rhetorical strategies of persuasion so often relied upon by health crusaders like Macfadden before him, and LaLanne after. It seems likely that he used the lectures as some sort of sales opportunity. Though no historical evidence directly proves that they were merely bait for guileless victims, in 1935, he was arrested for violating the "healing arts practice act," of Washington, D.C., and for selling "powdered compounds... containing drugs." The verdict of that case, unfortunately, remains unknown.¹⁹³

Regardless of Bragg's personal history and legal standing, his message of health generated an enthusiastic following.¹⁹⁴ Like Macfadden, Bragg professed that modernity caused disease, and that man was better off without processed foods and crowded cities. His message resonated with an American public often discomfited by the rapidly-changing pace of life in an increasingly industrialized nation. In his first published book,

192 Schwartz, *Never Satisfied*: 153.

193 "'Healer' In Court, Cancels Lectures," *The Washington Post*, 26 April 1935: 13; "Compounds Evidence in Healing Arts Case," *The Washington Post*, 30 April 1935: 3; "Bragg Denies Violation of Healing Arts Act," *The Washington Post*, 1 May 1935: 2; and "Arguments Commence in Bragg Trial," *The Washington Post*, 2 May 1935: 30.

194 "Outrageous Arrest," *The Washington Post*, 6 May 1935: 8. Furthermore, Bragg's decision to relinquish his position with the YMCA indicates that his lectures probably earned quite a bit of money, and therefore would have had to attract a large audience.

Cure Yourself, Bragg prescribed a five-point cure for the ills of modernity: diet, exercise, deep breathing, plenty of sunlight, and fasting.¹⁹⁵ Bragg's ideal diet consisted entirely of fruit and vegetables, and expressly and emphatically forbade flour, sugar, vinegar, eggs, rice, condiments, spicy food, cereal, soft drinks, milk, and chocolate. One should exercise daily, performing stretches, leg raises, and jumping jacks (though Bragg did not use that term – and no, the jumping jack is not named for Jack LaLanne, but for a nineteenth-century children's toy.) He suggested sunbathing, nude, beginning with ten minutes per day and gradually increasing that amount up to an hour over the course of two weeks. If all else failed, Bragg wrote, one should fast, for up to seven days at a time. "You may expect weakness, dizziness, nausea, depression, despondency, rapid loss of weight, headache, nose bleed, nervousness, and cold hands and cold feet during the fast. These symptoms are all indicative of impurities in the blood stream and will pass away as soon as the fast is stopped," he reassured readers.¹⁹⁶ By following these simple rules, Bragg claimed, one could avoid a terrible future, conquer modern life and enjoy youthful energy forever.

CONCLUSION: "REBORN AGAIN"

This was the promise Bragg made to the Oakland City Women's Club, and Jack clung to that promise desperately. It was 1929, and Jack was an anxious 15-year-old, filled with too much sugar and self-doubt. His stubbornness and misbehavior had caused him to be held back in school, and he fit in poorly with his younger, presumably better-

¹⁹⁵ Bragg, *Cure Yourself*, 56.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.

behaved classmates. Jack desperately needed a hero, and tall, athletic Bragg fit the bill perfectly.

Jack and Jennie arrived late to the lecture. “There were no seats available so we started to leave,” Jack said, “and [Bragg] saw us and said, ‘Lady with the boy, we don’t turn anybody away! Ushers, bring two seats and put them up on the stage!’”¹⁹⁷ Jack was mortified. “Here I was, this reclusive kid, about 30 pounds underweight, with pimples and boils, wearing glasses and shoulder braces,” he said. Jack’s physical situation may not have been nearly as grim as he painted it to be; but few teenage boys would *not* be embarrassed to be singled out for attending a women’s club lecture with his mother. Bragg hardly noticed; his vibrant style quickly overshadowed Jack’s embarrassment. He paced the stage, forceful and dynamic, shouting and singing the praises of natural foods, fresh air, and exercise. *Anyone* could be healthy and strong, Bragg said, if they would just change their ways!

Jack grew enthralled. "That's what I wanted! I wanted to be an athlete, I wanted the girls to like me, and I wanted to be able to get good grades in school, and this man said I could do all that," he said excitedly. "I was told that by exercising and eating properly, I could have a brand new body. And boy... did I ever want one!"¹⁹⁸ After the lecture, Jack spoke privately with Bragg for over an hour. He lived on cakes, pies, and ice cream for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Jack explained, yet his life was anything but sweet. “Jack, you’re a walking garbage can,” Bragg replied. He told the teen what he told everyone: to cut out the desserts and start eating fruits and vegetables – sound advice,

¹⁹⁷ Cohen, “Isn’t Life Just Great! An Interview with Jack LaLanne.”

¹⁹⁸ Dunheim, “Jack LaLanne.”

even today. Jack took that advice to heart, and, by all accounts, he never again touched a slice of pie, scoop of ice cream, or any other dessert; nor did he ever drink another cup of coffee or tea.

Even at the time, Jack realized that his meeting with Bragg was a turning point, a new beginning. “I made up my mind that I was going to get my act together,” he said. “I discontinued all white flour, white sugar products, all man-emasculated foods, and went strictly vegetarian for a matter of years.”¹⁹⁹ In five days’ time — reminiscent, perhaps, of Christ’s resurrection, an allusion he never discouraged — Jack felt “reborn again.”²⁰⁰ His pimples and headaches disappeared, his focus improved, and he felt, for once in his life, strong — capable of *achieving* something.

Jack’s “conversion” to healthful eating was probably much less dramatic than he claimed. In fact, in one of Jack’s first published books, *Foods for Glamour*, he admits that any substantial changes in his life occurred over a period of years, not days. But the transformation *seemed* dramatic. Jack’s tumultuous familial situation – his father’s struggles with alcoholism, his grandfather’s death, and the LaLanne’s frequent travel – compounded with his ill health, hyperactivity, and typical teenage angst all contributed to unchecked misbehavior and insecurity. It is not surprising that he would find comfort in Bragg’s promise that, just by eating healthfully and exercising, he could gain some control over his life, maybe even grow to look like Bragg and possess that same confidence and bravado. Many other members of the audience would have been attracted

¹⁹⁹ Andrew Berg, “Building the Perfect Beast,” *Detour*, April 1997: 60.

²⁰⁰ The redundancy of this phrase apparently never occurred to Jack, as he repeated it time and again in interviews.

to Bragg's business for that selfsame reason, but they were not impressionable teenage boys like Jack was.

Over the next decade, however, Jack's wholehearted embrace of diet and exercise did truly transform his body and his life. He outgrew the diffidence of early adolescence to become a star athlete, and, soon thereafter, a young and successful businessman. Though he never gained an appreciation for formal education, nor obeying the rules, he soon began to teach students of his own, when he founded one of the first commercial gyms in the United States. In doing so, he slowly cast aside his personal health crusade and took up the life of a fitness entrepreneur, all the while fighting viciously against the misconceptions about physical culture that discouraged so many others from exercising.

Ultimately, Jack's childhood story as he tells it aligns closely with the archetypal fitness entrepreneur biography: a sickly, skinny child overcame his illness and poverty by teaching himself the secrets of physical culture. That life experience served as Jack's resume of sorts, when he later sold those secrets to an audience desperate to make their own equally dramatic transformations. However, in reality, Jack's childhood contained pieces both brighter and darker than did the tale he told to the media. Furthermore, the "secrets" of diet and exercise he sold were not secret at all: they had been told for decades before, by men like Paul Bragg and Bernarr Macfadden. Despite all this, Jack's story is remarkable because he, among all of Bragg's customers, eventually built a multimillion-dollar fitness empire by bringing that promise to the entire nation through the exciting new medium of television.

Chapter 2: The Business Begins

Today, in Oakland, California, at 409 15th Street, there stands a grey, concrete building, sandwiched between Lincoln University and the Ferns Hotel. The building appears abandoned, and glooms dirtily over the street: windows barred, and face adorned with graffiti of varying artistic effort. Few would linger around 409 15th Street after dark, and even fewer would guess at the building's past glamour.

But eight decades ago, in 1936, during the depths of the Great Depression, 409 15th Street positively gleamed with beauty. It boasted clean, white walls that shone with bright, overhead lighting. The floors were paneled with hardwood, and inset with tile. Potted plants and mirrors adorned the walls. And the third floor? The third floor held a gym, one unlike any the city had ever seen before, with racks and racks of dumbbells and fixed-weight barbells stretching the length of the building; dipping stands; a pulley system; several adjustable benches; and a gymnastic mat for stunts and handbalancing filling its center. The corner office was, quite deliberately, the most ostentatious feature of the place: wallpapered in a zebra print, and tastefully decorated with modern furniture, a custom-made desk, and trophies and photographs.²⁰¹

The third floor of 409 15th housed Jack LaLanne's Physical Culture Studio, and it became a fixture in the lives of businessmen, housewives, and schoolchildren throughout the city. Everyone seemed to love Jack – except, maybe, the second-floor tenants of 409 15th subjugated to the near-constant banging of weights – and his clients trusted their health crusader not only with their bodies, but their hopes, and dreams, and fears. “I was

²⁰¹ The description in this paragraph comes from photographs in the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Oakland Gym.” The exact date of the gym's opening remains unknown; as will be explained, LaLanne started in 1936 two blocks north, on Telegraph Avenue, and sometime thereafter moved the gym to 15th Street.

their confidant and these people loved me for it,” Jack explained, because they, too, wanted to transform their lives the way he had.²⁰²

But that transformation was a much longer, much more harrowing process than Jack made it seem later in his life, in his countless interviews and media appearances. Beginning at the age of 15, he struggled, for five long years, to learn how to diet and exercise properly. Then, while still in high school, he built for himself a formidable athletic reputation; but unfortunate circumstances marred both his sporting aspirations and his first foray into business. It was not until near the end of the 1930s that Jack found for himself a relatively secure place in the world of fitness. This chapter chronicles his evolution.

JACK’S EDUCATION IN PHYSICAL CULTURE

Jack left Paul Bragg’s lecture full of hope mixed with trepidation. Despite their heartfelt talk, Jack remained staunchly unhealthy and unimpressive; “a human derelict,” according to a lecture he once gave on *The Jack LaLanne Show*. “Picture this,” he told viewers:

I was wearing glasses, they had special shoes built for me ‘cause my feet were flat. They had special shoulder bracers for me to keep my shoulders back. I had pimples and boils, and I was about 40 or 50 pounds underweight.... I followed [Paul Bragg’s] teachings, and in six weeks’ time, my face cleared up like magic, I threw my glasses off, my arch supports came off, the shoulder braces, I threw those away. I was a different person.... I was reborn again.²⁰³

202 “Jack LaLanne’s 30 Day Fitness Plan,” *Executive Fitness* (May 1988): 5. This chapter will show that this strategy brought Jack much success, and is used by many personal trainers today.

203 Jack LaLanne, *The Jack LaLanne Show*, Episode 65, from the LaLanne collection digital archive, file named “jll065.wmv.”

In that single word – “reborn” – Jack captured the essence of what health and fitness meant to him: a new beginning and sense of control in life. He was, of course, not actually reborn; and nor did he suffer from horribly debilitating maladies, but rather from the typical physical woes of puberty, perhaps exacerbated by his poor diet. His return to good health took years, not weeks, to complete, and understandably so, for besides the few short hours he had spent in Bragg’s company, Jack had had no guidance on healthful eating or on exercise. But the tall tale of his transformation conveys so powerfully his ardent devotion to health and fitness that, to Jack, it *felt* true. It was with the unwavering confidence of an apostle that 15-year-old Jack embarked on a health crusade to change his life.

At the lecture he delivered to the Oakland Women’s Club, Bragg preached the benefits of strict vegetarianism, and his mother Jennie had given up meat several years earlier, so naturally, Jack began his journey there, by eliminating all meats from his diet. The history of vegetarianism as a practice can be traced back to as early as 600 B.C.; it has, since then, been linked with moral imperatives, perhaps most notably in the Hindu religion, but also in certain Judeo-Christian sects.²⁰⁴ By the 1920s, explains historian James Whorton, “almost all” people recognized the importance of vegetables (not vegetarianism) to good health, and food educators “bombarded” the media with persuasive messages to that effect; given his age and Seventh-Day Adventist upbringing,

²⁰⁴ Colin Spencer, *The Heretic’s Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (University Press of New England, 1996): x-xi, 78; and Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: A History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (W.W. Norton, 2006): 4-5.

Jack was quite familiar with the practice of vegetarianism before listening to Bragg's speech.²⁰⁵

But Bragg had explained that he favored an even more stringent diet: a vegan one, which did away with animal products entirely, and strictly limited even grains and added fats. "The ideal diet for mankind, undoubtedly, is the exclusive fruit diet," he said but, for practicality's sake, one should take both fruit and vegetables.²⁰⁶ Bragg cautioned against eliminating popular foods (like meat and grains) from the diet too quickly, in order to prevent an adverse reaction from the digestive tract, but Jack's enthusiasm and zeal precluded him from taking such careful advice. Predictably, his body rebelled at his radical new diet and enormous influx of fiber. "I was 'purifying' even the Spartan plan Paul Bragg recommended... I was always bloated and sleepy. Frequently I had gas pains far worse than the headaches," he complained. "I was a victim of the worst sort of health faddism."²⁰⁷ Classmates began to poke fun at his indigestion instead of his acne.

Yet the taunting did not seem to matter quite as much to a young man who had, after hearing Bragg's words of inspiration, found himself a purpose in life. From the age of 15 until the day he died, he remained steadfast in his health goals, and no amount of naysaying could deter him. Jack never explained why his health and fitness regimen allowed him to so totally conquer his teenage insecurities. When asked, years later, he

205 James C. Whorton, "Historical Development of Vegetarianism," *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 59, no. 5 (May 1994): 1103S-1109S.

206 Paul Bragg, *Cure Yourself* (National Diet and Health Association of America, 1929): 78. The "National Diet and Health Association of America" was very probably an invention of Bragg's; the book was self-published, as was common for physical culture authors at the time.

207 Jack LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour* (Prentice-Hall, 1961): 89. To clarify, to Jack, the "worst" of faddism meant extremism. Although he himself certainly went to extreme measures in his quest for health and fitness, he did later in his career always recommend a moderate approach to his mainstream audience.

responded rhetorically: “If something saved your life, would you be enthusiastic about it?... After that lecture, I went home that night and I went strict vegetarian – cut out all white flour, all white sugar products... and the rest is history, just like that.”²⁰⁸ If Jack’s explanation seems somewhat disjointed, it may be because, in the early twentieth century, so was physical culture itself. Because it largely lacked academic or professional formality, those who would study the topic could often only turn to the knowledge available through word of mouth, popular publications, and personal experience: a wandering, fragmented education.²⁰⁹

208 Antonia Venezia, “The Jack LaLanne Interview,” *ALIVE* (March 2007): n.p.

209 Terry Todd, “The History of Resistance Exercise and Its Role in United States Education,” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1966), 195-199; and Jason Paul Shurley, “Strength for Sport: The Development of the Professional Strength and Conditioning Coach” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2013), especially chapters 1 & 2, 20-131. Some exceptions to the statement in the main text did exist; perhaps the most notable was Harvard College, which employed Dudley Allen Sargent as a professor of physical training.



Figure 4. Jack at age 15. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (1929).

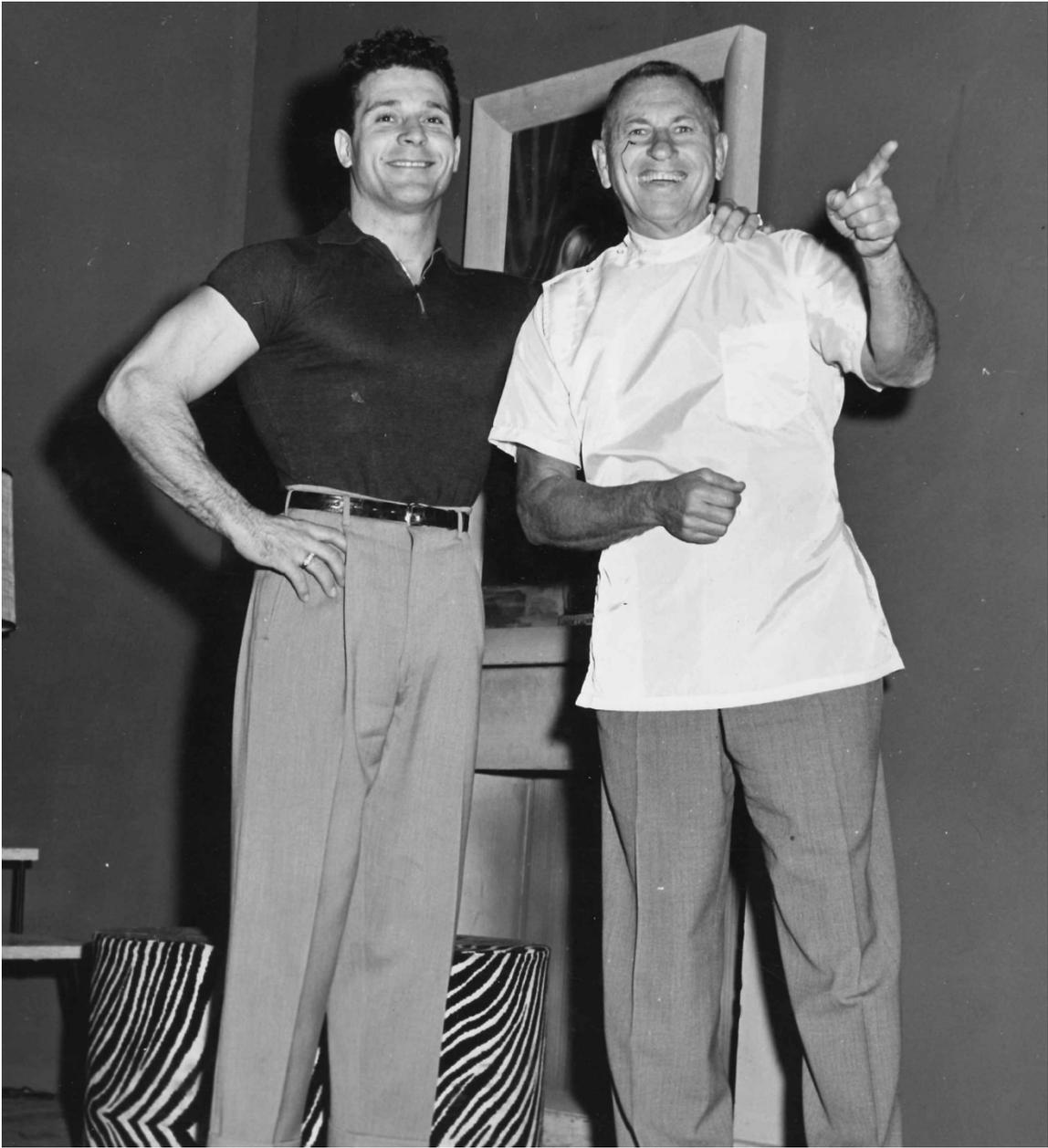


Figure 5. Jack with his early inspiration, Paul Bragg. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (1951).

Physical Culture Literature

Unsatisfied with his strict vegetarianism and its consequences, but convinced that he was on the right track, Jack next began to seek council from “muscle magazines,” like Macfadden’s *Physical Culture*. These periodicals offered a wide range of information about healthful practices to an American population that, for the most part, remained largely ignorant to such topics, and the ideas Jack found in the pages of *Physical Culture* inspired him.²¹⁰ Macfadden promoted imitation with an evangelical, even fanatical zeal in his magazine, encouraging readers to eat like he did, exercise like he did, and buy the myriad of products he sold.²¹¹ As a result, Macfadden garnered a certain degree of fame as a fitness entrepreneur of the 1920s, and a huge fortune: by 1931, he was worth more than \$30 million.²¹²

The actual information in *Physical Culture*, however, should be considered circumspect. Macfadden, after all, had allegedly inspired Bragg’s teachings, and their advice shared some extreme views. “Part diatribe against medical doctors, part instruction in calisthenics and nutrition, part mouthpiece for a growing national interest in exercise... [and] part pornography,” *Physical Culture* contained no small degree of what

210 LaLanne, *Foods For Glamour*, 90. While it is true that the general awareness of physical culture had increased in the past half-century – thanks to the Muscular Christianity movement, the popularity of performers like strongman Eugen Sandow, organizations like the YMCA, – enthusiasts like Macfadden were rarely portrayed as part of mainstream American culture. As an example of the deficiency in popular understanding about fitness, consider that, in the 1930s, many still embraced racially-charged pseudosciences like eugenics and phrenology as credible theories to address the nation’s health. See the Introduction, as well as Susan Currell, *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Ohio University Press, 2006); Patricia Vertinski, “Embodying Normalcy: Anthropometry and the Long Arm of William H. Sheldon’s Somatotyping Project,” *Journal of Sport History* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 95-133; and Arthur Wrobel, *Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America* (University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

211 Ann Fabian, “Making a Commodity of Truth: Speculations on the Career of Bernarr Macfadden,” *American Literary History* 5, no. 1 (1993): 54.

212 Robert Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime: The Life of Bernarr Macfadden* (Syracuse University Press, 1991): 88. It should be noted that MacFadden’s fortune came from his entire extensive publishing empire, not just his physical culture publications, but he built that empire beginning with *Physical Culture*.

critics of the time called “quackery.”²¹³ In one 1929 article titled “How Foods Fight Off Disease,” the “nutrition editor” of *Physical Culture*, Milo Hastings, suggested that a healthful diet would be far more effective at combating disease than “any schemes of vaccines and antitoxins or of the administration of drugs foreign to the human body” that a doctor might dispense.²¹⁴ In another article, Bernarr Macfadden advised eating only one type of food at each meal. For a month, he claimed, he ate nothing but fresh, stringless beans for breakfast and brown rice with honey for supper.²¹⁵ In “How I Cured My Sick Headaches” – an article that surely would have caught poor Jack’s attention – Loraine Dell Crawford explained that, instead of taking the medicine her doctor had prescribed, she fasted on orange and grapefruit juice for at least a week.²¹⁶

Commingled with all of this questionable guidance was sensible information in healthful eating and exercise. Crawford’s article suggested gradually transitioning from a fruit-juice fast to a diet full of vegetables, milk, and whole grains, and regular exercise: exactly what the United States government recommends today.²¹⁷ And in 1930, Daniel Mann bemoaned the lack of physical education in both public and private schools. He denounced the practices of

loading the student up with such tremendous lesson assignments and home work every day that he has... hardly any provision of a proportionate amount of recreation, release, and active play. By such a system it is possible to stuff a great

213 Greg Mullins, “Nudes, Prudes, and Pigmies: The Desirability of Disavowal in ‘Physical Culture’,” *Discourse* 15, no. 1 (1992): 28; and Donald J. Mrozek, “The Scientific Quest for Physical Culture and the Persistent Appeal of Quackery,” *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 1 (1987): 76-86.

214 Milo Hastings, “How Foods Fight Off Disease: Can You Insure Yourself Against Illness by Right Eating?” *Physical Culture* 62, no. 3 (September 1929): 70.

215 Bernarr Macfadden, “Vitalize With the Mono-Diet,” *Physical Culture* 63, no. 6 (June 1930): 17.

216 Loraine Dell Crawford, “How I Cured My Sick Headaches,” *Physical Culture* 62, no. 5 (November 1929): 51, 114-115.

217 *Ibid.*

deal of indigestible fact and great masses of book-learning divorced from any application to life into a youngster's mind... But to call it education is a joke. Yet that high pressure method of mental cramming is prevalent in "efficiently" run schools.

Though some – very few – schools offered physical education programs even in the later days of the nineteenth century, physical education would not become a standard facet of public-school curriculum until after World War II.²¹⁸ Thus, while Jack was misled by much of the information in the magazine, he would also have gleaned from it some very progressive insights. The rather daunting task facing him required separating the proverbial wheat from chaff.

A few years later, in 1932, that task grew even more formidable, when Jack added another physical culture magazine to his reading list: *Strength & Health*, fitness entrepreneur Bob Hoffman's second foray into the muscle business after opening the York Barbell Company in 1929. Hoffman, like Jack, invested himself fully in his pursuit of — well, of strength and health. He championed fitness and "functional" strength as patriotic ideals; promoted weight training for athletic improvement; and ultimately made millions by selling his ideas and products to a broad audience.²¹⁹ For these reasons, Hoffman quickly became a pivotal figure Jack's life and career.

218 James Holzknicht, *History of Physical Education in the United States* (Castalia Media, 2005); and Richard Albin Swanson and Betty Mary Spears, *History of Sport and Physical Education in the United States* (Brown & Benchmark, 1995). For more on the early history of physical education in America, see Todd, "The History of Resistance Exercise;" Roberta J. Park, "'Taking Their Measure' in Play, Games, and Physical Training: The American Scene, 1870s to World War I," *Journal of Sport History* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 193-217; Patricia Vertinski, "'Weighs and Means': Examining the Surveillance of Fat Bodies through Physical Education Practices in North America in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Sport History* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 449-463; and Ellen W. Gerber, *Innovators and Institutions in Physical Education* (Lea & Febiger, 1971). The topic is well-researched and many, many more works could be listed here if space allowed.

219 For more on Hoffman, see the Introduction to this dissertation, especially John D. Fair, *Muscle-town USA: Bob Hoffman and the Manly Culture of York Barbell* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

Strength & Health, like *Physical Culture*, contained some misinformation about its title topics. In particular, several authors insisted upon the delicacy of the “vital organs,” which needed rest after exercise and would benefit from increased musculature. According to one article, for example, “a stomach as strong and healthy as it should be, will digest anything.”²²⁰ Hoffman’s unstoppably colossal ego contributed to the some of the other sorts of misinformation in *Strength & Health*. So sure was his confidence in himself and his physical culture lifestyle that he insisted that was the very key to happiness. “You need not have worries about the future when you are strong and healthy,” he wrote. “I am sure that the following of the simple, result-producing advice [his book, in *How to Be Strong, Healthy and Happy*] contains will bring lifelong strength, Health and Happiness to you.”²²¹ Hoffman also embellished stories of his own youth and athletic accomplishments.²²² While certainly uplifting, these types of articles marginalized the importance of a balanced lifestyle – and decades later, Jack’s own advice and behavior echoed many of Hoffman’s exaggerations, excesses and saccharine assurances.

But Hoffman’s magazine also contained much information still considered credible today, probably more than did Macfadden’s, and clearly influenced Jack’s physical culture philosophies in a positive way. In fact, many of ideas Jack pushed to the American public with his physical culture studio and television show could have been

220 Larry Campbell, “What You Should Know,” *Strength & Health* (May 1933): 15. Digestive health was a popular topic in the early twentieth century, and, while exercise can improve digestion, Campbell obviously oversteps. For more, see James C. Whorton, *Inner Hygiene: Constipation and the Pursuit of Health in Modern Society* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

221 Morais, “Strength in Numbers,” 50. As the introduction to this dissertation states, many other fitness entrepreneurs possessed seemingly boundless egos as well.

222 Terry Todd, “Remembering Bob Hoffman,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 20.

pulled virtually verbatim from the articles in the earliest years of *Strength & Health*. In the very first issue, Hoffman wrote an article titled “How to Improve at Your Chosen Sport,” which explained that “strength, speed, endurance, coordination and other important qualities required by successful athletes can better be obtained with the bar bell and dumb-bell than in any other way,” and that a growing number of successful physical trainers and athletic coaches already recognized such as fact.²²³ Desire, dedication, and discipline, professed Hoffman, contributed more to success than stature or natural ability; and any successful physical culturist must be prepared to face — and persist despite — ridicule.²²⁴ Qualified personal instructors, he claimed, were products of their own teachings, and took personal interest in the success of their students.²²⁵ Jack later claimed credit for pioneering all of these ideas – about training for athletic benefits, the necessity of discipline, and the impact of careful personal instruction – but because *Strength & Health* began so shortly after Jack started studying physical culture, it is impossible to really prove whether Jack took his fitness philosophies from the magazine, or discovered them himself.

Many other muscle magazines existed in the 1920s, and Jack read some of those, too. Since the turn of the century, *Strength* (which merged with *Correct Eating* in 1930), *Iron Man*, *The Amateur Athlete*, and at least 40 more periodicals had debuted on

223 Bob Hoffman, “How to Improve at Your Chosen Sport,” *Strength & Health* 1, no. 1 (December 1932): 6.

224 Bob Hoffman, “Your Physical Possibilities,” *Strength & Health* 1, no. 9 (August 1933): 6–7.

225 Bob Hoffman, “The Advantage of Qualified Personal Instruction,” *Strength & Health* 1, no. 12 (November 1933): 8–11, 30; and Bob Hoffman, “Individual Training,” *Strength & Health* 1, no. 10 (September 1933): 6–8.

newsstands.²²⁶ Compared to *Physical Culture* and *Strength & Health*, though, these magazines enjoyed lower circulation and less appeal; even *Strength*, the magazine that pioneered the idea of progressive resistance training in America, had by 1930 relegated itself to “the realm of general physical culture.”²²⁷ Furthermore, most vendors only carried *Strength & Health*; the other periodicals were distributed mainly on a subscription basis.²²⁸ Regardless, all contained articles that, from a modern perspective, reached across of spectrum of credibility, from ludicrous to dubious to surprisingly tenable.

Jack spent his teenage years separating fact from fallacy in the physical culture literature. The possibilities for how to exercise and what to eat seemed endless, and overwhelming. “For five long years I lived as a vegetarian,” he lamented, eating no meat, fish, chicken or even dairy, and he suffered for lack of protein.²²⁹ Then he invested in all sorts of snake oils: boiled grapefruit rinds, desiccated liver tablets, and quarts of vegetable juices. Eventually, through painstaking trial and error he learned that he needed more protein, and so he began to drink milk and eat eggs. He began juicing, too – not using steroids, of course, but actually squeezing and drinking the juice from celery and carrots, and found that the extra nutrients helped him recover more quickly from exercise.

Nearly a century later, millions of Americans recognize Jack for the infomercials in which he and his future wife, Elaine, touted the benefits of juice and electric juicers.

226 Andy Kosar and Jan Todd, “Physical Fitness Magazine: Why Did It Fail?” *Iron Game History* 5, no. 3 (December 1998): 8. For an extensive list, see Jan Todd, Joe Roark, and Terry Todd, “A Briefly Annotated Bibliography of English Language Serial Publications in the Field of Physical Culture,” *Iron Game History* 1, no. 4&5 (March 1991): 25-40.

227 Kimberley Beckwith and Jan Todd, “Strength, America’s First Muscle Magazine: 1914-1935,” *Iron Game History* 9, no. 1 (August 2005): 25.

228 Dominic Morais, “Strength in Numbers: Strength & Health Brand Community from 1932-1964,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Texas, 2015): 31; see also Intro Note 16, “Newsstand 1926,” from “The Collidge Era and the Consumer Economy, 1921-1929” (Library of Congress, 1995), accessed online at <http://lcweb2.loc.gov:8081/ammem/amrlhtml/inmenu.html>.

229 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*, 89.

And many budding exercise enthusiasts cut their teeth exactly as Jack had: buying a muscle magazine at the supermarket checkout, and following its advice haphazardly, hoping to stumble upon the secrets of a great physique. “I had no scientific training for what I was doing,” Jack admitted, but later, when his television show began airing in the 1950s, he realized that his practical education in physical culture would not instill much confidence in an American audience that placed an unprecedented amount of faith in science and formal, “expert” knowledge in fields like medicine and psychology. Today, organizations like the National Strength and Conditioning Association confer certifications to qualified individuals as proof of their competency, but in the 1930s, ‘40s, and ‘50s, Jack had no such authority to which he could turn. Nevertheless, it is evident that, even in his teenage years, Jack practiced many modern healthful habits – but he did not invent them.

So, as an adult, he adapted his personal narrative for the media, emphasizing his interest in the scientific method and unwaveringly crediting *Gray’s Anatomy* – not *Physical Culture* or *Strength & Health* – as his guidebook. “*Grey’s Anatomy* [sic] was my Bible,” he said, time and again, on his show, in his writing, during interviews.²³⁰ It was implied that Jack had derived the most efficacious exercises for particular body parts, as well as the most nutritious foods for overall good health, from the information he gleaned from *Gray’s Anatomy*. He also implicitly borrowed on the reputation of the well-

230 Deborah Manfredini, “Famed ‘Charlatan’ Fitness Guru Comes to Sherwood,” *Sherwood Voice*, n.d. For an example of Jack’s alleged interest in science, consider a segment of The Jack LaLanne Show, where he tells viewers: “I’m kind of interested in how things first started — the first automobile, the first airplane. Why we have made such wonderful progress is because people have used and improved on modern ideas. They’ve taken an idea, a new idea, they’ve put it into practice, then people have come along and improved on that idea.” Jack goes on to compare his self-education in physical culture to the inventions of the automobile and airplane. See The Jack LaLanne Show, Episode 116, from the LaLanne collection digital archive, file named “jll116.wmv.”

known to me, rightly assuming that his audience would associate him with others who studied *Gray's*: doctors, physical therapists, and other knowledgeable authority figures. And, after all, it was only natural for Jack to seek out any sort of professional text on the topic, exhausted from pouring over the often unreasonable or conflicting information in his muscle magazines.

But Jack, a high-school student with notoriously poor academic performance in his regular classes, would have struggled mightily with the dense medical reference. *Gray's Anatomy* contains a very detailed description of human anatomy, filling thousands of pages thick with medical jargon. Jack said it inspired his Oakland gym, the equipment he invented, and even his amateur wrestling career, but all this seems doubtful. Jack's upbringing had not exposed him to any significant amount of scientific or medical writing. His mother and many other Seventh-day Adventists lived simple lives, rejecting many modern conveniences and technologies, like makeup and radio.²³¹ Jack grew up on a farm, far closer to the yeoman ideal than many ever come in their lives. It is easy to imagine him impressed with the complexity of *Gray's Anatomy*, but harder to believe that he could understand its content. It is more likely that Jack's dedication to *Gray's Anatomy* in the '30s probably represents a bit of historical revisionism: an attempt to retroactively legitimize the earliest days of his education in physical culture.

231 Donald Katz, "Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal," *Outside*, November 1995, 78–82, 162. Though the religion does not explicitly reject science as an authoritative knowledge, Seventh-day Adventists interpret the Bible literally, including notions like the six-day creation. However, many Americans at the time, regardless of their religious beliefs, also viewed the scientific community with skepticism. See Robert W. Rydell, "The Fan Dance of Science: American World's Fairs in the Great Depression," *Isis*, 1985, 525–42; and Thomas Bender, "Science and the Culture of American Communities: The Nineteenth Century," *History of Education Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 63-77.

The Berkeley Y.M.C.A.

The Y.M.C.A. has long stood as refuge for men who lacked productive pursuits but liked physical activity. The Berkeley chapter of the Y stood on Allston Way, only a few minutes' walk down the street from Jack's parents' home on Spaulding Avenue. Jack went there to continue his physical education. The city had four such centers, actually, though the location he frequented was the largest, and also included a students' organization. All four Berkeley Y.M.C.A.s offered classes in volleyball, boxing, wrestling, and swimming; as well as non-sporting topics, including music and public speaking; but prided themselves most of all on the friendly atmosphere, encouragement and council they provided to young men.²³² They were so popular that, in 1930, despite the hard economic times, John W. Berger, general secretary of the Y.M.C.A, pushed for the city to open a fifth, even more modern Center.²³³

Throughout the 1930s, the Y.M.C.A.'s entire organization struggled through great – sometimes painfully great – transformations. In those years, the predominately white, male, Protestant institution gradually extended its services to include both genders and all religions.²³⁴ Not all groups fared so well: the Y.M.C.A. had offered limited membership to African Americans as early as 1867, and continued to expand those opportunities into the 1930s, but many facilities remained segregated even decades later.²³⁵ Most importantly for Jack, during the Depression years the Y.M.C.A. “rediscovered” its

232 “Y.M.C.A. News,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 14 October 1931: 7.

233 “‘Y’ Head Tells of Need of Expansion,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 17 April 1930: 1.

234 Mayer N. Zald and Patricia Denton, “From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (September 1963): 214-234. See especially “Transformation of the Organization,” 217-220.

235 Sherwood Eddy, *A Century with Youth: A History of the Y.M.C.A. from 1844 to 1944* (Association Press, 1944): 66-68.

commitment to young men's programs, especially ones promoting leadership and social wellness.²³⁶

During the first half of the twentieth century, if the average American possessed any desire for instruction in physical culture or exercise, he could often turn *only* to the Y.M.C.A.; virtually no similar programs or institutions existed, save for those of a few enterprising individuals scattered across the country.²³⁷ The Association's physical training programs expanded rapidly in the first decades of the twentieth century, nearly doubling between 1900 and 1916.²³⁸ By 1924, an estimated 350,000 members attended gymnasium classes every year.²³⁹ These classes included both resistance training with dumbbells, Indian clubs, and pulley apparatus; and calisthenics, and fit easily into the busy schedule of a businessman.²⁴⁰ Though sports and games were considered separate from physical training, most Y.M.C.A.s offered a wide variety of both, and placed special emphasis on swimming (for its life-saving potential): "Every man and boy in America a swimmer," declared one Association slogan.²⁴¹ Years later, when he began planning his famous birthday stunts to promote his television show in the 1950s, Jack remembered that slogan; many of his feats of endurance involved swimming.

But Jack was full of endless enthusiasm for sports, and his stamina was unmatched, and when he got out of the pool he went to the wrestling mat, and practiced

236 Charles Howard Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A. in North America* (Association Press, 1951): 562.

237 These individuals are discussed in detail later in this chapter. The choice of the pronoun "he" is deliberate: even fewer opportunities were available to women.

238 David S. Churchill, "Making Broad Shoulders: Body-Building and Physical Culture in Chicago 1890-1920," *History of Education Quarterly* 48, no. 3 (August 2008): 354.

239 Hopkins, *History of the Y.M.C.A.*, 572.

240 Churchill, "Making Broad Shoulders."

241 "Teach Men and Boys Swimming is 'Y' Object," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 17 April 1925: 3.

jiu jitsu and gymnastics; he spent all of his excess energy at the Y. He remembers Walter Thomas, a physical instructor at the Berkeley Y, teaching him all of these, and more; but according to newspapers of the day, he trained at least some of the time under the tutelage of Arthur Alderette, as well. Alderette, a former hurdler for UC Berkeley, had a son who trained at the Y and sometimes wrestled with Jack, and was an interested and knowledgeable mentor for the up-and-coming physical culturist.²⁴² Jack had a natural affinity for wrestling — so much so that on April 24, 1930, at the age of 15, he placed second the AAU state wrestling championship in the 126-pound class. Had he not opened a gym in 1936 and lost his amateur status, he could have even pursued the chance to wrestle in the Olympics that year.²⁴³ With so many other interests, though, he never seemed able to find enough time to hone his wrestling skills, and never won the AAU championship he sought — a rare regret in a life filled with successes.²⁴⁴

Wrestling was never his true passion, anyway. Above all else, Jack sought health and fitness; sports like wrestling were merely tools to achieve a life full of vitality. So too was what historian Jan Todd has called “purposive exercise,” that physical activity performed only to develop the body and mind.²⁴⁵ Jack loved calisthenics, but one can only perform so many push-ups and sit-ups before the weight of the body provides

242 “Berkeley Coaches Sign 230 for Spring Sports,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 7 February 1940: 9; and “Wrestling Meet,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 11 November 1931: 14.

243 Jack repeatedly insisted that he won the state championship, but newspaper evidence directly refutes this claim and clearly shows that Jack lost in the finals of the 1930 meet. See “Bears, Berkeley ‘Y’ Lead in P.A. Wrestling Meet,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 25 April 1930: 17. Many popular publications from the late 20th and early 21st century include the wrestling championship under Jack’s list of accolades; one must assume that the journalists took his personal anecdotes at face value.

244 Don Sayenga, “AAU National Freestyle Championship Results, 1889-1982” (AAU Sports), accessed online at <http://image.aausports.org/dnn/wrestling/Archive-Results/AAU-Freestyle-National-Championships/1889-1982-Results.pdf>.

245 Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Physical Culture in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (Mercer University Press, 1999): 2. According to Todd, purposive exercise, in contrast to sport, is directed at “specific physiological and philosophical goals”; it “lacks the ‘play impulse’ that characterizes true games.”

insufficient resistance to develop the muscles to their fullest extent.²⁴⁶ As luck would have it, the Berkeley Y.M.C.A. provided other tools to improve upon his calisthenics routine.

When he walked into the gym one day, Jack spied, in the corner of the room, a long, narrow box kept under lock and key. Two older members – Ernie Green, a local construction worker; and Bill Holger, or Holser, or maybe it was George Ellis, depending on who tells the story – held that key, and with it, the secret to the next chapter in Jack’s life.²⁴⁷ The box held a treasure Jack – and most other Americans at that time – had never seen before: a barbell, and plates with which to load it, just like the ones Alan Calvert and Bob Hoffman sold in their magazines.²⁴⁸

The two barbell men, Green and Holger, possessed tremendous physiques as well — the kind that Jack yearned for — built through years of training with their heavy weights. But the Y at first refused Jack’s request to train with them. “We can’t have anybody use those [weights], they’d hurt themselves,” supervisors said. “We let these fellas do it because they do work around here.”²⁴⁹ Their attitudes reflected a common sentiment, and even today, many regard weight training as unsafe, especially for children; but in 1930, such prejudices were even more widespread.²⁵⁰ So Jack offered Green and

246 Terry Todd, in "Historical Perspectives: The Myth of Muscle-Binding," *NSCA Journal* 7, no. 3 (1985): 37-41.

247 In *Jack 101*, Elaine LaLanne gives the second man’s name as “Bill Holser;” Bonnie Robinson claims the name “Bill Holger” in her 1993 interview with Jack; and Hal Reynolds writes that “two husky guys” owned the weights, and that Jack remembers his best friends from that time as Ernie Green and George Ellis. See Bonnie Robinson, “You Can’t Overdo Sex, Exercise,” Ukiah, *California Daily Journal*, 10 October 1993: 27; and 247 Hal Reynolds, “Interview with Jack LaLanne,” March 2009, accessed online at <http://mshhig.com/jack-lalanne.php> on 10 March 2016.

248 For the history of the commercially-available barbell in America, see Kimberley Beckwith, “Building Strength: Alan Calvert, the Milo Bar-bell Company, and the Modernization of American Weight Training” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2006).

249 Todd and Todd, “Interview with Jack LaLanne.”

250 Todd, “The Myth of the Muscle-Binding.”

Holger a challenge: if he could outwrestle the pair, he would earn the right to lift weights with them. “It was like David fighting Goliath,” Jack laughed.²⁵¹ But, as anyone who has wrestled knows, the sport is highly technical, so Jack could have plausibly defeated two men who lacked any experience in takedowns, cross-faces and cradles, despite being much older and larger than their opponent. According to Jack, he bested them handily.²⁵²

Green and Holger stood up to their end of the bargain, and their barbell set set Jack on a course that he would continue for the rest of his life. His training must have involved a good deal of trial and error, at least at the outset; since relatively few engaged in the activity, historian Jason Shurley explains, doctors and scientists devoted very little study towards and therefore understood very little about strength training.²⁵³ Even those who did train with weights did so using what would today be considered extremely rudimentary methods. Modern methods, like periodization, would not be developed until several decades later. Hoffman and Calvert both included instructional literature with their equipment (though Calvert had abandoned his business in 1925), but that information omitted the use of multiple sets of repetitions that has since become ubiquitous in program design.²⁵⁴ Jack’s earliest strength training probably employed a combination of squats, deadlifts, presses, and perhaps the snatch and clean, as well: a sensible program, for bodybuilders and athletes alike, although Jack would have

251 Robinson, “You Can’t Overdo Sex, Exercise.”

252 Ibid.

253 Jason Shurley, “Strength for Sport: The Development of the Professional Strength and Conditioning Coach” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas, 2013): 60-66.

254 Terry Todd and Jan Todd, “The Science of Reps: The Strength Training Contributions of Dr. Richard A. Berger,” *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 15, no. 3 (2001): 275-278; Terry Todd, “The History of Resistance Exercise and Its Role in United States Education” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas, 1966); and Terry Todd, “The Myth of the Muscle-Bound Lifter,” *National Strength & Conditioning Association Journal* 7, no. 3 (June 1985): 37-41.

performed only one set of about 6-12 repetitions in each lift. Studies have since proved the multiple-set method superior to Jack's, and he eventually realized that, under the one-set method, he spent much of his training time resting. Soon, his training philosophy evolved into something that resembled modern "circuit" training, using high repetitions, moderate loads, and short rest periods between many different exercises.²⁵⁵ Jack even performed a form of "functional" bodyweight training at nearby San Pablo Park, where he practiced chin-ups and rope climbing – reminiscent of today's trendy fitness boot camps.²⁵⁶

Jack's training regimen contributed a great deal to his athletic success in high school. He may have realized as much at the time, recalling that Hoffman had begun promoting the benefits of weight training for sport in the very first issue of *Strength & Health*, in 1932; other physical culture enthusiasts had recognized the value of functional strength even earlier.²⁵⁷ The prejudicial myths of muscle-binding and "athlete's heart" that led most athletes, coaches, and doctors to eschew heavy resistance training for decades had no place in Jack's philosophy after he had obtained access to the necessary equipment.²⁵⁸

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255 Jack LaLanne, "Strength and Endurance" (1949); and Bill Starr, "Jack LaLanne – A Life Well Lived" (2011), accessed online at http://startingstrength.com/articles/jack_lalanne_starr.pdf

256 Reynolds, "Interview with LaLanne."

257 Jason Shurley, "Strength for Sport;" Shurley and Jan Todd, "Joe Weider, All American Athlete and the Promotion of Strength Training for Sport: 1940-1969," *Iron Game History* 12, no. 1 (August 2012): 4-27; and Terry Todd, "The History of Strength Training for Athletes at The University of Texas," *Iron Game History* 2, no. 5 (January 1993): 6-13.

258 See the Introduction.

The next spring, Jack added baseball to his sporting resume, and took on a new level of competition. He was short, but his training had strengthened him, and he had a great gift for athletics, so he was soon picked to pitch relief for the Berkeley Boy's Baseball League, and that same year made the city's all-star league (though no evidence suggests that he ever performed, as he claimed, on a near-professional level). Then he turned to track, and placed third in the 130-pound class for shot put at the Y.M.C.A.'s annual "Californiad Trackfest."²⁵⁹ He still had at this time – by his own admission – little idea of proper nutrition; and had been training for at most six months. He weighed 130 pounds, which means that – if his claim of being 30 pounds underweight before meeting Bragg were true – he gained 50 pounds in that same timeframe. In truth, Jack's athletic success at 16 indicates that his physical situation was never as dire as he claimed, but we are often our own worst critics – especially in angst-filled teenage years. Bragg's speech and Jack's new health regimen may not have transformed his body quite as dramatically as he claimed, but it *did* imbue him with enough confidence to put his athletics gifts to use. Unsurprisingly, he quickly became something of a local hero, winning the admiration of onlookers and local newswriters.

Jack enrolled at Berkeley High School in 1931, at age 16, held back by his expulsion and frequent poor academic performance and misbehavior for several semesters. His scholarly work never improved, but his athletic ability skyrocketed as he aged. He put the shot, vaulted, and even demonstrated his admirable singing voice in the

²⁵⁹ "Herman Tossers Win Local Boys' Baseball Title," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 26 May 1930: 9; and "Berkeley Sixth in 'Californiad' Trackfest Here," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 26 May 1930: 9.

school's glee club.²⁶⁰ He pitched a brilliant no-hitter in the Boy's Baseball League that year – though sadly his team still that game lost due to errors made by his teammates.²⁶¹ Football became Jack's best sport. He earned the second-string position at quarterback on the Berkeley High School Yellowjackets' varsity squad in his freshman year, and also won the school's punt-and-pass contest.²⁶² In his second year, he earned a starting position at quarterback, and quickly rose to the level of county star.²⁶³ Jack liked to gloat that the 'Jackets won all but one game in the 1932 season, easily overlooking the fact that the team also lost the Alameda County Athletic League championship for the first time in the school's history team – a bitter defeat at the hands of longtime rival Piedmont High.²⁶⁴ The school's principal, C.L. Breidenbach, dedicated the 1932 yearbook to the students' good sportsmanship afterwards, but Jack loathed the loss.²⁶⁵

The following year, a far more tragic disaster struck, and with it, Jack's athletic dreams came crashing down in a single excruciating moment. He again started the year at quarterback, having made team captain for the Yellowjackets; and he managed to navigate the first two games of the season, despite having to shoulder the majority of the burden of winning in the absence of his ace halfback, veteran guard, and backup quarterback, all hobbled with injury. Jack would not escape the Jackets' injury jinx. On September 22, in a game against Vallejo High School, Jack suffered a vicious tackle and

260 "Local Juniors in Ball Series," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 16 June 1931: 18; "B.H.S. Athletes Escape Faculty Axe for Period," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 27 February 1931: 17; "Boys' Glee Club to Sing," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 22 April 1931: 14.

261 "Legion Junior Pitches No-Hitter," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 25 April 1931: 9.

262 "B.H.S. Freshman Win Fall Track Meet With Ease," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 14 November 1931: 9.

263 "Berkeley Gridmen Open '32 Campaign With 18-0 Win Over Oakland Tech," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 2 September 1932: 15; and Bill Hogan, "Clan, Jackets Squads Lose Few Stars," *Oakland Tribune*, 21 December 1932: B15.

264 Hal Reynolds, "Interview with Jack LaLanne."

265 Berkeley High School yearbook for December, 1932: n.p.

his knee gave way.²⁶⁶ The injury was devastating. He had torn several ligaments and needed surgery, and his doctor warned Jack of the possibility that he might remain crippled, unable to walk for the rest of his life. Bravely, he tried to finish out the season, but eventually relented when he realized how his performance had faltered, and reluctantly agreed to undergo the procedure to repair his knee.

As soon as he recovered from the anesthesia, he asked for his weights. His knee could support no weight, and so he could not leave the hospital bed, but “within an hour I was exercising,” he said. “I could sit up and do presses and curls and lateral raises. I could do situps and do buttocks [exercises] by pushing my heels against the bed. I never missed a workout, ever.”²⁶⁷ Without Jack’s leadership, though, the Yellowjackets’ football season floundered. He appears in caricature in the 1933 school yearbook on crutches, punting with both legs. “Maybe Jack LaLanne could kick some this way,” mourned the artist, Ralph Voigt.²⁶⁸

Jack’s dedication never wavered. He rejected the doctor’s prognosis of lifelong disability, though he wore a cast for several months. He gradually rehabilitated by walking up and down Marin Street: one of the steepest and most crooked in the city, that bicycle racers call a “death ride.”²⁶⁹ Jack’s resilience paid off. “If I hadn’t been a tough little poop, I’d never have made it,” he said.²⁷⁰ Sadly, though he regained most of his strength and mobility, the injury never fully healed. He could never again perform a full

266 “LaLanne Hurt, B.H.S. Without a Quarterback,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 26 September 1933: 12.

267 Donna Kennedy, “To Get Fit, Just Do It!” *Press-Enterprise*, 11 September 1989: C6.

268 Berkeley High School yearbook for December, 1933.

269 Elaine LaLanne, *Jack 101*, n.d.; and Reynolds, “Interview with Jack LaLanne.” According to Berkeley bicycle enthusiast Tom Holub, Marin Street “is simply ridiculous... the main disadvantage [of riding it] is that it could kill you.” See Holub, “The Berkeley Hills Death Ride,” accessed online at <http://inl.org/cycling/rides/the-berkeley-hills-death-ride/>

270 Mark Wolf, “LaLanne Still Gets Exercised over Physical Fitness,” *Fresno Bee* (1985): n.p.

squat, and he gave up running for exercise, instead returning to the swimming he had learned at the Y. Perhaps, in hindsight, Jack's injury had a silver lining: had he never hurt his knee, he might never have embarked on the aquatic feats of endurance he performed later in life, that helped solidify his legacy as one of the world's most accomplished physical culturists.

But if not swimming, Jack would have found another outlet for what amounted to nothing less than an indomitable will and boundless energy, physical and mental. It was that spirit, that pneuma, above all else, that drove Jack to unprecedented feats; he would spread his message of health and fitness by any means necessary.



GEORGE CORNELL played halfback. He was good on both defense and offense. George played heady football and was responsible for many of Berkeley's touchdowns. Many extra points were added by his dropkicking. His hard tackling always kept the score of the opponents down. He is another two-year veteran and has one more year.

PERRY THOMAS played fullback. Perry, an understudy to Gore last year, developed into a fine player this season. When yards were needed, he could always be depended on. He will be back next year.

ELLIOTT KELLY, who played at the other halfback post, was hailed as a second Bertoli. His running, punting, and passing reminded everybody of "Chili" himself. Elliot played on the Goofs for two seasons before working up to the first string on the Unlimiteds.

JACK LALANNE was usually the starting quarterback. He was a good field-general and was very good at running back punts. Jack was one of the best punters on the team, his punts getting Berkeley out of many tough spots and making many scores possible. He is a two-year veteran and will be back next year.

Figure 6. Jack in the Berkeley High School yearbook (December, 1932). Photography courtesy of the Berkeley Public Library.

Jack's First Foray into Fitness Entrepreneurship

Facing the long, inevitable rehabilitation process and forced to relinquish both his starting position and his athletic stardom at Berkeley High, Jack turned his energies towards his second passion: convincing others they should live as healthfully as he did. From a young age he deployed what journalists later termed his “salesman’s gift,” convincing his classmates that they, too, should snack on sprouts and practice their pull-ups and sit-ups; impervious to the fact that he preached to the same classmates who had mocked him mercilessly for his healthful habits. He began, as most good entrepreneurs do, in his own home, where he cajoled Jennie into baking dozens and dozens of whole-wheat bread and cookies.²⁷¹ Jennie was easily swayed, and in fact thrilled that her son had finally begun to control his inhibitions, vigorously supported Jack’s effort. “Mom searched every health food store in town for recipes,” Jack remembered.²⁷² She stumbled upon The Food Mill, a local store – still operating today – that ground its own organic, whole-wheat flour perfect for the LaLannes’ purposes.²⁷³ The heaviness and high carbohydrate content of his mother’s baked goods left Jack tired after eating them, but they tasted great, and they sold great, too.

They sold so well, in fact, that Jack had to recruit friends from school to help distribute them. That proved difficult: former star quarterback or not, he could really only

271 George Helmer, “Jack LaLanne — Amazing at Any Age,” n.d., 8–11. Article from the LaLanne collection, loose magazine clippings. Helmer was involved in physical culture and fitness entrepreneurship himself, as a friend and business partner of Steve Reeves and author of a cookbook of healthy recipes.

272 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*, 94.

273 According to one news article, The Food Mill also baked its own bread and cookies, and sold them to Jack. It is possible, though unproven, that Jack resold that store’s products to his classmates and marketed them as “homemade” – not entirely true, but a common and successful business strategy used by many resellers today. See Maria Cianci, “No Run-of-the-Mill Food Store,” *SFGate*, 19 August 1998: n.p.

call a few other students friends, since most still harbored doubts about his strange diet and exercise habits, and, having been held back for his poor academic performances, he was several years older than many of his classmates. But the small group of confidants he did have supported him vehemently, and he rewarded them by teaching them about proper eating and exercise. “It was like a little cult,” Jack said.²⁷⁴ Whether he realized it or not, Jack had from the start stumbled upon one of the secrets central to business success: the ability to leverage social capital, especially the support of loyal friends and family.²⁷⁵

The next year, in January of 1934, amidst the Great Depression, Berkeley High School closed its Physical Education building and gymnasiums for want of funding. The school’s administration recognized the loss, but had no resources with which to provide an alternate outlet for physical education. “It is, therefore, imperative that all of us consider ourselves personally responsible... for contributing as much as we can towards the upkeep of a high student body morale,” wrote Principal Breidenbach in the school yearbook.²⁷⁶ Jack took Breidenbach’s message to heart, fashioning his own gym in his parents’ backyard.

Without any sort of funding for his new venture, Jack had to rely on mostly makeshift weights in his gym, and so he filled cans with concrete to use in pulley-style apparatus.²⁷⁷ Then he opened the backyard to neighbors, charging \$5 per month for

²⁷⁴ LaLanne, *Jack 101*, n.p.

²⁷⁵ Per Davidsson and Benson Honig, “The Role of Social and Human Capital Among Nascent Entrepreneurs,” *Journal of Business Venturing* 18, no. 3 (2003): 301-331. The authors explain that when an entrepreneur has “strong ties” in his social network, like Jack did with his “cult,” the business is more likely to succeed.

²⁷⁶ Berkeley High School Yearbook for June, 1934: n.p.

²⁷⁷ Michael Dorman, “The Man Who Started America Sweating,” *Newsday*, 22 September 1985: 10–15.

access to his “facility,” and for training advice. Several of Berkeley High students, clamoring for a place to play, enrolled; but his first two clients, Jack said, were not schoolmates, but rather a policeman and a fireman.²⁷⁸ When he looks back upon those years, Jack’s own recollections grow hazy; sometimes, he recalls having opened that backyard gym in 1931. However, he was just 16 years old in ’31: a freshman in high school preoccupied with football, baseball, and glee club practice. Nineteen thirty-four, therefore, seems the more credible date, especially given his forced retirement from football and the school’s forced closing of its physical education facilities.²⁷⁹

Jack’s first gym distinguishes itself among those in physical culture history not for the jury-rigged weights. As legend has it, Milo of Croton pioneered a similar idea to Jack’s concrete-filled pails some 2500 years earlier, when he hoisted a young calf over his shoulder every day to strengthen his muscles. As the calf grew into a heavy bull, Milo’s muscles grew, too.²⁸⁰ Nor were Jack’s age, fees, or lack of commercial zoning unique: Vic and Armand Tanny, for example, opened a neighborhood gym in their parents’ garage in 1930, when Vic was 18 and Armand 11. They charged just five cents per visit.²⁸¹ And throughout the twentieth century, countless physical culturists have cut their teeth in garage, basement, or backyard gyms.

But, if Jack’s claim to training public safety officers in his parents’ backyard is true, then he is the first to have extended the benefits of heavy lifting to a group that,

278 Helmer, “Jack LaLanne — Amazing at Any Age.”

279 Charles McCarthy, “Exercise Guru LaLanne Living Proof of Survival of the Fittest,” *Fresno Bee*, 25 August 1985: B4.

280 See, for example, Jan Todd, “From Milo to Milo: A History of Barbells, Dumbbells, and Indian Clubs,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 6 (April 1995): 4. Though many other sources recant the Milo of Croton myth, Todd’s directly connects it to the rise of tools for resistance training.

281 Randy Roach, *Muscle, Smoke, & Mirrors, Volume 1* (AuthorHouse, 2008): 374.

today, considers fitness an integral part of work. Moreover, as historian Victoria Felkar explains, in contemporary culture, besides its functional benefits, many associate muscularity with aggression and masculinity: valuable traits to some emergency responders.²⁸² Yet despite the obvious importance of strength and stamina in these careers, virtually no scholarly literature examines that linkage, and what little research exists often focuses on the presumed connections between physicality and criminal populations. However, weight training in prison physical culture dates back only until 1939, when Bob Hoffman donated a York Barbell set to San Quentin prison in California.²⁸³ Al Thomas traces academic recognition of the value of physical fitness for police to a 1964 study in *The FBI Enforcement Bulletin* – a relatively recent publication, given that the organization now known as the FBI was formed in 1908.²⁸⁴ Today, almost all law enforcement officers and firefighters must pass rigorous physical examinations to stay on the job, and many seek advice from personal trainers or coaches to improve their on-the-job performance. This trend represents only a small part of a larger phenomenon in a new wave of modern fitness paradigms, and functional training in general is poised to become even more prominent in our current moment.²⁸⁵ But Jack may deserve historical credit as the first to apply the benefits of resistance training to the jobs of

282 Victoria Felkar, “How Muscled Became Bad,” *Muscle Insider*, 19 February 2015, accessed online at <http://muscle-insider.com/features/how-muscle-became-bad>. Felkar has written extensively on the topic. See, for example, “The Iron Bar: Episodes in the Modern History of Prison Physical Culture, Body Typing, and the Ban on Weight” (unpublished master’s thesis, University of British Columbia, 2014).

283 Fair, *Muscle USA*: 264.

284 Al Thomas, “Police Chief Joe Peters: Lawman as Strongman,” *Iron Game History* 2, no. 2 (April 1992): 18.

285 Daniel Kunitz, *Lift: Fitness Culture, from Naked Greeks and Acrobats to Jazzercise and Ninja Warriors* (HarpersCollins, 2016). As its title suggests, Kunitz’s book is geared towards a popular audience and, although he accurately represents most historical facts, the academic quality of his arguments suffers from some oversights and inconsistencies. However, functional fitness is undoubtedly becoming more and more popular thanks to organizations like CrossFit, many of which (as Kunitz points out) have strong military ties.

public-safety officials. Unfortunately, no evidence exists to either corroborate or refute Jack's memories about his first customers, so that claim remains tenuous; but its significance means that its mere possibility bears mentioning.

All throughout high school Jack had busied himself with athletic and entrepreneurial endeavors, but despite (or perhaps because of) his admirable extracurricular success, he had left little time for schoolwork. He remained an abysmal student. He fell yet another semester behind in his studies, and managed to graduate from high school only by the skin of his teeth in winter of 1934, at the age of 20. Berkeley High School includes him in their yearbook for the class of 1935.²⁸⁶ Jack's brother, Norman, had graduated from high school and gone on to study engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, but Jack himself never seriously pursued higher education after finishing secondary school. After graduating, he wandered aimlessly for a short time, spending part of a semester at UC Berkeley himself before dropping out; and enduring a brief stint at Oakland Chiropractic College. He never graduated from chiropractic school, but the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic later bestowed upon him an honorary degree for his persistent work in the field of physical culture.²⁸⁷ Academic success had always eluded Jack, and yet he desperately wanted to distinguish himself as a learned physical culturist. His excuses would have given pause to even the most credulous observer. He claimed to have earned athletic scholarship offers from three

²⁸⁶ Berkeley High School yearbook for Fall, 1934, n.p.; and Tanya Dennis, "Hot Fun in the Summertime, 1200 attend BHS All Class Reunion," *The Post News Group*, 7 September 2001, accessed online at <http://postnewsgroup.com/blog/2011/09/07/hot-fun-in-the-summertime-1200-attend-bhs-all-class-reunion/>

²⁸⁷ Census data from 1940 clearly shows that Jack never completed more than a high school level of education. His family, however, has preserved his diploma from the Los Angeles College of Chiropractic at their home in Morro Bay, California; the diploma is dated August 16, 2008. The Patriarch Society of Chiropractors issued him an honorary certificate in 1987, as well. See the United States Department of Commerce, "Sixteenth Census of the United States," for California, Berkeley, on 18 April 1940: 16B.

different colleges (implausible, given his knee injury) and turned down the chance to study opera in New York for financial reasons, despite the backing of a nameless investor who only wanted to listen to Jack sing.²⁸⁸ Even with scholarship offers, his family could not afford to send him to college, he said, but Norman never complained of financial burdens, and besides, his family was clearly well-off compared to most Americans at the time.²⁸⁹ In truth Jack may have been ashamed of his unremarkable academic career; he wanted other people to consider him superhuman, but his low GPA proved that even Jack LaLanne could not excel at everything.

Jack's own self-doubts about his performance in school – and even on the playing field – made him painfully shy, but like many teenagers, he masked that shyness under a thick layer of bravado. To conceal his diffidence, he struck an attitude, partying and flirting with girls — lots and lots of girls. “I played the field,” he admitted.²⁹⁰ He took his beaus to parks, to drive-ins, to dinner, sometimes all three; sometimes, with more than one girl at once. But, truthfully, Jack remained an introvert. Once, during his senior year, as captain of his high school football team, he tried to deliver an inspirational speech to his teammates. “I got up there and just froze,” he said. “I had to sit back down. Couldn't do it. I was just so insecure.”²⁹¹ Many years later, when he stepped into the bright stage lights of his nationally-syndicated television show, the same stage fright struck him, although by that time he could better control his nerves. The secret to Jack's success in

288 Katz, “Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal”; Jay Horning, “Jack LaLanne's Numbers,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 8 May 1988: 6a.

289 Michael Dorman, “LaLanne Excelled in Fitness Salesmanship,” *Syracuse Herald-Examiner*, 25 November 1985: n.p. Tuition to an Ivy League school in 1936 cost \$400, less than the \$500 Jack used to open his gym. See Mark Frazier Lloyd, “University History” (University of Pennsylvania, 2003), <http://www.archives.upenn.edu/histy/features/tuition/1930.html>. Furthermore, Jack's father could afford a new car during the middle of the Depression. See LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

290 Christine Gustafson, “Jack LaLanne: Fitness Immortal,” *San Luis Obispo Country Telegram-Tribune*.

291 *Ibid.*

his many pursuits was never self-confidence, but rather confidence — unshakeable, absolute faith — in his fitness philosophies. “I was one million percent convinced that what I was doing was correct,” he said.²⁹² That faith imbued him with the courage to persist despite any doubts, first in high school, then in business, and finally on television.

JACK LALANNE’S PHYSICAL CULTURE STUDIO

By 1936, Jack had exhausted his patience for formal education. He could have pursued so many different careers – singing in the opera, practicing medicine, following in the footsteps of his father or grandfather as an electrician or as a farmer – but none appealed to him. The pursuit of health and strength had grown into an obsession; it dominated his heart and his mind, and so, in 1936, just one year after he graduated from high school, he resolved to dedicate his entire life to their cause. His backyard gym had garnered some attention from neighbors, and he wondered how a real gymnasium might fare.

Opening a gym is expensive, and Jack had no money. But his parents had done well for themselves during the Depression and, probably hoping his son would find *any* career, Jack’s father John lent his son \$200 with which to start a business. With no more than a prayer and that very generous loan, Jack built a real gymnasium: the antipode to his backyard playground with makeshift weights. But the gym did not take off the way Jack had hoped.

²⁹² LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

He used the money from his father to rent space on Telegraph Avenue, which runs from the heart of downtown Oakland to the very edge of the University of California campus over in Berkeley. It was “a great big building,” Jack remembered, “that got too small.”²⁹³ The Telegraph gym decor paled in comparison to the images that had haunted Jack in his dreams; the young entrepreneur simply could not afford any such lavishes. Its walls were bare; windows were covered by broken blinds; and the clutter of equipment invites claustrophobia.²⁹⁴ “You couldn’t move two feet,” Jack mourned. “We had stuff coming out of the ceiling and out of the floors.”²⁹⁵ But the worst of it all was that Jack had begun his foray into entrepreneurship at a *terrible* time.

Nineteen hundred thirty-six marked the midpoint of the Great Depression in America, but despite some halfhearted signs of economic recovery, the country faced another five years of hunger and strife. Even in sunny, golden California, the Depression dragged down all but the hardiest entrepreneurs. The San Francisco Bay area fared only slightly better than the country as a whole; it suffered the least among major West Coast metropolitan areas in terms of monetary circulation shortages, but by April 1930, over 21,000 residents were unemployed. Overproduction led to unemployment; demand for consumer goods evaporated; wages dropped by an average of 20 percent. Breadlines formed by autumn. “Contrary to many assertions of the day, the depression did not affect the West Coast later or to a lesser degree than the rest of the nation,” explains historian William Mullins, but the myth helped buoy the spirits of many Midwesterners who later

293 “Interview with Jack LaLanne,” n.d. From the LaLanne collection, on the external hard drive.

294 Photographs from the LaLanne collection, in the binder titled “Oakland Gym.”

295 Jerry Janda, “The Father of Fitness,” *Club Industry*, December 1999, 25–26, 30.

migrated to California in search of better fortune.²⁹⁶ In fact, the Depression brought over 300,000 white Americans from the dust-stricken Great Plains and Southwest to California, few of whom possessed any means of self-sufficiency. California's warm, mild climate also attracted thousands of elderly people, often too feeble to work.²⁹⁷

The depths of the Depression took their toll on both the physical and mental health of the nation. Despite President Hoover's denial that "nobody is actually starving," many were. The problem was not a lack of food, exactly, but rather a lack of funds with which to buy it. Crops went unharvested and slaughtered livestock unsold; the situation became so desperate that the government paid farmers to destroy their own produce, for fear that the entire agricultural industry would collapse. Lack of nutritionally-adequate food led to record increases in cases of tuberculosis, rickets and anemia. A psychological burden devastated thousands of unemployed men who located their identities in their traditional role of provider for the family. They "found their self-respect evaporating with their job prospects," recounts historian Wyn Derbyshire sadly.²⁹⁸ Many suffered feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy; fatigue, depression, and impotency. Food riots broke out. Suicide rates climbed.

Jack soon discovered that when one earns scarcely enough to feed his family, the mere idea of spending money on *exercise*, of all things, feels ludicrous at best and insulting at worst. He himself nearly starved for lack of customers; many of those who

296 William Mullins, *The Depression and the Urban West Coast, 1929-1933: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland* (Indiana University Press, 1991): 5.

297 Ibid.; Andrew Rolle and Arthur Verge, *California: A History* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014): 511; Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (Oxford University Press, 1996): 67.

298 Wyn Derbyshire, *Dark Realities: America's Great Depression* (Spiramus Press, 2013): 112.

could afford his services failed to understand the value of them. Interest in popular sports climbed during the Depression, thanks to the efforts of intercollegiate athletic leaders and physical educators alike, who emphatically reaffirmed the character-building virtues of competitive sport throughout the Depression.²⁹⁹ But these benefits did not, according to popular thought, extend to training with weights. Scores of fitness entrepreneurs without some alternative source of income went bankrupt during the Depression: Earle Liederman, Charles Atlas, and George Jowett, among others.³⁰⁰

So Jack struggled mightily to convince potential customers of the benefits — even the safety — of his gym and his practices. “You wouldn’t believe the ridicule I got when the gym opened,” he said.³⁰¹ “There was strong resistance in those days.... I would get a guy about half-recruited, and he would come back to me and say that his doctor wouldn’t let him join. ‘You’ll get a hernia,’ all the doctors said then... Or, ‘You’ll get muscle-bound.’”³⁰² “Even my brother and my dad were against me,” Jack said, as they tried to convince him to accept a more conventional job and earn a more dependable income.³⁰³

Sound advice, perhaps. Even with the \$200 loan from his father, Jack floundered. In his first year of business, he nearly went bankrupt for want of customers, and struggled to make rent.³⁰⁴ And because of the Great Depression, Jack had little on which to fall back in case his gym failed entirely. Yet he remained unwaveringly dedicated to his

299 Brad Austin, “Protecting Athletics and the American Way: Defenses of Intercollegiate Athletics at Ohio State and Across the Big Ten During the Great Depression,” *Journal of Sport History* 27, no. 2 (2000): 247–70.

300 All of these particular men sold correspondence courses in physical culture, but save Bob Hoffman, barbell manufacturers suffered, as well. See Pollack and Todd, “The Kings of Mail-Order Muscle;” and Beckwith, “Building Strength.”

301 Katz, “Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal.”

302 Bonnie Siegler, “Jack LaLanne,” *Luxury Lifestyles*, n.d., 28. From the LaLanne collection, loose magazine clippings.

303 Lisa Lee Freeman, “Fitness Pioneer Jack LaLanne: Literally Swimming Against the Tide to Gain Prominence,” *Investor’s Business Daily*, 28 April 1995: 1–2.

304 Jeannine Stein, “LaLanne Presses on,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 1988: V1–2, 6.

cause. To earn enough money for food, he somewhat reluctantly began to offer massage therapy at his gym. The need for physical therapy and rehabilitation of injured soldiers during World War I had helped to standardize and professionalize massage in America, and so the practice had gained in both popularity and perceived legitimacy over the past two decades.³⁰⁵ Jack's massage venture therefore proved more financially lucrative than selling gym memberships, especially because it appealed to the harried businessmen who wandered downtown on their lunch breaks.³⁰⁶

Jack struggled as a massage therapist for over a year before realization dawned upon him. "They aren't coming to me," he admitted, "so why not go to them?"³⁰⁷ He squeezed his formidable physique into the tightest T-shirt he could possibly manage, and strolled down to Berkeley High, where he had graduated barely over a year earlier, and where he still enjoyed a reputation as an athlete and a number of friendships. Biceps bulging, he paraded around campus, hunting down the most out-of-shape students in the dining halls. Once Jack had cornered his carefully-selected prey, the sale was easy: he knew the physically-unfit students probably suffered from insecurities very much like his own, and he offered them salvation. If they would just exercise under his guidance, he promised, he could change their lives around; and when he found that high-school students could rarely afford his fees, he beseeched their parents, instead. "I'd pick out the

305 H. Micheal Tarver, Til Luchau, and Susan G. Salvo, "History of Massage Therapy," in *Massage Therapy: Principles and Practice*, edited by Salvo (Elsevier Health Sciences, 2015): 6-8. Tarver and colleagues credit the introduction of modern massage therapy in America to Pehr Henrik Ling, whose Swedish system of physical culture influenced many early practitioners around the world.

306 Ibid. Jack's most well-known client was, allegedly, Victor J. Bergeron, better known today as Trader Vic. Bergeron built a multimillion-dollar restaurant business, but he got his start in 1934, when he opened Hinky Dink's, a hole-in-the-wall beer joint in Oakland, with a \$500 loan. See LaLanne, *Jack 101*; and Johnny Miller, "1984: Victor J. 'Trader Vic' Bergeron Dies," *SF Gate Chronicle*.

307 Freeman, "Fitness Pioneer Jack LaLanne."

fattest kids and the skinniest kids,” he explained. “I’d get their addresses and at night I’d go solicit their folks. I’d write them out a guarantee: ‘I will take 15 pounds of fat off your boy, double your money back. I will put 15 pounds of muscle on this kid in 30 days or double your money back!’”³⁰⁸

The students of Berkeley High fell enthralled under the spell of the short, stocky man with his marvelous muscles and energy that seemed endless, as if it were too big for his tiny stature. “His enthusiasm for exercise was infectious,” said one former student, Charles McCarl. “I was completely under his influence,” agreed Norman Marks, who became a chiropractor after “graduating” from Jack’s tutelage.³⁰⁹ W. Barrett Pierce became a chiropractor, too. He wrote Jack in 1992, thanking him for saving his life. “I would be dead if I hadn’t worked out all these years,” wrote Pierce.³¹⁰ Nor could their parents resist Jack’s charms, despite the hard reality that may have skittered about in the backs of their minds: very few individuals can gain fifteen pounds of muscle in a single month.³¹¹

But Jack was selling more than muscles, and his customers knew it. His promises of transformation encompassed not just physical fitness but instead his students’ entire lives. He called his clients “students,” he explained, because he considered himself to be a teacher, a personal health consultant; and small details like that helped him form bonds

308 Berg, “Building the Perfect Beast.”

309 Martha Sherrill, “The First Mr. Fitness,” *Newsday*, 4 April 1994: B4–5.

310 Photograph from the LaLanne collection, in the binder titled “Jack’s Students.”

311 Increases in muscular weight involve a number of factors, including training, nutrition, and genetics, but most popular authors estimate that an untrained individual can build at most two pounds of muscle per month without the use of performance-enhancing drugs. Though that number is both unproven and debatable, it illustrates the implausibility of Jack’s 15-pound guarantee. See Lyle McDonald, “What’s My Genetic Muscular Potential?” *Body Recomposition*, accessed online at <http://www.bodyrecomposition.com/muscle-gain/whats-my-genetic-muscular-potential.html>

with his customers (and later with his television audience) and gain their trust. Of course, it helped that Berkeley High students fondly remembered Jack's athletic performances on behalf of the Yellow Jackets, and the former star quarterback still enjoyed enormous popularity on campus. "I knew everybody," he said. "They were my family. They loved me and I loved them."³¹² And the use of the word "student" implies more of an altruistic relationship than does "customer," which probably further strengthened that good will. Jack's strength, physique, and the results he achieved for his students all prove that he understood his trade in great depth. But he owes as much — perhaps even more — of his entrepreneurial success as a personal trainer to his ability to channel his popularity into sales. In fact, in Jack's obituary, the *New York Times* called his personableness "a salesman's gift."³¹³

His pitches pushed that gift to its limit, because Jack's services did not come cheap. He charged \$20 per month for personal instruction; consider that, in 1932, many Oakland families lived on less than \$50 per month.³¹⁴ But once he had secured a client, Jack got results. In fact, one Berkeley High student lost 111 pounds in eight months under Jack's supervision; he literally became half the man he once was.³¹⁵ At a time when so few people understood the benefits of diet and exercise, the physical

312 Veronika Kalmar, "The Gospel According to Jack LaLanne," *Trailblazer* (June 1992): 36.

313 Richard Goldstein, "Jack LaLanne, Founder of Modern Fitness Movement, Dies at 96," *The New York Times*, 23 January 2011: A25. Academic research supports Goldstein's conclusions. Management scholar Frederick Webster, for example, argues that successful salespeople achieve a common understanding with their customers through personal communication. See Frederick E. Webster, Jr., "Interpersonal Communication and Salesman Effectiveness," *The Journal of Marketing* (1968): 9.

314 Todd and Todd, "Interview with Jack LaLanne;" and Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland* (University of California Press, 2004): 75. Admittedly, Oakland's economic situation in the '30s paled in comparison to its prosperity a decade earlier. See "Striking Indices of Oakland's Progress," *Oakland Tribune Year Book Part One*, 26 February 1936: 26.

315 Helmer, "Jack LaLanne — Amazing at Any Age;" and photographs from the LaLanne collection, in the binder titled "Jack's Students."

transformations Jack's clients achieved seemed nothing short of miraculous, and \$20 per month began to look more reasonable.

Besides, Jack was more than a physical trainer: he was a life coach, and – with a firm hand – he guided his students towards success inside and outside of his Physical Culture Studio. He explained:

When I was running the club, I knew everybody's birthday, their anniversary, their kids, who they were fooling around with, if they were pregnant, if they had a disease. *I got to be friends with them.* I was their consultant. I was their confidant and these people loved me for it. And I'd ask them to do something and they'd do it. They would never think of missing a workout; they'd die first because I got into their brain. You have to be a psychologist.³¹⁶

As a result, the gym membership evolved into a sort of cult of personality around Jack's charismatic authority, reminiscent of the close-knit group of friends who helped Jack run his health food business at Berkeley High.

Despite that congeniality, the sheer rigor of Jack's guidance often shocked neophytes. Besides partaking in strenuous workouts, he required that gym members follow strict rules regarding diet and personal hygiene – reminiscent of the ones he himself had rebelled against as a child – and even held the younger ones to high academic standards. Members in high school had to maintain a C average, or Jack would not even allow them inside the gym. He enforced these rules, he explained, because he cared about

316 "Jack LaLanne's 30 Day Fitness Plan," *Executive Fitness* (May 1988): 5. Many modern studies support Jack's conclusion. See, for example, Raj Arora, Charles Stoner, and Alisha Arora, "Using Framing and Credibility to Incorporate Exercise and Fitness in Individuals' Lifestyle," *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 23, no. 4 (2006): 199–207; Ahmad Daryanto et al., "Service Firms and Customer Loyalty Programs: A Regulatory Fit Perspective of Reward Preferences in a Health Club Setting," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 38, no. 5 (2010): 604–16; and Stefano Della Vigna and Ulrike Malmendier, "Overestimating Self Control: Evidence from the Health Club Industry" (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2004). However, it should also be noted that ethical issues arise when fitness professionals fail to respect their clients' personal boundaries; see James Gavin, "Personal Trainers' Perceptions of Role Responsibilities, Conflicts, and Boundaries," *Ethics & Behavior* 6, no. 1 (1996): 55-70.

his students' whole lives, not just their bodies or their money; but his paternalism quickly began to drift towards obsessiveness. "I told them how to cut their hair. Their clothes. I told them they were leaders, not followers. We had a cult going, boy," he boasted. "Everybody that came to that studio and saw those boys had respect for them. They were a step ahead of everybody else. They had pride and discipline. That's what I pounded into their heads. Pride and discipline."³¹⁷ And no one who wanted to stay at Jack's dared skip a session. "If you missed two workouts at my gym, I was on the phone to you," Jack said.³¹⁸ Those who could endure the aggressive instruction enjoyed fantastic results: they lost fat, gained muscle, and felt better about themselves.

One need only look to the dozens of personal trainers who swarm throughout modern health clubs to see evidence of the benefits of Jack's approach. In fact, one study reported that more than half of all personal trainers believe their job is to improve a client's self-esteem, psychological health, or social status.³¹⁹ Excellent trainers today recognize that success means more than building muscle or losing fat: it requires building both physical and social knowledge and competency.³²⁰ The unique, "holistic" training Jack offered in 1936 has since blossomed into an entire industry, with nearly 300,000 trainers in the United States alone.³²¹

By 1938, six months after he began pursuing clients at Berkeley High, Jack had weathered the worst of his entrepreneurial woes. In fact, he had secured so many clients

317 Janda, "The Father of Fitness."

318 Ibid.

319 Gavin, "Personal Trainers' Perceptions," 61.

320 Jean Cote, Bradley Young, Julian North and Patrick Duffy, "Towards a Definition of Excellence in Sport Coaching," *International Journal of Coaching Science* 1, no. 1 (January 2007): 3-17.

321 U.S. Department of Labor, "Occupational Outlook Handbook," 17 December 2015, accessed online at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/personal-care-and-service/fitness-trainers-and-instructors.htm>

that they no longer fit into the tiny space on Telegraph Avenue. By now he earned enough income to reinvest some into the business, and he did so, renting a new, bright, spacious building at 409 15th Street, two blocks south of his original location. He filled the gym with mirrors, chromed weights, impressive décor; all of his efforts intended to craft the new studio as a much more attractive destination. He even added a small food shop, selling healthful lunches and supplements to his customers after their workouts. “It was the first modern health spa in the United States,” Jack gloated. “Number one. All the equipment was chrome. I had rugs on the floors. Tiled showers. Flowers all over. Scientific bodybuilding. Personal supervision.”³²²

He took more of his earnings and used them to stock the 15th Street gym with new equipment, much of which his students had never seen before. Jack had built his physique using just the scant selection of barbells and dumbbells available at the Berkeley Y.M.C.A., but he recognized that many of his students quickly grew bored with those relatively rudimentary tools. So, he built machines. He enlisted the help of his friend and local blacksmith, Paul Martin, to build apparatus for the legs, back, and arms, all designed according to Jack’s own specifications. “You can’t beat dumbbells and barbells,” Jack admitted. “The machines add variety, which is good, but there’s nothing better than the iron. I invented machines to break monotony,” he explained.³²³ “That’s why I invented the first leg extension, the first weight selector, the first Smith machine. Everything was mine.”³²⁴

322 Andrew Berg, “Building the Perfect Beast,” *Detour* (April 1997): 60.

323 Siegler, “Jack LaLanne.”

324 Jack Beardwood, “Jack LaLanne, Morro Bay’s Fitness Guru,” *The Bay Breeze*, 10 April 1998: 23.

Unbeknownst to Jack, other early physical culturists had built similar innovations, some long before Jack was even born. Pulley-based machines were “enormously popular” in the 19th century, according to historians Jan Todd and Jason Shurley.³²⁵ James Chiosso invented his Gymnastic Polymachion, the first known precursor to modern selectorized pulley machines, in 1855, after more than a quarter-century of experimenting with pulleys. George Barker Windship and William Wood both owned commercial gyms equipped with exercise machines in the 1860s, and Windship’s pupil, David P. Butler, patented the first pulley machine in America in 1865.³²⁶ In the late nineteenth century, Harvard physical educator Dudley Allen Sargent built fifty-six different machines to work different muscle groups, including the back, chest, arms, legs, abdominals, and even neck and fingers.³²⁷ The chronology of the modern Smith machine (which allows the user to perform fixed-path barbell exercises) remains unclear. Rudy Smith, the device’s namesake and one-time employee of Vic Tanny, credited Jack with designing the first prototype.³²⁸ However, no patent evidence can corroborate that claim; sadly (and much to his lawyers’ chagrin), Jack failed to file patents for any of his products until the 1960s.

It mattered little that Jack was not first to invent the machines in his gym. They were available nowhere else in Oakland, and his students enjoyed the novelty. Most fitness centers today recognize that a great deal of customer satisfaction depends upon the

325 Jan Todd and Jason Shurley, “Building American Muscle: A Brief History of Barbells, Dumbbells and Pulley Machines,” n.d., 1.

326 Ibid.

327 Caroline de la Peña, *The Body Electric: How Strange Machines Built the Modern American* (New York University Press, 2003): 55-56. De la Peña’s book is perhaps the best history of the use in machines in physical culture. She explains that machines had become prevalent by the early 20th century, making Jack’s claims to have invented the first of any kind even more unlikely.

328 Rudolph “Rudy” Smith [obituary], *The Malibu Times*, 14 July 2010.

quality of the provided facilities; in fact, several studies have proven that connection.³²⁹ Jack, of course, never had the opportunity to read those studies. As always, he was guided by only his intuition and perception, and more often than not he still managed to find the right answers.



Figure 7. Jack LaLanne's Physical Culture Studio. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

³²⁹ See, for example, Stefan Largrosen and Yvonne Lagrosen, "Exploring Service Quality in the Health and Fitness Industry," *Managing Service Quality* 17, no. 1 (2007): 41-53; and Edmundas Jasinskas, Diana Reklaitiene, and Biruta Svagzdiene, "Evaluation of Service Quality in Fitness Centres," *Structural Transformations in Business Development* 12, no. 1 (2013): 108-124.

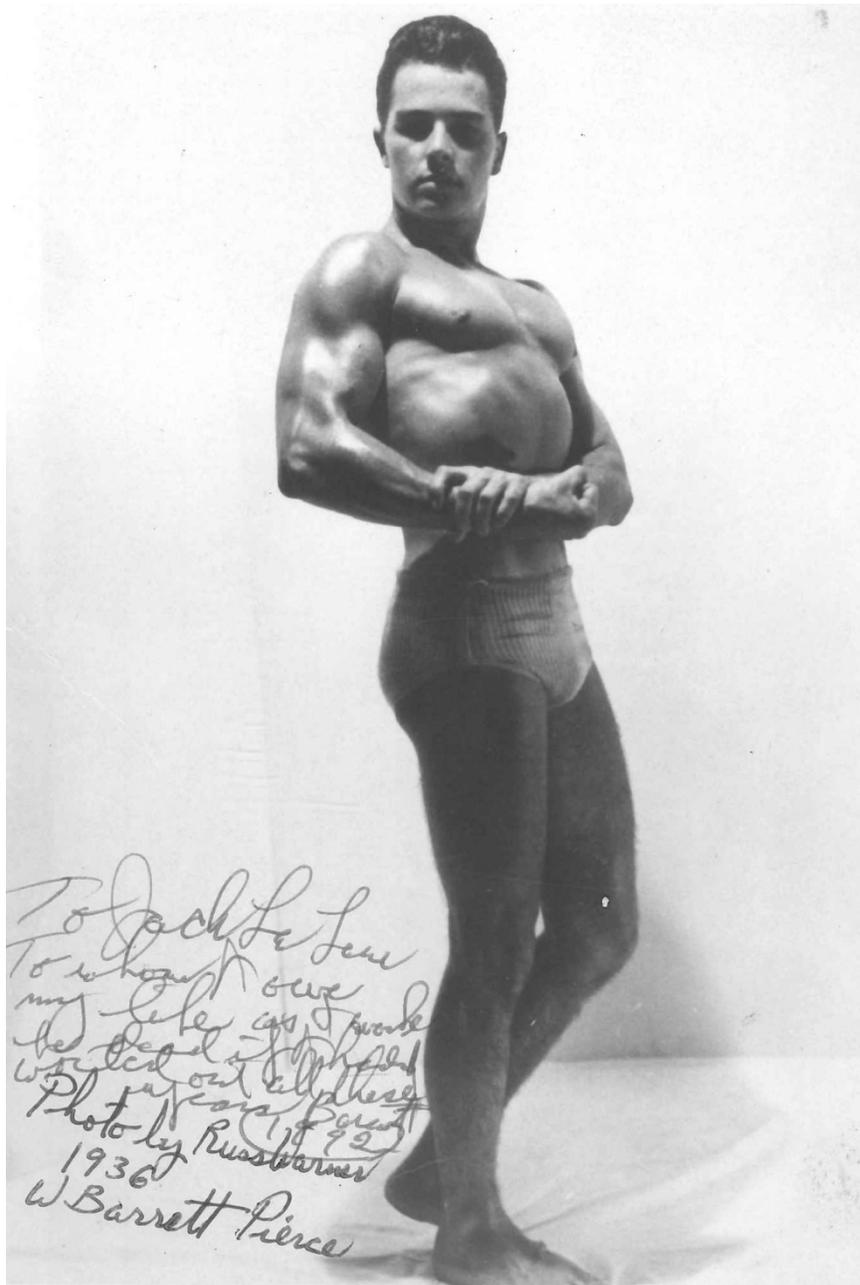


Figure 8. A signed photograph from one of Jack's earliest students. Photograph from the LaLanne collection, 1936.



Figure 9. Another photograph of LaLanne's Physical Culture Studio, showing the care Jack placed into making the area appear clean and inviting. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

A Brief History of the Modern Gym Industry

Though he undoubtedly suffered for it, in retrospect, Jack's decision to open a business during this time has some benefits to a study of his life. Primarily, it suggests a number of characteristics about his target clientele: during the Depression, only customers with a fairly large amount of discretionary income would have deemed Jack's services a reasonable investment. Furthermore, as previously explained, most women avoided exercise. Therefore, Jack's earliest customers were almost certainly upper-class white males. By the same logic, Jack's own family was probably well-off. In fact, John

LaLanne's \$200 loan to his son represented a substantial investment (the equivalent of approximately \$3,500 in 2018 dollars).

Understanding Jack's clientele is crucial to understanding the modern fitness industry. Sociologist Jennifer Maguire explains that today, "health club membership is marketed as not only a leisure pursuit and a healthy use of discretionary income; membership is also an investment in your status profile: Membership in the 'right' club is an indispensable element of the lifestyles of the status-conscious."³³⁰ Maguire locates the roots of this phenomenon in the 1970s, but, in fact, it began much earlier, with Jack's Physical Culture Studio and with the gyms of his competitors.³³¹

Jack was by no means the first fitness entrepreneur to open a modern fitness studio in America. That distinction rests instead with self-acclaimed "Professor" Louis Attila, born Ludwig Durlacher, a professional strongman who founded a private gymnasium in Brussels, Belgium around 1886. Attila immigrated to New York City in 1893, where he opened his Athletic Studio and School of Physical Culture there that same year, decades before Jack was even born.³³² Attila's gym ushered in a new era of fitness in American, by appealing to a swath of social classes, including the affluent, and not just working-class clientele. He adorned the studio in midtown New York with luxuries that historians Kimberley Beckwith and Jan Todd describe as "a delight to the senses:"

³³⁰ Jennifer Smith Maguire, *Fit for Consumption: Sociology and the Business of Fitness* (Routledge, 2007): 62.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 62-64.

³³² Charles Ottignon opened a commercial gymnasium in the United States decades earlier, in 1842, where he offered facilities for boxing, shooting, and gymnastics. Although there were other German-style boxing gyms in Boston as early as the 1820s, some of which also included weights, Ottignon's gym is often credited as the first American fitness club. However, no evidence suggests that Ottignon's gym offered any of the niceties of Attila's; in fact, the first mass-produced mirror only began to be sold a few years earlier, in 1835. See "Obituary for Charles F. Ottignon," *New York Herald*, 15 November 1880: 9.

The walls were filled with signed, gilt-framed photographs of contemporary boxers, wrestlers, and strongman stars such as [Eugen] Sandow and Lionel Strongfort. Brightly-colored Turkish carpets protected the floor, a large oil painting of Attila in his leopard-skin stage costume dominated one wall, while another wall held a large, ornately-framed mirror. Several replicas of Greek statuary helped to create an atmosphere of elegance, refinement and classical beauty. Everything was of the finest quality, even the barbells.³³³

Richard K. Fox, publisher of the *National Police Gazette* and personal friend of Attila, often featured the gym and its proprietor in his magazine; and when famous strongmen visited New York, they almost all made sure to stop by Attila's studio. As a result, the gym, Attila wrote, attracted "the prominent, the distinguished, the eminent and the great," including men like Fox, J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr., Alfred Vanderbilt, John Philip Sousa, Florenz Ziegfield, and Oscar Hammerstein.³³⁴ Their presence only enhanced the studio's glamour, and soon Attila had so many clients that he opened a second location, in Chicago.

Besides Attila, several other fitness entrepreneurs ran similarly luxurious gymnasiums before Jack moved into his cramped quarters on Telegraph Avenue. Art Gay founded his famous gym in Rochester, New York, in the early 1920s. Gay's gym was equipped with cutting-edge exercise equipment, including early versions of the stationary bicycle and treadmill; as well as tanning booths, private locker rooms, and heated baths.³³⁵ Vic Tanny, one of Gay's early pupils, opened his own competing, gym in Rochester in 1935, but it was a far less glamorous affair squeezed into a small space

333 Kim Beckwith and Jan Todd, "Requiem for a Strongman: Reassessing the Career of Professor Louis Attila," *Iron Game History* 7, nos. 2-3 (2002): 47-48.

334 *Ibid.*, 48.

335 "Personal Supervision Featured at Gay's," *Rochester, New York Democrat and Chronicle*, 14 May 1943: 11; and Joe Roark, "Gyms of the Past," *Iron Game History* 2, no. 3 (July 1992): 17.

above a local bowling alley. “The place smelled like a locker room and it was so dark I could barely see my own muscles,” Tanny admitted, but he later moved to the West Coast, and opened a gym that became far more famous and successful, and was known as the Muscle Beach “Dungeon,” on Santa Monica Boulevard in 1939. Tanny’s business rapidly expanded after World War II, and grew to encompass a chain of almost a hundred luxurious health clubs nationwide that featured amenities far more elegant than even those in Attila’s and Gay’s gyms. In truth, Tanny influenced the modern gymnasium industry more than any other single individual in history; his became *the* model for fitness clubs, and remains so today.³³⁶

Beginning with Attila, these early gyms and health clubs shared a number of characteristics that Jack later employed in his own efforts to market his services to affluent clientele. For much of its early twentieth-century history, resistance training – like boxing and blood sports – was perceived by many as a working-class activity practiced in dirty, dark gyms.³³⁷ Years earlier, in the mid-nineteenth century, respected men like Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Dr. George Barker Windship, Harvard’s Dudley Allen Sargent and even Theodore Roosevelt all espoused the benefits of training with weights, and the popular muscular Christianity ideology of the same era touted physical training as yet another way to improve one’s spiritual well-being.³³⁸

³³⁶ Ben Pollack, forthcoming.

³³⁷ Historian Elliot J. Gorn describes boxing and blood sports as part of a nineteenth-century “bachelor subculture” in *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Cornell University Press, 2012).

³³⁸ Jan Todd and Jason Shurley, “Building American Muscle: A Brief History of Barbells, Dumbbells and Pulley Machines,” in *The Routledge History of American Sport*, edited by Linda J. Borish, David K. Wiggins, and Gerald R. Gems (Routledge, 2016); and Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

In fact, it was Harvard man George Barker Windship who sparked the first American weight-training boom when he invented the “Health Lift,” a bulky apparatus for lifting massive amounts of weights over a very short distance using the muscles of the hips and back. Windship shared the benefits of his invention on a lecture circuit that led him all over the Northeast, and soon copyists like George Butler were opening “Health Lift Studios” in major cities across the country, from San Francisco to Boston. But when Windship died of a massive stroke in 1871, at the age of 42, “weight training in general was struck a severe blow,” laments historian Jan Todd.³³⁹ The Health Lift no longer seemed so healthy, given its inventor’s premature demise, and by the time Attila, Gay, Tanny, and then Jack entered the industry, the medical community had begun to warn of the supposed dangers of lifting weights, and the practice fell into disfavor.³⁴⁰

To regain that once-favorable reputation, early twentieth-century fitness entrepreneurs built beautiful “health clubs” trying to create a more upscale atmosphere. They even chose names for their businesses that conveyed elegance and sophistication. Words like “club” and “studio” brought to mind images of privacy, high-class artistry, and good taste. The new clubs also offered personal training, to businessmen, athletes, and women alike, to address the widespread lack of knowledge about proper exercise methods. This helped new members feel more comfortable in the gym.³⁴¹

339 Jan Todd, “Strength is Health: George Barker Windship and the First American Weight Training Boom,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 11.

340 Obviously, many exceptions existed. Dudley Allen Sargent continued to promote resistance training at Harvard into the twentieth century, and the Y.M.C.A.s continue the tradition of muscular Christianity to this day. The discussion of the gym industry is intentionally brief, to keep the focus of this dissertation on Jack and his business.

341 Today, nearly every gym offers some form of personal training. Scholarly research shows that personal training can change negative attitudes towards exercise, increase motivation, and produce better results. See, for example, Steven R. McClaran, “The Effectiveness of Personal Training on Changing Attitudes Towards Physical Activity,” *Journal of Sports Science & Medicine* 2

Tanny and Jack recognized another important factor: opening a gym required investing in real estate, and in real estate, location matters. Both proprietors chose strategic locations for their facilities. Tanny's Muscle Beach gym provided him easy access to an enthusiastic customer base and virtually free word-of-mouth advertising. Later, he demanded only the best real estate for his health clubs, with easy access to transportation and near other, already-established upscale businesses. Jack opened his gym in the heart of downtown Oakland, where passersby would notice the large, scripted sign announcing his studio. Like his hometown of San Francisco, Oakland was home to at least three branches of the Y.M.C.A., indicating a pre-existing demand for exercise facilities.³⁴² It was also a much larger city than Berkeley, home to about 300,000 residents.³⁴³ The prime locations helped customers feel safe and comfortable, and associated the gyms with other upscale businesses in the area.³⁴⁴

All four of these early twentieth-century health clubs accepted women, too: a significant move towards equality of access in a field overwhelmingly dominated by patriarchal authority. In the early twentieth century – and in the nineteenth, and even earlier than that – men often discouraged or unequivocally disallowed women from exercising, except sometimes with very light training, lest they sacrifice their femininity. As historian Jan Todd explains, training in a gym “was not a simple matter for women,”

(2003): 10-14; and Scott A. Mazzetti et al., “The Influence of Direct Supervision of Resistance Training on Strength Performance,” *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* (2000): 1175-1184.

342 YMCA of the East Bay, “History of the YMCA of the East Bay,” accessed online, http://www.ymcaeastbay.org/About_the_Y/History.htm.

343 “City of Oakland, 1860-1940,” *Bay Area Census*, accessed online at <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Oakland40.htm>

344 GYMetrix, “Case Study 6: Making Gyms Fit,” accessed online at http://www.gymetrix.co.uk/case_studies/What_is_important_to_customers.pdf. GYMetrix offers health-club consulting services and found that location is one of the three most important factors customers consider when choosing a gym, along with the availability and quality of equipment.

since most health clubs forbade them from membership.³⁴⁵ Attila especially spoke out against these oppressive gender norms, protesting that women need not be “ashamed to cultivate their bodies as well as their minds,” to gain the strength to protect themselves from the dangers of modern life in the Progressive Era.³⁴⁶ But Attila, along with Gay, Tanny, and Jack, all maintained separate spaces for women to train, and the segregation of genders in gyms would continue even into the 1950s. They advertised their primarily “reducing” services, to help women slim not for their health, but to make themselves more attractive to men. Sadly, true gender equality would continue to allude the gym industry for many decades. Some might argue it has yet to be achieved.³⁴⁷

On the whole, the efforts of these twentieth-century entrepreneurs succeeded. All four earned a comfortable living from their gym businesses, and after World War II, the model they pioneered proliferated across the nation. That progress came at a cost: Jack and the other early gym proprietors – with their insistence upon the necessity of beautiful chrome machines, personalized instruction, and upscale real estate – positioned access to their facilities as a luxury good, one out of reach of lower socioeconomic classes. And, as Maguire explains, “The commercial fitness field represents the commodification and reproduction of the problem [of inactivity and obesity in society today]: the already deeply-entrenched class-based stratification of health and health risks.” Those who cannot afford access to luxurious modern health clubs – or even time to exercise at all –

345 Jan Todd and Desiree Harguess, “Doris Barrilleaux and the Beginnings of Modern Women’s Bodybuilding,” *Iron Game History* 11, no. 4 (January 2012): 8; and Todd, “‘As Men Do Walk a Mile, Women Should Talk an Hour... Tis Their Exercise,’ & Other Pre-Enlightenment Thought on Women and Purposive Training,” *Iron Game History* 7, no. 2 & 3 (July 2002): 56-70.

346 Beckwith and Todd, “Requiem for a Strongman,” 52.

347 See, for example, Shari L. Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs, “What Kind of Subjects and Objects? Gender, Consumer Culture, and Convergence,” in *Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness* (New York University Press, 2009): 29-64; and Eileen Kennedy and Pirkko Markula, editors, *Women and Exercise: The Body, Health, and Consumerism* (Routledge, 2011).

are more likely to suffer from poor health. In addressing contemporary health problems, critics should consider how those problems have become deeply entrenched in the history of the fitness industry. At the same time, of course, Attila, Gay, Tanny, and Jack all created opportunities for physical fitness where before, none existed. They should be lauded, not condemned, for that contribution.

Advertising to Men & Women

Jack took a decidedly more hands-off approach to promoting and advertising his gym, preferring to let the results – his own and his clients’ – speak for themselves. “We never spent a nickel on advertising — not a cent,” he proudly declared. “So many of these spas now, the only thing they think about are grosses, grosses. They never think about instruction.... It’s ridiculous.... They should take measurements, check nutritional habits and, you know, *help*.”³⁴⁸ It is true that precious few gyms today rely solely on word-of-mouth advertising to enhance their brand and customer base.³⁴⁹ But Jack’s claim to have “never spent a nickel on advertising” was a bit of an exaggeration. He actually bolstered his word-of-mouth campaign by running print ads in the *Oakland Tribune*, inviting readers to visit his studio, thereby helping to spread news of his gym with more

348 Kalmar, “The Gospel According to Jack LaLanne.”

349 Today, most gyms are part of nationwide chains like the one Vic Tanny pioneered in the late 1940s. These chains, like Tanny’s, often spend heavily on traditional advertising and rely on iron-clad contracts to keep their customers coming back. However, academic research has shown that word-of-mouth advertising can be more than twice as effective as more traditional advertising in newspapers or signage. See, for example, David Stokes, Sameera Ali Syed, and Wendy Lomax, “Shaping up Word of Mouth Marketing Strategy: The Case of an Independent Health Club,” *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship* 4, no. 2 (2002): 119–33.

conventional means. “Showers, sunshine, and fresh air,” the ads read. “Health is the greatest asset you have — preserve it.”³⁵⁰

And, Jack’s body was an advertisement in and of itself, too. He continued to don too-tight T-shirts on his trips to high schools, and, with a 48-inch chest and 28-inch waist, his dramatically tapered torso stood out despite his small stature.³⁵¹ Jack’s athletic feats also continued to impress locals. In 1937, he entered a weight lifting contest held by the Amateur Athletic Union, where he broke the “world’s record for the two-arm pullover.”³⁵² He must have known that the feat would reflect well upon his credibility as a gymnasium operator, building both his reputation and the reputation of his gym. He would later use similar tactics to promote his television show during the 1950s.

By the end of 1938, Jack’s financial worries were over, never to return. The gym’s membership was stable; his grassroots advertising proved effective, and more and more people came to him in hopes of transforming their own bodies. These newcomers included a number of athletes, eager to improve their performance on the field under Jack’s tutelage. Jack himself knew, from his own high school athletic career and physical culture magazines, that weight training could help them perform better, but their coaches resisted the idea. Some even threatened to blacklist anyone foolhardy enough to train with Jack. Forbidding high school students from an activity often only goads them to partake in it by any means necessary; and so Jack’s student-athletes snuck in anyway,

350 Jack LaLanne, “Build Your Body Advertisement,” *Oakland Tribune*, 24 May 1937: 11.

351 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

352 “Local Lifters Enter Tourney,” *Oakland Tribune*, 10 March 1937: 27. Though the roots of competitive weightlifting can be traced back to a time when “odd” lifts, like the pullover, were contested, by 1937, most meets were limited to the snatch, clean and press, and clean and jerk.

sometimes at night to escape detection. Jack claimed to have worked with high-profile teams, too, like the University of California Bears and the San Francisco 49ers; and individuals, like bodybuilder and movie star Steve Reeves.³⁵³

Eventually, wives and mothers also began to call on Jack. They had seen what he had done for their husbands and sons, and wanted to join his gym, too. Jack had never trained women before – in fact, almost no one had. In the nineteenth century, most physical educators opposed strenuous competition for women, and instead favored mass participation – and that, in segregated facilities. According to historian Martha Verbrugge,

To effect their model of female recreation, women teachers needed a gym of their own.... Females should teach other females, they explained, while males trained males; women ought to exercise and play together, just as men should compete against other men; control over female physical education should rest with women teachers, while their male colleagues administered men's programs. In many respects, those tenets became reality. Whereas other areas of American life and education became more integrated during the twentieth century, physical education remained, until only recently, bifurcated by sex.³⁵⁴

Although historian Jan Todd has shown that Dio Lewis encouraged more vigorous exercise for women in the 1860s and some women practiced Windship's Health Lift, most physical educators considered only very light training, like calisthenics, to be suitable for them. It would not be until the 1890s and the birth of basketball that women

353 Jack's story is corroborated by Ed Yarick; but, the latter man claims that it was he, and not Jack, who was primarily responsible for Reeve's training. See "The Steve Reeves I Know and Remember," *Muscle Mag International* 2, no. 1 (May 1976): 33–34; and LaLanne, *Jack* 101.

354 Martha H Verbrugge, "Recreating the Body: Women's Physical Education and the Science of Sex Differences in America, 1900–1940," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 71, no. 2 (1997): 278.

began participating in more organized sports and physical activities in large numbers.³⁵⁵ Even in the early twentieth century, women commonly played using modified rules relative to men's sports, and in restrictive dress. Further, these opportunities for women's sport and physical culture were available primarily to upper-class women who could afford the time and money needed for exercise. Immigrants, African Americans, and working-class women did not typically train.³⁵⁶

Thanks in part to fitness entrepreneurs like Sandow, Macfadden and Alan Calvert, women slowly began to gain awareness of the benefits of exercise through the pages of *Sandow's Magazine of Physical Culture*, Macfadden's *Physical Culture*, and Calvert's *Strength*. In a few cities, women's athletic clubs were organized, occasionally equipped with resistance-training equipment like barbells and dumbbells. Standout female athletes like Ivy Russell and Pudgy Stockton brought further attention to strength training for women beginning in the 1930s. Nevertheless, coaches, physical educators, and social taboos all continued to discourage women from vigorous weight training for at least another *half century*.³⁵⁷

Little is known about the facilities or training that Jack provided to women early in his career as a gym owner. Since by the late 1930s, he claimed that "I had so many students I could hardly handle them," it is doubtful that women constituted a large part of his membership. He explained on one occasion that "for a while I had to close

355 Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1870* (Mercer University Press, 1998).

356 Helen Lenskyj, *Out of Bounds: Women, Sport, and Sexuality* (Women's Press, 1986).

357 Jan Todd, "The Origins of Weight Training for Female Athletes in North America," *Iron Game History* 2, no. 2 (April 1992): 4-14.

membership down. I couldn't handle it."³⁵⁸ So he halted his newspaper advertisements, and, along with them, any historical record of his business outside of his own stories. In retrospect, however, one cannot help but wonder about the impact of later seeing the women of Muscle Beach, and whether their bodies and physical performances influenced his own willingness to train less women new to physical culture.

CONCLUSION: A FAMILY TRAGEDY, AND A TURNING POINT

On September 17, 1939, Jack's father died.³⁵⁹ John suffered a myocardial infarction, and, although he survived the attack, he fell ill soon after. When he was taken to the hospital, doctors also discovered he had cirrhosis of the liver.³⁶⁰ He died three days later.

Jack tells the story slightly differently. He was a senior in high school when his father suffered a coronary heart attack, he said:

When I got up to leave that morning, my dad was waiting for me. "I don't feel so good, kid," he said. He wondered if we would drop him off at the French Hospital... Three days later I was called. Dad wasn't expected to live. Hurrying back to San Francisco, I couldn't believe it.... That night he was gone. My mother cried out in anguished protest. She couldn't comprehend why God, so good to her with me, should take a man so young. It was too sudden, she cried. But it wasn't really.³⁶¹

Jack further claimed that his father died because of his unredeemable eating habits. "My dad thought that eating right and exercise was a bunch of bull. He couldn't change. He

358 Todd and Todd, interview with LaLanne.

359 "Will Hold Services for John LaLanne," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 18 September 1939: 13.

360 "Episode 90," The Jack LaLanne Show, n.d.

361 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*, 116-119.

killed himself with a knife and fork — along with inactivity.”³⁶² John stood just five feet, five inches tall, yet weighed 185 pounds – about 40 pounds overweight.³⁶³ John loved butter, cheese, and coffee with heavy cream, Jack said, and never exercised.³⁶⁴ “Exercise is for young kids,” he protested.³⁶⁵ Obesity doubtless contributed to his heart attack; but then, so too did John’s alcoholism.³⁶⁶ The cirrhosis found by the coroner indicates that John never completely conquered his habit for liquor.

Jack mourned the loss of his father at such an early age. “I feel... that I let my dad down some way,” he said. “I don’t know how, but I didn’t insist enough that he go along with this program of exercise and nutrition.”³⁶⁷ It was, Jack said, the motivation underlying his crusade for fitness.³⁶⁸ Indeed, throughout the rest of his life, Jack would unrelentingly deliver his gospel of good health to anyone who cared to listen – and even some who did not.

More troublingly, Jack also displayed a willingness to use his family and those closest to him to further his own pursuits. He subsequently used the story of his father’s death as a way of marketing his own books and products and spoke about it often on his television show. In much the same way, he later used the support and good looks of his

362 Gustafson, “Jack LaLanne.”

363 According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a healthy adult male of John’s height should weigh less than 149 pounds. See “Aim for a Healthy Weight,” accessed online at http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/index.htm

364 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*, 117–18.

365 “Episode 90.”

366 According to the National Institutes of Health, “researchers have known for centuries that excessive alcohol consumption can damage the heart,” and increase risks of cardiomyopathy, arrhythmia, strokes, and high blood pressure. See “Beyond Hangovers: Understanding Alcohol’s Impact on Your Health,” accessed online at <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Hangovers/beyondHangovers.htm>

367 Ibid.

368 LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour*, 119.

wife, Elaine, as an advertisement for his own skill as a personal instructor; and demanded that his son, Jon Allen, follow in his own aggrandized footsteps.

Just as his reaction to his father's death foreshadowed many of Jack's future decisions, so did the Physical Culture Studio he opened in Oakland. Though it has never received any significant recognition, especially compared to his prolific television career, Jack's entrance into entrepreneurship with his gym influenced the entire modern fitness industry. By marketing his services to upper-class clientele, he – along with other early twentieth-century gymnasium proprietors – positioned access to health clubs and fitness instruction as a luxury good, which remains the case even today.

Furthermore, the success of Jack's gym proved that fitness was his calling and salesmanship his strength; and that, together, they could form the basis of an emotionally and financially fulfilling life. In his own typical blend of humility and arrogance, he explained:

[The gym] was another stepping stone to go into television. This was really successful and I could walk away from it and go on to another step in my life. This was just another stepping stone. Then from television, I go to heaven. No, it brings back a lot of fond memories because I made so many friends. You know, when you get some of these people that are mentally depressed and financially depressed, physically shot, then you see them a month later and they say that they are a new person and born again. They come to me and treat me like God. I had nothing to do with it. I just guided them. They did the work. It was a wonderful feeling that I made so many good friends and they are still friends today.³⁶⁹

As the next chapter shows, throughout the 1940s, Jack would continue to cultivate his “brand” using many of the strategies that had helped make his gym successful. It would

³⁶⁹ “Interview with Jack LaLanne.”

take a world war, an economical and technological revolution, and a few lucky breaks for Jack to take his business to television, and thus to the entire nation. But all of that began with the Oakland gym.

Chapter 3: Becoming a Bodybuilder

Arcadia Terrace is a narrow, cramped alley in Santa Monica that winds off Olympic Drive and Ocean Avenue down to the soft, white sands along the Pacific. There, the cool ocean breeze tempers the hot Southern California sun even during the summer months, and beachgoers delight in the moderate climate. But in winter, in the evening, the beach lies deserted.

So too lies The Pit, a small, fenced-in area just two miles south, in Venice, filled with a smattering of weights and benches and surrounded by bare metal bleachers. Plaques around The Pit commemorate modern legends of the iron game, men like Joe Weider, “The Father of Bodybuilding;” Joe Gold, founder of Gold’s Gym; former Mr. America Dave Draper; former Mr. Olympia Frank Zane; and dozens more – including Jack LaLanne. Women are honored, too: modern bodybuilders Lenda Murray and Rachel McLish are commemorated next to Muscle Beach pioneers and Paula Boelsom Pudgy Stockton.³⁷⁰ Tourists and regulars alike still flock to The Pit to lift weights in the open air, displaying their muscular prowess to passersby as their bodybuilding heroes did in the 1960s, ‘70s, and ‘80s. But today, “it lacks a bit of the glamour of the new order,” writes *Los Angeles Times* reporter Steve Harvey. “After all, Arnold Schwarzenegger lifts indoors. The Pit only has one mirror.”³⁷¹ And indeed, on an early-evening visit to Muscle Beach (once prime lifting time), The Pit stands dark and dormant, while just a mile to the

³⁷⁰ Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners, “Venice Beach – Muscle Beach Walk of Fame,” 14 August 2007, 1-3.

³⁷¹ Steve Harvey, “Muscle Beach: Press to Revive Name Is On,” *Los Angeles Times*, 30 March 1986, A14.

south, Gold's Gym Venice – the omnipresent chain's original location – positively bustles with physical activity.

Today The Pit claims the title of Muscle Beach Venice, but before World War II, the small patch of sand off of Arcadia Terrace alongside the Santa Monica pier owned that title. There, in the 1930s, the City of Santa Monica had built a long, low wooden platform, three feet by twelve; and surrounded by poles, ladders, and a set of gymnastic rings suspended 25 feet off the ground. Physical culturists of all sorts flocked to the area, to train and to show off their athletic talents, and display their bodies to crowds of amazed onlookers. Their performances attracted so many onlookers, and so much media attention, that Santa Monica's Muscle Beach quickly garnered international fame.³⁷²

Jack, like many other young Californians, could not resist the allure of Muscle Beach. For more than a year before the war, he pilgrimaged there on weekends, driving nearly four hundred miles from Oakland to be part of Muscle Beach on the weekend. In Southern California he found, for the first time, the thrill of performing with and before a group of men and women who shared his love of physical challenges. Those performances – which he continued while serving in the Navy during World War II – therefore marked the next step on Jack's road to international influence. This chapter chronicles those events, which changed the trajectory of Jack's career.

³⁷² Jan Todd, "The Halcyon Days of the Original Muscle Beach," in *Sport in Los Angeles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

TOWARDS MUSCLE BEACH

By 1936, Jack had established his first gym and had decided he wanted to pursue a career in fitness. He also knew that his unique body could help make that gym a success. By 1936, Jack possessed a marvelous physique, the kind that appeared in muscle magazines. His wide shoulders tapered to an incredibly small waist, and his arms stretched the seams of his shirts. Conscious of his posture, he held his ribcage high, deepening his chest and further tightening his waist. Jack had not lost his boyish good looks, either. His square jaw and calm smile exuded confidence, manliness, and likeability.³⁷³ He was, in short, already a “poster boy” for fitness.

In fact, while most believe that Jack’s campaign for national attention began with his television show in 1951, it actually began a decade and a half earlier, in 1936. Jack wrote to his favorite muscle magazine, *Strength & Health*, sending pictures and reports of his training, and publisher Bob Hoffman took note. Hoffman’s *Strength & Health*, was the most popular muscle magazine in America in 1936.³⁷⁴ As historian Dominic Morais explains, Jack’s decision to write the magazine was nothing unusual: Hoffman deliberately fostered a sense of community in his publication, encouraging readers to share their stories with him and with one another through its pages.³⁷⁵ Since Hoffman admired men who possessed both tremendous strength and musculature, it is little wonder

373 The description of Jack from this time comes from photographs in the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Oakland Gym.”

374 See the Introduction to this dissertation for more on Hoffman’s background.

375 Dominic Morais, “Strength in Numbers: Strength & Health Brand Community from 1932-1964,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Texas at Austin, 2015).

that he and other *Strength & Health* writers showered Jack with accolades soon after receiving his letters and photographs.³⁷⁶

Jack appeared in *Strength & Health* in June of 1936, when one of the pictures he sent to the magazine was displayed in an article by Norman Miller titled, “Who is the World’s Best Built Man?” Although Miller was actually writing about Siegmund Klein, John Grimek, and Anthony Sansone as possessing the best physiques in America at the time, he noted that Jack “would upset the dope in any contest for ‘World’s Best Built Man.’”³⁷⁷ The men Miller named over Jack deserved their recognition: Klein and Sansone had already established themselves as powerhouses in the iron game, and Grimek would go on to become one of the most admired bodybuilders in history.³⁷⁸ They were all also older than Jack, and had already been featured in *Strength & Health* many times, a fact that no doubt gave Jack considerable satisfaction.

Hoffman continued to publish photographs of Jack over the next few years. The January 1937 issue of *Strength & Health* featured a half-page image of him in repose, describing him as “one of the world’s outstanding physiques” and one year later, in April 1938, Hoffman used Jack’s image as a model of physical perfection, asking, “have you ever seen such tremendous breadth of chest in proportion to the waist?”³⁷⁹ And indeed, when Jack struck a vacuum pose – performed by exhaling forcefully and using the

376 Hoffman’s enthusiasm for men who possessed strength and muscle is perhaps best shown in Terry Todd’s article, “Remembering Bob Hoffman,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 18-23.

377 Norman Miller, “Who is the World’s Best Built Man?” *Strength & Health* (June 1936): 27.

378 Siegmund Klein assumed ownership of “Professor” Louis Attila’s gym after Attila’s death in 1924. Sansone won a physique contest sponsored by fitness entrepreneur Charles Atlas in 1923, and thereafter went into business with Atlas, publishing a popular mail-order training course. Grimek trained with Hoffman’s York Barbell Team, represented the United States in weightlifting at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, and won countless bodybuilding courses over his career.

379 Photograph and caption of Jack LaLanne, *Strength & Health* (January 1937): 28; and photograph and caption of Jack LaLanne, *Strength & Health* (April 1938): 34.

muscles of the lower stomach to pull the midsection inward, making it appear much more narrow – his waist seemed to almost disappear entirely.³⁸⁰

Jack had to content himself with the magazine’s praise, because he never had the opportunity to actually compete for the title of “World’s Best Built Man,” nor any other physique laurel. Although bodybuilding contests are plentiful today, as historian John D. Fair notes, virtually no one promoted them in America until the late 1930s. Before that time, bodybuilding suffered “neglect and subservience to [Olympic] weightlifting,” in part because of Hoffman’s opinion that “muscles should be useful,” and deserving of athletic as well as aesthetic accolades, writes Fair.³⁸¹ As a result – and contrary to his own claims and very many media reports – Jack never won any major bodybuilding contest.³⁸²

In *Mr. America: The Tragic History of a Bodybuilding Icon*, Fair explains:

LaLanne, at 5’7” [an extremely generous estimate], was only runner-up at Walt Baptiste’s Professional Mr. America Contest in 1954 and never entered an AAU Mr. America Contest, yet he attracted seemingly endless coverage in all the leading muscle magazines, including twelve covers. According to [friend and fellow handbalancer Jimmy] Payne, Jack ‘did not look good under the lights, but he had the best beach body and was the best all around performer.’³⁸³

Despite his lack of bodybuilding success, Jack continued to enter and excel in other sorts of contests. In 1938, he began wrestling again — now at a professional level — to build

380 From photographs in the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Oakland Gym.”

381 John D. Fair, *Mr. America: The Tragic History of a Bodybuilding Icon* (University of Texas Press, 2015): 67, 71. Olympic weightlifting refers to the snatch and clean and jerk, explosive and highly technical barbell movements that typically build relatively little musculature but require tremendous strength and athletic ability.

382 Several authors claimed that Jack won a Mr. America contest, a myth that Jack encouraged. See Pohla Smith, “Strongman Jack LaLanne Still Going, Well, Strong,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 14 September 2003; Donald Katz, “Jack LaLanne is Still an Animal,” *Outside* magazine (November 1995); and Phil Light, “Still Displaying the Fountain of Youth,” *Vegas Times*, 27 October 1995, A16. For a complete list of Mr. America winners, see Fair, “Mr/Ms America Titlists,” in *Mr. America*, 371-377.

383 John D. Fair, “Jimmy Payne: The Forgotten Mr. America,” *Iron Game History* 11, no. 4 (January 2012): 23.

publicity for his Oakland gym. He debuted on December 2, 1938, at Oakland Auditorium, as the opening act for Sandor Szabo, the Pacific Coast champion who also reportedly possessed “a perfect physique and tremendous power.”³⁸⁴ Szabo had immigrated from Hungary, and would go on to win several titles on the professional wrestling circuit, but in truth, his “perfect” physique was not so perfect: his arms and thighs lacked development, and his wide midsection could not belie the imminent threat of middle-aged spread.³⁸⁵ So instead of Szabo, Jack stole the show. He was a true “mat adonis,” wrote Bill Tobitt, sports reporter for the *Oakland Tribune*. Jack “pranced out under the lights... It was a beautiful thing to behold — [he was] seven feet wide at the shoulders, six inches across at the hips,” Tobin gushed. Jack “daren’t lose,” he continued, “or the feminine brigade would boycott the [Oakland Auditorium] forevermore.”³⁸⁶ Jack would later rely on that same masculine appeal during his time on television, when he wore a tight jumpsuit to accentuate his muscles and titillate the housewives of the Cold War era during a time when mainstream opinion favored the containment of sexuality. Although his professional wrestling career lasted only a few years, it helped Jack build a reputation in the Bay Area.

By 1940, thanks largely to Hoffman’s publicity, Jack’s physique was relatively well-known in the world of physical culture, even though he had barely established himself as a businessman and gymnasium owner. While wrestling helped him cover his rent and pay his other bills, he could not spare the time to justify any extensive pursuit of

384 Szabo to Meet Ivan Tonight, *Oakland Tribune*, 2 December 1938, B37.

385 Milton MacKaye, “On the Hoof,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 14 December 1935, n.p.

386 Bill Tobitt, “Hearts Flutter as Mat Adonis Lalanne Wins,” *Oakland Tribune*, 10 December 1938, D1.

a wrestling career. By 1940, however, word of what was happening on Muscle Beach on the weekends had made its way to northern California, and Jack could not resist seeing the legendary physical culture mecca for himself. Of course, Jack characteristically claimed that *his* reputation had traveled south, ahead of him, and that friends in distant Santa Monica had positively begged him to visit.³⁸⁷ In any case, since Muscle Beach could not come to him, Jack deigned to make the long, winding drive himself. “I would drive all night – about eight hours – I’d leave about ten and drive all night.”³⁸⁸ California’s beauty blesses the coast all the way from the San Francisco Bay to Santa Monica with four hundred miles of green and tan grasses lining craggy hillsides that abut the Pacific Ocean make the distance a pleasant one to traverse, at least in the daytime. Jack probably saw little of that, though, if his claims are true and he traveled all night long. But as Jack drove south, he – perhaps purposefully, perhaps unknowingly – set his career off on a new trajectory.

³⁸⁷ LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

³⁸⁸ Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.



Figure 10. Jack at age 21, displaying impressive musculature and posing ability.
Photograph from the LaLanne collection (ca. 1935).

Muscle Beach: The Early Days

According to historian Jan Todd, Santa Monica's Muscle Beach truly began to take shape in the mid-1920s, when local high schools first introduced gymnastics to their nascent physical education programs. Interest in the sport grew leading up to the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, although the Great Depression precluded the city from constructing many additional athletic facilities. When a massive earthquake struck nearby Long Beach in 1933, damaging schools, gyms, and hundreds of other buildings along the Santa Monica shoreline, local teenagers turned to the beach as a suitable place to practice tumbling and acrobatics. Two years later, in 1935, the Works Progress Administration granted funds to build a wooden platform, suspended rings, and parallel bars, just south of the Santa Monica pier.³⁸⁹

Thanks to the new equipment, the still-growing interest in gymnastics, and the talent of those who practiced there, Muscle Beach's popularity soared in the second half of the 1930s. Especially large crowds gathered on weekends, to watch group training sessions when dozens of athletes performed handbalancing, acrobatics, and other stunts on the new platform. In 1937 alone, about 1.8 *million* people visited the Beach: an increase of over 500 percent in less than a decade. Wrote reporter Joseph Fike in the *Los Angeles Times*: "It is not altogether a coincidence that local interest in tumbling and

³⁸⁹ Todd, "The Halcyon Days of the Original Muscle Beach."

apparatus work has grown as the playground has grown until the Los Angeles area today is probably the national center for this type of activity.”³⁹⁰

Even so, when Jack first arrived at the Beach, around 1940, it lacked much of the glamour it would acquire over the next decade. Armand Tanny, for example, a national-caliber weightlifter who had recently moved to Santa Monica from New York, “had never heard of it.”³⁹¹ His brother Vic, who founded Muscle Beach’s first gym and the world’s first chain of health clubs, had not yet even arrived on the West Coast. But many of the future Muscle Beach stars were already there and were practicing their skills on the still-new equipment: Abbye “Pudgy” and Les Stockton, Relna and Paul Brewer, Russ Saunders, Harold Zinkin, and other icons of physical culture found the Beach in the late 1930s and early 1940s.³⁹² They wrestled, did adagio, and practiced gymnastic and handbalancing feats in training sessions that often looked like an improvised vaudeville act. Their impressive physiques and athletic ability, when publically displayed on the Beach, caught the eyes of onlookers, and their feats became the stuff of legends.

The atmosphere was all the more special because those legendary figures were a family. Even the suave Armand Tanny seemed to struggle to explain their close bond:

You always had a friendship. No matter when you went to Muscle Beach there was always somebody around there that you knew. And it was the big attraction. It was like a club, it was a community. We all had common interests. It was just very much part of our lives. That was what made it a

390 Quoted in Todd, “The Halcyon Days of the Original Muscle Beach.” Fike’s writing comes from an article titled “Athletes Aren’t Always Show Offs!” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 August 1938, 10.

391 Armand Tanny, interview by Terry Todd, 9 June 1999.

392 Ben Pollack and Jan Todd, “The Chrome Icarus: Vic Tanny and America’s First Health Club Chain,” *Iron Game History*, *Iron Game History: The Journal of Physical Culture* 13-14 (December 2016): 17-37.

lot of fun. You knew everybody when you went down there. It was delightful.³⁹³

Just like in *Cheers*, at Muscle Beach, everyone knew your name. But membership in the club was earned, not given. When he finally arrived at Muscle Beach, Jack was met with trial by fire. Harold Zinkin greeted him – the same man with whom Jack would later perform a famous four-man pyramid; as well as a successful bodybuilder and weightlifter, and “an exceptionally well-rounded athlete,” Jack admitted.³⁹⁴ In order to test Jack’s mettle, Zinkin demanded a wrestling match: no small feat, considering that Jack had just driven a considerable distance, and that Zinkin was generally regarded as “the strongest in the [Muscle Beach] bunch.”³⁹⁵ Zinkin was a skilled wrestler himself, having learned the sport from several pro wrestlers who were also regulars at Muscle Beach and who would come down to the shore in the afternoon after practicing their skills at an arena a few blocks away. As Jack tells the tale, of course, Jack put his skills from the professional circuit to work, and bested Zinkin handily.³⁹⁶ “Harold was tough,” Jack admitted, “and we wrestled about 20 minutes, and then he’s skinned up and all this stuff. But it was tough, you know. And then we became buddies.”³⁹⁷ Passing this initiation test made Jack an integral member of the Muscle Beach clique.

Wrestling got Jack “in” at Muscle Beach, but it did not make him a star. The biggest crowds did not come to Muscle Beach for the wrestlers: they came for the

393 Armand Tanny, interview by Terry Todd, quoted in Tolga Ozyurtcu, “Flex Marks the Spot: Histories of Muscle Beach,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Texas at Austin, 2014), 36.

394 Rourke, “Harold Zinkin.”

395 Ibid., and LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

396 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

397 Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.

gymnasts. “Every conceivable balancing event that you wanted to do [we would do],” Zinkin explained.

There’d be a little bit of a line, taking turns, doing whatever we wanted to until we were tired. And we’d bounce off of what other people were doing, or put combinations of things together. You’d have a little sequence, a trick you may have created, a trick you saw somebody do that you liked. Something you polished up. Maybe had a better way of choreographing, getting from one trick to another, and all of sudden you’d have people clapping. To me it was a novelty. All of sudden you get people clapping and you figure “hmm, I did something pretty good.”³⁹⁸

Jack knew how to lift weights, but he had never done any sort of acrobatics and lacked the polished skills of the other regulars. And he wanted them.

Jack understood that as a successful gym owner, he simply could not afford to constantly take long weekends away from his business to visit Santa Monica, he also understood that he needed more than weekend practice to become as skilled as the Muscle Beach regulars were. So, when he returned north after that first visit, he promptly trotted the two and one-half miles across Oakland’s Inner Harbor to Washington Park, in Alameda, just a few miles from his childhood home in Berkeley. The city of Alameda had established the park in 1908, as one of the state’s earliest municipal recreation areas;

³⁹⁸ Harold Zinkin, interview by Jan and Terry Todd, quoted in Ozyutcu, “Flex Marks the Spot,” 32-33.

and, by the mid-1930s, Washington Park flourished as a family destination, full of space for physical activity, athletic games and gymnastics.³⁹⁹

During his childhood, Jack had frequented the park, and swam at nearby Neptune Beach, which opened on Washington Park's shores in 1917. (When he was older he snuck across the San Leandro Bay to Sunny Cove in the company of his many girlfriends.⁴⁰⁰) In its prime, Washington Park drew as many as 40,000 visitors on holidays. There was an amusement area there as well, but during the Great Depression, the rides closed.⁴⁰¹ Washington Park's gymnastic equipment remained, though, and that apparatus – very similar to what could be found at Muscle Beach – drew Jack to the park. There were parallel bars, suspended rings, and areas to perform acrobatics and tumbling.⁴⁰² Gymnastic skills, however, take years, even decades, to develop, and though he began to practice alone, Jack soon realized he needed an instructor.

That same year, 1940, Jack befriended Paul Knauer, a German immigrant with an extensive background in gymnastics. Knauer had been born in 1905, in Germany, and in 1925, at the age of 20, moved to Milwaukee, a city home to many German immigrants and organizations.⁴⁰³ Knauer earned a living as a cabinet maker, but spent his free in the

399 "Playground Notes," *San Mateo (California) Times*, 2 July 1936, 4; and City of Alameda, "ARPD History," accessed online at <https://alamedaca.gov/recreation/arpd-history>.

400 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

401 Greta Dutcher and Stephen Rowland, *Alameda* (Arcadia Publishing, 2009). *Alameda* is a photography or "coffee table" book, and its pages are not numbered.

402 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

403 "High Court Upholds OPA in Texas Eviction Cases," *Amarillo (Texas) Daily News*, 29 April 1947, 5; and the Milwaukee County Historical Society, "Milwaukee Timeline," accessed online at <http://www.milwaukeehistory.net/education/milwaukee-timeline/>. He almost certainly fled his homeland to escape the economic disaster that marked the German economy following the end of World War I and the ill-advised Treaty of Versailles: some nearly 500,000 Germans immigrated to the United States during the interwar years, though many masked their heritage in the face of strong anti-German sentiments following the war. See Lisa Trumbauer and Robert Asher, *Immigration to the United States: German Immigrants* (Facts on File Series, 2009): 69; and Maria Brand, "Paul Knauer Celebrated His 80th Birthday in 1985. He Was a Member of the Oakland Turn Verein and One of the Last Genuine Turners," *German American Pioneers*, accessed online at <http://www.germanamericanpioneers.org/JackLaLanneandPaulKnauer.htm>.

company of his wife and daughter; or hiking and climbing in forests and mountains, so he was probably already well-versed in physical culture when he came to America. Though it was not commonly recognized as an academic subject in Germany until after Knauer immigrated, according to historian Roland Naul, physical education benefitted from a “silent revolution” in the 1920s that portrayed the development of a healthy body as an integral component of a well-rounded general education.⁴⁰⁴

By the early 1930s, Knauer had moved to Oakland, and there he joined the local *Turnverein*, a German gymnastic club that preserved German culture partly through the practice of physical culture.⁴⁰⁵ Friedrich Ludwig Jahn founded the Turner movement in 1806, long before the “revolution” of which Naul writes, during the Napoleonic occupation of Germany. After the failed German revolution in 1848, many Turners immigrated to the United States, where they helped spread the popularity of resistance training and other forms of exercise. By the beginning of the 20th century, more than three hundred Turner organizations existed in America, collectively supporting about forty thousand members.⁴⁰⁶ Physical culture for the Turners comprised a breadth of activity, including, notably, calisthenics and gymnastics with apparatus, and exercise with

404 Roland Naul, “Physical Education Teacher Training,” in *Sport and Physical Education in Germany*, edited by Roland Naul and Ken Hardman (Psychology Press, 2002): 100.

405 Brand, “Paul Knauer,”; and “U.C. to Compete in Gymnastic Tourney,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 14 December 1935, 10. It is likely that Knauer belonged to a Turner society in Milwaukee, and perhaps also Germany; but no historical evidence exists to prove that was the case.

406 Annette Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History From Its Beginnings to 2000* (Printing Edge, 2010); Jan Todd, “From Milo to Milo: A History of Barbells, Dumbbells, and Indian Clubs,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 6 (April 1995): 11-12; and Sacramento Turn Verein, “Turn Verein Beginnings in the U.S.,” accessed online at <http://sacramentoturnverein.com/history>.

light weights. Knauer's specialty was handbalancing, and he practiced at Washington Park.⁴⁰⁷

He and Jack probably met there, at the park, or perhaps at the Berkeley Y.M.C.A., where Knauer trained (he later taught gymnastics and a "Y-Mando" conditioning course there, beginning in 1943).⁴⁰⁸ Admittedly, after he opened his own Physical Culture Studio, Jack had no particular reason to patronize the Y, but one can easily imagine Jack visiting his old haunt on occasion, to take a workout or to catch up with old friends.⁴⁰⁹ Regardless of how they met, Jack and Knauer quickly formed a close relationship, brought together by their love of physical culture.⁴¹⁰ "You're one of the greatest friends I ever had," Jack wrote to Knauer in 1985, "and one of my greatest inspirations."⁴¹¹ Impressed with Jack's raw physical talent, Knauer taught him the intricacies of handbalancing: balance, grace, and muscle control. Jack learned to walk, perform push-ups, even support other people, all while standing on his hands.⁴¹²

These were no mean feats. Bob Hoffman claimed that "handbalancing to... any barbell man is as natural as a duck taking to water," but few individuals who train with weights today would agree with him.⁴¹³ In contrast, in his forward to "Professor" Paulinetti's 1931 book on the subject, Logan Christopher describes the results that most anyone who has tried to perform a handstand without proper instruction finds: "a bruised

407 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

408 "Tumbling Class Set," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 17 March 1943, 8.

409 Given Jack's early strategy of attracting clients from Berkeley High, it seems reasonable to assume that he maintained a strong network of potential physical culturists throughout his early career. Visiting the Y would have supported this effort.

410 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

411 Letter from Jack LaLanne to Paul Knauer, 17 April 1985, accessed online at <http://www.germanamericanpioneers.org/JackLaLanneandPaulKnauer.htm>.

412 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

413 Bob Hoffman, *The York Handbalancing Course* (York Barbell Company, n.d.): 1.

tailbone and a bruised ego.”⁴¹⁴ Executing stunts in a handstand position requires the balance of a skilled gymnast or ballet dancer, but the necessary practice paid off for Jack. Unlike traditional weight training, handbalancing performances demonstrated Jack’s remarkable strength in a way even the casual observer – someone with no knowledge of resistance training – could appreciate. Handbalancing was an important asset for Jack as a young entrepreneur, as it allowed him to earn money as an entertainer as well as an instructor.

By the time Jack had absorbed all he could from Knauer, Washington Park no longer boasted the busyness it once had. Though its dancing pavilion and swimming pools remained intact, they rarely hosted performances from trapeze artists, vaudeville actors, or any of the other exciting entertainers that had delighted huge audiences there before the Great Depression.⁴¹⁵

Over the next year, and for several years after World War II, Jack spent many of his weekends pilgrimaging to Santa Monica, leaving Oakland late on Friday nights, after his business had closed; renting a motel for the weekend, driving home just in time to open the gym early on Monday morning. Over the next two decades, Muscle Beach helped dozens of men and women to emerge as stars and build the reputations of celebrities with their performances on the sand. While correlation may not equal causation, one cannot help but imagine that Jack’s early appearances at Muscle Beach must have contributed to his physical culture legacy, too.

⁴¹⁴ Professor Paulinetti, *The True Art and Science of Hand Balancing*. The book was originally published in 1945 and re-published by Logan Christopher in 2012. “Professor” was likely a title that Paulinetti bestowed upon himself – a common practice among early 20th-century physical culturists.

⁴¹⁵ Dutcher and Rowland, *Alameda*.

If the Beach made Jack famous, Jack made Muscle Beach famous, too. For example, one of Muscle Beach's most iconic photographs features Jack performing a stunt known as the "three high on a back bend." It involved Harold Zinkin's body as the base of a pyramid, his feet and palms flat on the base of the beach's small wooden platform and back arched in an inverted 'U' shape. Muscle Beach regular Deforest "Moe" Most stood on Zinkin's stomach; Jack, on Most's shoulders, and professional handbalancer Gene Miller completed the human tower. True to form, Jack claimed that his place in the pyramid was both the most demanding and the most important.⁴¹⁶ Zinkin claimed the stunt took two years of practice to complete successfully.⁴¹⁷ In popular articles about Muscle Beach today, Jack LaLanne's name is almost always included as an example of the importance of the Beach in the context of American fitness history.⁴¹⁸

Jack's fame would eventually outshine that of all the other regulars at Santa Monica's Muscle Beach; in fact, only Arnold Schwarzenegger's fitness legacy outstripped Jack's, but Arnold only trained at the "new" Muscle Beach in Venice. He never had the chance to train at Muscle Beach's original location, because it closed in 1958: a backlash to what some alleged had become a bohemian culture, accepting of marijuana, homosexuality, and casual sex.⁴¹⁹ Jack never forgot the Beach, nor the

416 LaLanne, *Jack 101*; and untitled photograph from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder "Body Building Friends." The photograph has become quite popular, especially in online articles about Muscle Beach.

417 Mary Rourke, "Harold Zinkin, 82; Muscle Beach Pioneer Invented Weight Machine" [obituary], *Los Angeles Times*, 24 September 2004.

418 See, for example, Adam Nagourney and Ian Lovett, "Venice Beach Bodybuilders Fear Google is Kicking Sand at Them," *New York Times*, 19 June 2012: A1; and John Zant, "Muscle Beach Memories: Santa Barbara Honors the Iconic Weight-Lifting Hot Spot," *Santa Barbara Independent*, 31 July 2014.

419 See Ozyurtcu, "Flex Marks the Spot," especially "Chapter 2: The Short Goodbye: Scandal, Politics, and the End of Muscle Beach," 41-75.

friendships he had made there, but World War II put a sudden end to the long weekends he spent there.



Figure 11. A signed photograph sent from Paul Knauer to Jack in 1945, demonstrating a difficult three-person handstand. Photograph from the LaLanne collection, 1945.

WORLD WAR II

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, marking the beginning of a war that would change the course of modern history. President Roosevelt immediately declared American neutrality in the Eurasian conflict, but by 1940, some – including Roosevelt himself – believed German aggression would necessitate that the United States enter the conflict as well.⁴²⁰ Yet even after the invasion of Poland in 1939, the American economy remained mired in depression. Circumstances seemed especially grim.

But six thousand miles away, Jack probably felt little urgency over the economy and foreign affairs, as his days were filled with weight lifting and athletic exhibitions, and his Muscle Beach escapades. He was not alone in his distraction. In 1939, San Francisco held the World's Fair on Treasure Island, celebrating the opening of the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges, and northern Californians fell in love with the event. Some even argued that the grandeur of the exposition would “contribute to cordial relations among the nations of the world,” a hope which, of course, never materialized.⁴²¹ Treasure Island would, however, eventually contribute to relations instrumental in Jack's personal future.

By 1940, one year after the World's Fair, America still had not formally entered the war, but had begun preparing itself for that inevitability. Wartime production in support of Allied forces had in fact begun, and invigorated Oakland's economy. People flocked to the city, and economic activity and population reached unprecedented heights. “The waterfront was active 24 hours a day,” read one city planning brief, and most

⁴²⁰ See William Hosch, *World War II: People, Politics, and Power* (New York: Britannica Educational Publishing, 2010): 175-176.

⁴²¹ Jack James and Earle Vonard Weller, *Treasure Island, “The Magic City,” 1939-1940: The Story of the Golden Gate International Exposition* (Pisani, 1941): 99.

industries “expanded and worked overtime.”⁴²² Ironically, the boom somewhat hurt Jack’s gym business, as it had done to Vic Tanny’s, in Southern California. For many gymgoers, the chance to work simply supplanted the need to work out.⁴²³ But Jack and his Physical Culture Studio had weathered almost a decade of hard economic times already, and, while it is impossible to determine whether Jack’s previously-established customer base shrunk by any significant amount, he claimed that his business continued to earn money throughout the war.

In fact, throughout all of this, Jack’s boundless energy for his business could not be exhausted – not by war, nor by his father’s early death the year prior in 1939, nor by the distraction of Muscle Beach. With characteristic determinedness he continued to promote the gym, even as the war escalated overseas. As late as March of 1941, when Roosevelt’s passage of the Lend-Lease Act virtually obliterated any hope of America avoiding war, Jack was still heralding the benefits of physical culture at local clubs and gatherings.⁴²⁴ Soon, however, he would be left with no choice but to acknowledge the enormity of world affairs. Roosevelt had established the Selective Service System (and America’s first peacetime draft) in September 1940, and Jack, at age 26, registered for the draft a year later.⁴²⁵

422 “Envision Oakland: City of Oakland General Plan,” Community and Economic Development Agency of Oakland (March 1998): 18; and Marilyn S. Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II* (University of California Press, 1994): 61.

423 Pollack and Todd, “Vic Tanny.”

424 “Dads, Sons Plan Night, Boys’ League to Present Program,” *Hayward (California) Daily News*, 29 March 1941, 1. Though this article ran on the front page of the local periodical, the “above-the-fold” section was dominated by war news.

425 Hosch, *World War II*, 175-176.



Figure 12. A young Jack LaLanne in his Navy uniform, ca. 1940. Photograph from the LaLanne collection.

Unfit for Service

When Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Jack knew he was destined for war. His confidence wavered, though, when he was presented with a rejection letter shortly after visiting the recruitment center nearest his gym.

Judging by modern standards, many would consider the draft planning and process in World War II rather primitive. Although the American military had been preparing for the threat posed by Germany and the Axis Powers before Pearl Harbor, few had anticipated the scale of that threat or the manpower required to defeat it. Initial plans in September 1940 called for an increase in personnel from 200,000 to 900,000 of highly qualified, physically capable men, drawing from a pool of more than 17 million men between the ages of 21 and 36. The military soon found, however, that the standard of physical fitness among recruits was quite low.⁴²⁶

Carl Zebrowski, editor of *America in World War II*, recalls how men were drafted: the government printed numbers on pieces of paper and put them into small capsules. The capsules went into a giant fishbowl, which was stirred with a wooden spoon, and a single one drawn from the bowl. All men who held the number in the chosen capsule reported to their local draft boards to be examined. “A man had to be at least five feet tall and no taller than six and a half, be at least 105 pounds, have vision correctable with glasses, have at least half his teeth, not have been convicted of a crime,

⁴²⁶ Gertrude G. Johnson, “Manpower Selection and the Preventative Medicine Program,” in *Preventative Medicine in World War II*, edited by John Boyd Coates, Jr., Ebbe Curtis Hoff, and Phebe M. Hoff (Office of the Surgeon General, 1955): 1-2.

and be able to read and write,” Zebrowski explains.⁴²⁷ Those judged unfit for duty were often African-Americans, or those with friends on the draft board who had connections that helped them escape military service. Draft boards – often “composed of men from Main Street” – rejected more than twenty percent of applicants, for reasons including cardiovascular defects, venereal disease, and psychiatric grounds.⁴²⁸

But Jack felt pressured to serve, as most American men did. Enlisting was a big decision for him: by 1941 his gym was a financial success and he was reportedly making so much money he could scarcely believe it, let alone spend it. Yet, “I had to go in. All my buddies were so nationalistic, we had to protect this country,” he remembered. As it turned out, enlisting was not so easy.

My last year in high school, in football, I dislocated my knee. Tore all the tendons in it. I was in a cast for about three months... When I came out of that thing, I couldn't do a full squat. In those days, one of the prerequisites for getting into the service was being able to do a full squat. So I tried three or four times to get into the Army, the Marines, and I would have been great, except for not being able to do a full squat. So they turned me down.⁴²⁹

427 Carl Zebrowski, “Your Number’s Up!” *America in World War II* (December 2007).

428 Leonard G. Rowntree, Kenneth H. McGill, and Thomas L. Edwards, “Causes of Rejection and the Incidence of Defects,” *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 123, no. 4 (25 September 1943): 181; and Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New Press, 1997): 562.

429 Interview with Jack LaLanne by Jan and Terry Todd.

By 1942, however, “the picture changed radically,” according to military historian Gertrude G. Johnson.⁴³⁰ With the stark realization of the horrors of war and the manpower required to weather it, the Army and Navy both dramatically lowered their physical standards. Johnson also notes that before 1942, local draft boards examined recruits; but after January of that year, their function “was limited to elimination of the obviously disqualifying defects.”⁴³¹ According to Jack,

Out of desperation, they were having a big recruiting thing in the Navy...

Here I come in, naked, all this tan, and all these guys, they’re looking at me, like “Oh god, Jack LaLanne’s here.” I’m doing handstands, and flips, and all that stuff, and the guys are going crazy. Then when it comes time, the examining doctor, he comes in, and he’s the guy that operated on my knee. He didn’t have me do nuthin’ – he just passed me through. Next thing I know, I’m on Mare Island.⁴³²

Jack later suggested that he was conflicted about the nature of his military service. He even once described it as “the stupidest thing I ever did” – a rather uncommon sentiment from a veteran. It also seems unlikely that any doctor would reject such a fine physical specimen; and no historical record can corroborate the “full squat” requirement for service. However, patriotism prevailed throughout the entire nation; few even attempted to dodge the draft, and many of his fellow physical culturists had readily enlisted, including most of the male Muscle Beach regulars. Perhaps the exact details of Jack’s

430 Johnson, “Manpower Selection,” 2.

431 Ibid.

432 Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.

enlistment are unimportant, as his actual service in the military is well documented. After being accepted, he quickly arranged his business affairs, assigning longtime student and employee Carl Cathey to manage the Oakland gym.⁴³³ Then he set off.

The Pacific Theater

Jack's tour began in 1942 on Mare Island, a mass of land measuring roughly one thousand square acres off the coast of Vallejo, about thirty miles from Jack's hometown. The first naval shipyard on the West Coast was founded on Mare Island, in 1853; and a century later, that shipyard employed over 40,000 men and women in support of the war effort.⁴³⁴ Perhaps it was on Mare Island that Jack was issued his standard equipment for the next several years. In any case, he was made to manage with little more than a uniform, mess gear, sleeping materials, and a "sea bag" to store his possessions.⁴³⁵

During six weeks of basic training, Jack endured training drills that most soldiers felt were grueling, tiresome events though they were oftentimes more challenging mentally than physically. New recruits learned to wield firearms, climb up ropes and over obstacles, perform hand-to-hand combat, and remain orderly during chaos. General calisthenics were intended not just to build strength and stamina, but to teach new soldiers to work in unison and develop resolve.⁴³⁶ Though he had no difficulty in completing the exercises, Jack did not enjoy them, nor the unsparing rigor of the military. "It was like a prison," he remembered.⁴³⁷

433 Unidentified newspaper clipping from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled "Old Newspaper Articles 1989-1990." Only the second of page of the two-page article is included in the binder, and the continuation on that page is titled "LaLanne: Proof Is Still in the Pudding," from the newspaper *Valley Herald*, 26 August 1990, C7. No author is identified.

434 Judy Schnieder, "Urban and Regional Effects of Military Spending: A Case Study of Vallejo, California and Mare Island Shipyard," *Built Environment* 11, no. 3 (1985): 207-208; "A Brief History of Mare Island," Lenmar Mare Island, LLC, accessed online at <http://discovermareisland.com/history/>; and LaLanne, Jack 101.

435 Wm. J. Veigele, *Sea Bag of Memories: Images, Poems, Thoughts & Crafts of the Small Ship Sailors of World War II* (Astral Publishing, 2003): n.p.

436 "Welcome to the Service, Son," *America in World War II*, accessed online at <http://www.americainwwii.com/galleries/welcome-to-the-service-son/>

437 LaLanne, *Jack* 101.

Finally, with training completed, Jack was stationed aboard the newly completed transport ship *S.S. Dashing Wave*, bound for Yerba Buena Island.⁴³⁸ Yerba Buena Island sits in the San Francisco Bay, between San Francisco and Oakland; and during World War II, it and nearby Treasure Island collectively formed the Naval Station Treasure Island, a major military facility. During and after the war, Treasure Island processed as many as 12,000 troops per day for deployment throughout the Pacific area, and, thanks to its strategic location, the Island was sometimes referred to as “the gateway to the Pacific.”⁴³⁹

Jack was assigned to duty as a pharmacist’s mate aboard the *Dashing Wave*, a job for which he felt woefully unqualified. At that time, pharmacist’s mates were classified as petty officers, responsible for work that could vary from making beds to administering first aid on the battlefield. According to government documents from 1945, the position required fairly extensive training, including detailed knowledge of medicine and medical instruments, anatomy, clinical charting, nursing, and over a dozen other related skills.⁴⁴⁰ Knowledge of anatomy aside, Jack had none of them. He simply had no idea why he had been given the job.

So, like most any in his position might, he asked his older brother for help. Fortunately, Norman also served in the Navy and was stationed near San Francisco, and during the war he never strayed far from Jack. Norman had graduated from the University of California, Berkeley in 1935, some ten years earlier, and in the years leading up to the war he started his own business along the San Francisco waterfront,

438 Ibid., and “NH 102230 SS Dashing Wave,” *Naval History and Heritage Command*, accessed online at <https://www.history.navy.mil/>

439 Sue Lemon, “Treasure Island, Naval Station, 1937 – ,” in *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases*, edited by Paolo E. Coletta (Greenwood, 1985): 600.

440 “United States Navy Rating Description, Pharmacist’s Mate, Second Class” (Navy Department Bureau of Naval Personnel, 1945), accessed online at <http://home.epix.net/~nooyawka/Phm2.htm>

selling “pumps, filters, engine parts and other essential items used by such customers as shipyards, fishermen and the Navy,” according to his obituary in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.⁴⁴¹ Perhaps in part because of his civilian relationship with the Navy and his postsecondary education, Norman rose quickly through its ranks after joining to support the war effort, and by the time Jack was stationed aboard the *Dashing Wave*, Norman had earned the rank of lieutenant commander.⁴⁴²

Jack pleaded desperately with his older brother, asking that Norman use his influence to get Jack reassigned. Norman agreed, Jack remembered: he told the man to whom Jack reported that Jack was employed as a chiropractor, and that he deeply distrusted pharmaceuticals and lacked any medical knowledge whatsoever. Horrified, Jack’s commanding officer promptly reassigned him to a different position on a different ship.⁴⁴³

Jack’s new ship, the *President Tyler*, like the *Dashing Wave*, was a troop transport ship, destined for the South Pacific to carry injured soldiers back to San Francisco for treatment.⁴⁴⁴ Jack’s assignment had not changed significantly: he would still care for the wounded, but in a less technically-demanding capacity, providing basic personal care for and feeding of sick or injured men. Of course, he was aboard a ship in the Pacific Theater, and so Jack’s job was somewhat complicated by the imminent and omnipresent threat of attack by Japanese warships or airplanes. Though he never used a weapon during the war, Jack understandably feared for his life, stationed so close to combat.

441 Michael Taylor, “Norman LaLanne – Well-Known Waterfront Businessman,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 October 2005; and “Norman LaLanne” [obituary], *San Francisco Chronicle*, 6 October 2005.

442 Ibid.; and LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

443 LaLanne, *Jack 101*. The story is not as unlikely as it might seem, since the rapid expansion of the Navy necessitated more flexibility than during peacetime, and enlisted men were often reassigned. Of course, Jack had a flair for the dramatic, and his reassignment probably did not play out exactly as he described. See “This Month in Intrepid’s History,” Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum Complex, April 28, 2014, accessed online at <https://www.intrepidmuseum.org/LatestNews/April-2014/This-Month-in-Intrepid%E2%80%99s-History>

444 Emory A. Massman, *Hospital Ships of World War II: An Illustrated Reference* (McFarland, 1999): 365.

In February 1943, the *President Tyler* finally embarked with Jack on board, for his first deployment to Guadalcanal, the site of the first major offensive victory for the United States in the Pacific Theater.⁴⁴⁵ Over two thousand Americans had died in the conflict – a terrible tragedy, but still one-tenth the number of Japanese casualties.⁴⁴⁶ On one especially harrowing occasion, the *President Tyler* lost communication with its protection convoy and could do nothing more than hold its position off the coast of Guadalcanal, hoping to avoid detection by the enemy by silencing its engines.⁴⁴⁷

Realizing the enormity of his assignment, Jack decided he had no option except to make the best of a bad situation. So, with the help of a few shipmates, he snuck onboard enough weights to fashion a makeshift gym: sufficient, at least, to maintain his physique.⁴⁴⁸ “All the guys, you know, they had sea bags,” Jack explained proudly. “So every one of the guys put maybe 25 or 50 pounds of plates in each of their sea bags. You had maybe 40 guys smuggling things on board.” Once safely aboard the ship, they fashioned a gym from their contraband. “It became so popular with the crew – the doctors, the top officers working out – so we built benches and chinning bars, the whole damn thing on the ship!”⁴⁴⁹

Jack thus filled at least part of his time on the *President Tyler* with physical culture. He trained often. When the ship landed and crew disembarked, he stripped off his Navy uniform and showed his muscles for the locals, posing and flexing. His company even held an impromptu bodybuilding contest – with trophies! – which, one must assume, Jack won.⁴⁵⁰ The Navy officers slackened their regulations during voyages, and

445 Roland W. Charles, “President Tyler,” in *Troopships of World War II* (Army Transport Association, April 1947): 239.

446 “Battle of Guadalcanal,” *The Reader’s Companion to Military History*, edited by Robert Cowley and Geoffrey Parker (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1996): 190-191.

447 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

448 Ibid.

449 Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.

450 Untitled photographs from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Navy;” and LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

Jack grew a beard and tanned. Yet duties took precedence over all, and despite his best efforts, Jack could not maintain his physical peak in the Pacific. Photographs from his voyage show that his pectorals and arms shrunk, and his midsection expanded. Though the loss of hard-earned muscle must have rankled Jack, it was a small sacrifice in the name of the greater good.

Over the course of 1943, the *President Tyler* made six voyages to Honolulu – presumably less consequential ones than the first trip to Guadalcanal – the last of which ended in January 1944. It then departed San Francisco, destined for Los Angeles, but Jack was not aboard: he had yet again been reassigned.⁴⁵¹ The “ritual good times” in the Pacific with the crew of the *President Tyler* lasted over a year, and perhaps Jack was sad to see them end.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵¹ Charles, *Troopships of World War II*, 239.

⁴⁵² David Medigovich to Jack LaLanne, 19 October 1943, from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Navy.”



Figure 13. Jack displaying his physique to excited children in Guadalcanal, ca. 1943.
Photograph from the LaLanne collection.



Figure 14. Jack performing handstand push-ups in front of fellow sailors. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

Return to Treasure Island

Upon the *President Tyler*'s return, Jack was again stationed at Treasure Island to await reassignment. The naval station on Treasure Island processed so many soldiers that it is little coincidence that in 1944 several other well-known physical culturists bided their time at Treasure Island as well. During their wait together, they transformed the base into a hotbed for handbalancing – as well as weight training and wrestling.

The list of Treasure Island lifters began with Jack's old friend from Washington Park, Jimmy Payne. Payne had entered the service in 1943, and, as a resident of the Bay Area, came to the Island before his ship sailed for the south Pacific. While there, he continued to practice his handbalancing and barbell work, and later became a physical trainer for the Navy.⁴⁵³ George Redpath, an early Muscle Beach regular, found himself ordered to Treasure Island, too. Redpath had begun practicing gymnastics at an early age, and enlisted in the Navy rather than wait for his draft number to be called. His physical talents caught the attention of his commanders, who quickly placed Redpath in charge of a physical training facility. During his work there, according to historian Al Thomas, Redpath "worked with men who would leave their mark upon post-war handbalancing," including Jack Brick, Loren Brown, and Al Motter.⁴⁵⁴ Jack, of course, ended up at Treasure Island, too.

But all that talent on Treasure Island might have gone untapped if not for the efforts of Sam and Joe Loprinzi, the two brothers who operated the base gym there.

⁴⁵³ John D. Fair, "Jimmy Payne."

⁴⁵⁴ Al Thomas, "George Redpath: A Life in the Balance," *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 16.

According to Payne, the Loprinzi gym was the first one with barbells in the service; and it had a profound impact on the Navy. Thomas explains:

World War II found Sam in the U.S. Navy, and his memorable accomplishment in those years was breaking down the Navy brass' stubborn resistance to his, and brother Joe's, request to set-up a weight training program for the Naval personnel at Treasure Island Navy Base in San Francisco. Since, in those days, the great fear was that the barbell trainer was doomed to becoming 'musclebound,' Sam's first order of business was to demonstrate that such worries were unnecessary by means of easily assumed splits, back-bends, and the suppleness of his muscle control (along with his and Joe's demonstrated athleticism in wrestling, swimming, boxing, handball, and hand-balancing). By the end of their enlistments, the Loprinzi brothers were putting '500 men a day through the Loprinzi workouts and, whereas in the beginning they were using makeshift equipment, they ended up with all of the best equipment needed for the job.' To make their ideological victory over the Navy complete, by the time of their discharge, the boys 'received a... commendation from their superiors for their achievement in building such a wonderful program of physical training.'⁴⁵⁵

The Loprinzi gym had a profound impact on Payne, Redpath, and Jack, as well. All three would spend the remainder of their enlistments as physical trainers in various locale. Jack, of course, already owned his own gym, but after the war, Payne opened his own health studio together with bodybuilder Norman Marks.⁴⁵⁶ Redpath opened one too, in 1949, together with his wife, Peggy. "We had a co-ed gym which was a very rare thing at that time," Redpath remembered. "Peggy was an admirer of Pudgy Stockton and trained with weights at a time when resistance training was rare for women. The gym was an instant success: people loved the idea of coed training."⁴⁵⁷

455 Al Thomas, "Where Are They Now? Sam Loprinzi," *Iron Game History* 1, no. 6 (August 1991): 10.

456 Fair, "Jimmy Payne."

457 Thomas, "George Redpath," 16.

Sadly, no accounts of the handbalancing performances on Treasure Island can be found, but it seems safe to assume that they were both plentiful and impressive. Later, after the war, other men would join Redpath, Payne, Loprinzi and Jack in what amounted to nothing less than a gym business boom. Throughout the late 1940s and 1950s, Vic Tanny expanded his Muscle Beach gym to a chain of over seven dozen locations; Ray Wilson opened several of his own chains, beginning with American Health Studios in 1953.⁴⁵⁸ As historian Jan Todd explains, the bodies and athletic abilities of Jack and other physical culturists had impressed many of their fellow servicemen during the war. After it ended, those men wanted to continue with training, and their enthusiasm spread. Ultimately, World War II “introduced thousands of men to the benefits of weight training,” and helped dispel the myth of muscle-binding.⁴⁵⁹ The physical culturists at Treasure Island in 1944 provide perhaps the most obvious example of Todd’s argument.

Sun Valley

Treasure Island served both as a melting pot and a starting point: the men who trained there shared ideas with each other, and spread them to others upon redeployment in new places. Management scholars would refer to this phenomenon as a process of legitimacy. When those previously unexposed to physical culture saw the skilled men from Treasure Island, they came to understand the benefits of fitness, and, in understanding, came to accept exercise as a beneficial practice.⁴⁶⁰

458 Pollack and Todd, “Vic Tanny.”

459 Todd, “The Halcyon Days of the Original Muscle Beach.”

460 Legitimacy theory is a well-developed area of management scholarship. Some of the most important early works on legitimacy include Mark Suchman, “Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches,” *Academy of Management Review* 20, no. 3

Nevertheless, the inevitable transfers – so common in the military – meant that Jack enjoyed relatively little time on Treasure Island, though he surely would have loved to stay for the war’s duration. Shortly after arriving there, early in 1944, he was promoted to full lieutenant, and sent to the Navy Convalescent Hospital in Sun Valley, Idaho to help rehabilitate injured soldiers.⁴⁶¹ Sun Valley is a beautiful, tiny town, in the middle of the state, popular with vacationers and winter-sports enthusiasts. Jack may have regretted departing from Treasure Island, but he was pleased with his reassignment. It was a welcome change from the confines and potential danger of the *President Tyler*, and yet another opportunity to promote physical culture. “I loaded my car – a brand new convertible Cadillac I’d been given – I loaded the whole thing up with as much weights as I could get my hands on,” he said. “I had maybe 1,000 pounds of weights. I took everything: barbells... and then I go to Sun Valley.”⁴⁶²

The hospital was commissioned just one year prior, in 1943, and refashioned from a hotel formerly owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. It was huge, and could hold over 1,000 patients – but in fact, it filled quickly and became the most heavily-occupied military hospital in the country. The Navy Convalescent Hospital was “especially equipped” to deliver physical therapy services to patients after they had undergone surgery, a relatively new form of accepted medicine at that time.⁴⁶³ In fact, owing to the relatively primitive rehabilitation methods employed at the time, many patients spent

(1995): 571-610; Blake Ashforth and Barrie Gibbs, “The Double-Edge of Organizational Legitimation,” *Organization Science* 1, no. 2 (1990): 177-194; and Howard Aldrich and C. Marlene Fiol, “The Institutional Context of Industry Creation,” *Academy of Management Review* 19, no. 4 (1994): 645-670.

⁴⁶¹ LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

⁴⁶² Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.

⁴⁶³ Jennifer Mitchum, “Convalescent Navy Hospitals of World War II,” *BUMED History Showcase* (n.d.): 27.

over half a year in postoperative therapy during the war. These circumstances inevitably contributed to the overcrowding of many hospitals like the one at Sun Valley.⁴⁶⁴

Life at the hospital was far kinder to Jack than it had been aboard the *President Tyler*. Many of the hospital's patients suffered not from traumatic physical injury, but rather from what is today known as post-traumatic stress disorder. These men usually did not require intensive medical care. They primarily needed rest, psychotherapy, and, in some cases, physical therapy. Jack's work as a physical therapist was remarkably much like the work he had done at his physical culture studio: work that he obviously savored. Yet he was not content to do his assignment at Sun Valley in only a perfunctory manner; Jack, as he often did, saw his station as a valuable opportunity to share his knowledge of physical culture with those in need.

Rehabilitation protocols at that time largely consisted of rest, heat, and extremely light exercise, as recommended by the first American professor of physical therapy, R. Tait McKenzie, in 1923. They had not improved significantly in the two decades since. As historians Jan and Terry Todd and Jason Shurley explain,

the modern strength training practitioner can appreciate that, although better than complete rest, these rehabilitation protocols produced only minimal strength gains and, in all likelihood, did little to shorten periods of disability. Consequently, rehabilitation progressed much more slowly than in our modern era, and during World War II veterans' hospitals were overwhelmed with hundreds of slowly recovering orthopedic patients.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Jan Todd, Jason Shurley, and Terry C. Todd, "Thomas L. DeLorme and the Science of Progressive Resistance Exercise," *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research* 26, no. 11 (November 2012): 2913-2923.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2915.

However, some medical authorities, like Dr. Thomas DeLorme, realized and evangelized the benefits of heavier resistance training as a form of physiotherapy. DeLorme presented his patients' results from heavy training to several military hospitals between 1944 and 1945, and eventually convinced the Surgeon General of the United States to formally recommend his protocols to all Army therapists.⁴⁶⁶

When Jack arrived in Sun Valley, he was already well-versed in, and a strong proponent of, heavier training. However, recognizing both the soldiers' unfamiliarity with the importance of progressive resistance, he began most patients with a regime of light calisthenics and endurance work. Jack's favored protocol constituted a vast improvement over traditional methods, and the results immediately caught the attention of many patients. He disparaged traditional methods. "What was rehabilitation in those days?" he asked. "A little massaging, a little walking... So I set up a gym."⁴⁶⁷

In just the short while since he had arrived, Jack had earned enough credibility to get permission to refashion a corner of a break room in the hospital into a gym, displacing the pool and ping-pong tables to make room for makeshift equipment similar to that found at his studio in Oakland.⁴⁶⁸ "They gave me seven civilian workers," Jack said, "and one of my jobs was getting the fellows up on the cold winter mornings, about six o'clock in the morning.... And then I'd get them out there and exercise them."⁴⁶⁹ He continued: "I'd get them lifting weights, I'd get them doing squats, and I put a chinning

466 Ibid.

467 Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.

468 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

469 Jimmy Lancaster, "Fitness Guru Likes Area," *Branson (Missouri) Tri-Lakes Daily News*, 12 November 1997, n.p. From the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled "Old Newspaper Articles, 1996-1998;" and The Jack LaLanne Show, Episode 12, from the LaLanne digital collection.

bar up – God almighty, we had so many guys that we had no room. And the doctors couldn't believe it – they saw these skinny guys lifting dangerous weights, thinking they'd strain."

Apparently, most patients resented the early-morning schedule of the workouts, but they loved the results so much that soon Jack was permitted to convert the entire break room into a gym. They added weight benches and incline boards for abdominal training. Some of the soldiers had lost as much as 50 pounds since sustaining their injuries, and he helped them regain their muscle and strength.⁴⁷⁰ "The guys we had were shellshocked when they came there. We got more results in 30 days with exercise than the doctors got with their methods. That's when (fitness) really got into people's minds," Jack concluded.⁴⁷¹

Just as he had on the *President Tyler*, Jack resolved at Sun Valley to enjoy his service. Though overcrowded, the Navy Convalescent Hospital still provided plenty of time for recreation; after all, in the repurposed rec room, Jack's gym shared space with ping-pong and pool tables. In fact, the hospital positively teemed with fun amenities:

The facility maintained two glass-enclosed, heated, yearlong swimming pools. Three of the six ski lifts were kept in operation for Navy personnel and in season advantage was taken of the excellent skiing in the very fine powder snow of the area. Ice skating in the winter was amply provided for, although the artificial rink was discontinued. Fishing, hunting, soft ball diamond, a golf course, tennis, badminton, and archery courts were available. Indoor recreation was also ample. A 500-seat theater with excellent equipment and first-run pictures obtained from Salt Lake City provided entertainment. Bowling alleys, air-conditioned and

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with LaLanne by Jack and Terry Todd.

⁴⁷¹ Lancaster, "Fitness Guru."

soundproof with six regulation alleys, were on hand as were pool tables, ping pong tables, and ample equipment.⁴⁷²

The hospital's description resembles many of the sanatoriums popular in the early twentieth century, as well as many of the luxurious health spas Vic Tanny opened in the 1950s. Although no evidence proves that Tanny drew any inspiration from Sun Valley, his clubs attracted thousands of people and earned millions of dollars during the next decade.⁴⁷³

Jack enjoyed the many recreational facilities at the hospital, and he began spending time with Irma Navarre, a lieutenant nurse from New York.⁴⁷⁴ Navarre had worked at the Arizona State Hospital before the war broke out, and subsequently moved to Sun Valley.⁴⁷⁵ Her slim physique, bright smile and broad dimples quickly caught Jack's eyes and, just as quickly, she became pregnant with his child.⁴⁷⁶ Perhaps to avoid the unseemliness of childbirth out of wedlock, Jack and Irma married; and on December 6, 1944, Jack's newlywed wife gave birth to a daughter, Yvonne.⁴⁷⁷

Virtually nothing more is known about Navarre. Jack never spoke of her in interviews, nor on his television show, and apparently no publications considered her life newsworthy. Their marriage soon failed, and they separated in 1948. Although Jack claimed they divorced that year, in truth, he divorced her in 1959, just one month before he married his second wife, Elaine.⁴⁷⁸ After their separation, Yvonne stayed with her mother, although both kept Jack's surname.⁴⁷⁹

472 Mitchum, "Navy Hospitals," 27.

473 Pollack and Todd, "Vic Tanny."

474 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

475 United States Department of Commerce, "Sixteenth Census of the United States," for Arizona State Hospital, 3 May 1940: 13B.

476 Photographs of Jack and Navarre from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled "Navy;" and LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

477 "Yvonne LaLanne," accessed online via Ancestry.com, in the database U.S. Public Records Index, 1950-1993, Volume 2.

478 Alabama Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Divorce Index, 1950-1959 (Montgomery): 811.

479 California Social Security Death Index for Irma LaLanne, record 559-44-5762. Irma died on 3 February, 1996.

Jack stayed at Sun Valley until the war's end in 1945. The aid that Jack, and the many other caregivers, dispensed at Sun Valley profoundly influenced the lives of the soldiers who stayed there. "Few [soldiers] left in the same condition in which they had come," writes historian Jennifer Mitchum, and while the names of his patients and trainees are hidden by medical privacy laws, it is hard to imagine that some of them did not adopt more physically active lives after the war.



Figure 15. Irma Navarre in her uniform. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

WELCOME TO SHOW BUSINESS

When the war ended, Jack returned to Oakland, and resumed his business at LaLanne's Physical Culture Studio. Yet in the few years he had spent away in the Navy, he had cultivated a thirst for more publicity than could not be slaked with his tiny gym so close to his childhood home. His demonstrations to the inhabitants of Guadalcanal; to the passersthrough at Treasure Island; and to the patients at the Convalescent Hospital in Sun Valley: all had proven beyond any doubt that Jack could persuade all sorts of people to embrace the benefits of physical culture. And so, instead of devoting his full attention to running the business or training students, Jack began to focus more on performances that were held throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.

The first record of such a performance comes from 1946. One June 8 of that year, Jack performed a "handbalancing and specialty act" back at his old haunt, the Berkeley YMCA, during a physique contest held there. As a simple performance the act seems insignificant: after all, Jack had made many such guest appearances before the war, too. However, this particular appearance may have originated the myth of Jack's bodybuilding career, thanks to a newspaper article promoting the event that appeared in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. The article explained that Jack would be appearing *with*, but not *as*, the true Mr. America winner of 1945, Clarence Ross. That distinction, however, was poorly drawn.⁴⁸⁰ Ross, like Jack, was an Oakland native, and had enlisted in the Air Force to support the war effort. Though nearly a decade Jack's junior, Ross had started training before the war, and afterward won the Mr. America Contest, and was soon

⁴⁸⁰ "Muscles to Bulge at YMCA," *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, 8 June 1946, 11.

featured in numerous muscle magazines.⁴⁸¹ In January of 1946 he opened his own gymnasium on Encinal Avenue, in Alameda, less than five miles from Jack's Physical Culture Studio. The two men probably enjoyed at best a strained friendship, drawn together by their love for physical culture but wary of the threat of competition.

Not easily distracted by small problems like the competition posed by Ross, after the YMCA performance, Jack quickly "worked up a sensational act" with his old handbalancing buddy, Jimmy Payne, and the two toured up and down the California coast for the next several years.⁴⁸² Payne would perform handstand push-ups while holding weights in his teeth and dips on a bar suspended by helicopter. Jack's favorite trick was more involved. He began in a regular handstand and held that inverted position as he used one hand at a time to stack blocks up on the ground. When the stack grew too high to build from the ground, he would – still in a handstand – "climb" the stack with his arms, all while continuing to build, as assistants handed him more blocks. Jack and Jimmy even interspersed their demonstrations of strength with comedy routines.⁴⁸³ "The stuff we did in those days, nobody did," Payne said.⁴⁸⁴ They partied hard, too. Payne recalls a regular trip to Muscle Beach: "We would perform on the beach all day and go to the Brown Derby and other clubs in Hollywood at night to drink," he said. "Jack put away quite a

481 Fair, *Mr. America*, 90-94; Leo Stern, "Clarence Ross, 'Mr. America of 1945,'" *Your Physique* 5, no. 4 (October 1945): 14; and *Muscle Power* (September 1946): 76. David Gentle claims that Ross joined Ray Wilson in managing Wilson's American Health Studios chain around this time as well, but Wilson did not begin franchising his clubs until the late 1950s.

482 Fair, "Jimmy Payne," 23.

483 Chris Smith, "Jimmie Paine," *Santa Monica Press-Herald*, 30 January 2012; Alyce Stagg, "Professional 'Mr. America' Contest," *Strength & Health* (December 1946): 24; and "Was Jack LaLanne Strong?" IronOnline, accessed online at

<http://www.davedraper.com/fusionbb/showtopic.php?tid/19929/>

484 Smith, "Jimmie Paine."

few.”⁴⁸⁵ Jack always downplayed his weakness for alcohol; but then, in his mind, he earned the right to drink. "Vices keep you sane," he said. "Look at how many people had coffee, a doughnut and a cigarette for breakfast. As long as you're in good condition, you're earned the right to do whatever you want."⁴⁸⁶

On August 5, 1949, Jack swam from Oakland to San Francisco, a six-mile journey through open waters that took him three hours and 15 minutes to finish. The day was warm, and clear, but windy, and the strong breeze probably made the stunt even more difficult.⁴⁸⁷ Sadly, it garnered little media attention, despite Jack’s claim that he had performed the stunt to awaken Americans to the dangers of excessive consumption and insufficient exercise. In 1949, Jack’s reputation simply was not imposing enough to capture widespread interest. Years later, after he had established *The Jack LaLanne Show*, the whole world would take note when he reentered the icy waters of the Bay for another, far more epic swim.

By 1950, the San Francisco Bay area had gotten to know Jack LaLanne, and he relished the opportunities that came with fame. He issued an open challenge to all who patronized his Physical Culture Studio: best him in a physical contest – the events of which Jack would stipulate – and win a fabulous prize. In May 1950 local journalist Ed Schoenfeld wrote a full-page feature on Jack, Jimmy Payne and Clarence Ross – all Bay-area musclemen – in the *Oakland Tribune*. “Oakland has turned out more well-developed

485 Fair, “Jimmy Payne,” 23.

486 Dan Stephens, “Muscle Magic,” *San Luis Obispo Tribune*, 29-30 December, 1984, 1.

487 LaLanne, Jack 101; “LaLanne.... Nuff said!” on an Internet forum titled Raw Iron, 15 August 2008, accessed online at <http://raw-iron.com/forums/index.php?topic=367.0>; and “Weather History for KSFO – August, 1949,” Weather Underground, accessed online at www.wunderground.com/history

men than any other city in the land,” he boasted.⁴⁸⁸ His praise of Jack outshone even that of Ross, who – in truth – could easily best Jack in a physique contest. Nevertheless, Schoenfeld gushed,

There is a standing offer of \$2000 to anyone in the world who can follow Jack LaLanne, still another Oaklander, in a program of endurance and feats of strength. He has five world records for his prowess in these two fields. Fifty men from all over the nation have faced Lalanne here, but they might as well have saved their time and their breath. Next, please!⁴⁸⁹

In fact, no one ever earned any money from besting Jack in that particular challenge. As he later explained, his balanced combination of strength and endurance allowed him to outpace any specialist who could keep pace with him in one area or the other, but not both. Jack’s carefully-developed training methods provided him an advantage over most other barbell men, too: he used a primitive version of what would today be called periodized circuit training. He would alternate spending three weeks performing many sets of high repetitions with little rest, to condition his body; and then the next three weeks performing fewer reps with longer rest periods, to develop maximal strength. The approach enabled him to perform feats that few others could ever hope to match.⁴⁹⁰

In November, Jack had the chance to once again exercise his vocal cords that still mourned his decision to abandon opera, when he was invited to sing on the popular local radio station KLX, broadcast out of Oakland. And, later that winter, local businesses

488 Ed Schoenfeld, “Mr. Muscles,” *Oakland Tribune*, 7 May 1950, T-8.

489 Ibid.

490 Jack LaLanne, “Strength and Endurance” (1949), accessed online at <http://ditillo2.blogspot.com/2010/11/strength-and-endurance-jack-lalanne.html>

hired him to perform “his wonderful feats of strength,” outside their establishments, seeking to attract customers to their pre-Christmas sales.⁴⁹¹

From a historical perspective, these early self-promotions and exhibitions evidence the practically universal truth of twentieth-century fitness that Jack had come to embrace in the late 1940s and 1950. “We’re not selling muscles,” he exclaimed, “we’re selling tone, health, snap!”⁴⁹² Jack realized that he did not need to beat Clarence Ross or Jimmy Payne and earn the title of Mr. America to be successful – *he only had to sell his customers on the idea that he could make them as athletic and physically beautiful as he was*. To do that, he had to appeal not to the jocks or bodybuilders, but to the general public – and in appealing to the general public, Jack beat everyone else in the industry. The next two sections of this dissertation unpack the ways in which Jack applied that knowledge to become one of the most influential entrepreneurs in fitness history.

CONCLUSION

World War II forever altered American life and culture, and physical culture was no exception. The performances and instruction that Jack and his fellow bodybuilders and handbalancers delivered during and after the war exposed countless individuals to the benefits of fitness, and, in doing so, they transformed their niche hobbies into big businesses. This is not a presentist perspective: in August 1951, for example, *Westward*, a

491 “Another Wonderful Pre-Christmas Event At Castro Village” [advertisement], *Hayward (California) Daily Review*, 8 December 1950, 9; and Dan Steele, “Going Places: A Roundup of Nightlife Gossip,” *Oakland Tribune*, 18 November 1950, 7.

492 “Biceps are Big Business,” *Westward* (August 1951): 39.

now-defunct general-interest magazine, published a seven-page article declaring exactly that: biceps had “become a multi-million dollar American industry.”

During World War II, the need for physical fitness was socked home to every American when draft officials announced that more than 50 per cent of all American youths were unfit for the armed services. It was after the war that the physical culture studio, muscle den, or perspiration parlor really hit the big time. It started rolling when results proved that wounded war vets recovered up to four times as fast if they exercised with weights. It gathered momentum as the “muscle bound” myth about body builders was exploded.... It broke into a spirited clip when athletic coaches began advising weight training for swimmers, football players and trackmen.⁴⁹³

By 1951, the article continued, California alone boasted 35 gyms catering to over 10,000 customers – not including the many YMCA facilities that provided weight-training equipment.⁴⁹⁴

Though Jack cannot be solely credited for that growth, he undeniably played a pivotal role in spreading the benefits of physical culture – and specifically of training with weights – during the war. By smuggling weights onboard the *President Tyler*, hosting bodybuilding contests and displaying his physique to the locals, performing on Treasure Island and after the war, and helping to rehabilitate the wounded soldiers in Sun Valley, Jack very likely reached more people between 1941 and 1945 than he had in his entire career prior to that point. He realized that, although he loved his successful Physical Culture Studio, he loved helping people more, and Jack simply could not help enough people with a single gymnasium to satisfy his nearly unquenchable drive and

493 Ibid., 36.

494 Ibid.

energy. So he began performing up and down the California coast: a pursuit that would, eventually, lead him to television, fame, and fortune.

PART II: THE ORIGINS OF THE JACK LALANNE SHOW

Chapter 4: Becoming A Television Star

The Jack LaLanne Show began with a silhouette, illuminated by a spotlight amid surrounding darkness, and little fanfare. No catchy theme song, nor dramatic montage, nor cold open introduced the man who started millions of people on their own roads to fitness. Instead, a booming voice announced the appearance of Jack LaLanne, and the star of the show leapt into a tidy living room dressed in his tight, tailored, and now iconic jumpsuit with its padded shoulders and deep-cut neckline. The set was simple, and unadorned. Two tiny chairs – to make Jack seem taller than he was – and a single bookcase lined the walls. Drapery surrounded a fake window that revealed a serene mountain lake against a forest of pine trees in the background.

“Good morning! Happy Monday morning to you! Thanks very, very much for letting me come into your home,” Jack gushed. “I’m here for one reason and one reason only: to show you how to feel better, and look better, so you can live longer. Please keep your dial right where it is, because I want to become real good friends with you.”⁴⁹⁵

His vibrant enthusiasm is contagious, even today; and for that reason, over the 34 years following his show’s debut, several generations of Americans came to consider Jack LaLanne their friend, advisor, and source of motivation. During that record-setting run, Jack used television to preach the benefits of exercise, sang the praises of healthful eating, and reminded viewers of the benefits that accrued from having a positive mental attitude. His was largely an adult audience that grew up in a time when most medical

⁴⁹⁵ Introduction from *The Jack LaLanne Show*, footage from the LaLanne collection digital records. The same introduction is repeated on the over 100 episodes included in the collection.

experts harbored a skepticism of physical activity. The light calisthenics demonstrated on *The Jack LaLanne Show* probably trimmed few pounds off the collective waistline of America, but that fact belies the show's true significance. The show's significance came not from the effectiveness of Jack's exercise routine, but, rather, from his ability to change people's habits, dispositions, and ways of thinking about their health. Jack may not have prevented the modern obesity epidemic, but he made people realize that overeating and under-exercising could lead to shorter, less vibrant lives.

From a sociocultural perspective, all of that influence came at a price. To attract his listeners' attention, to earn their trust, Jack crafted a television persona, molding himself into an attractive, patriarchal figure whose advice reinforced the idea that women's lives should be centered in their homes, serving their families' needs and desires. Jack often motivated them through shame, insisting that only physically attractive women were worthy of others' love and affection, and therefore capable of fulfilling a role in society. These sentiments were by no means considered unusual or even offensive at the time; on the contrary, they typified the 1950s American family dynamic. But, when evaluated without the benefit of historical context, some aspects of *The Jack LaLanne Show* can be considered offensive, even misogynistic. While it may have added exercise to the list of activities that mainstream American culture deemed socially acceptable for women, the show arguably did little to advance feminism itself.

This chapter explains how Jack found his way in front of the camera in the San Francisco Bay area in 1951, and how KGO-TV, a local station affiliated with ABC, produced *The Jack LaLanne Show* there for the next eight years. It describes the show's

format and reception. It also attempts to unpack the reasons behind Jack's success: a phenomenon that most popular authors have attributed to his personality and fortunate historical circumstances. In reality, it was somewhat more complicated.

TELEVISION AND AMERICAN CULTURE AFTER WORLD WAR II

When Jack returned from his service in the war, he picked up right where he had left off, enthusiastically rededicating his time and energy to building his physical culture business. Yet the late 1940s and 1950s are often considered a sleepy time in American history, a time of complacency and prosperity, and a lull between the horrors of World War II and the tensions of the politically-charged 1960s. By the end of the 1940s, thanks to the newly invigorated economy (especially relative to a still war-worn Europe), the country came to revel in a widespread sense of wellbeing, a “wonderful sense of entitlement” and grand expectations, according to historian James Patterson.⁴⁹⁶ By the mid-1950s, it seemed as if the whole world “was turning itself over to please the special, God-graced generation – and its children – that had triumphed over depression and fascism, that would sooner or later vanquish Communism, and that was destined to live happily ever after (well, almost) in a fairy tale of health, wealth, and happiness,” Patterson writes.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁶ James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (Oxford University Press, 1996): 65. The 1950s have been studied extensively for the reasons listed in the text. Other important works include Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (Knopf, 2003); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books, 2008); and Robert A. Beauregard, *When American Became Suburban* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006). Though the overwhelming majority share a view of the 1950s as a time of affluence and conservative thinking, some interpret it differently. Perhaps most notable among these is M. Keith Booker, *The Post-Utopian Imagination: American Culture in the Long 1950s* (Greenwood, 2002), which considers the fifties a prelude to the social unrest of the 1960s.

⁴⁹⁷ Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 311.

These rising economic expectations led directly to a shift in sociocultural norms. As higher wages funded longer, more comfortable lives, increasing numbers of young couples could afford to marry, buy homes in the ever-growing sprawl of the suburbs, and have children. Those who had put off marriage and children during the wartime years settled down and sought solace in traditional, conservative lives amidst America's growing affluence. In fact, after the despair of the Great Depression and the dread of war – first World War II, and soon thereafter the Korean War and the Cold War – virtually *everyone* in America agreed that happiness was found in the security of family.⁴⁹⁸

In some aspects, the changing family dynamic curtailed the progressive social tide of the 1930s and '40s. The Great Depression and World War II had necessitated that women contribute to the family's economic wellbeing, both inside and outside of homes. As a result, popular culture often glamourized the working woman – Rosie the Riveter, for example, became a symbol of feminism and the economic power of women. But the overwhelming desire for security, domesticity, and children in the 1950s, together with the influx of returning veterans in need of work, again confined women to insular lives as homemakers and mothers, often subject to the whims of their husbands. The typical 1950s American home became a sphere of what historian Elaine Tyler May calls “domestic containment,” where traditional gender roles and conformity to heterosexual norms were valued partly as a way to suppress the perceived danger of deviance.⁴⁹⁹ A

498 May, *Homeward Bound*, 1. Again, not all scholars agree on this issue. Arlene Skolnick, for example, questions whether the family ideal of the 1950s is rooted more in nostalgia than in fact. See Skolnick, *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* (Basic Books, 1993).

499 *Ibid.* Feminism in the fifties is, again, a topic of great debate. Many consider May's to be a presentist approach; and, as she herself concedes, many people at the time considered postwar women emancipated and men oppressed. For more, see Joanne Jay

patriarchal household represented a return to normalcy and shelter from the fear of anything *different* – such as working women, homosexuals, and juvenile delinquency – much in the same way that political policies of containment represented shelter from Communism.

At the same time, however, the postwar era was marked by optimism and faith in the American dream: the belief that, with hard, honest work, they could move up in the world. That dream was closely connected to the growing economic prosperity, the rise of then new consumer culture, and the increased availability of lavish pleasures. New suburbanites filled their homes with labor-saving electric appliances like washing machines and refrigerators, and more and more driveways contained automobiles. And virtually everyone owned a television.⁵⁰⁰ By the end of the 1950s, almost ninety percent of American households contained at least one TV set.⁵⁰¹ In fact, over the next decade, the booming economy, domestic containment, and television became deeply intertwined.⁵⁰²

JACK’S INTRODUCTION TO TELEVISION

Meyerowitz’s edited volume, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*; Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (University of Chicago Press, 2001); and Barbara Ehrenreich, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts’ Advice to Women* (Anchor Books, 2005).

500 Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 351.

501 Winthrop Jordan, *The Americans* (Boston: McDougal Littell, 1996): 798.

502 The confluence of an explosion in corporate advertising, middle-class Americans’ newfound affluence and increased time for leisure drove television’s rapid proliferation. At the end of the 1940s, television remained a rarity, reserved only for the wealthiest families: in 1948, only about 172,000 American homes had a TV. Just a few years later, by 1952, over 15 million did, and by the end of the decade, almost nine in ten American households had at least one TV set. See Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (University of Chicago Press, 2013): 1. Because of its great impact, television has been extensively studied both. Patterson explains its impact on American culture in the 1950s in *Grand Expectations*; see also Lawrence R Samuel, *Brought to You by: Postwar Television Advertising and the American Dream* (University of Texas Press, 2009); Horace Newcomb, editor, *Television: The Critical View* (Oxford University Press, 2000); and John E. O’Conner, *American History, American Television: Interpreting the Video Past* (Frederick Ungar, 1983).

Even as an octogenarian, Jack never forgot the first time he watched a television show. It was in 1948, he said, and he was 34 years old and not overly impressed at the time. “It’s all black and white then,” he remembered in an interview he gave for the Archive of American Television in 2003. “They just had a few shows on.”⁵⁰³ LaLanne’s Physical Culture Studio was thriving in Oakland, but Jack feared television would induce laziness, intuiting the possibility of a generation of couch potatoes long before the term was ever coined. And yet, just a few years after that first 1948 viewing, Jack appeared on television himself, thanks to the pluck of student-turned-employee Betty Jo Brown.

Brown had come to LaLanne’s Physical Culture Studio years earlier, as a young, overweight woman desperately in search of advice, and her determination to reduce caused her to quickly become one of Jack’s favorite students. Under his strict and careful tutelage, she dropped seven dress sizes and lost 100 pounds; she literally became a poster child for LaLanne’s Physical Culture Studio, and he later featured her likeness in newspaper advertisements for his women’s gym.⁵⁰⁴ As she shed her excess pounds, Brown seemed to gain energy, and confidence. Jack was impressed by her, and he hired her to help manage the women’s division of his Oakland studio.⁵⁰⁵ “She was very articulate, and glib – just a heck of a person,” he recalled.⁵⁰⁶

As part of her management duties, Brown answered phones, and in 1950, she made a fateful call of her own. By now a firm believer in and advocate of her boss’s

503 Jack LaLanne, interview by Karen Herman, 12 September 2003, accessed online at <http://www.emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/jack-lalanne>

504 Jack LaLanne, “‘I Lost 100 Pounds!’ Says Betty Jo Brown (Advertisement),” *Oakland Tribune*, 10 March 1957: T4. LaLanne frequently spoke of Brown in his many interviews, but no biographical information about her could be found.

505 Elaine LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

506 LaLanne, interview by Herman.

ability to transform lives, she phoned a local variety television show to suggest that her employer might make a good act. Brown was fascinated by Jack's handbalancing acts and his many feats of strength – feats that had garnered him so much popularity in the San Francisco Bay area. While Jack remained skeptical of television, she believed that the new medium had enormous potential. On TV, Jack's stunts would reach many more people than at Muscle Beach or Washington Park, and therefore spread his message even further.⁵⁰⁷ Her own transformation had so emboldened Brown that she did not even consult with Jack before calling *The Les Malloy Show*, a program produced by KGO-TV, a San Francisco station affiliated with ABC.

That show was a good choice; it was extremely popular, thanks in large part to its host. Malloy had begun his media career in radio in 1934, and turned to television in the late 1940s. By the 1950s, Malloy had established his name in that industry, as well.⁵⁰⁸ He was strikingly handsome, tall, with a broad forehead and broader smile, and sharp, dark eyes. He had a friendly, relaxed nature and a gift for comedy; and his show was similarly informal.⁵⁰⁹ “It was a variety show, and it was a class act, with a live band and big-name guest stars,” reminisced KGO-TV producers on the channel's 40th anniversary celebration in 1988. “Those of us in the business remember him [Malloy] as the man who could sell

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁸ “Obituary — Les Malloy,” *San Francisco Gate Chronicle*, 22 March 1996. The obituary contains some errors, and claims that Malloy did not begin his show until the 1950s, but newspaper evidence clearly contradicts this.

⁵⁰⁹ “Les Malloy (Advertisement),” *San Mateo Times*, 14 December 1949: 3A; and “What You Can See Week of December 25 to January 1,” *San Mateo Times*, 24 December 1949: 11.

anything, from potato peelers to vacuum cleaners.”⁵¹⁰ As history would eventually prove, Jack could “sell” just as well as Malloy could.

It was not Malloy, however, but his assistant, Elaine Doyle, who received Betty Jo Brown’s call, and Doyle, enamored of the idea, readily agreed to put Jack on the show. To Jack’s credit, when Brown finally shared her news with him, he did not protest, recognizing a good idea when it fell into his lap, even though he had not been involved in the initial arrangement. Jack debated several options for his performance on the show. His handbalancing act was then thriving, but for it he needed a partner, and Jack no doubt realized that he would gain more benefit if the performance highlighted him alone. And so he eventually settled on pumping out push-ups without rest for the *Malloy* show’s entire duration, a full hour and a half. It was an important decision, for the feat had to walk a line between providing excitement for viewers and not totally exhausting Jack. Too difficult a task could mean failure and devastating embarrassment; too easy, and viewers would scorn the attempt regardless of its completion. He chose well: the spectacle caught the attention of both viewers and network executives at KGO and ABC.⁵¹¹

Jack’s performance on *The Les Malloy Show* marked the beginning of his lifelong partnerships with television and with Elaine Doyle. In fact, recalling the whole

510 Video Rewind, “KGO-TV 40th Anniversary – Part 9,” YouTube video, runtime 9:49, accessed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWNj9zZDp9w>

511 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

experience, Jack mostly just remembered meeting Elaine.⁵¹² But it was television that truly changed Jack's life, and made him into a national authority on fitness.

George Bartlett, Kevo-Etts, and the Origins of *The Jack LaLanne Show*

Shortly after his performance on *The Les Malloy Show* came another memorable phone call, one which Jack received from an old high school friend. The year was 1951, and a man named Vincent Francis had seen Jack's performance on the show. As luck would have it, Francis was working at the time for the local San Francisco station KGO-TV, selling advertising spots on new programs.⁵¹³ He needed talent for an upcoming health show, Francis said, and he wanted Jack to audition. "He called me because some old guy, Mr. Barkley [actually, the man's name was George Bartlett], who was 98 [actually 89] years old, had developed a health product made out of dried fruit and so on, and wanted to sponsor a health show on television," Jack explained in an interview for *Muscular Development* magazine four decades later. "They needed an M.C."⁵¹⁴

George Bartlett's vague request to Vince Francis for a "health show" might seem strange today, but at the time, advertisers drove the entire television industry, and one of the most important aspects of television production involved attracting and securing sponsors.⁵¹⁵ Today, broadcast networks fund production, and then they sell advertising

512 Jack LaLanne, interview by Herman.

513 "Talk of the Trade," *Billboard*, 19.

514 Carol Ann Weber, "Jack LaLanne: The Man and His Passion," *Muscular Development*, March 1993, 108–12, 166. Jack was apparently never quite sure on the client's name — it was actually George Bartlett, and he was 89 when he began selling his product, called the Kevo-Ett. Jack's rather dismissive attitude towards Bartlett belies the facts that, first, he owed his start in television to the man; and second, that Bartlett had a very successful entrepreneurial history and pioneered health-food advertising on television.

515 To a large degree, affordable television technology was developed by the same large corporate interests that developed affordable radio technology. For that reason, from its very beginning, TV was intended as an instrument to promote consumption, and was fueled

time to sponsors. But in television's infancy, advertisers directly financed shows, and, therefore, controlled the shows' content, as well. This sponsorship system benefitted broadcast companies, because it absolved them of the burden of content production costs.⁵¹⁶ Bartlett had concocted a health supplement, which he called a Kevo-Ett (from the Pueblo word, "kiva," meaning "inspiration"), and he guaranteed it would provide "students, teachers, office workers, athletes and others... [with] quick, lasting energy."⁵¹⁷ Now he needed a spokesman capable of convincing viewers that – with the help of Kevo-Etts – they could live long, healthy, happy lives, too.

At first, Jack was impressed by neither Francis's pitch nor Bartlett's product. Kevo-Etts seemed suspicious: each wafer contained only nine calories, and a pack cost just a nickel.⁵¹⁸ They were made from "100% pure" kelp, wheat germ, brewer's yeast, soy milk, carrots, spinach, and dandelion, and tasted — allegedly — "delicious."⁵¹⁹ Bartlett credited his vitality in old age to the wafers (along with hard work, natural food, exercise, and fresh air, of course).⁵²⁰ Furthermore, despite the warm reception he received for his performance on the *Les Malloy Show*, Jack remained distrustful of television. He

by advertisement. Historian David Potter goes so far as to classify television as "a creature of the advertising industry.... the culmination of America's long evolution toward a mass society." According to advertising historian Richard Pollay, television advertising generated a more "seductive awareness" than print ads did, and so, despite its relatively high cost, many advertisers embraced the new medium over print. So, while television could influence cultural values, learning and emotional development, and politics, its inherent purpose — as an advertising medium, designed to sell as many products to as many people as possible — meant that television programming necessarily catered to a mainstream audience and carried almost exclusively mainstream views. See Potter, "Spigel, *Make Room for TV*, 30; David M Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), quoted in O'Connor, *American History, American Television*, xv; and Richard W Pollay, "The Subsiding Sizzle: A Descriptive History of Print Advertising, 1900-1980," *The Journal of Marketing* (1985): 33.

516 Cynthia B Meyers, "The Problems with Sponsorship in US Broadcasting, 1930s–1950s: Perspectives from the Advertising Industry," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 31, no. 3 (2011): 355–372.

517 George Bartlett, "Energy Low? (Advertisement)," *Oakland Tribune*, 19 October 1953: 18E; and "How It Began," *Lubbock Morning Avalanche*, 16 July 1953: 4.

518 Bartlett, "Energy Low? (Advertisement)."

519 George Bartlett, "Satisfy That 'Secret Hunger' (Advertisement)," *Life and Health* (May 1953): 28.

520 "George Bartlett Keeps TV Fans Amazed at Actions," *Covina Argus Citizen*, 3 April 1953: 8.

worried that it had the potential to discourage physical activity just like automobiles and household appliances did, and he feared it could create a generation of what he called “sitting watchers.”⁵²¹

In fact, Jack was so disinterested in the offer that he first sent Betty Jo Brown to fill the role in his stead. “What did I know about television?” he barked in 2004.⁵²² But Francis was persistent, and he knew from their time in high school together that a little flattery would go a long way with Jack. So he took one look at Brown and sent her home – she wasn’t what he wanted – and called his old friend back, insisting that Jack alone could fill the role. “Froggy, they want you!” Francis appealed, using a high school nickname referring to Jack’s French heritage.⁵²³ So Jack drove down to Hollywood to audition:

I was met by some so-called executive in a stretched-out limousine. This guy says to me, ‘Jack, what do you have in your mind to do this thing? We have to get this idea over to the big shot at the studio to get the OK.’ We arrive at this fancy office in Hollywood, and I start showing this executive some exercises, got him to do the bicycle, and had him doing sit ups on a chair. I also gave him a little tip on nutrition. So he says, ‘Mary, call New York.’ He picks up the phone and says, ‘We’ve got our guy, stop the auditions.’⁵²⁴

In another version of the tale, Jack claimed that the executive introduced himself as an assistant, in order to calm Jack’s nerves. Jack did not realize they were conducting the interview when it happened. Whichever version is true matters little, as both reveal that

521 Jim Scott, “The Conscious of a Million Housewives,” n.d.: 23. Unidentified 5x7-inch stapled booklet from the LaLanne Collection, “Old Newspaper Clippings 1961-1964.” Many shared Jack’s initial skepticism of television, including Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton Minnow, whose address, “Television and the Public Interest,” famously denounced the new medium as a “vast wasteland.”

522 Richard Sandomir, “Jack LaLanne is Back (Sort Of), Helping Viewers Feel Guilty Again,” *The New York Times*, 12 March 2004.

523 Sandomir, “Jack LaLanne is Back.” “Froggy” was a derisory nickname referring to Jack’s French heritage.

524 Weber, “Jack LaLanne.”

Jack's very first experiences with the television industry impressed, excited, and maybe even intimidated him, but he refused to let those emotions cloud his performance. Whether a stretch limo was involved in Jack's audition seems implausible, since he claims to have driven to Los Angeles himself, and early television production budgets paled in comparison to modern extravaganzas.⁵²⁵ It is also unlikely that Jack was hired on the spot. He *was* hired, though, and the exact nature of the interview matters less than its eventual outcome.

In a way, it is fortunate that Jack found himself so impressed and enthused with his meeting with station executives. Under the sponsorship system, studios usually hired not the most talented actors, but rather the stars best suited to hawk goods and services. Jack could, at times, appear aloof or disinterested, and given his attitudes towards television, one would expect that he might have put little energy into the interview that eventually led to *The Jack LaLanne Show*. But the studio itself and evidence of the scores of people involved in the production process inspired him. It inspired him so much that he finally began to let go of his fears of "sitting watchers" and instead chose to acknowledge the awesome power of television to reach people, deliver messages, and change lives. That was exactly what he needed, Jack realized: a medium that could put his salesman's gift to work on a larger scale. And so Jack turned on his charm, pitching a variety of exercises and nutrition tips during the interview. It worked. In fact, Jack's

⁵²⁵ CBS, for example, held 5,500 auditions in six months in 1951 to fill 11 roles on network shows . See "TV Actors on Rocky Road; 5,500 Called, 11 Chosen," *The Billboard*, 3 March 1951: 1.

charisma and physical appearance likely did as much to earn him the job than did any specific knowledge of physical fitness.

And so, Jack found himself tasked with convincing viewers that they desperately wanted to buy some kelp-filled Kevo-Etts. Despite the blatantly commercial interest underpinning the show, Jack's intense passion for fitness leapt across the air waves and created an authentic experience for viewers, who felt like Jack was right there in their homes.

Kevo-Etts' creator, George Bartlett, had lived an astounding life, partly as a result of the strict regimen of health he followed. In fact, he was lucky to have lived even long enough to see middle age, though he had been born to well-off parents in New York and enjoyed the benefits of a privileged upbringing. Bartlett attended the newly-opened Pratt Institute – a highly prestigious school – graduating in 1893. He then married classmate Henrietta M. Sawyer and took employment with Ernest Flagg, one of the country's most prominent urban architects.⁵²⁶ He worked for Flagg six years until, in 1899, he suddenly and mysteriously fell ill. For twenty-eight days Bartlett was in a coma; his doctors, at one point, pronounced him dead.⁵²⁷

Eventually, however, Bartlett recovered; and, full of renewed appreciation for his life and his health, he left the stifling urban environment of New York, with its smoggy air and crowded streets, and moved to sunny California. There, he invested in real estate, and earned millions when the state's population grew at a staggering 60 percent rate over

⁵²⁶ "Art Department Notes," *Pratt Institute Monthly*, Volume 7 (Pratt, 1899): 81.

⁵²⁷ "'Dead' Man is Pretty Spry at 92," *Pulaski Southwest Times*, 24 July 1953: 6.

the next decade.⁵²⁸ With his new wealth he founded Kevo Products, a health food company, and produced one of the first meal-replacement products. *Iron Man* magazine advertised Bartlett's "'44' Supplemental Food Beverage" in June 1950, boasting a high protein and vitamin content from all natural ingredients: soya beans, deep sea kelp, wheat germ, and numerous herbs. Kevo-Etts followed shortly after the drink.⁵²⁹

Bartlett's origin story is important for two reasons. First, for its incredibility: like that of many other crusaders for health and fitness entrepreneurs, Bartlett's seemingly miraculous recovery imparted credibility upon the Kevo-Ett founder. Many who believed that Bartlett had essentially risen from the dead surely also believed that the man possessed the secrets of good health and revitalization, and they became more likely to buy his products. In hindsight, one suspects Jack may have modeled his own origin story – particularly his emphasis on being “reborn again” – using some elements of Bartlett's. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that Jack himself later produced health food supplements, having seen the success that Bartlett had earned in doing so.

Despite the tenacity of both Bartlett and Jack, selling health food products remained a daunting task. In fact, when Bartlett began advertising, the supplement industry lacked any significant consumer market. There were a few competitors – Muscle Beach regular Barney Fry, for example, sold energy wafers made from figs and dates in the 1930s and 1940s. But according to historians Daniel Hall and John Fair, though the health food industry's history can be traced to the isolation of vitamins in 1911, it did not

⁵²⁸ Ibid.; and United States Bureau of the Census, “Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910,” Reports by States, 138 (entry for California).

⁵²⁹ Randy Roach, *Muscle, Smoke and Mirrors Volume 1* (AuthorHouse, 2008): 197.

truly begin in earnest until after World War II.⁵³⁰ Because the market was very new, few Americans were familiar with such products, and so Bartlett and Jack faced the dual challenges of both educating the public about the benefits of supplements and actually selling the Kevo-Etts themselves. Bartlett's earliest newspaper ads compared the wafers to the K-rations given soldiers during the war — an ingenious strategy for framing his product so customers might both comprehend and accept it as useful.⁵³¹

The Jack LaLanne Show on KGO-TV

Jack had at least some experience in selling health food, from his time at Berkeley High; and plenty of experience as an exercise instructor, so he was as well-equipped for the job as anyone. Even so, when he walked into KGO's San Francisco studio, and on to the set of *The Jack LaLanne Show* for the first time in 1951, Jack was probably worried by how little he had to work with. The studio building was a marvel of modern engineering amid historic grandeur; when it expanded from radio into television broadcasting in 1949, KGO had purchased the famous La Avezada mansion as its base of operations. Adolph Sutro, grandson of the former mayor of the city and inheritor of a family fortune, had built the astonishing house in 1935. The three-story villa overlooked the entire city, and in the distance one could even make out Mount Diablo, far to the east. Inside, imposing electronic equipment flooded entire rooms. Merely entering the house, wrote *Oakland Tribune* reporter Elinor Hayes, "must have been a rewarding experience:"

⁵³⁰ Daniel Hall and John Fair, "The Pioneers of Protein," *Iron Game History* 8, no. 3 (May/June 2004): 23–34.

⁵³¹ Andrew B. Hargadon and Yellowlees Douglas, "When Innovations Meet Institutions: Edison and the Design of the Electric Light," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (2001): 476–501.

The hidden entrance is up a narrow, one-car wide road bordered by dense trees and blackberry vines, in a clearing on the southern crest of 903-foot Mount Sutro. Suddenly... there it is... a massive and mysterious mansion...brooding and baffling.... The great front door is set off by stained glass panels. Inside there is a waist high corner fireplace in the hall. A door is covered in dark leather. Light fixtures and chandeliers are iron and leather.... It really is a sensational place.⁵³²

But Jack's set itself was small. What appeared to be a well-carpeted, spacious living room consisted of no more than a thin rug and three paneled wall sections. Even the furniture was diminutive; according to Jimmy Payne. KGO used children's furniture on the set, to make the five-foot, four-inch Jack look taller on television.⁵³³

Jack claimed to have barely noticed the set. "We have people who do that stuff," he explained later, as if he had no time to bother himself with such small details.⁵³⁴ Undeterred by its sparse furnishings, he leapt onto the nearly-bare stage for the first show, wearing a short-sleeved shirt with a deep-cut neckline, to show off his chest and arm musculature. On stage that day his focus lay entirely on the task at hand, and what it meant for his career and his reputation. "I'll never forget the first show," he said in 2003, explaining that he went in thinking, "I'm gonna be their savior. I'm gonna help these people. I gotta get people off of eating all this canned stuff... cakes, pies, candy, ice cream."⁵³⁵

These positive thoughts belied his nervousness. The newness of television, the anxieties that come with public speaking, and the pressure of a first performance can

532 Elinor Hayes, "Sutro Tower To Replace Historic Mountain Villa," *Oakland Tribune*, 19 October 1969: 7.

533 Interview with John D. Fair by the author, 11 April 2016. Fair's insight came from an interview he conducted with Jack's friend and handbalancing partner, Jimmy Payne.

534 Archive of American Television, "Jack LaLanne Interview," 12 September 2003, accessed online at <http://emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/jack-lalanne> on 28 July 2016.

535 Ibid.

unsettle even the most confident of actors, and Jack had suffered from insecurity since childhood, and was by now used to the distractions it posed. “I’m so nervous!” he continued in that interview. “You never get over it.... If anybody played football, before the game, before the kickoff, you get on, but then it’s all gone.” And indeed, when the cameras came on, Jack seemed to transform.⁵³⁶ He hid his quiet, contemplative self behind a mask of energy and dynamism.

Once June Melody began to play the organ, and Jack took the stage, any hint of trepidation vanished, and he plunged into the act with vigor. He had planned well enough, and knew (probably from briefings by producer Dorothy Hooker Nye) that the exercises he demonstrated on television must appeal to a broader clientele than the one that frequented his local health studio. The routine Jack performed required no traditional exercise equipment, for while Jack’s carefully-designed equipment attracted many customers to his fitness studio, viewers at home had access to none of those tools. In 1951, virtually none of his TV audience owned a home gymnasium, and many viewers would have remained intimidated by myths of the dangers of exercise that had persisted since early in the century. Instead, Jack relied on items commonly found around the home, using furniture and kitchenstuffs as makeshift gym equipment – just as he had in his backyard gym in high school.⁵³⁷ “Gimmicks? I had ’em all!” he laughed, but exercising with books and chairs was far less intimidating to many than exercising with barbells and dumbbells.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Richard Goldstein, “Jack LaLanne, Founder of Modern Fitness Movement, Dies at 96,” *The New York Times*, A25.

⁵³⁸ Dee Dunheim, “Jack LaLanne: America’s Godfather of Fitness and Good Health,” *Senior News*, May 1998.

As the story goes, Jack performed all of his early shows live, with neither rehearsal nor guidance. This seems unlikely. For one, Nye directed and produced *The Jack LaLanne Show*, and she was one of San Francisco's top studio executives.⁵³⁹ In fact, Nye – one of television's few female executives – not only conceived but orchestrated several hit shows on KGO-TV with “hard, nerve wracking-work,” including oversight of intricate details like floor and lighting plans and camera and microphone work.⁵⁴⁰ Such an experienced television manager would probably not have ceded total control of a show to a newcomer to the industry like Jack. Nevertheless, records *do* suggest that any planning was rather minimal, especially by modern standards. Jack's dialog was loosely scripted, but the exercises he performed were not; nor, apparently, were most of the commercials. An episode's entire script might span only two pages, perhaps with a few handwritten notes in the margins.⁵⁴¹ The musicians improvised their parts as well, keeping time with Jack's movements.

One of the few guidelines concerning Jack's dialogue governed the use of profanity – or anything close to it. Television executives refused to condone any language considered sexually suggestive, vulgar, or violent. In fact, television censorship practices imposed strict limitations on acceptable language, dress, and demeanor. “I couldn't say ‘buttocks,’ couldn't say ‘breasts,’” explained Jack. “That was absolutely forbidden. So I had to use expressions like ‘front porch’ and ‘back porch.’ I had all these expressions for

539 “Top Production,” *San Mateo Times*, April 23, 1951, 17; and “Dorothy Hooker Nye (Obituary),” *Monterey Herald*, November 1, 2011.

540 Bob Foster, “A TV Show Is Born,” *San Mateo Times*, April 5, 1952, 4.

541 See, for example, “Show 674” [script]. This evidence was gathered during a visit to the LaLanne family in Morro Bay, California, and is not part of the LaLanne collection at the University of Texas.

different parts of the body that you couldn't mention the name.”⁵⁴² Historian Robert Pondillo explains that early television programming was plagued by a “lowbrow taint” of violence, sexual innuendo, and critics feared that these alleged perversions threatened to undermine the traditional family values upon which America had been built.⁵⁴³ By censoring language on *The Jack LaLanne Show*, producers avoided any lower-class connotations that may have been associated with both television and exercise, and therefore broadened its appeal.⁵⁴⁴

Jack's mostly extemporaneous performances sufficed for a simple reason: every episode of *The Jack LaLanne Show* was nearly identical. The formula neatly filled a 30-minute time slot, perfect for KGO's needs. It began with a 30-second opening, where an announcer's disembodied voice announced the show's start, and Jack welcomed his viewers and thanked them “for letting me come into your home.”

Three exercise segments comprised the majority of the show. Jack led his audience through simple, quick-paced calisthenics, substituting chairs for traditional weight benches, and books and soup cans for the weights themselves. The first exercise segment filled most of six minutes, followed by a two-minute commercial break. The second segment perfectly mirrored the first, but used a different exercise; sometimes Jack

542 Karen Herman, “Jack LaLanne Interview” (Interview; American Academy of Television, September 12, 2003).

543 Robert Pondillo, *America's First Network TV Censor: The Work of NBC's Stockton Helffrich* (SIU Press, 2010), 17.

544 Television's target demographics were a topic of much debate in the postwar era. In contrast to those who spoke out against the “lowbrow taint,” many other critics denounced television for contributing to the almost overwhelming desire for conformity that marked the postwar era. Historians, however, interpret television's effect on 1950s American culture from vastly different perspectives. For Potter, television's mainstream content meant that “the broad sweep of American culture had been shackled to the popular taste, in all its mediocrity.” Media studies scholar Marshall McLuhan argues persuasively against Potter's views. In his opinion, viewers watched television actively. He used the terms “hot” and “cold” to distinguish among forms of new media; “cool” media, like television, requires more engagement and interpretation on the part of the viewer compared to “hot” media like movies. Patterson summarizes McLuhan's argument quite succinctly. “People,” he writes, “are not easily programmed.” See Potter, *People of Plenty*, xv; Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (MIT University Press, 2001); Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 348; and Samuel, *Brought to You By*, xv.

would introduce more difficult variations for more experienced students. The second segment was also followed by a two-minute commercial break. The third segment stretched towards nine or sometimes even ten minutes. In addition to another new exercise, Jack would give viewers a small pep talk: inspiration to encourage them to remain vigilant with their new diet and exercise protocols, even after the show ended. Other times he would prefer to answer questions that loyal viewers had mailed him – chosen before the show’s filming, so Jack could prepare a simple answer – or offer some healthful recipe. The third segment closed with yet another commercial break.

Finally, the show ended with one last exercise; or, sometimes, with a “tip of the day,” one last entreaty for viewers to stay dedicated in their quest to look better, feel better, and live longer. This last part could last anywhere from 80 seconds to nearly two and one-half minutes, depending on how long the third segment ran. Each episode, in its entirety, spanned exactly twenty-nine minutes and twenty seconds (in most cases), including commercials.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁵ Description of the show’s format comes from personal correspondence from Lyle Westcott to Hans Dorner, 9 October 1964, in reference to a contract to syndicate The Jack LaLanne Show in Germany.



Figure 16. Jack on set at KGO-TV. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.) Note his informal posture: he appears not as an actor, but as a friend who's come into your living room.

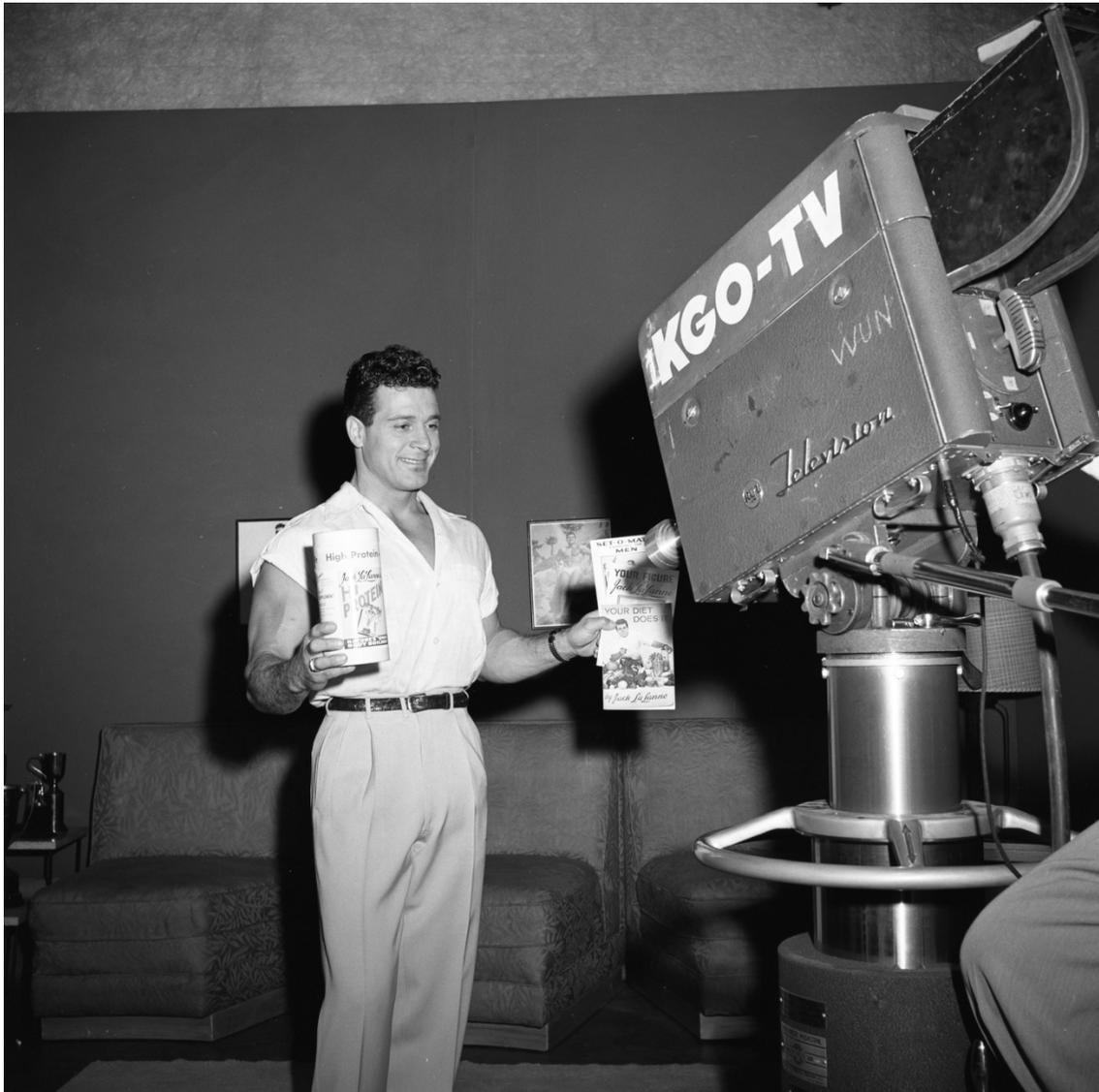


Figure 17. In the mid-1950s, Jack launched and advertised his own brand of health foods, including the Hi-Protein supplement seen here. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

POPULAR AND CRITICAL RECEPTION

Later in life, Jack often complained that his show was met with skepticism and criticism, and he had to fight an uphill battle to gain a foothold in the television industry.

“This Jack LaLanne — this crackpot — he’s got the revolutionary stuff,” he mocked. “He’s got the weight lifting for older people and women and athletes and it’s never been done. He’s into kooky nutritional things. We’ll give him six weeks.”⁵⁴⁶ But he, like many people, had tended to ruminate over his naysayers. In truth the show became a hit “from nearly the minute it hit the air,” according to Dave Sacks, former general manager of KGO.⁵⁴⁷ *Variety*, for example, called the show “instructive and educational. Viewers are given actual exercise demonstrations as well as dietary notes for balanced, high-protein menus.” Jack himself had “a pleasing manner before cameras. The criticism *The Jack LaLanne Show* did receive was constructive: “LaLanne could add additional program polish by using more control of his hands while instructing,” *Variety* suggested helpfully.⁵⁴⁸

Viewers at home loved the show perhaps even more than professional critics. In 1998, journalist Audrey Parente shared memories from longtime fans about watching Jack’s show. “I was probably about 8 years old,” said Bob Petz, who had attended grammar school in Stockton, California, part of the show’s viewing area before its nationwide syndication. “I thought, if he could do it, I could. I am not an excellent athlete, but I have done it all my life, and he has been a real inspiration.” John Turley, of Ponce Inlet, Florida, agreed: “He was probably instrumental in getting us started in health and fitness probably 30 years ago,” Turley said. Most of Jack’s viewers, unlike Petz and Turley, were women, as another self-avowed health nut suggested. “When my children

546 Jack Beardwood, “Father of Fitness Revolution Continues Quest,” *Fitness* (October 1997): 8–9.

547 “LaLanne: His Words Are Still Exercised,” unidentified newspaper clipping from the LaLanne collection, in the binder titled “Old Newspaper Articles Misc.”

548 “Television Reviews: Jack LaLanne Show,” *Variety*, 11 November 1953: 35.

were small, we used to all get in front of the TV and exercise with Jack LaLanne,” she remembered.⁵⁴⁹

Not everyone was happy, however, especially in the early days of his career. In fact, some of the station’s own sponsors were among his disgruntled viewers. Jack often recounted the story of how, on his very first episode, he demonstrated the deleterious effects of white flour on one’s health (a controversial topic both in the 1950s and today).⁵⁵⁰ Jack did not bother with any nuanced discussion. “I took this big economy loaf of white bread, made a ball of it and slammed it on the floor,” he said. “Then I told ‘em, ‘That’s what it does when it hits your stomach.’”⁵⁵¹ As fate would have it, Jack chose Langendorf bread to deprecate: a well-known, national brand baked by a company that had operated for nearly fifty years.⁵⁵² Langendorf sponsored several other shows on KGO-TV, and station executives were flooded by angry calls from the bakery’s management.⁵⁵³ Vince Francis had to pacify the irritated sponsor.⁵⁵⁴ “I learned real fast,” Jack said, “never to mention brand names on TV.”⁵⁵⁵

Despite the show’s initially lukewarm reception, Jack seemed almost desperate to keep himself on the air, reflecting his and the industry’s highly competitive nature. He continually implored viewers to support the show by telling their friends, even hosting

549 Audrey Parente, “‘50s Exercise Guru Jack LaLanne Still Going Strong at 83,” *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, 21 June 1998: C1.

550 Lisa Lee Freeman, “Fitness Pioneer Jack LaLanne: Literally Swimming Against the Tide to Gain Prominence,” *Investor’s Business Daily*, 28 April 1995: 1–2. For the benefits of white flour compared to whole-grain products in the 1950s, see DW Kent-Jones, “The Case for Fortified Flour,” *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society* 17, no. 01 (1958): 38–43; and for a modern perspective, see Joanne L Slavin, David Jacobs, and Len Marquart, “Grain Processing and Nutrition,” *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition*. 40, no. 4 (2000): 309–26.

551 Freeman, “Fitness Pioneer Jack LaLanne.”

552 Franz Bakery, “Historical Timeline,” 2013, <http://franzbakery.com/about-franz/historical-timeline/>.

553 Sam McManis, “Raising the Bar: At 88, Fitness Guru Jack LaLanne Can Run Circles Around Those Half His Age,” *San Francisco Gate Chronicle*, 13 January 2003: n.p.

554 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

555 McManis, “Raising the Bar.”

watching parties. “Ratings are gonna come out in a few weeks from now,” he said on an early episode. “If I have a good rating, then we are sure of our television time – and television time is very hard to come by.”⁵⁵⁶ He even read one woman’s endorsement on the air: “Dear Jack LaLanne,” she wrote,

My son and my sister-in-laws and friends [all watch you]... we have started sort of a telephone relay system. Five minutes before your program, I start dialing my sister-in-law, Anne. I let her phone ring just once. She, in turn, dials someone else and so forth. We have at least ten members and the number is increasing each day.... We keep each other posted so just in case we get too involved in something, we stop and turn your program on.⁵⁵⁷

Jack’s popularity grew over the years, and many of his viewers became not just fans but converts – even disciples. Fan mail began arriving at the studio, and the volume of that mail increased with the show’s growth and greater viewership. Mailbags full of fans’ letters arrived, according to Elaine, on a regular basis at the studio. The fans’ response to the show, she said in an interview, became “totally overwhelming.”⁵⁵⁸ Even now, in 2018, many older women and even fitness stars like Arnold Schwarzenegger cite Jack LaLanne as an inspiration for their own careers. Perhaps even more than its critical reception, *The Jack LaLanne Show*’s zealous fanbase indicated that Jack and his show would stand the test of time.⁵⁵⁹

556 “Episode 5,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.

557 “Episode 73,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.

558 Interview with Elaine by Jan Todd, 7 January 2016.

559 As media studies scholar Sue Brower explains, “because of the unique form of television series and serials, fans not only ‘follow’ a program, but they are invested in its continuance.” That is, by engaging with a show – through call-ins, writing letters, or word-of-mouth advertising – fans often prove even more important to a show’s survival than ratings or the whims of producers. See Brower, “Fans as Tastemakers: Viewers for Quality Television,” in Lisa A. Lewis, editor, *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media* (Routledge, 1992): 168. Emphasis original.

Due to the repetitive nature of the show's format, the actual content of *The Jack LaLanne Show* – the pep talks, the demonstrated exercises – varied little. However, many of the ideas Jack presented regarding health and fitness would be considered accurate and insightful, even by modern standards.⁵⁶⁰ Most journalists of the late twentieth century also cite his good looks and boundless energy as crucial to the show's success, for Jack was “so positively chirpy that you don't realize he's kicking your flabby rear end,” as NPR's Tom Goldman once quipped.⁵⁶¹ His attitude brought to mind the positivity and passion of two other orotund motivators of the postwar age: Norman Vincent Peale, author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*; and evangelist Billy Graham.⁵⁶² In fact, some journalists called Jack “the Norman Vincent Peale with muscles,” an epithet Jack loved to repeat.⁵⁶³ Others thought the analogy of a preacher fit better, given Jack's zealous devotion to his cause, and Jack embraced that comparison, too. “Billy Graham was for

560 Robert Cochrane has produced one of the only existing academic works about Jack: a documentary, titled “You Should Know Jack: A Qualitative Study of The Jack LaLanne Show (1961-1965).” In it, he explains the accuracy of Jack's teachings: especially his endorsement of exercise before many doctors; and his recommendations for a diet full of wholesome, unprocessed foods, lean proteins, and raw fruits and vegetables. The results garnered from these teachings, Cochrane argues, helped create Jack's success. That same logic has been echoed in popular news articles about Jack for decades. See Cochrane, “You Should Know Jack: A Qualitative Study of The Jack LaLanne Show (1961-1965),” unpublished master's thesis (Greenspun College of Urban Affairs, 2012).

561 Tom Goldman, “Remembering Fitness Icon Jack LaLanne,” 24 January 2011, transcript available online at <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/24/133188009/Remembering-Fitness-Icon-Jack-LaLanne>. From an academic perspective, Lynn Spiegel explains that great personalities made for great TV. Overly formal mannerisms, a lack of rapport, arrogance: these all spelled disaster in the broadcasting industry, explains Spiegel. “The personality should fit right into your living room.... It is the responsibility of television to bear constantly in mind that the audience is primarily a home audience, and consequently that television's relationship to the viewers is that between guest and host,” she writes. See Spiegel, *Make Room for TV*, 84, 136.

562 From an academic perspective, the components of personalities like Peale, Graham, and Jack are fairly well-researched. Historian Timothy H. Sherwood, for example, explains that men and women who lead using inspirational rhetoric require an inherent charisma: not just charm, or wit, but an entire public persona, capable of influencing large numbers of people. Those few individuals possessing such a gift can often convey a sense of trustworthiness, of integrity, to their audiences. But even that is not enough. The successful leader must also convince his audience that he possesses unique, valuable knowledge, which can change the lives of those who gain it. And, perhaps most of all, idealism sets apart the leader from the hustler. Leaders value the best interests of their constituents and the desire to make a difference over worldly rewards; and because of the sureness of their cause, they embody a certain security, a peace of mind, one that reverberated through the hearts and minds of 1950s America. A single individual possessing all of these traits is, of course, quite rare; and so Jack – and Peale and Graham – seemed to many to be larger than life. See Timothy H. Sherwood, *Rhetorical Leadership in an Age of Extremes* (Lexington Books, 2013): 2-3, 94-98, 105.

563 Jack LaLanne, *Foods For Glamour* (Prentice-Hall, 1961): 43.

the hereafter; I'm for the here and now," he liked to say.⁵⁶⁴ With his prolific pep talks, daring feats of physicality, and unshakably healthful habits, Jack helped many Americans find the courage to start improving their lives.

Today, fans argue on the Internet about just *how* extroverted Jack was – even speculating on his Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (a formal but qualitative psychological profile of an individual). “He was an extrovert for sure,” one commentator declared.⁵⁶⁵ But, as his daughter Yvonne explained, Jack displayed far less vivaciousness in his private life. Instead, Jack (or perhaps his show’s producers) realized that a certain personality drove viewership. In fact, the suave, masculine host became such a common trope that *TIME* magazine dubbed men like Garry Moore, Arthur Godfrey, and Art Linkletter “the charm boys,” for the rapport they established with female viewers through their subtle humor and sexuality. Jack strived to assume a similar public face, which he combined with such ebullience so as to both motivate pupils and help to mask any nervousness or insecurities he may have felt. Jack’s charisma was no gift, though he worked hard to make viewers believe otherwise.

Perhaps the most obvious example: by looking directly into the camera, as Jack always did, he formed a closer connection with the audience at home. “My show was so personal, I made it feel like you and I were the only ones there,” Jack said.⁵⁶⁶ “I always kept that personal touch and I would get letters saying, ‘I know you’re talking to me,

564 Richard Goldstein, “Jack LaLanne, Nutrition and Fitness Guru, Dies at 96,” *The Seattle Times*, 23 January 2011. Jack sometimes applied this phrase to Peale, as well, though it makes less sense in that context. See Jack LaLanne and Matthew J. Rettick, *Fiscal Fitness: 8 Steps to Wealth & Health from America's Leaders of Fitness and Finance* (Career Press: 243).

565 Personality Café, “Jack LaLanne – MBTI Type?” accessed online at <http://personalitycafe.com/guess-type/49025-jack-lalanne-mbti-type.html>

566 Goldstein, “Jack LaLanne.”

Jack.”⁵⁶⁷ Media studies scholar Robert Thompson agrees. “He was perfect for the intimacy of television,” said Thompson. “This guy had some of the same stuff that Oprah has and Johnny Carson had — the ability to insinuate themselves in the domestic space of people’s lives.”⁵⁶⁸

Jack’s use of his origin story contributed to his widespread appeal too. His (probably exaggerated) tale involved growing from a shy, sickly, skinny boy into an attractive and successful young man. He accomplished the feat by teaching himself the secrets of physical culture – secrets that eluded nearly all Americans before his arrival on television in the 1950s. In fact, by emphasizing how doctors and coaches loathed the advice he doled out from his Oakland gym, Jack established himself as more knowledgeable even than formally-trained authority figures. People wanted to have for themselves what Jack had: an attractive body, *and* the satisfaction of having achieved the American dream, rising from humble beginnings to to top of one’s chosen profession. It was only natural that they should therefore come to Jack himself for advice, in order to undergo their own transformations.

Jack’s public biography defined him as an idealist, one whose motives and intentions were pure and selfless. It portrayed him as a health crusader, rather than the fitness entrepreneur he really was. What better driving force for a such an advocate than the untimely death of an unhealthy father? Who better to rescue the unfit and unattractive than someone who had himself so dramatically suffered the consequences of a poor diet

⁵⁶⁷ Weber, “Jack LaLanne.”

⁵⁶⁸ Goldstein, “Jack LaLanne.”

and inactivity? In short, Jack's story convinced his audience of his surety and trustworthiness, and so offered viewers a certain peace of mind. Of course, many fitness entrepreneurs had employed a similarly dramatic and transformative origin story to attract their own audiences, but Jack was the first to take advantage of television's unprecedented reach and impact.

Fortuitous cultural circumstances fueled the show's popularity, too, simultaneously emphasizing slimness and allowing Jack to use television to reach a fairly homogenous mass audience. Jack's daughter, Yvonne – herself a physical culturist and practicing doctor of chiropractic – puts it simply: “My father was in the right place at the right time,” she says.⁵⁶⁹ Earlier fitness entrepreneurs enjoyed similar advantages, though often on a smaller scale. For example, communication through mass media by no means began with television: newspapers and improvements in photography offered fitness entrepreneurs similar opportunities in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁷⁰ Nor was the desire for thinness a new trend. Several historians trace the origins of what became a “reducing craze” to the *fin-de-siècle* era, when the focus of the (much smaller) American economy began to shift from production to consumption.⁵⁷¹ Finally, dozens of other fitness entrepreneurs also possessed shockingly good looks and good physiques, perhaps first and most notably Eugen Sandow.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ For more on the importance of mass media and especially photography to fitness entrepreneurship, see Jan Todd, “Bernarr MacFadden: Reformer of Feminine Form,” *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 74-75; and Michael Anton Budd, *The Sculpture Machine: Physical Culture and Body Politics in the Age of Empire* (New York University Press, 1997): 60.

⁵⁷¹ See, for example, Heather Addison, *Hollywood and the Rise of Physical Culture* (Psychology Press, 2003): 144; Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies, and Fat* (Free Press, 1986): 81-82; and Roberta Pollack Seid, *Never Too Thin: Why Women Are At War With Their Bodies* (Prentice-Hall, 1989): 83.

⁵⁷² Sandow and other fitness entrepreneurs are discussed at length in the Introduction.

But postwar America was more open to the idea of men with muscles. Several major films – *Spartacus*, *Samson and Deliah*, and of course *Hercules*, starring Mr. America Steve Reeves – had helped to create an acceptance of male muscularity, even if bodybuilding itself remained somewhat of a fringe sport. Jack, however, did not present himself as a bodybuilder on television. He came through the screen as a wonderfully fit, broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted “action star,” who seemed physically able to tackle any challenge, all with the unthreatening demeanor of the handsome man next door that many housewives drooled over. He was masculine, yes, and yet he also seemed “normal” and approachable. Some might argue that his regular appearances on television in the homes of middle-class Americans played a large role in inspiring the growth of weight training in the 1970s and 1980s.

THE JACK LALANNE SHOW AND WOMEN’S EXERCISE IN THE 1950S

In understanding Jack’s success, it is crucial to realize that besides his skilled oratory, his charm and his understanding of diet and exercise, he also possessed a situational awareness of the cultural contexts of 1950s America. Specifically, his reiteration of patriarchal gender norms appealed to an enormous majority of his viewers – almost all of whom were women, since Jack’s show aired during the daytime, when most men were at work and children in school.⁵⁷³ Because they largely agreed with Jack about

⁵⁷³ Common daytime television programming usually consisted of game shows and talk shows. Those required little attention so as to not distract from household chores that viewers ostensibly performed while they watched (or at least listened); and they were highly valued by advertisers for household goods, due to the ease of marketing to the homogenous audience, explains television historian Marsha F. Cassidy. See Marsha F. Cassidy, *What Women Watched: Daytime Television in the 1950s* (University of Texas Press, 2009): 3, 35.

those aspects of their lives and culture, viewers were more receptive to his ideas about health and fitness. Indeed, adherence to traditional gender roles characterized most television shows of the postwar era, and modern historians have agreed that the family dynamic portrayed on 1950s television largely served to reinforce a hegemonic masculinity in American society.⁵⁷⁴ However, Jack's firm adherence to hegemonic masculinity also seems problematic in retrospect. Journalist Frank Bruni even described it as "insidious:"

That sense of failure you feel when you haven't exercised in days? That conviction that if you could pull off better push-ups, you'd be a better person through and through? These, too, are his doing, at least in part.... In the post-LaLanne landscape, it's not the eyes but the abdominals that are windows to the soul.⁵⁷⁵

"Mr. LaLanne... found fame shaming Cold War-era housewives into living-room workouts," agreed another author.⁵⁷⁶

Indeed, as much as he inspired and educated, Jack also provoked chagrin and insecurity. "The housewife is disgusted with the way she looks," he claimed.⁵⁷⁷ She was vain, lazy, pampered, oversoft, and Jack charged himself with correcting any self-satisfaction she might have felt. He taunted them with lines like "Ten seconds on the lips,

574 Many women were attracted to television precisely because postwar America "equated femininity solely with domestic fulfillment," according to Cassidy. But that domesticity starkly limited the social power of women, Mary Beth Haralovich argues, and, as a result, women's role in postwar homes "was at once central and marginal." See Marsha F. Cassidy, *What Women Watched*, 74-75; and Mary Beth Haralovich, "Sitcoms and Suburbs: Positioning the 1950s Homemaker," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11, no. 1 (1989): 61.

575 Frank Bruni, "The Ripped and the Righteous," *The New York Times*, 30 January 2011: WK1.

576 Jacquelyn Floyd, "Jack's Still Jumpin' at 82," *Dallas Morning News*, October 18, 1996: 37A.

577 Jim Scott, "The Conscious of a Million Housewives," n.d.: 23. Unidentified 5x7-inch stapled booklet from the LaLanne Collection, "Old Newspaper Clippings 1961-1964."

a lifetime on the hips,” and “if it tastes good, spit it out.”⁵⁷⁸ Since “slim” was “in” in the 1950s, pervading not only television but also the pages of popular magazines, those maxims undoubtedly stuck in the heads of viewers just as determinedly as fats and sweets allegedly stuck to their hips and thighs.

In one especially shocking episode of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, Jack brought on the set a bird cage filled with ten pounds of raw animal fat, in great, big slabs. “Supposing I put this right here on my old front porch, put that on my tummy,” he proposed, slapping several handfuls of lard against his own trim waistline. “How do you think I’d look? I put a glob of it over here on my hip,” he continued, splattering huge chunks of the stuff around the set, “on my thigh, or back here on my back porch. What if I had a big hunk underneath my chin here? How do you think I’d look? Ugly.” Then Jack brought out a chalkboard and the lecture really began:

Fat, students, here it is. I’m gonna break it down for you and show you. Fat: F.A.T. “F” for “fatal,” because if you don’t get rid of it, it’ll kill you. There are more people that die of coronaries, heart disease, and from fat than from anything else. “A,” it’s “awful.” It looks awful, and you feel awful when you’re carrying it around. “T” for “trouble,” all the trouble that fat can cause you. You don’t look good in your clothes, you have aches and pains, and you feel terrible.⁵⁷⁹

In a very general sense, Jack was right. In the 1950s, heart disease caused more deaths than any other malady; and though it declined throughout the rest of the century, it

⁵⁷⁸ Connie Marie Jones, “Jack LaLanne the Fitness Legend,” *Whole Life Times: The Journal of Holistic Living* (March 1998): 40–41.
⁵⁷⁹ “Episode 23,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.

remained the deadliest disease even into the 21st century.⁵⁸⁰ Obesity, of course, contributes to heart disease, and to a number of other medical concerns.

But Jack never mentioned obesity in his sermon against fat. Based on his ostentatious demonstrations, all the ills he threatened would presumably befall anyone with even just ten pounds of excess flesh. Ten pounds could make a person look unattractive, suffer aches and pains, and, generally, feel miserable, Jack opined. On another occasion, Jack brought out a family portrait, meant to represent the typical American household. The middle-aged adults and their teenaged daughter all practiced poor eating habits and never exercised. Six months after the photograph was taken, Jack said, the father had died of a heart attack, arthritis crippled the mother, and the daughter, 15 pounds overweight, “looks like a little old fat lady.”⁵⁸¹

To be clear, Jack recommended diet and exercise to combat a climbing bodyweight: a recommendation that has, since, been thoroughly endorsed by almost every medical professional. Furthermore, research has shown that invoking feelings of disgust can be highly motivating. Dr. Julian Woolf explains that “to be persuasive, a message must attract the [audience’s] attention,” and disgust – as evidenced by everything from Roman gladiators to modern “slasher” films – is particularly effective at that. In the context of physical activity in particular, feelings of disgust – which, in

580 Caroline S. Fox et al., “Temporal Trends in Coronary Heart Disease Cardiac Death from 1950 to 1999,” *Circulation* 110, no. 5 (August 2004): 522-527; and Ahmedin Jemal, et al., “Trends in the Leading Causes of Death in the United States, 1970-2002,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 294, no. 10 (2005): 1255-1259.

581 “Episode 35,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.

modern society, often accompany images of fatness – call attention to the negative outcomes of obesity, and therefore encourage people to exercise.⁵⁸²

However, by using negative feedback as a motivational strategy, he engaged in what is today criticized as “body shaming,” whereby “the fat body is made a spectacle, serving as an antagonistic visual discursive element against which notions of personal responsibility are articulated,” explains communications scholar Deborah Morrison Thompson.⁵⁸³ Body shaming has become in modern times a highly controversial subject, to such an extent that health promotion campaigns in the United Kingdom have avoided using even the *word* “obesity.”⁵⁸⁴ Jack’s dialogue very clearly intended to shame viewers into exercise.

For example, Jack exhorted his female viewers to exercise as insurance against the stress and strain of family life. He warned them that “if your energy and vitality isn’t up where it should be, if you’re losing your youthful figure, then your children aren’t gonna have respect for you like they should.... And your husband,” he continued, “he wants to see you looking slick and sleek and beautiful, like you were before you got married.”⁵⁸⁵ In another episode, he reminded women that they bore responsibility for the entire family’s success and happiness. “Remember,” he said, “you’re the backbone of the family. Everybody depends on you – your husband, your children, and everyone. The

582 Julian Woolf, “The Effects of Disgusting Eliciting Persuasive Messages on Physical Activity,” Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Texas, 2007): 38.

583 Deborah Morrison Thompson, “Big Food and the Body Politics of Personal Responsibility,” *Southern Communication Journal* 74, no. 1 (January-March 2009): 3.

584 Joe Piggan and Jessica Lee, “‘Don’t Mention Obesity:’ Contradictions and Tensions in the UK Change4Life Health Promotion Campaign,” *Journal of Health Psychology* 16, no. 8 (2011): 1151-1164.

585 “Episode 22,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.

minute you slip, then every member of that family has slipped.”⁵⁸⁶ Given the inextricable ideas and ideals of happiness and family in 1950s America, such threats surely shook many women who found the very meaning of their lives in their husbands and children.

It should be noted that this critical interpretation of Jack’s motivational strategy is a decidedly presentist one; few, if any critics questioned him for its use in the 1950s. However, as historians Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English explain, American history has exhibited no shortage of patronizing discourse towards women. Little effort is required “to discern a consistent bias,” they write: advice to women for centuries pointed “towards domesticity.... And deviations from this path were at the very least unhealthy.”⁵⁸⁷ Jack’s televised sermons constituted simply the latest iteration of a well-established trope. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that *The Jack LaLanne Show* contributed to many of the patriarchal norms that persist in the fitness industry.⁵⁸⁸ That understanding can serve as a starting point to address inequality and even gender-related barriers to participation that unfortunately remain common today.

CONCLUSION

That Jack crafted a public persona for the cameras should in no way detract from his legacy. And yet, because of how carefully Jack guarded that public image, in many ways, it became synonymous with his legacy. The public never saw his true self; after his

586 “Episode 5,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.

587 Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of Experts’ Advice to Women* (Anchor Books, 1978): xiii-xiv.

588 A full discussion of these disparities could constitute a dissertation in itself. However, Shari Dworkin and Faye Linda Wachs have written an excellent synopsis in their book, *Body Panic: Gender, Health, and the Selling of Fitness* (New York University Press, 2009).

shows, he would turn silent. “He seems contemplative, worried about his image.... There are no cheery goodbys from the studio gang as LaLanne and his dog pad away,” wrote Jerry LeBlanc after spending a day with Jack.⁵⁸⁹ “Jack is a very private person,” confided Elaine, his wife of over fifty years. “He doesn’t like being analyzed, and he hates people prying into his personal life and thoughts – even me.”⁵⁹⁰

“And yet,” wrote James Meadow in 1990, “there was one moment, one brief moment, when a quick wave of fatigue seemed to slip into his eyes. It was gone in an instant, but its brief appearance was, curiously, a source of relief for the interviewer. It was somehow reassuring to know that even Jack LaLanne gets tired occasionally. But please don’t tell anybody.”⁵⁹¹ As Jack loved to say about his own death, “it might wreck my image.”

After a somewhat hesitant entrance into the industry, Jack embraced television wholeheartedly; and with the new medium’s ability to instantly deliver both sights and sounds to all of America, his physical culture enterprises soared. Jack’s energy and passion for health and fitness reverberated through television sets: first only in San Francisco; later, in Los Angeles; then the whole country and eventually the whole world. However, *The Jack LaLanne Show’s* success did not stem solely from the vitality of its namesake. Jack’s rhetoric on the show connected with the wishes and the worries shared by many people during the 1950s. His goal, he claimed, was to serve as a panacea for the desire for a stable, traditional family life; discomfiture with the rapid advance of

589 Jerry LeBlanc, “He Makes the Ladies Jump,” *Empire* magazine, 24 January 1971: 29.

590 Gail Cottman, “Jack LaLanne Isn’t Kidding,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 April 1971: 30.

591 James B. Meadow, “Jack LaLanne, America’s First Man of Fitness,” *Senior Edition USA* (January 1990): 18.

technology; and the demanding new fashions and norms of physical appearance. And woe betide she who failed to heed his announcer's call to "Stop! Look! Listen!" when *The Jack LaLanne Show* aired, for she would surely remain fat, affectionless, and unhappy.

Over the course of the 1950s and into the early 1960s, Jack progressively broadened his show's reach. He began visiting small groups, usually women's clubs, and preaching the benefits of diet and exercise in person – exactly as his original inspiration, Paul Bragg, had done in the early decades of the century. The perpetual hunt for sponsorship and financial support led Jack to expand his own line of fitness products, including health food supplements, exercise equipment, and much, much more. Fueled by Jack's endless supply of enthusiasm, an immense advertising campaign, and the unwavering support of his future wife, Elaine, *The Jack LaLanne Show* soon outgrew its San Francisco roots and took Jack south, to Los Angeles; and then east, to Dallas, Chicago, New York, and ultimately to nearly every city in the United States.

Chapter 5: Survival of the Fittest

When he arrived in Los Angeles, Jack *owned* the television fitness industry. No nationally-syndicated competitors existed; in fact, no local competitors existed, either. His show was also different than other daytime programming, which, in the 1950s, largely consisted of serial dramas (“soap operas”) interspersed with the occasional game show. The relatively small daytime audience limited potential advertising profits, especially compared to prime-time shows, and so the networks’ invested little in daytime programming variety. Daytime shows usually attracted viewers by offering women “a break from the daily grind of housework,” and soaps and game shows could deliver broad appeal with low production costs.⁵⁹²

By the 1960s, however, television had firmly established itself as an American institution, and proved its economic worth beyond any doubt. It was therefore inevitable that Jack would, eventually, have to share his audience with a number of imitators, all eager to enjoy their own piece of television profits. Debbie Drake, of Texas, brought her busty beauty to televisions across the country in 1960, just one year after *The Jack LaLanne Show* was syndicated nationwide. Richard Hittleman shared the secrets of yoga with an audience largely unfamiliar with any exercise practices, let alone ancient Eastern ones. He and Jack both vied for early-morning airtime in Los Angeles, and Hittleman often won. Paul Fogarty preceded all of them. Fogarty alone eschewed commercialism;

⁵⁹² Cassidy, *What Women Watched*, 3–5, 36.

and perhaps because of this, his show never escaped its Chicago origins with national syndication.

This chapter documents the early history of each of these competitors, as well as their start in television and the eventual fate of their shows. It proves that while Jack may not have been the first to demonstrate exercise on television, he was the first – barely – to be nationally syndicated. More importantly, his show lasted longer than the others’, thanks to its ability to reach the broadest audience without offending the conservative sensibilities of 1950s American families. For these reasons, historians should consider Jack’s the most significant early television exercise program.

PAUL FOGARTY AND THE FIRST TELEVISION EXERCISE SHOW

The television exercise show began not with Jack, but with James Paul Fogarty, who used his middle name when he entered the broadcasting industry as the host of the radio show “Keep Fit to Music,” which aired on WGN in Chicago in the 1930s and 1940s. Fogarty was born on November 8, 1893, in Michigan City, Indiana: originally a quiet town amidst a rugged beauty near Lake Michigan. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Michigan City had attracted Eastern immigrants with money to invest and became a prominent city for railroad car manufacturing.⁵⁹³ Fogarty’s father, an Irish immigrant also named James, worked as a railroad engineer, and earned enough money

593 United States Selective Service System, “World War I Draft Registration Card for James Paul Fogarty,” World War I Draft Registration Card Index, 1917-1918, n.d.; and Web Site of the City of Michigan City, Indiana, “History and Architecture,” accessed online at <http://www.emichigancity.com/history/architecture.htm>

that his son was able to attend school, rather than work, as did the children of many immigrants at that time and place.⁵⁹⁴ The younger Fogarty earned high marks in school, and then an advanced degree in journalism from the University of Notre Dame. He graduated in 1917, and, with America's entrance into the conflict of World War I imminent, joined the Army.⁵⁹⁵

Fogarty was stationed at Fort Benjamin, in Harrison, Indiana, about three hundred miles south of his hometown. By the late 1910s, he had grown into a tall young man, though medium of build; and, perhaps due to his strong constitution and college education, earned a position in officers' training camps.⁵⁹⁶ In preparation for this work, he received "intensive schooling" from Colonel Herman J. Koehler.⁵⁹⁷ Koehler's instruction shaped much of Fogarty's life – both in the military, and thereafter.

Koehler, a renowned instructor at West Point military academy, had accumulated an extensive background in physical culture. He was born on 14 December 1859, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to German parents.⁵⁹⁸ Perhaps his parents were members of the Turner movement, for in 1882, at the age of 23, Koehler graduated from the Milwaukee Normal School of Physical Training. There he would have been exposed to both the traditional German and Swedish styles of gymnastic training, as well as massage techniques, physiology, fencing, boxing, and wrestling.⁵⁹⁹ For the next several years,

594 U.S. Department of Commerce, "1900 Federal Census for La Porte County, Indiana," 2 June 1900.

595 *Who's Who in the Midwest, Volume 6* (Marquis, 1958): 333.

596 Selective Service System, "World War I Draft Registration Card for James Paul Fogarty."

597 Eleanor Nangle, "Do Their Daily Dozen on Exercise Program," *Chicago Tribune*, 21 May 1951: F1.

598 Ship's manifest for the S.S. *Mauretania* (New York, 18 September 1925): 104; and U.S. Department of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the United States for Highlands Township, Orange, New York," 19 January 1920: 26B.

599 Turner Hall & The Milwaukee Turners, "History of the Milwaukee Turners," accessed, <http://www.milwaukeeeturners.org/about>; and "Summer School for Physical Training of the North American Gymnastic Union," *Mind and Body* 4 (1897): 96. For more on the

from 1882-1885, he served as Director of School Gymnastics in nearby Oshkosh, less than one hundred miles from his hometown.⁶⁰⁰ Yet the future would hold a great deal of travel for Koehler, after he relocated to New York to enroll in the United States Military Academy. According to sport historian Jeffery Charlston, by the time he arrived in West Point, Koehler was generally recognized as “a gymnast of international stature and professional physical educator.”⁶⁰¹

Koehler had devised over the course of his education a simple philosophy of physical fitness. One should train to develop general health, muscular strength, endurance, discipline, confidence, and personal pride, he wrote.⁶⁰² For Koehler, and for many physical culturists during the era of Muscular Christianity, the building of character equaled in importance the building of the physique.⁶⁰³ But Koehler held rather rare egalitarian views: everyone should take part in exercise, he opined, men, women, and children alike. “In fact,” Koehler wrote, “instruction [in physical fitness] should be compulsory and universal.”⁶⁰⁴

Therefore, the physical instructor himself bore a great deal of responsibility to his charges:

Swedish and German gymnastics systems, see Annette Hofmann, *The American Turner Movement: A History from its Beginnings to 2000* (Printing Edge, 2010); Gertrud Pfister, “Cultural Confrontations: German Turnen, Swedish Gymnastics and English Sport – European Diversity in Physical Activities From a Historical Perspective,” *Culture, Sport, Society* 6, no. 1 (2003): 61-91; and Jan Todd, *Physical Culture and the Body Beautiful: Purposive Exercise in the Lives of American Women, 1800-1875* (Mercer University Press, 1998).

600 David Yebra, “Colonel Herman J. Koehler: The Father of Physical Education at West Point,” unpublished manuscript (Long Island University, 1998): 7–8.

601 Jeffery A. Charlston, “Disorganized and Quasi-Official but Eventually Successful: Sport in the US Military, 1814-1914,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, no. 4 (2002): 77.

602 Herman John Koehler, *Koehler’s West Point Manual of Disciplinary Physical Training* (EP Dutton, 1919), 6.

603 See, for example, Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Harvard University Press: 2001); Barker J. William, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); and William J. Baker, “Religion,” in S.W. Pope and John Nauright, ed., *Routledge Companion to Sports History* (Routledge, 2010): 216-228.

604 Herman Koehler, *The Koehler Method of Physical Drill* (J.B. Lippincott, 1920), 11.

All will agree that “nothing really great has ever been accomplished without enthusiasm.” One of the chief objects of the physical drill is to instill into the men a buoyant enthusiasm. This is done by example, by a cheerful and pleasant and yet compelling tone of voice, by awakening a man’s pride in his carriage and physique... Once [you] get a group of men striving and straining to accomplish the result the instructor desires and the problem is solved. This is where the personality of the instructor and the elements of real leadership come into play.... The instructor must give out to his men immeasurable funds of nervous energy... he must so strive himself that his men will be proud of their leader in every way, proud of his appearance, proud of his ability, proud of his fairness, and proud because **their** instructor is helping to make **their** organization the best.⁶⁰⁵

Guided by his physical philosophy and moral barometer, Koehler ushered in to West Point its first “theoretically sound and successful physical training system.”⁶⁰⁶ It was so successful, in fact, that within a single month of the U.S. War Department’s recommendation for gymnastic training of new recruits, the one infantry regiment decided to expand such instruction “to cover the full duration of basic training,” and the U.S. War Department subsequently compiled Koehler’s techniques into its first *Manual of Physical Training* published in 1893.⁶⁰⁷

It is clear that Fogarty applied Koehler’s philosophy in his own extensive career by spreading the message of physical culture and its benefits to the world. Fogarty began in 1917 at Fort Benjamin, where – like Koehler at West Point – he led other soldiers in calisthenics and other sorts of physical training, such as bayonet work. Though his journalism degree would have imparted upon him no experience in physical culture, he nevertheless found success at that post, rising to the level of captain by the war’s end.⁶⁰⁸

605 Ibid., 12–13 [emphasis original].

606 Charlston, “Disorganized and Quasi-Official but Eventually Successful,” 80.

607 Ibid., 80–81.

608 Larry Wolters, “W-G-N Women’s Exercise Periods to Open Monday,” *Chicago Tribune*, 13AD, 10.

Even then, he continued with similar work as an instructor at the Culver Military Academy in Indiana, from 1920-1923, and also served as football coach there.⁶⁰⁹

But Fogarty was a man of many interests, and in 1924, he turned his talents elsewhere, towards a musical career. Copyright records from that year show that, while still at Culver, he penned “‘Neath the Wabash Moon,” a song of young love and a tribute to the school.⁶¹⁰ The song gained popularity, and Fogarty contributed to several more musical pieces over the course of the decade. He wrote the lyrics to “Joe College,” performed with popular composer and keyboardist Ted Fiorito. “The first month the song hit the stands we expected to net \$10,000,” Fogarty reminisced. “By the second we settled for \$5,000; by the third, \$2,500. About this time I got a statement from the publisher. We owed him 7 cents!”⁶¹¹ Nevertheless, Fogarty persisted, and found some fame with “Betty Co-ed,” a nationwide hit that reached #4 on the charts.⁶¹²

He also forayed into the Florida real estate market, with limited success. Not surprisingly, especially for a man surely accustomed to achievement, Fogarty did not relish his time there. “I went hunting in the wilds of that state for three days without ever getting off a sidewalk,” he quipped.⁶¹³ He persisted for a time, taking a job managing entertainment at the Edgewater Beach resort in Panama City.⁶¹⁴

609 Mark Roeder, *A History of Culver and the Culver Military Academy* (iUniverse, 2004).

610 Ibid.; and Library of Congress Copyright Office, *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, vol. 3, 5-6, 1925.

611 Anton Remenih, “Appleberry Is Now in TV; He’s Paul Fogarty!” *Chicago Tribune*, April 30, 1950, 1F.

612 Ibid.

613 Ibid.

614 Ibid.

By 1932, he had left Florida and found his way to Chicago, and to WGN, a relatively new radio affiliate of CBS owned by the *Chicago Tribune*.⁶¹⁵ According to historian Michele Hilmes, WGN soon rose to national prominence for its programming originality and media connections. Its mission: “to maintain in its broadcasting standards of entertainment and instruction worthy of the call letters WGN [World’s Greatest Newspaper].”⁶¹⁶ It favored classical music and programs directed at education and public service.

From his affiliation with WGN, one can surmise that Fogarty’s radio programs were held to similarly lofty standards. And yet, his first program was a comedy: *Big Leaguers and Bushers* featured Fogarty as “Mac” McConnell, fictional manager of a professional baseball team on which protagonist Rube Appleberry (Lawrence Read) played. Fogarty produced the show together with Louis Wolf; it aired thrice weekly, and won the adoration of casual listeners and professional athletes alike. *Big Leaguers’* success led WGN to host promotional events featuring appearances by Fogarty and his fellow actors. In 1933, Fogarty changed the show’s title to *Rube Appleberry*, and it continued airing until 1935. In 1936, the format changed dramatically to that of a comic strip of the same name published in the *Illinois State Journal*, and was eventually syndicated.⁶¹⁷

615 “WGN Joins CBS Net,” *Broadcasting*, 15 October 1931: 12. The station itself was not new, but had recently transferred to CBS as the result of a complicated transaction involving competitors Chicago Daily News, WMAQ, and NBC.

616 Michele Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 70-71.

617 Ryan Ellett, “The Story of Rube Appleberry,” Old Time Radio Researchers Group, n.d., n.p., accessed online at http://www.otrr.org/Pages/Articles/Ryan_Ellett.html

Fogarty hosted a second show on WGN, as well, and it was this second show that eventually led him towards television. The “Keep Fit to Music” program — which also ran under the names “Keep Fit Club” and “Keep Fit Corps” — aired for 15 minutes each weekday morning at 9 o’clock.⁶¹⁸ It ran for at least a decade before gaining any notoriety; erstwhile, Fogarty began work on a second comic strip, and produced several sports news programs and a quiz show.⁶¹⁹

In 1942, the “Keep Fit Corps” program caught the attention of writer Sam Honigberg at *Billboard* magazine. He characterized it as

An exercise class of the air that is easy to listen to, due to the style of presentation by Capt. Paul Fogarty, a WGN producer who directed calisthenics classes during the first World War. It is new on the station and available for a sponsor. Fogarty ties in the nationwide campaign to keep civilians physically fit and directs the exercises in simple, everyday language. The program is announced by Ed Allen, staff announcer, who doubles as Fogarty’s visible class of one. Len Salvo is at the organ.⁶²⁰

Honigberg erred in identifying the show as “new,” but the *Billboard* review reveals much about Fogarty and his career. First, by 1942, the favorable review in a fairly prestigious publication indicates that he enjoyed as much success in broadcasting as he had in the military. Second, the reference to national fitness suggests that Fogarty was both patriotic and possessed an aptitude for appealing to the cultural climate of his day. The latter skill would surely help in the years to come, when Fogarty took his broadcasting career into television.

618 Remenih, “Appleberry Is Now in TV; He’s Paul Fogarty!”

619 Ellett, “Rube Appleberry.”

620 “Keep Fit Corps,” *Billboard*, March 21, 1942, 8.

Fogarty finally adapted his radio show to the new medium, on October 2, 1950: a full year before Jack. Fogarty introduced *Your Figure, Ladies* on WGN-TV; and, like his radio show, this new program aired for 15 minutes each weekday morning. Harold Turner accompanied Fogarty on the organ. “While this series... is aimed at women, it may prove of interest to males,” *Chicago Tribune* author Larry Wolters noted, “because Fogarty will be assisted by a group of Connie Seaman models.”⁶²¹ And, indeed, by 1957 the show was renamed *The Paul Fogarty Program* thanks to the growing male viewership.⁶²²

Just as Jack credited his success to his ability to speak directly to viewers at home, critics realized that Fogarty’s demeanor drove the show’s popularity:

Many of his pupils sometimes feel he has the power to see right into the living rooms where they are doing their gyrations in private. He checks them up, often, with a gibe that hits home. It’s as tho [*sic*] he seems them when they don’t stick to the brisk cadence of Harold Turner’s music. Each student is electrified when Paul says, “Kind of lazy this morning, huh?” And when he says, “Atta girl, over there in Gary, very good,” hundreds of Gary housewives feel that they alone have been selected to go to the head of the class.⁶²³

From his very first show, then, Fogarty established a pattern in exercise television that Jack LaLanne, Debbie Drake, and Richard Hittleman would rely upon in their shows over the next two decades. A simple show, set to music, that featured pretty women demonstrating calisthenics to viewers fulfilled several needs in 1950s America: it educated the public about exercise, with accessible recommendations; it titillated viewers

621 Larry Wolters, “Mr. Keep Fit’s Back, Ladies, over WGN-TV,” 2 October 1950: 10F.

622 Ellett, “Rube Appleberry.”

623 Nangle, “Do Their Daily Dozen on Exercise Program.”

while staying within the confines of a containment culture that vilified sexuality; and it sold products to a rapidly growing consumer society.

This last point may have proved to be Fogarty's failure. Colonel Koehler had deeply influenced Fogarty's teaching, and rather than Jack, Drake, or Hittleman's over-commercialized, materialistic, and guilt-laden approaches, he eschewed ostentatious selling and was "anything but a crotchety professor," *Chicago Tribune* journalist Eleanor Nangel gushed. "He has barrels of fun teaching exercise, and there are times when his pupils can hardly bend or twist for laughing."⁶²⁴ And viewers responded to his gentle, enthusiastic, encouraging style:

The women love it. Thousands of them have fun with Fogarty five mornings a week. The mailmen tremble at the sight of his name, because they lug in thousands of letters a month from grateful pupils whose measurements are shrinking while their sense of well being is ballooning. They send him their 'before and after' charts and even write poetry, like the woman who penned: 'Truly I love it, I really feel swell/And I'm getting an excellent chassis as well!'⁶²⁵

"His enthusiasm and knowledge about exercise is contagious," agreed another author.⁶²⁶

Perhaps most importantly, Fogarty — unlike all of his competitors — never resorted to shaming women about their bodies. "Women are divided into three classes," Fogarty explained, "those who want to lose weight, those who want to gain weight, and those who want to redistribute the weight from where they have too much to where they haven't quite enough. Most men and women exercise for vanity reasons and health is

624 Ibid.

625 Ibid.

626 "WGN-TV's Your Figure, Ladies Back Tomorrow," *Chicago Tribune*, March 29, 1953, N10.

dragged in by the scruff of the neck. Happily it doesn't make much difference why people exercise. The important thing is — exercise!"⁶²⁷

At first, Fogarty directed the "entertaining and phenomenally successful" *Your Figure, Ladies* towards great results — for both the show and its viewers.⁶²⁸ "The hips are going down, down down," rejoiced one fan, and Fogarty's ratings went up, up, up.⁶²⁹ Less than a year after it first began airing, WGN doubled Fogarty's airtime, from 15 minutes per day to 30.⁶³⁰ But this success lasted just barely over a decade. Ten years and one month after the show debuted, WGN cancelled *The Paul Fogarty Show*.

The show had never failed to capture viewers' attention. Fans, even the less dedicated or attentive ones, went "up in arms" about the show's cancellation. Wrote one woman from Itasca: "Perhaps I am only one of thousands who never wrote a fan letter. However, along with all my friends, I am up in arms about the loss of Paul Fogarty on TV.... Paul Fogarty not only helped the weight problem but was real good for the morale. Please bring him back."⁶³¹ And Americans still *needed* exercise television — perhaps more than ever before. "Television, which has been accused of many high crimes in the last year — payola, plugola, quiz scandals, excessive violence, too many westerns — has suffered one more body blow," wrote Wolters:

It's accused of being fattening. And in this day of women would desire sylph-like figures and men who want to look as young as Jack Benny, this is a terrible charge. A physician addressing a conference of the New York Academy of

627 Ibid.

628 Eleanor Nangle, "Exercise to Whittle Away on Hips," *Chicago Tribune*, 23, 1951, F2.

629 Ibid.

630 Nangle, "Do Their Daily Dozen on Exercise Program."

631 "TV Mailbag," *Chicago Tribune TV Week*, 19 November 1960: 6.

Sciences commented on the possible effects on the public's health of the combination of little exercise and 'rich snacks' while watching TV.... It is obvious that a calorie countdown is indicated for a lot of viewers.⁶³²

But while viewers needed exercise, they did not need Fogarty specifically — and by 1960, he faced quickly growing competition. Besides LaLanne, Drake, and Hittleman, all of whom had begun broadcasting nationally by 1960, “there may be some benefits to be obtained by those who follow Dick Clark, Jack Hilton, Dave Hull, and Jim Lounsbury, who would have you dance [excess weight] off,” suggested Wolters.⁶³³

Evidence — or lack thereof — suggests that Fogarty never peddled products, at least not to the extent that his competitors did. The *Chicago Tribune* alludes to a sponsor of his radio show, but fails to even name that company or individual. No sponsor of *Your Figure, Ladies* is ever mentioned. Fogarty proved his prowess as an author by writing a *Your Figure, Ladies* exercise book, as well as a manual of drills for the United States Army. He also released a recording titled “Paul Fogarty’s Famous Forty Exercises.” However, besides these two products, his audience would not have had to pay for Fogarty’s information, as he shared much of it in a weekly exercise column in the *Chicago Tribune*. The column contained photographs of exercises that Fogarty prescribed to viewers on his show, along with a lengthy description of their proper execution and potential benefits.

Perhaps his inattention to America’s growing commercialization explains why Fogarty never syndicated his show nationally. Or perhaps Fogarty’s age had simply

632 Larry Wolters, “Television in Hot Water Again; Now They Say It Makes You Fat,” *Chicago Tribune*, 19 June 1960: B8.

633 Ibid.

caught up with him. He celebrated his 67th birthday in 1960, the year his exercise show was cancelled; and in a culture and industry that valued youth and glamour, age offered no advantage. While Jack maintained his youthful good looks until very late in life, one assumes that Fogarty, who relied upon stand-ins to demonstrate his prescribed exercises, possessed a less impressive aged glamour. *The Paul Fogarty Show* never returned after its cancellation, and Fogarty retired three years later. He returned to Florida, where he lived quietly for the rest of his life. His 1976 obituary described him simply as “A figure in Chicago broadcasting for more than 31 years before he retired, [who] had a morning exercise program on WGN-TV during the 1950s. He also was a sports writer and song composer.”



Figure 18. The cover of one of Fogarty's exercise records. Note that Fogarty himself is not pictured.

DEBBIE DRAKE: THE FIRST FEMALE EXERCISE SHOW HOST ON TELEVISION

Though Fogarty holds the title of first television exercise host, his show was never broadcast nationally, never garnered huge profits, and his overall importance is difficult to assess. This is unfortunate, given Fogarty's emphasis on exercise for health rather than

appearance. Debbie Drake, Jack's first true competitor, however, could be called Fogarty's antipode. She quickly amassed a devout following across the country when her show was nationally syndicated just two years after it first aired. Even more so than Jack, Drake oozed sex appeal, and though her show attracted a largely male viewership, she too commercialized her physique and persona to the tune of tens of millions of dollars in merchandise sold in a single year. On *The Debbie Drake Show* and its sequel, *Dancercise*, millions of Americans saw her lithe body bending and bouncing across their television screens, and idolized the visual ideal of fit, attractive womanhood that she presented. Many viewers interpreted her femininity as evidence of her competency as a fitness instructor, and Drake herself argued that an attractive body proved good health, and was essential to finding lasting love and happiness in life. Drake's success was a product of desirable aesthetics, powerful marketing based on sex appeal, and the historical moment in which her show aired, but the vision of fitness that she presented had little grounding in scientific or medical research, and the diets and exercises she prescribed were likely ineffective or even unhealthy.

Drake was born Velda Louise Bellah, on March 28, 1930, to Glover and Ola Bellah, in Nueces, Texas, near Corpus Christi, and grew up in a household crowded with seven siblings.⁶³⁴ Her father was an "itinerant 'trading man,'" who worked as a farmer

634 Texas State Board of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics, "Standard Certificate of Birth for Velda Lousie Bellah," 28 March 1930, file number 28053; Texas Department of State Health Services, "Debbie Drake," from the Texas Birth Index, 1903-1997, n.d.; Bureau of the Census, "1940 Census for Nueces County, Texas," Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, 27 April 1940; and Clarence Petersen, "How Velda Lousie Bellah Became TV's Debbie Drake," *Chicago Tribune*, 15 February 1970: Section 10, page 15. Drake claimed to have been born in 1930. See Olga Curtis, "A Perfect TV Figure: Debbie Drake Teaches Women How to Exercise," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 9 April 1961: 29.

during the 1910s, then took up carpentry, and by the 1940s owned his own business.⁶³⁵ Drake's mother, Ola, kept house. She was devoutly religious, a member of the Assemblies of God, and "overly strict," said Drake.⁶³⁶ "I never danced or saw a movie or anything until I was 21 years old," she remembered. "I couldn't wear slacks. I couldn't even play in the yard with kids who were wearing slacks."⁶³⁷ Having become accustomed to farm life, Drake was something of a tomboy despite the skirts, and was judged not feminine enough by her mother's standards – an accusation no one would level against her in adulthood.⁶³⁸ Drake harbored her own misgivings about her mother. "Mother weighed 190 pounds and it was all in her tummy. I was built the same way and had a horror about being fat," she admitted.⁶³⁹ She wanted something different from life, and so she "broke away, faster than hell," Drake's adopted daughter, Tammy Evans, explained.⁶⁴⁰

To escape Nueces, she married a man named Evans Hott when she was 16, and together they moved north, to Grand Prairie, near Dallas. They lived together for three years, until, shortly before her nineteenth birthday, Drake gave birth to a son, Larry.⁶⁴¹ But the marriage did not last, and one year later, Hott left his family, and Drake found herself alone, relatively uneducated, and a single mother; she felt "skinny and scared."⁶⁴² Nevertheless, she decided to stay in Grand Prairie, driven only by a "determination that

635 Selective Service System, "Draft Registration Card for Glover Bee Floyd Bellah"; and Census, "1940 Census for Nueces County, Texas."

636 Phone interview with Debbie Drake, 18 January 2017; and Curtis, "A Perfect TV Figure."

637 Petersen, "Debbie Drake."

638 Dick Kleiner, "Why Would Any Man Like to Watch Debbie Drake Do the Army Dozen," *Bristol Daily Courier*, July 12, 1962, 9.

639 Joan Foster Dames, "'Dancercise' Is Her Dish," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 15 May 1968, 4F.

640 Phone interview with Tammy Eiteljorg Evans, 12 January 2017.

641 Texas Department of State Health Services, "Larry Dean Hott," from the Texas Birth Index, 1903-1997, 19 February 1949.

642 Petersen, "Debbie Drake."

would stop a freight train,” and “floundered through school and secretarial work” before finding a job at American Health Studios in nearby Dallas, she later told an interviewer.⁶⁴³

At the health studio, Drake resolved to improve her situation in life. “When I became a secretary,” she said, “I realized that I didn’t like it. I was sitting down so much that I was 15 pounds overweight. I was heavy in the hips and waist and skinny up above,” she told one reporter.⁶⁴⁴ “My chest was in the poverty program.... My hips were so heavy with gooey fat that they slowed me down when I walked. I was just desperate.”⁶⁴⁵ She breakfasted with coffee and doughnuts, snacked frequently, and loved desserts: a result of the heavy meals she had been fed as a child.⁶⁴⁶ But under the tutelage of bodybuilder Jim Drinkward, whom she met at the health studio, she managed to lose some of her excess weight, and to “redistribute the remainder.”⁶⁴⁷

Over time, she learned to teach other women how to exercise and eat properly, too. Drinkward’s instruction in weight training helped Drake to improve her figure so much that she was offered a job as an instructor at the health studio herself, earning a wage of the greater of \$50 per week or commissions.⁶⁴⁸ “I never once needed that guarantee [of \$50],” she bragged. “I went over it the very first week because when a woman would come in I’d promise to transform her – and I would! I took it personally

643 Interview with Drake; and Petersen, “Debbie Drake.” Almost no information about Drake’s first marriage can be found in the historical record, which may suggest that she never actually did marry, but rather had a child out of wedlock. Lanier Johnson, who worked with Drake on her Diversified Products portfolio in the 1960s, explained that while Drake admitted in private to having a grandchild, she usually avoided discussing her family or her past.

644 Kleiner, “Debbie Drake.”

645 Petersen, “Debbie Drake.”

646 Dames, “‘Dancercise’ Is Her Dish.”

647 Kleiner, “Debbie Drake.”

648 Interview with Drake; and Al Thomas, “George Redpath: A Life in the Balance,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 17.

when someone didn't do as I told them."⁶⁴⁹ That same drive and enthusiasm would later characterize her television show and fitness business.

Drake's big break came in 1960, when she visited a country club in Indianapolis with a romantic acquaintance. "He introduced me to someone who ran a [television] station," she said, and the station executive asked her to audition for a new exercise show in that city. "I'd love to," Drake answered, and that spring, she starred in a series called *Passport to Beauty*.⁶⁵⁰ The show aired on the local station WISH-TV, from 10:15 to 10:30 on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. It was sponsored by the supermarket and retailing company Kroger.⁶⁵¹

The Kroger sponsorship, and others that Drake soon procured, including Serta Mattress and Diet Pepsi, funded over 90 percent of her show's costs and fueled its syndication in 65 markets nationwide by July 1961. Banner Films distributed the show, renaming it *The Debbie Drake Show* to capitalize on the star's growing celebrity.⁶⁵² Drake immediately embarked on a promotional tour, and according to Charles McGregor, president of Banner, within four months she became so popular that her personal appearances caused "minor riots."⁶⁵³ The next year, Banner sold a second season of the show to an additional 47 markets, bringing the total to 112.⁶⁵⁴ The 1961 and 1962 seasons

649 Petersen, "Debbie Drake."

650 Interview with Drake.

651 "Passport to Beauty" [advertisement], *Indianapolis Star*, 3 March 1960: 18.

652 "An 'Important Part' of Viewers' Lives," *Broadcasting*, 10 July 1961: 78; and "Follow Debbie Drake to a Lovelier You!" [advertisement], *Dallas Morning News*, 26 February 1961: section 1, page 7.

653 "Of Curves, Charts & Debbie Drake," *Variety*, 14 June 1961: 25; and "An 'Important Part' of Viewers' Lives."

654 "Debbie Drake Sales," *Variety*, 15 August 1962: 39.

of *The Debbie Drake Show* were the only ones ever produced, but, according to one reporter, “many stations ran it and reran it for years in response to excellent ratings.”⁶⁵⁵

Obviously, Drake and Jack had much in common in their histories. Both were raised in farming households that paid little mind to healthful eating, instead favoring rich foods and sweets. Both grew discomfited by their unappealing physical appearances fairly early in life, and found solace and guidance at a local gymnasium. Both entered the fitness industry as gym employees, and later used their success, good looks, and charm to transition into television.

They also had much in common in their shows. In fact, *The Jack LaLanne Show* and *The Debbie Drake Show* were identical in most regards, excepting of course the gender of their hosts. Just as Jack did, Drake began by leading viewers through a series of simple calisthenics to be performed without the use of equipment. The show’s set mimicked a stereotypical 1950s living room, and Drake exercised barefooted on the carpeted floor, occasionally using commonly-found objects like chairs as props to aid her instruction. Drake, however, omitted the monologues and question-and-answer section that Jack included halfway through his program.

In truth, Drake probably owes a fair amount of success to Jack. By the time Drake started her show, Jack already broadcast his nationally; and so stations that had missed out on his show probably jumped at the chance to air hers. Jack had already proven the viability of the subject and format on television. Drake’s major advantage was her ability to appeal to both men *and* women. While her show, like Jack’s, was ostensibly targeted at

⁶⁵⁵ Dames, “‘Dancercise’ Is Her Dish.”

women, Drake's overt sexuality, accentuated by her tight clothing and soft, sensual voice lured many men to the television, too. *TIME* magazine explained the situation bluntly: "A shrewd Texas blonde named Debbie Drake has fashioned a never-fail device to pare tallow off overweight Americans, using three proven methods: 1) exercise, 2) diet, and 3) matrimonial strife," read its review. "While the women writhe, their husbands too are profiting by the sitting-up exercises (they do not exercise, naturally; it is hard to roll about on the floor and at the same time watch Debbie with the concentration she deserves)."656

Jack tried to contest Drake's stranglehold on the male audience. He experimented in 1961 with a fifteen-minute late show, which aired from 9:15 to 9:30 P.M. He chose Denver as a test market, claiming that it was more representative of American tastes than any other; and indeed, Denver has a diverse population and has grown rapidly since the 1960s. The LaLannes had been "deluged with requests for an evening show," Jack claimed, "especially from those people who work and are unable to see our morning program."⁶⁵⁷ Not all of these requests were from working women; many housewives wanted for their husbands a chance to exercise, too. Accordingly, the late show was targeted at "the entire family — mom, dad, and junior."⁶⁵⁸

But observers doubted Jack's ability to attract men as well as women. "Can Jack La Lanne, who makes with the exercises each morning on Chandler 28, hope to attract the male viewers who hopped out of bed to watch shapely Debbie Drake in the same

656 "TV: One, Two."

657 Del Carnes, "LaLanne Sets Late Show," *Denver Post*, 34.

658 Ibid.

routine?” asked *The Scranton Times*.⁶⁵⁹ “He makes a lot of husbands happier,” wrote journalist Robert Johnson, “by helping their wives become healthier,” but the men themselves had no interest in watching Jack.⁶⁶⁰ Presumably, the critics were right: the late show never made its way outside of Denver.

As Drake’s popularity grew, she began to capture more of the opportunities Jack surely would have wished to keep to himself. In July of 1962, she spoke on famous anchorman Howard K. Smith’s special report on the nation’s fitness, titled “America the Lazy.” Drake was joined by physical culture entrepreneurs Vic Tanny and Charles Atlas; Dr. Harry Johnson, national health officer for the Boy Scouts of America, and Charles “Bud” Wilkinson, President Kennedy’s chief consultant on physical fitness. Jack was left out.⁶⁶¹

She could sell fitness products dollar-for-dollar just as well as Jack could, too. Her mind was “commercially acute,” remarked Newspaper Enterprise Association writer Dick Kleiner, and in 1964, she partnered with Alabama businessman Forrest James Junior, a former Auburn football star and future two-term governor of the state, to sell branded exercise equipment.⁶⁶² James had revolutionized the barbell industry in 1961 by manufacturing vinyl-covered concrete barbells for home use, and marketing them in department stores. Demand was high and James soon added other exercise equipment to his product line and incorporated his company under the name Diversified Products

659 “Listening Post,” *The Scranton Times*, January 27, 1962, 7–A.

660 Johnson, “La Lanne.”

661 Ray McConnell, “TV to Report on Nation’s Fitness,” *Star News*, July 18, 1962, 26.

662 Kleiner, “Debbie Drake”; and McConnell, “TV to Report on Nation’s Fitness.”

(DP).⁶⁶³ According to Lanier Johnson, a DP marketing executive, Drake was hired as a contract employee, and became their first celebrity spokesperson.⁶⁶⁴

The arrangement brought in millions of dollars in revenue. DP quickly launched a Debbie Drake line of equipment, including the Debbie Drake Exercise Cycle, Debbie Drake Slant Board, Debbie Drake Exercise Mat, Debbie Drake Beauty-belles (dumbbells), and many other branded products. Her merchandise had glamour, she said: “I want women to feel feminine and look feminine and their men want them to be this way.”⁶⁶⁵ She sold a red leotard with white collar like the one she wore on air. Her monetary success alone indicates that Drake possessed considerable prestige in the commoditized beauty culture industry of the 1960s. There was even a Debbie Drake doll, a copy of the best-selling Barbie doll, but dressed in Drake’s signature leotard.⁶⁶⁶

But as Drake’s popularity grew, many viewers – some of whom felt physically inadequate in comparison to Drake – began to object to the overt sexuality used to market the show, which created conflict in households unaccustomed to sensual imagery on television. Disgruntled viewers wrote to newspapers or broadcast stations, protesting various aspects of the show. One woman wrote to the *Los Angeles Times*, arguing that the show aired during an inappropriate timeslot:

You can’t tell me there are any ladies up at [midnight] with enough energy left after a hard day’s work to be doing exercises. I’m of the opinion that

663 John D. Fair, “Diversified Products,” *Encyclopedia of Alabama*, 8 March 2013, accessed online at <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-3419>

664 Phone interview with Lanier Johnson, 3 January 2017.

665 Jeffrey, “Debbie Drake Is for Real.”

666 McKenzie, *Getting Physical*, 77.

the program is put on at that time for the eyes of our men.... It seems to me KTLA is using Miss Drake, who, I'm sure, is a very nice person, as a means of putting on a cheap burlesque show for men to ogle. If you've seen the show, you'll know that any gal with a figure like that who twists and turns and rolls around on the floor is enough to keep any man up late.⁶⁶⁷

Another concerned reader of the *Chicago Tribune* resented that her husband watched the show at all. "Every week day evening," she wrote, "when I've got dinner on the table and the kids are waiting, he's in the living room, staring at that Debbie Drake on television. He won't come to dinner until the show's over. Meanwhile, the food's chilling, I'm burning, and he's drooling."⁶⁶⁸

These letters received only dismissive responses, but they reveal much about Drake, her audience, and the culture in which her show aired. Even before Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, many women had grown discontented with the notion that they should conform to the patriarchal expectations portrayed in the media.⁶⁶⁹ Louise Mansfield argues that changing attitudes towards women's fitness reflect "shifting boundaries of public and private spaces in which women have to negotiate the appearance and performance of their bodies," and as women began to pursue more opportunities outside the home, they also began to reconsider the psychological feasibility and moral acceptability of traditional gender roles in and outside

667 Cecil Smith, "Exercised Fans Flex Their Pens," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1961, A16.

668 "Husband Drools Over Debbie Drake," *Chicago Tribune*, 6 March 1963, 2-1.

669 Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing up Female in the Fifties* (University of Chicago Press, 1992): 33, 37.

of a fitness context.⁶⁷⁰ Of course, Drake was not the only physical instructor of the time to encourage women to exercise to become more attractive to men. Jack used the same rhetoric on his show; and other institutions, like the YWCA, encouraged women to exercise for the purposes of “man-catching,” offering posture and charm “exercise” classes to help patrons become more ladylike.⁶⁷¹ And since in the early 1960s, television viewers interested in fitness could choose only between her and LaLanne, Drake probably found the criticism levied against her use of sex appeal un concerning.

But by the mid-1960s, Drake was no longer the only woman demonstrating calisthenics on television. Several others hosted exercise shows, competing directly with Drake and Jack, and they put less emphasis on their own bodies than did Drake, instead explaining how exercise could improve family life and aging bodies. Gloria Roeder, for example, was considered “living proof that a mother of six daughters can retain her girlish figure,” and often included her children on her morning exercise program.⁶⁷² Bonnie Prudden, who had coauthored the Kraus-Hirshland study in 1953, also devoted a great deal of her air time to explaining how exercise could benefit mothers and children.⁶⁷³ As early as 1957, the *Chicago Tribune* credited Prudden and Kraus as “basically responsible for the current attention to muscular weakness” in America.⁶⁷⁴

Prudden did not host her own exercise show until 1965, when she was over 50 years of

670 Louise Mansfield, “‘Sexercise’: Working out Heterosexuality in Jane Fonda’s Fitness Books,” *Leisure Studies* 30, no. 2 (2011): 241; and Karen Oppenheim Mason, John L. Czajka and Sara Arber, “Change in U.S. Women’s Sex-Role Attitudes, 1964-1974,” *American Sociological Review* 41, no. 4 (August 1976): 573-596.

671 Marissa Salcedo, “The Best of Intentions: Upbuilding Through Health at the Portland YWCA, 1908-1959,” *Journal of Women’s History* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 185-186.

672 Larry Wolters, “Channel 9 Figures to Get Flying Start,” *Chicago Tribune*, 14 September 1964, 1C-8.

673 Prudden’s column in the *Los Angeles Times* began in 1956, with an article titled “Note to Housewives: You Needn’t Look Lopsided,” and continued with several pieces targeted at men, women, and children throughout the remainder of that year. It continued through 1960.

674 Marcia Winn, “Some Schools Developing Fitness,” *Chicago Tribune*, 5 November 1957, 2-1.

age, but she had been considered an exercise authority long before then. Drake turned 40 in 1964, but she often claimed to be younger than she was, and avoided discussing her marriage and children. Nevertheless, it was becoming evident that Drake's strategy of sex appeal had flaws: she could not attract the older, family-centric demographic as well as her competitors, whom viewers perceived as less threatening to their domestic lives.⁶⁷⁵

As a result, Drake's popularity plummeted, despite launching a new series, *Dancercise*, in 1967. *Dancercise* incorporated traditional dance steps to build more graceful, feminine bodies and negate some of the monotony of exercise routines, but the paucity of media coverage about the new show suggests that it was not received as well as Drake's earlier efforts. *The Debbie Drake Show* show had fallen behind or was replaced by Jack's in many viewing areas as early as 1966, and *Dancercise* did little to remedy that situation; by August 1971, *The Debbie Drake Show* was no longer advertised in the *Los Angeles Times*, though she continued to make guest appearances on other programs, and to sell her books and other exercise products.⁶⁷⁶ "She fought for her place, but it was third place," behind Jack and Prudden, Drake's choreographer, Linda Twedell explained.⁶⁷⁷ She'd "been tried," explained Sheldon Cooper, program chief of WGN in Chicago, "but after the men have watched those great big eyes of hers two or three times,

675 Arland Thornton and Linda Young-DeMarco, "Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s Through the 1990s," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63, no. 4 (November 2001): 1011.

676 This pattern continued through 1971; see, for example, Clarence Petersen, "More Eyes Turned on Eyewitness News," *Chicago Tribune*, 27 March 1972, 1A-19.

677 Interview with Twedell.

they go back to Raquel Welch.”⁶⁷⁸ She “was moderately successful,” Lanier Johnson agreed, but “didn’t last long.”⁶⁷⁹

It is important to note that the individual reactions to and eventual rejection of Drake’s shows were not necessarily motivated by systematic discontent. As sociologist Pirkko Markula observes, “individual aerobicizers’ voices engage in a dialogue with the media voices of aerobics.”⁶⁸⁰ That is, while constrained by traditional perceptions of femininity, Drake’s viewers crafted their own meanings from the visual experience of watching her show.⁶⁸¹ The women whose letters appear above, for example, may simply have envied Drake’s good looks and bustline, as Elaine suggested, particularly “the way she could pour herself into that leotard.”⁶⁸²

But Drake never recovered from the shortcomings of *Dancercise*, and instead her influence continued to slowly fade. Although the lack of media coverage of the failing show precludes a detailed reconstruction of her career during the 1970s, Drake soon found herself alone and overwhelmed. In January 1977, her husband, Jack Eiteljorg separated from her, and filed for divorce and custody of their daughter later that year.⁶⁸³ “I’m a wreck,” Drake admitted. “I’ve spent a long time telling people how to handle stress. But I can’t handle it now.”⁶⁸⁴ She discontinued work on *Dancercise* because she

678 Clarence Petersen, “Some Fans Protest a Slim Gloria,” *Chicago Tribune*, 28 January 1971, 2-19.

679 Interview with Johnson.

680 Pirkko Markula, “Firm but Shapely, Fit but Sexy, Strong but Thin: The Postmodern Aerobicizing Female Bodies,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12 (1995): 450-451.

681 Vikki Krane, “We Can Be Athletic and Feminine, But Do We Want To? Challenging Hegemonic Femininity in Women’s Sport,” *Quest* 53, no. 1 (2001): 115-133.

682 Hal Humphrey, “Healthy Ratings Keep Jack Fit,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 May 1966: C14.

683 “Newsmakers,” Biloxi, Mississippi, *Sun Herald*, 12 November 1977, A4.

684 “Newsmakers,” *Los Angeles Times*, 13 November 1977, A2.

was too ashamed to be seen in her less-than-glamorous state.⁶⁸⁵ By 1978, neither show aired in any U.S. market. Drake retired from the television and fitness businesses, and moved to Padre Island, off the eastern Texas coast, near her childhood home.⁶⁸⁶

Despite her longevity and her influence on a very popular form of exercise in the 1970s, Drake cannot be said to have had the same impact on American fitness culture as Jack. Her exercise show was not the first to air either locally or nationally; nor did it last the longest; nor did it reach the most people. Jack's broader appeal and better grasp of consumer preferences ultimately led his business to persist for the duration of his life; Drake's slowly faded away. Nevertheless, Drake deserves to be remembered as a pioneer in fitness media targeted at women. Her use of sex appeal and careful self-presentation through television allowed her to reach an impressively large audience at a time when fitness was becoming a more important aspect of many Americans' lives. Drake's legacy is obvious in the success of modern female fitness idols like Jane Fonda and Jillian Michaels, who used similar strategies in their own careers.

⁶⁸⁵ "Newsmakers," *Biloxi, Mississippi, Sun Herald*.

⁶⁸⁶ Interview with Twidell.



Figure 19. Drake's sexuality was central to her appeal, and is accentuated in this photoshoot for Life Magazine. Photograph by Alfred Eisenstaedt, ca. 1960.

YOGA ON TV: RICHARD HITTLEMAN

Jack, Drake, and Fogarty all preached exercise in the form of calisthenics (though, late in her career, Drake also incorporated dance movements). Calisthenics offered one enormous advantage over the generally more efficacious resistance training with weights: viewers at home could perform bodyweight movements without the need for any special equipment, which few American owned in the 1950s and 1960s. Richard Hittleman also found fame in the early 1960s by eschewing weights, but he did so in favor of a different low-overhead physical culture practice. In 1961, Hittleman began broadcasting *Yoga for Health* from a studio in Los Angeles, directly competing with Jack on what the latter man surely considered his own home turf.

Richard Lowell Hittleman was born on March 7, 1927, in New York.⁶⁸⁷ His parents were conservative, and Jewish; and though they never attended school, Hittleman's father, Louis, probably earned a reasonable salary as a real estate salesman.⁶⁸⁸ Furthermore, according to Hittleman's son, Josh, the family eventually purchased a resort in the Catskill Mountains, in where Hittleman worked during the summers of his youth.⁶⁸⁹

So Hittleman came from a well-off family, and lived a comfortable childhood. He could afford an extensive education, and, ostensibly, earned his undergraduate degree

687 United States Social Security Administration, "Social Security File for Richard Hittleman," Social Security Applications and Claims, 1936-2007, n.d.

688 U.S. Department of Commerce, "1930 Federal Census for Bronx Borough, New York," 8 April 1930; and Amy Chen Mills, "Death and Taxes," *Metro*, 22-29 November, 1995, accessed online at <http://www.metroactive.com/papers/metro/11.22.95/yogi-9547.html>

689 Daniel Lang, "My Father Was a Yogi: Interview with Josh Hittleman," YouTube video, runtime 8:39, accessed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M1FoK5XG8mk>

from the University of Miami.⁶⁹⁰ He later claimed, alternatively, to have both earned a master's degree in education and studied Oriental music and mysticism at Columbia University, though his attendance cannot be verified at either institution.⁶⁹¹ It is nevertheless likely that much of Hittleman's claimed educational resume was true, because evidence proves that he completed at least some post-graduate work at the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco in the late 1950s. He was joined there by a number of influential individuals — most notably, British philosopher Alan Wilson Watts, who helped popularize Eastern ideology for a Western audience through his radio show, television program, and numerous publications.⁶⁹² Not content with a traditional Western education, even one earned in such prestigious company, he also allegedly spent many years under the tutelage of Hindu yogi Indra Devi.⁶⁹³ His first instruction in the secrets of yoga, however, came from a somewhat less exotic source: an East Indian man who worked for his parents. The man's name and occupation are unknown; according to Hittleman, he was a handyman employed by his parents, largely performing menial tasks like washing dishes and making minor mechanical repairs. And yet, "he was my guru," Hittleman said, "and since he showed me how it was done I've never looked back."⁶⁹⁴

690 University of Miami, "Yearbook," 1947.

691 Beverley Wilson, "Yoga's 'Lotus Position' Will Relax Mind, Body," *Syracuse Post Standard Pictorial*, 31 July 1960, 12.

692 Alan Watts, "Beginning a Counterculture," ed. Paul Harvey, *The Columbia Documentary History of Religion in America Since 1945*, n.d., 83

693 Wilson, "Yoga's 'Lotus Position' Will Relax Mind, Body"; and Matthew Clark, *The Origins and Practice of Yoga: A Weeny Introduction* (self-published, 2010): 22.

694 "Hittleman's Taking Yoga to the Ladies," *The Washington Post*, 2 August 2 1961, B11; and Chen, "Death and Taxes."

The mystical Eastern lessons, according to Hittleman, taught him how to unleash “the great vital forces of the body and mind.”⁶⁹⁵ Today, many enjoy the physical benefits yoga offers; but in the late 1950s, fewer were familiar with the practice.⁶⁹⁶ So when, in 1957, Hittleman founded the American Academy of Yoga in Coral Gables, Florida, he probably attracted only a small following.⁶⁹⁷ And when Hittleman first pitched his idea for a television exercise show on yoga in Hollywood, “the agent listened carefully and like the idea a lot,” he recalled. “I was excited until I realized he through the lotus was a flower and I wanted to teach flower arranging.”⁶⁹⁸

Yet the mysterious lessons of the East intrigued producers; and Hittleman’s story of learning his trade from an anonymous, unassuming Indian man probably served to deepen that mystery. Eventually, in 1961, he managed to explain his plan for yoga on television to executives at KTLA in Los Angeles – albeit in grandiose terms that offered little in the way of substance. He would restore to viewers “the treasure of beauty and vitality you had as a young woman,” with tranquility and gentle exercise — not the vigorous, uncomfortable calisthenics that Jack and his competitors pushed.⁶⁹⁹ Clearly, like Jack, Hittleman largely targeted female viewers; he also interspersed exercises with diet advice and took a rather patriarchal attitude towards his viewers while simultaneously employing various mawkish phrases to soften his harsh message.

695 “Yoga Show Entered in TV Health Race,” *New York Times*, 10 January 1966, 45.

696 Scholars have researched the history of yoga very extensively, and a full synopsis far exceeds the scope of the dissertation. Some reasonably comprehensive histories of yoga in the West include Mark Singleton, *Yoga Body: The Origins of Modern Posture Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2010); Suzanne Newcombe, “The Development of Modern Yoga: A Survey of the Field,” *Religion Compass* 3, no. 6 (December 2009): 986-1002; and Bulent Diken and Carsten Bagge Laustsen, *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives* (Routledge, 2008).

697 Library of Congress Copyright Office, Catalog of Copyright Entries, Third Series 14, no. 1(1961).

698 “Hittleman’s Taking Yoga to the Ladies.”

699 Richard Hittleman, “20 Minutes a Day Can Make You the Woman Your Husband Married!” *Daily Review*, 27 October 1968, 83.

“American women are a mess,” he said. “They’re falling apart. They suffer from advanced gadgetitis.”⁷⁰⁰

Nevertheless, viewers enjoyed his show — in some cases, more than Jack’s. Most were housewives, some businessmen; and Hittleman grabbed his share of celebrity endorsements, as well. Academy-Award winning actresses Jennifer Jones and Carolyn Jones both watched, and their support probably contributed to the 600 pieces of fan mail Hittleman received each week in Los Angeles.⁷⁰¹ So great was Hittleman’s fame that yoga historian Mark Singleton credits him as a pivotal figure in the practice’s adoption in America, who brought “yoga closer to the mainstream.” *Yoga for Health*, Singleton writes, “encouraged many to take up posture-based yoga in the comfort of their own homes,” and marked the beginning of a Western trend of yoga as a commercialized enterprise.⁷⁰²

The show’s popularity should not be attributed to any significant production quality. The set resembled “1960s Eastern Mystic Cornball: carpeted risers with vaguely Hindu mandalas floating on the back wall,” wrote television critic Laura Daltry in 1984.⁷⁰³ Nor did Hittleman himself possess any of the magnetic appeal of the other “charm boys” on daytime television. Daltry described him as “a grave man with deep-set eyes... as if he has seen The Truth and it is Grim.”⁷⁰⁴ However, Hittleman employed his wife, Diane, to demonstrate various poses. Diane, like Fogarty’s assistants, was “a

700 “Hittleman’s Taking Yoga to the Ladies.”

701 Ibid.

702 Singleton, *Yoga Body*, 20.

703 Laura Daltry, “Jump! Stretch! Relax! TV’s A.M. Fat Farm,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 April, 1984: T5.

704 Ibid.

shapely young lady who gives the men something to look at while the ladies are listening to Hittleman.”⁷⁰⁵ She was referred to on the show only as “The Beautiful Diane,” and never spoke a word; but then, her grace and beauty spoke for themselves.⁷⁰⁶ A skilled yogi in her own right, Diane surely contributed to Hittleman’s success just as Elaine contributed to Jack’s.⁷⁰⁷ But in truth, Diane was Hittleman’s ex-wife: they had divorced in 1960, and remained business partners, for lucrative financial reasons.⁷⁰⁸

Perhaps the gentle nature of yoga contributed more than any other factor to the popularity of *Yoga for Health*. Viewers may have associated it less with the sweat and strain of traditional exercise, even compared to the light, non-strenuous calisthenics Jack and Drake performed on their own programs. Yet, according to popular understanding, yoga offered better relief for nervous energy. For that reason, Hittleman encountered little difficulty when taking his show nationwide, which he did almost immediately after it first aired in Los Angeles. KLAS-TV in Las Vegas, for example, explained its decision to add Hittleman to their early-morning television lineup:

There is a bewitching hour in every home early in the morning when the kids get up and start screaming for breakfast and the old man is trying to get the little monsters out of the bathroom so he can go to work... A shrieking, nervous housewife is not a fit person to take charge during such times of tension and can have disastrous effects on enduring family relationships. To bring about a better family life in southern Nevada, KLAS-TV, Channel 8, is now bringing you Richard Hittleman’s *Yoga for Health* program... Yoga brings beauty and radiance to a woman in addition to removing wrinkles from tense faces. It shapes and firms

705 Florida Department of Health, “Divorce Record 8034 for Richard and Diane Hittleman,” Florida Divorce Index, 1927-2001, June 1960.

706 Bret Hittleman, “Obituary: Diane Hittleman, Yoga Teacher,” *Buddhist News*, 22 May 2013, accessed online at <http://www.lionsroar.com/obituary-diane-hittleman-yoga-teacher/>

707 Shreena Gandhi, “Translating, Practicing, and Commodifying Yoga in the U.S.,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Florida, 2009): 103.

708 Ibid.

the legs, busts and minds. The biggest detriment to good health is lying in bed 12 to 14 hours at a stretch as many women have done in the past. For this reason, Jack LaLanne's program was started at 9:30 in the morning to roll the housewife out of the sack at a fairly decent hour. We are now starting Richard Hittleman and his Yoga at 8:30 a.m. to properly stimulate the women for the chores of the day.⁷⁰⁹

Even Hittleman's production crew joined in. One member of it said he felt "lousey" [*sic*] after trying Hittleman's routine, "but not as bad as when I used to do LaLanne's exercises when he was on this spot. Then I felt lousey and tired."⁷¹⁰

And, like Jack, Hittleman began to peddle health products as soon almost immediately after he had achieved some television success. He launched a line of organic foods and energy supplements, exercise instruction records, and authored at least two dozen books.⁷¹¹ He found a flourishing audience for his business in the 1960s counterculture, and his books especially flew off the shelves. He sold eight million copies throughout the course of his career.⁷¹² His television show thrived, too. According to his second wife, Linda, whom he married in 1967, Hittleman received hundreds of fan letters each week.⁷¹³

He remained popular and productive until the mid-1970s. In fact, his business and legacy might have exceeded even Jack's were it not for Hittleman's apparent greed. In 1977, he founded the Yoga Universal Church, ostensibly a nonprofit religious organization but in truth a vehicle for tax evasion. When the IRS caught up with him, in

709 Hank Greenspun, "Where I Stand," *Las Vegas Sun*, 16 June 1962, 1.

710 "Hittleman's Taking Yoga to the Ladies."

711 *Ibid.*

712 "Richard Hittleman," *Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, n.d.

713 Chen, "Death and Taxes."

1983, he owed “tens of thousands” in back taxes.⁷¹⁴ Hittleman refused to pay, and fought the accusation for nearly a decade, but eventually, the government put an end to his protests in 1991.⁷¹⁵ Hittleman died that same year.⁷¹⁶

CONCLUSION

Fogarty, Drake, and Hittleman all left a legacy for the modern fitness industry. Fogarty holds the claim to true pioneer of exercise television: his show preceded even Jack’s. Hittleman introduced yoga to the mainstream. Today, over 36 million practice yoga regularly; and the medical community has proven its effectiveness in combating many of the health problems that plague modern society.⁷¹⁷ Drake provided a (perhaps unrealistic) model of female beauty ostensibly attainable through exercise, and contributed to the rise of some alternative styles of exercise, specifically aerobic dance. Jack had staying power. Just as he himself endured the icy waters of the Pacific Ocean during his famous swims, his show endured the onslaught of competitors, of new cultural trends, and of changing attitudes towards exercise. "I've outlived them all on TV," he said, "because I believe in what I am doing – it's a religion with me and this my church."⁷¹⁸ Perhaps he possessed a deeper faith in the transformative power of exercise, but, more likely, it was his viewers who had faith – in him, not in his competitors. Jack’s

714 Chen, “Death and Taxes.”

715 Ibid.

716 “California Death Records,” for Richard Lowell Hittleman, accessed online at <http://vitals.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ca/death/search.cgi>

717 Yoga Journal and Yoga Alliance, “2016 Yoga in America Study” (Ipsos Public Affairs, 2016): 2; and Alyson Ross and Sue Thomas, “The Health Benefits of Yoga and Exercise: A Review of Comparison Studies,” *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* 16, no. 1 (2010): 3-12.

718 Hal Humphrey, “Healthy Ratings Keep Jack Fit,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 May 1966: C14.

ability to capture the loyalties of Americans better than any other exercise-show host justifies his legacy as the most important physical culture figure in the 1950s and 1960s.

This chapter also shows that those who represent more modern female fitness celebrities – like Jane Fonda – as the primary cause of the modern female aesthetic overlook important historical figures. Hilary Radner, for example, argues that Fonda reformulated physical fitness “as a critical practice in the production of a feminine ‘self.’”⁷¹⁹ Elizabeth Kagan and Margaret Morse agree that Fonda, above all others, drove the mass acceptance of women’s aerobics. “Until Fonda, the imperatives of commercial beauty culture and the body culture of health and fitness had little in common,” they write.⁷²⁰

This dissertation, and this chapter in particular, has unquestionably shown that Jack LaLanne and Debbie Drake connected commercial beauty to health and fitness *decades* before Fonda. Furthermore, they had connected that physical beauty to a woman’s self-worth and place in the world – and, by embracing traditional gender roles, defined that place in the world as one dedicated to the happiness of their husbands and children rather than their own. Interpretations such as Radner’s and Kagan and Morse’s are, at best, presentist ones. Jack and his contemporaries laid the groundwork for modern icons like Fonda, and understanding their businesses can give us a better understanding of the present.

719 Hilary Radner, “Producing the Body: Jane Fonda and the New Public Feminine,” in John Holmwood, Hilary Radner, Gerhard Schulze, and Pekka Sulkunen, ed., *Constructing the New Consumer Society* (Springer, 1997): 111.

720 Elizabeth Kagan and Margaret Morse, “The Body Electronic: Aerobic Exercise on Video: Women’s Search for Empowerment and Self-Transformation,” *The MIT Press* 32, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 166.

PART III: 1954-1963

Chapter 6: Becoming Jack – and Elaine – LaLanne

Elaine LaLanne celebrated her ninetieth birthday in March of 2016, but she shows few – if any – signs of her age. Elaine is a whirlwind of energy, warmth, and happiness, and upon meeting her, one wonders how anyone, even Jack, could ever match the intensity of her life. She still exercises daily; she dines on fruit, lean protein (usually fish) and occasionally a little wine; and still manages BeFit Enterprises, the successor of LaLanne, Inc. that controls and distributes all of the content and products under the LaLanne brand, including a new, feature-length movie about Jack’s life, titled “Anything is Possible,” celebrating the 100th anniversary of his birth, released in 2015.

Surely, the 52 years she spent married to Jack gave Elaine more than a little bit of her personality today, but well before she ever met Jack, Elaine possessed vibrancy, beauty, and athletic talent. As a young girl, she performed as a swimmer; as a teenager, she won beauty pageants; as a young adult, she starred in and produced television shows. And, as Jack LaLanne’s wife and partner, she built a multi-million-dollar business empire that has existed for more than fifty years. Though she steadfastly refuses to take credit for any of Jack’s accomplishments, or for the success of LaLanne, Inc. and BeFit Enterprises, it is no secret that Jack owes much – maybe most – of his financial success to Elaine’s business savvy. “Jack never wanted to run [the business],” Elaine said, and so she took that responsibility upon herself.⁷²¹

⁷²¹ James Fell, “5 Questions: Elaine LaLanne,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 May 2012, accessed online at <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/may/26/health/la-he-five-questions-lalanne-20120526> on 24 April 2017.

Even today, while many entrepreneurs operate their businesses alongside their spouses, highly successful husband-and-wife teams are fairly rare. *Forbes* magazine, for example, lists fewer than ten billionaire couples, where both individuals contribute to their company in major roles. In contrast, *Forbes* included 565 individuals in its 2015 list of American billionaires: couples therefore make up just over one percent of that list.⁷²² While Jack and Elaine never became billionaires, their impact on American culture transcends monetary value; and their collaboration within the context of a marriage that lasted over half a century distinguishes them from many of the other fitness entrepreneurs of the postwar twentieth century.

It was that collaboration that allowed *The Jack LaLanne Show* to take off, and capture the minds and bodies of people across the nation. Together, Jack and Elaine built the LaLanne name into a globally-recognized brand, one step at a time: first by securing sponsors, and then more reliable sources of income, beginning with health-food supplements; and finally by promoting Jack's physical prowess in ways the media never failed to notice. All the while, they grew their own relationship, despite difficult logistics, and forged a bond that outlived Jack himself. This chapter chronicles Elaine's early life and career, the couple's courtship, and the beginning of the transition of *The Jack LaLanne Show* from popular local program to globally-renowned phenomenon.

⁷²² Luisa Kroll, "Billion Dollar Couples: America's Richest Husband-and-Wife Teams," *Forbes*, 24 October 2014; and "The World's Billionaires," accessed online at <https://www.forbes.com/billionaires/> on 24 April, 2017.

ENTER ELAINE

Elaine Lucille Rorem was born on March 19, 1926, in Hennepin, Minnesota, just outside of Minneapolis.⁷²³ Hennepin grew rapidly in the 1920s, thanks to the economic power of the Mississippi River and its new streetcar system. Three hundred thousand people migrated there during the Twenties, more than doubling the population. Perhaps Elaine's parents – established residents of the area – appreciated the influx of new people and new money that invigorated the economy and culture in Minnesota.

Certainly, the Rorems were well off. Elaine's father, Allen, practiced law; her mother, Betty Sylvia, kept house. Elaine was the family's middle child: five years younger than her brother Eugene, and three years elder to the youngest child, Ralph.⁷²⁴ By the time Eugene was born, Allen Rorem had already built for himself a distinguished career as a young lawyer. According to Hennepin County Bar Association, he helped established the Minneapolis College of Law in 1912, before even his own admission to the bar – suggesting that he also came from a family of means.⁷²⁵ By 1920, he owned a practice along with two partners, Elmer Patterson and Chester Brown.⁷²⁶

Given Allen Rorem's success in law, one must assume that Elaine grew up comfortably, though she steadfastly avoids discussing her own past in interviews today. When she does reminisce, rather than remembering her childhood in the city, she prefers to see herself as a tomboy, who loved the outdoors and spent summers working on her

723 Minnesota Historical Society, "Minnesota Birth Certificates Index," for Elaine Rorem, 19 March 1926.

724 United States Department of Commerce, "Sixteenth Census of the United States for Hennepin County, Minnesota."

725 Minneapolis City Council Chambers, "Memorials for Deceased Members of the Hennepin County Bar," May 1968, 28; and Douglas Heidenreich, "And Then There Was One," *William Mitchell Magazine* (Faculty Scholarship) 16, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 5.

726 Minnesota State Gazetteer and Business Directory (R.L. Polk, 1920–1921).

grandfather's farm.⁷²⁷ Those memories may have connected her more closely to Jack and his childhood in Bakersfield. But Allen's own father – Elaine's paternal grandfather – was president of a mining company, and Betty's father, Samuel Michealson, worked as a salesman at a car store.⁷²⁸ Though either man may well have owned a farm, it seems very unlikely that either would rely upon one for his livelihood, and so any work Elaine did on a farm was likely not as rigorous as Jack's. In fact, Jack's Bakersville upbringing seems rather rugged in comparison.

Elaine was just a small girl when the stock market crashed, but her family's financial stability insulated Elaine from many of the horrors of the Great Depression. The Minneapolis area, however, suffered greatly: its once-vibrant flour-milling industry faced assault from a number of competitors, compounded by the shortage of materials caused by drought and a sharp drop in demand caused by the Depression.⁷²⁹ Since Allen's law practice did not depend on the turbulent tides of the agricultural industry, the Rorems managed reasonably well. They could probably afford a radio, one of the technological marvels of the Depression era that ushered in a new age of mass media and comforted many Americans during the hard times.⁷³⁰ Radio, and of course television, would become very important to Elaine later in her life.

727 Bob Foster, "Elaine Doyle Ends First Year as D.J." *The San Mateo Times*, September 13, 1955, 13.

728 United States Department of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the United States for Hennepin County, Minnesota"; and United States Department of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the United States for Roland Story, Iowa."

729 Thomas B. Welge, "The Adaptation of Flour Milling Based Companies to Environmental Change," *Honors Projects* (Illinois Wesleyan University, 1992): 33-36.

730 Bruce Lenthall, *Radio's America: The Great Depression and the Rise of Modern Mass Culture* (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Elaine's first introduction to show business, however, came in high school, when she joined the Minneapolis Aqua Follies.⁷³¹ The Aqua Follies had been established in 1940 as a recreational swimming group. Their facility included an amphitheater that accommodated an audience of 5,000 around a section of Theodore Wirth Park Lake in Minneapolis, with "two huge diving towers and a wooden stage, that encompassed from what, from on top, would look like a swimming pool," remembered former "Aqua-Dear" Annliv Solberg Bacon.⁷³² It was, therefore, a somewhat prominent feature of the city, especially for the many children and young adults who passed summer days in the park and surely were impressed by its sheer size. The Aqua Follies group itself held considerable prestige: many members traveled from across the country to perform in the frequently sold-out shows. Elaine swam with the feature act, the local synchronized-swimming "bathing beauties," and she surely earned the envy of her classmates for the effort. Her act required strength, stamina, and coordination, and team practices forbade resting on the shore, in order to build endurance.⁷³³ From even a young age, then, Elaine possessed both beauty and athletic grace; determination and perseverance.

Every year, the Aqua Follies planned and staged an outdoor summer festival called the Minneapolis Aquatennial, featuring athletic performances and cultural and community events.⁷³⁴ The Follies also performed "a combination of water ballet by Hollywood professionals and high-diving thrill shows by Olympic and Pan Am Games

731 Foster, "Elaine Doyle Ends First Year as d.J."

732 Twin Cities PBS, "Lost Twin Cities III: Aquatennial Follies," YouTube video, runtime 2:54, accessed online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G6erCAcox4g>

733 Ibid.

734 Minnesota Historical Society, "Inventory of Records," Minneapolis Aquatennial Association Records, n.d., <http://www2.mnhs.org/library/findaids/00891.xml>.

champions,” all of whom dazzled onlookers with their lithe, athletic bodies in rather revealing bathing suits.⁷³⁵ “The water ballet has the only women we’ve ever seen who look beautiful with their hair wet,” wrote one reporter.⁷³⁶ Their athletic talent and good looks drew crowds of over 10,000 nearly every day of the Aquatennial.⁷³⁷ Elaine would have fit in well with such a group. She was trim, and blessed by her Norwegian ancestry with strong cheekbones, thick blond hair, bright blue eyes, and a glowing complexion. She was short — perhaps even shorter than Jack, though only by an inch. She styled her hair, her makeup, and her lipstick skillfully. She could even be said to have resembled the woman who would become the preeminent sex symbol of the 1950s: Marilyn Monroe. In fact, Elaine and Marilyn were the same age, nearly the same height, and began their modeling careers at nearly the same time. Elaine was even chosen “college queen” while studying at the University of Minnesota, and named Ms. Land O’ Lakes in a state beauty pageant in 1945, at the age of 19.⁷³⁸

MOVING WEST AND ENTERING THE BROADCAST INDUSTRY

So Elaine already possessed some familiarity with show business when, after graduating from high school, she moved west, to attend a course in radio announcing at the University of California, Los Angeles. It was a bold choice: despite its importance during World War II, radio no longer held quite the same appeal of novelty it had during

735 Hennepin County Library, “Minneapolis Aquatennial Aqua Follies,” 2015, <http://hclib.tumblr.com/post/92455370956/minneapolis-aquatennial-aqua-follies-a-perennial>.

736 Dawn Pawson Bean, *Synchronized Swimming: An American History* (McFarland, 2005), 14.

737 Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board, “Theodore Wirth Park History and Background,” accessed online, https://www.minneapolisparcs.org/_asset/ykv6z7/wirth_park_history_background.pdf.

738 “Rorem-Doyle,” *Roland Record*, 29 January 1948, 4.

the Depression, as television sets became more and more prominent after the war. More importantly for Elaine, from a historical perspective, the entire broadcasting industry had long marginalized women. In its early years, “‘radio[’s] bosses’ all agreed that women’s abilities were limited,” writes historian Donna Halper. “They were unsuitable for covering sports and politics, and their voices were unlistenable when they tried to announce a serious program... it was best for women to stick to talking about recipes or fashion.”⁷³⁹ In fact, until the 1920s, most considered even *listening* to the radio to be a masculine endeavor.⁷⁴⁰ In the 1940s, however, women found more opportunities to be on the air and involved in radio production. Most often, however, these opportunities involved interviewing, coordination of programming, and script work, not announcing. According to scholar Judith Cramer, networks would even “rub off” women’s voices from recorded tracks and replace them with male voices. Even into the 1960s, women represented less than five percent of the broadcasting workforce in radio and television *combined*.⁷⁴¹

Given the difficulties women faced in finding jobs in the broadcasting industry, Elaine was taking a big risk in leaving Minnesota. In order to enroll in a new broadcasting course at UCLA, which was held in association with NBC, she had to travel 2,000 miles from the comfort and familiarity of her family’s home.⁷⁴² The course content remains unknown, but one suspects that it included instruction in the fundamentals of

739 Donna Halper, *Invisible Stars: A Social History of Women in American Broadcasting* (Routledge, 2015), 59.

740 Anne F. MacLennan, “Women, Radio Broadcasting and the ‘Captive Audience from Household Hints to Story Time and Serials,” *Women’s Studies* 37, no. 6 (2008): 618.

741 Judith Cramer, “Radio: The More Things Change... The More They Stay the Same,” in *Women in Mass Communication*, edited by Pamela Creedon and Judith Cramer (Sage, 2006): 62.

742 “General Catalogue,” *University of California Bulletin* 41, no. 11 (June 1947); and “Rorem-Doyle.”

radio success: writing and speaking to convey both information and emotion; the nuances of show production; and the importance of effective advertising.⁷⁴³ All of this knowledge would, of course, become invaluable to both Elaine and her future husband as they worked together to produce *The Jack LaLanne Show* – Jack lacked even a cursory knowledge of such details, and his poor academic performance and shyness in high school suggests that he lacked experience in writing and public speaking, too. In contrast, Elaine must have earned strong marks at her UCLA course, because throughout her career, she demonstrated a keen understanding of the broadcast industry. Upon graduating, she did find work in television — but not at first as a broadcaster. Instead, she once again turned to her natural beauty as she modeled for commercials with newscaster Lee Giroux, in San Francisco.⁷⁴⁴

In San Francisco, she met Joseph Doyle, a writer for the *San Francisco Examiner*. The two were married very shortly thereafter, in 1948.⁷⁴⁵ Unfortunately, very little is known about Elaine’s first husband; she was young, and that marriage did not last for long. Today, Elaine very deliberately avoids discussing her personal life before Jack came into it, though she is quick to speak of his childhood, and even his first marriage, to Irma Navarre. Elaine and Joseph had two children: Janet and Daniel. Elaine’s love for them is obvious.⁷⁴⁶

743 “‘Hello, America!’ Radio Broadcasting in the Years Before Television,” *Art to Zoo* (Smithsonian Institute, Fall 1986): 3-4.

744 Foster, “Elaine Doyle Ends First Year as D.J.”

745 “Rorem-Doyle.”

746 Elaine LaLanne, interview with the author. Sadly, Janet died in a car accident in 1974, at the age of 21, but Elaine’s home is adorned with memories of her daughter.

Elaine also met in San Francisco Ruth “Bunty” Fabian, whose show *Afternoon Hostess* ran on the local station KGO-TV.⁷⁴⁷ Like Elaine, Fabian was attractive, well-educated, and had made her way to San Francisco by way of Los Angeles.⁷⁴⁸ Fabian began her career in radio, but she shone even brighter on TV. “A girl with real ‘presence,’ her voice and manner convinced the San Francisco businessmen she’d make their products desirable to coast audiences,” explained one reporter.⁷⁴⁹ *Afternoon Hostess*, as the title implies, provided housewives with suggestions for “superb handling of guests and food.”⁷⁵⁰ Elaine found favor with KGO executives, as well, and they hired her to help Fabian on the show, along with a French poodle named *Cherchez la Femme*. The show did not last, however, and Elaine was in 1951 again reduced to peddling 45 RPM record players out of a department store for RCA-Victor. But when another KGO-TV personality, Les Malloy, visited the store as part of an RCA promotion in September of that year, Elaine immediately caught his eye. While it was not exactly the “show biz” job she had dreamed of, Malloy gave Elaine her first big break: the very next day, according to *San Mateo Times* reporter Bob Foster, “[Elaine] was sitting at his side keeping the list of guests, helping with the commercials and looking pretty.”⁷⁵¹

In her return to KGO, Elaine flourished as Malloy’s “girl Friday.” “We don’t think that in the past 18 months we have ever met a soul who didn’t have a nice word for this daughter of Minnesota,” wrote Foster in his glowing review.

747 Foster, “Elaine Doyle Ends First Year as D.J.”

748 “Death: Ruth ‘Bunty’ Fabian Jones,” *Desert News*, 22 October 1992.

749 Gay Freebairn, “Bunty Fabian Carves Niche for Herself,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 December 1950, 14W.

750 Ibid.

751 Bob Foster, “Elaine Doyle Fills Roll of Young Lady in a Big Hurry,” *San Mateo Times*, October 2, 1952, 29.

Elaine is one of our favorite people in television. Unfortunately, we don't have a monopoly on that feeling. Everybody who knows her feels the same way. Highly efficient, most telegenic, and endowed with a delightful laugh, Elaine has worked herself into a niche in television that many another young woman will understandably envy. Elaine is so capable that she could easily handle her own show with little effort.... If KGO-TV doesn't give her an opportunity to show her wares, then the boys at ABC are missing a real bet.⁷⁵²

Foster later voted her among both the prettiest *and* hardest-working television personalities in San Francisco.⁷⁵³

Like most television stations, KGO grew rapidly during the 1950s, thanks in part to its affiliation with NBC. A decade earlier, NBC had begun construction on one of the most advanced, technologically-sophisticated buildings the city of San Francisco had even seen. By 1953, many KGO employees operated out of that newly-opened building, on the corner of Taylor and O'Farrell Streets.⁷⁵⁴ The new building replaced the historic La Avezada mansion, housed *ten* studios, and employed "every device engineering science [had] developed for the efficiency of broadcasting," including vibration dampening, precision temperature and humidity control, and cutting-edge signal routing technology.⁷⁵⁵ But Elaine's memories are somewhat different. She recalls being cramped into one room along with Dorothy Hooker, two news directors, and a secretary.⁷⁵⁶ Nevertheless, NBC's investment in KGO made it an attractive employer for Elaine, who had finally found a position that she liked and that lasted for more than a few years.

752 Ibid.

753 Foster, "TV-Radio," *San Mateo Times*, 9 March 1954, 11.

754 Elinor Hayes, "Sutro Tower To Replace Historic Mountain Villa," *Oakland Tribune*, 19 October 1969: 7.

755 "New NBC Studios to Be Suspended on Springs," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 24 November 1940,

<http://www.sfmuseum.net/hist6/studios.html>.

756 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.



Figure 20. A young Elaine LaLanne. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)



Figure 21. Another photograph of Elaine in her youth. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

MEETING JACK

News traveled fast in the close quarters of the KGO building, and the success of *The Jack LaLanne Show* was no exception. “We’d all heard of the health nut muscle man who was going to get poor little housewives to change their lives,” Elaine remembered.⁷⁵⁷ But the news meant little to her: she was invested in her own television career. With the stress of caring for her two children and working as a fairly high-profile assistant in an industry dominated by men, Elaine recalls that she simply had no interest in exercise or dieting.

However, from the minute he laid eyes on her, Jack was struck, smitten by her beauty and her charm. Elaine was simply a lovely woman, in every sense of the word, full of energy and optimism, and with as much zeal for life as Jack. One of the great ironies of their relationship was that Elaine’s innate attractiveness would be diminished in later years by Jack’s need to show that he had transformed her, too, just like the rest of his students. Time and again, in books and interviews, he insisted that when he met Elaine, “she was a bean pole living off of coffee and cigarettes.”⁷⁵⁸ Elaine admits that when they met, she smoked and often lived off of coffee and sweets. She was also admittedly flat-chested and underweight, and felt that childbirth had taken a toll on her body.⁷⁵⁹ Nevertheless, she remained beautiful, and it was only later that Jack painted an unattractive – and, given Elaine’s often-acknowledged good looks, at least somewhat inaccurate – picture of his future wife.

⁷⁵⁷ Jack LaLanne, *Foods for Glamour* (Prentice-Hall, 1961), 142.

⁷⁵⁸ Huston Horn, “LaLanne: A Treat and a Treatment,” *Sports Illustrated*, 28–30.

⁷⁵⁹ “A Day in Television Land’ Is TOWC Theme for March,” *Fairfield Republic*.

Elaine, too, found Jack somewhat lacking – at least at first, because she found neither Jack’s muscles nor his personality attractive. When he first walked over to her desk at KGO to lecture her to eat fruits and vegetables rather than sweets, she blew him off, literally, taking a gratuitous bite of her doughnut and puffing cigarette smoke in his face.⁷⁶⁰ Undeterred, Jack expounded on the dangers of smoking during his next show. “You get all those tars and all that poison up in your sinuses here and your lungs are all full of all that junk,” he admonished.⁷⁶¹ Slowly – swayed, perhaps, by his obvious passion along with the show’s popularity – Elaine began to come around. She conceded that she had nothing to lose by trying to live a little healthier, and, in lieu of her cigarettes, started sucking on the Kevo-Ettes that Jack still possessed in troves. But she continued to resist Jack’s romantic advances. She had already tried marriage, Elaine said, and she was a harried single mother caring for two children, and besides, she wanted to focus on her career.⁷⁶²

And that career was flourishing. In January of 1953, a poll of television viewers conducted by the *San Mateo Times* found Elaine to be a favorite among audiences; she “could be highly valuable to KGO-TV on her own if she were only given the opportunity,” wrote critic Bob Foster, who had by this time established himself as one of Elaine’s biggest fans. In his opinion, it was only the ineptitude of local station managers that held her back, for she possessed the “attractiveness, plus a personality which

⁷⁶⁰ Luther, “Jack LaLanne Dies at 96; Spiritual Father of U.S. Fitness Movement.”

⁷⁶¹ “Episode 59,” *The Jack LaLanne Show*, n.d.; and LaLanne, Jack 101.

⁷⁶² LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

generates sincerity,” to resonate with the public.⁷⁶³ Those managers did, however, bestow a great deal of responsibility upon Elaine: she recruited talent for the variety section of *The Les Malloy Show*; occasionally filled in for Malloy on camera when he was absent; and was included in writing and producing meetings run by Dorothy Nye (who also produced Jack’s show).⁷⁶⁴ Newspaperman Foster, clearly smitten by Elaine, dubbed her “the sweetheart of San Francisco television.”⁷⁶⁵

But if he was anything at all, Jack LaLanne was persistent. He had decided he wanted a relationship with Elaine; and no amount of rejection discouraged him. He lingered around her desk during breaks and flirted when they passed each other in the halls. Eventually, to Jack’s delight, exhausted by his pestering, she agreed to a date. They dined with several friends at Doro’s, a sleek, modern restaurant near San Francisco’s financial district. And, for once, Elaine saw a softer side of Jack, and the smallest bit of doubt began to creep into the corners of her mind: perhaps, she thought, she had misjudged the station’s muscle nut. While the group waited for a table, Jack serenaded Elaine with a rendition of Johnny Green’s “Because You’re Mine:”

*I only know for as long as I may live
I'll only live for the kiss that you alone may give me
And when we kiss that isn't thunder dear
It's only my poor heart you hear, and it's applause
Because you're mine!*

763 Foster, “TV-Radio,” *San Mateo Times*, 21 January 1953: 17.

764 Foster, “TV-Radio,” *San Mateo Times*, 16 April 1953: 31; idem., “Two Local Belles,” *San Mateo Times*, 25 April 1953: 6; and idem., “TV-Radio,” *San Mateo Times*, 8 May 1953: 19.

765 Foster, “TV-Radio,” *San Mateo Times*, 8 May 1953: 19.

Jack was, at heart, a romantic; and he could dance with as much grace and aplomb with which he sung.⁷⁶⁶ He began to win Elaine over.

But it was not a totally smooth courtship. The first time Elaine invited Jack over to her home, she was mortified. She had given up smoking, and begun to change her eating habits, but still avoided most kitchen chores; between her career and children, she could afford little time to spend on meals, and so she preferred to dine out (though she would, at least since meeting Jack, choose fish or fowl over a filet mignon). Jack, of course, was comfortable in the kitchen after all of his health-food experimentation in high school. Besides, he was picky at restaurants, and never sure when the chef would throw some butter on the pan or glaze his vegetables with fatty olive oil. So, bold as ever, he immediately began rummaging in her fridge for something to cook. He found it bare, but in the scheme of Jack's health evangelism, an empty cupboard barely presented a challenge at all. "He came over to my house and I said, 'Well, I don't have anything in the refrigerator,'" Elaine remembered. Characteristically undeterred, Jack said, "'Well, let me look.' And he brought out this and that, and all of a sudden... I had a gourmet meal. It was fantastic." She was impressed.

In most reports of how they met and married, Jack and Elaine told journalists that they began dating in 1953. Jack had divorced Irma in 1948, he always claimed, and the inference was that Elaine was single as well, since she was dating Jack. However, divorce records show that Jack remained married to Irma until August 19, 1959 – one month

⁷⁶⁶ Ibid.; and Craig Claiborne, "Good Food, Well Priced, Found in San Francisco," *The New York Times*, July 14, 1964, 26.

before he married Elaine, and at least six years into their romantic involvement.⁷⁶⁷ Elaine gave birth to Janet – her daughter by Joseph Doyle – on February 7, 1953.⁷⁶⁸ Clearly, theirs was at first a clandestine relationship and very probably an extramarital affair. They tried to remain at least somewhat discreet in public, but once their relationship started, they fell so deeply and so quickly in love that they managed to conceal little. The media noticed the beautiful new couple keeping close company at several high-brow events during the first summer of their courtship, like the Miss California beauty contest; and the “Fiesta Fandango,” a gala in San Mateo.⁷⁶⁹ But their honeymoon phase lasted only a few short months before Elaine found herself distracted by another opportunity.

Throughout the first several years of her time at KGO, critic and longtime admirer Bob Foster continued to tirelessly lobby for an *Elaine Doyle Show* to be produced by that station. But when no such opportunity materialized, Elaine loyally remained in her position as Malloy’s assistant, rather than pursue such an opportunity more aggressively. Then, in April 1954, Malloy formally announced that, having earned a small fortune in television, he had decided to buy his own *radio* station. In doing so, he effectively abandoned television. “He burned a TV bridge behind him by signing off to actively manage his own private radio station KVSM in San Mateo,” reported the *Oakland Tribune*.⁷⁷⁰ Malloy took Elaine with him. He finally offered her a show of her own – an opportunity too good to pass up – and Elaine found just as much success in radio as she

767 Alabama Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Divorce Index, 1950-1959 (Montgomery): 811.

768 “Janet Elaine Doyle,” on FindAGrave, accessed online at <http://www.findagrave.com/>

769 “Photograph,” San Mateo Times, May 28, 1954; and “2000 Open S.M. Fandango,” *San Mateo Times*, July 31, 1954, 2.

770 James Abbe, “Cal-Stanford Tennis Matches on Your TV Screen Tomorrow,” *Oakland Tribune*, 9 April 1954, 26.

had in television. “The sponsors are standing in line!” for her show, exclaimed “Duke” Lloyd Johnson.⁷⁷¹

Elaine’s show began that October, and consisted largely of interviews with invited guests.⁷⁷² It garnered no significant attention from media critics, perhaps because on radio, Elaine could only be heard and not seen. Her beauty had been a central theme of Foster’s repeated pleas for her to be given a larger role at KGO. Elaine had several other duties, as well: she wrote commercials and sold advertising time for KVSM, and even helped with more physically-demanding work, like shipping and distribution of equipment.⁷⁷³ The demands of her new job left her with less time spend with Jack, and they no longer worked at the same station, nor even in the same industry.

Nevertheless, Elaine devoted what little time and energy she had left to help Jack in any way she possibly could. By 1955, Jack had become embroiled in significant career moves of his own, and from then on, he would rely on her full support to achieve his dream of spreading fitness to America.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the rest of the 1950s, Jack’s own fame and fortune soared, but Elaine largely remained a local celebrity – and a minor one at that. In fact, while Elaine would eventually have a place on *The Jack LaLanne Show*, she never fully stepped into the same limelight that Jack enjoyed. Perhaps Jack encouraged her to take a secondary role: he was, for example, quick to take credit for many of Elaine’s physical gift. “I rebuilt her to

⁷⁷¹ Lloyd Johnson, “Startime,” *The Daily Review*, 27 November 1954, 14.

⁷⁷² “From the Production Centers in San Francisco,” *Variety*, 6 October 1955: 44.

⁷⁷³ LaLanne, *Jack 101*; and caption to a photograph of Elaine in *Broadcast 47*, no. 24 (13 December 1954): 94.

my own specifications,” Jack loved to crow, “36-24-36 — and man alive, just look at her!”⁷⁷⁴ As should be obvious from photographs of Elaine from the early 1950s, from her many beauty accolades, and from television critics’ encomia, Elaine had possessed her beauty and figure long before even meeting Jack. Yet she wholeheartedly agreed with Jack’s claim, despite any number of facts to the contrary.

Everyone tells stories: stories about themselves, their history; about the dreams, fears, and experiences that made them who they are today. Rarely are those stories entirely factual. They are mired as details are lost to the fallibility of memory. Many of Jack’s stories lacked any grounding in historical events, but — like all stories — they still reveal valuable truths, because they tell us how Jack saw himself, and how he saw Elaine. And Jack’s story of “remaking” Elaine was typical of their relationship. Throughout their marriage, Elaine never failed to sacrifice for Jack, and yet it seemed to outsiders that he consistently put his wants above her own needs. While he always verbally acknowledged how crucial Elaine was to his own success, he also openly flirted in front of her, interrupted her when she spoke, and often left her out of the spotlight. “He’d rather not be married,” Elaine let slip in one moment of candidness after a waitress grabbed Jack’s buttocks during a dinner with journalist Louise Farr in 1978. “Ooh, *Jack* — that *tush*. It’s so *hard*,” the waitress gushed. “Everything’s hard, honey,” Jack replied.⁷⁷⁵ Jack never even tried to deny Elaine’s statement. “I’d like to be sleeping with a different woman every night. I’ve got all this *energy*,” he explained.⁷⁷⁶ And though she invested her whole

⁷⁷⁴ Horn, “LaLanne.”

⁷⁷⁵ Louise Farr, “The Exercist,” *New West*, 29.

⁷⁷⁶ Farr, “The Exercist,” 26–29.

self in Jack, he in turn rarely shared any of his thoughts or feelings with Elaine. “Jack is a very private person,” she confided. “He doesn’t like being analyzed, and he hates people prying into his personal life and thoughts — even me.”⁷⁷⁷

But any analysis of Jack and Elaine’s life must consider that, first and foremost, that public “personas” rarely reflect the truths of an individual’s lived experiences. And, in the sociocultural milieu of the 1950s, most people expected women to embrace traditional gender roles and subservience to one’s husband. Nevertheless, marriages were often “a crucible for egalitarian ideas and a site of a nascent struggle... over marital power and decision making,” Jessica Weiss explains.⁷⁷⁸ “Prescribed roles exacted unique pressures on [men and women], and both sexes suffered from anxiety and feelings of inadequacy.”⁷⁷⁹

More broadly, overwhelming numbers of Americans made sacrifices for their family in order to seek a place of comforting domesticity free from the recent horrors of war.⁷⁸⁰ Thousands of women yielded the jobs they had held outside their homes to veterans, and returned to the domestic duties of housekeeping and childrearing, rededicating their lives to the happiness of their families by cooking, cleaning, and being a willing sexual partner for their husbands at the expense of their own fulfillment. It was not until Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 that the widespread

⁷⁷⁷ Gail Cottman, “Jack LaLanne Isn’t Kidding,” *Los Angeles Times*, 28–31.

⁷⁷⁸ Jessica Weiss, *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, the Baby Boom, and Social Change* (University of Chicago Press, 2000): 16.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

⁷⁸⁰ Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 65. Definitions of the “long fifties” vary among scholars, but most concur that the period beginning in the late 1940s and continuing into the early 1960s were a time of affluence and conservative thinking. See also Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (Knopf, 2003); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books, 2008); and Robert A. Beauregard, *When American Became Suburban* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

enchantment with domesticity in America began to face serious criticism in the media.⁷⁸¹ Even scholarly literature at the time argued that gender roles formed an integral basis of both martial and even societal stability.⁷⁸²

In these contexts, Elaine likely felt that she had sacrificed relatively little for Jack. Furthermore, it seems almost certain from her ambition and ability to succeed in the male-dominated broadcasting industry that Elaine possessed her own desire for wealth and fame; she likely judged her personal investment in Jack and his business as the surest route to those goals. And undoubtedly, she became the cornerstone of LaLanne, Inc., and deserves as much credit as Jack for being a fitness entrepreneur and pioneer in the postwar age.

Ultimately, the public has not remembered or even known the personal details of Jack and Elaine's relationship, but it has remembered the fitness legacy the LaLannes built together. As they grew closer, both personally and professionally, began to build a nationwide reputation and channel it into the success of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, and use it to help sell the various fitness products produced under the LaLanne brand. The next chapter explains their plan.

⁷⁸¹ May, *Homeward Bound*, 209.

⁷⁸² Talcott Parsons, "The Social Structure of the Family," in Ruth Nanda Anshen, *The Family: Its Function and Destiny* (Oxford: 1949), 173-201.

Chapter 7: Branding Jack LaLanne

Understanding Jack's legacy in both the fitness and television industries requires one to place his accomplishments into geographical as well as historical context. By the time Jack turned forty, in 1954, he had established himself as a popular presence on local TV in the San Francisco Bay area. California has, especially since World War II, been closely associated with the bodily aesthetic. However, many associate fitness specifically with *Southern* California, thanks to its warmer climates and the proximity of both Muscle Beach and Hollywood. Jack and Elaine recognized this, and during the 1950s, strategically attempted to connect the LaLanne brand to those ideals through several different marketing channels.

In fact, careful marketing – combined, of course, with the unique aspects of his persona – was central to Jack's development from a local television star into a national fitness icon. Jack and his team were especially cognizant of the need to brand on a big scale while maintaining his personable image and the intimate feel of his show. In the past, rather than relying solely on traditional print and broadcast advertisements, Jack had used his body to capture his target audience's attention. Now he did so again, in a much grander, much more memorable fashion, performing a series of legendary stunts: escaping from Alcatraz Island by swimming through ice-cold water while handcuffed and shackled; swimming the length of the Golden Gate Bridge while under water; and towing a cabin cruiser through the Golden Gate channel for over a mile. The stunts received

staggering amounts of media coverage, which Jack and Elaine capitalized on during a year-long nationwide campaign to promote the show's syndication.

As the LaLanne brand began to transcend television, opportunities for monetization grew. In high school, Jack sold his health foods to his classmates, but now he began directly selling products to his viewers, beginning with easily-shipped items like resistance tubing used for stretches that he incorporated into *The Jack LaLanne Show*. The Glamour Stretcher, as it was called, sold millions, and hundreds of LaLanne-branded products of all sorts followed. By the early 1960s, one could purchase everything from Jack LaLanne hand cream to a Jack LaLanne swimming pool.

While she takes little credit, records show that Elaine was at the forefront of the business expansion, managing many of the day-to-day affairs and making key decisions with regard to legal matters, syndication, and product development. She was, in fact, an indispensable part of LaLanne, Inc. Her affable, wholesome image allowed her to easily connect with the women who comprised the majority of Jack's audience, and her own knowledge of fitness allowed her to speak in Jack's stead – essentially doubling the potential for face-to-face interactions that built the intimacy upon which a part of Jack's reputation depended. Elaine was Jack's best advertisement: a convert from an unhealthy lifestyle who changed her ways and lived a fuller life for having done so.

Before the LaLannes could begin to execute the bold vision they had conceived for their future, however, Jack needed to extricate himself from the obligations he had to his sponsors. That process proved surprisingly complicated.

GEORGE BARTLETT, YAMI YOGURT, AND THE FUTURE OF *THE JACK LALANNE SHOW*

The day of November 21, 1953 dawned only dimly through fog and drizzle, while wind chilled the normally balmy morning air to an uncomfortable forty-one degrees.⁷⁸³ Despite the unfortunate conditions and rough seas, dozens of newspaper reporters, magazine writers, filmmakers and photographers taxied by motorboat from the Long Beach Pier to Avalon, the lone city on the beautiful Santa Catalina Island. Avalon was a popular tourist destination when more welcoming weather blessed the area. On November 21, however, Avalon was filled with reporters anticipating the arrival of multimillionaire George Bartlett and his wife-to-be, Sonja Du Pont.⁷⁸⁴

Bartlett, creator of the Kevo-Ette and the sponsor of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, was a thoughtful man, who had originally planned to marry Du Pont with a quiet ceremony the Thursday prior. Both had married before, and divorced; and though Du Pont was fifty years old, Bartlett, at 92, was nearly twice her age (Du Pont had worked as Bartlett's secretary for four years). Perhaps a bit of scandal surrounded the proceedings, which would explain Bartlett's propensity for restraint; but in any case, Bartlett's advertising agency "decided to make a production of the affair," and proposed that the couple wed in a diving bell off the coast of Santa Catalina Island. They agreed.⁷⁸⁵ The marketing effort served to both enhance Bartlett's own reputation and increase awareness

783 Weather Underground, "Weather History for KLGB – November, 1953" (The Weather Company, LLC), accessed online at <https://www.wunderground.com/history/airport/KLGB/1953/11/20/DailyHistory.html>

784 "Pep Pill Maker Weds at 92: Simple Rites Replace Diving Bell Nuptials," *Long Beach Telegram*, 21 November 1953, 9.

785 *Ibid.*, and Elaine LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

of the efficacy of his nutritional supplements – after all, how many 92-year-old men have the stamina to keep up with a woman forty years younger?

The California coast, sadly, had other ideas. Bartlett had chartered a seaplane to carry them to Avalon, and scheduled departure for late morning, in time for an early-afternoon ceremony.⁷⁸⁶ But the rough seas and high winds around Avalon made it impossible to land on the island.⁷⁸⁷ The wedding party waited for conditions to calm, but nature refused, and by three o'clock in the afternoon, they had conceded to the inevitable. Instead, the couple resolved to have their wedding right there, on the mainland, despite the media's absence and the setting's complete lack of romance. Reverend Benjamin J. Paroulek married Bartlett and Du Jour at the Los Angeles Municipal airport before just a handful of witnesses. Among them were Bartlett's daughter, Elizabeth; Gene Hawley, the general manager of one of his production facilities; and Jack.⁷⁸⁸ Bartlett had, in fact, chosen Jack as his best man, for he had, in just two short years of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, added considerably to the groom's already impressive fortune.⁷⁸⁹

Perhaps his proximity to Bartlett's success roused Jack's own aspirations. Bartlett, though aged, seemingly had it all: nearly unlimited wealth; a (relatively) young, beautiful bride; and the media paid him plenty of attention because of it. Jack had turned his life around at age fifteen, and built his body to award-winning proportions; he owned a gym, and part of a growing television show. But his marriage with Irma was floundering; his relationship with Elaine at the time was far from certain; and though far from poor, he did

786 "Pep Pill Maker Weds at 92."

787 "Tribune Newreel: Interesting Items from Everywhere," *Galveston Tribune*, 21 November 1953: 9.

788 "Pep Pill Maker Weds at 92."

789 "'Dead' Man is Pretty Spry at 92," *Pulaski Southwest Times*, 24 July 1953: 6.

not possess the remarkable wealth of Bartlett. As it happened, he soon had no choice but to take charge of his own fortunes in television. Bartlett stopped advertising his Kevo-Etts almost immediately after his marriage to Du Jour. He had mismanaged his finances, explained Jack, and, with a new marriage and an advanced age, could afford neither the time nor the money to continue sponsoring *The Jack LaLanne Show*.⁷⁹⁰ Jack, his best man, was shocked, and felt abandoned.

In hindsight, Bartlett's monetary woes should have come as a surprise to no one. By the mid-1950s, many show sponsors, who had profited so handsomely from their advertising when the industry remained in its most nascent of stages, struggled to fund their programs as television became increasingly common. The new medium's soaring popularity had caused sponsorship and production costs to soar dramatically, as well. In 1952, sponsoring a one-hour show cost about \$35,000 (the equivalent of over \$300,000 today).⁷⁹¹ For this reason, by 1953, historian William Boddy explains, "many sponsors were more interested in joining an established show than in developing new programs themselves."⁷⁹² Bartlett, however, had no such partners, and so he could not afford to continue funding *The Jack LaLanne Show* at all.

By now Jack was almost forty years of age, and had grown into a far more patient man than one might have imagined given the tales of his anxious, hyperactive youth. He took the setback in stride: he had already established his show and its selling power, so surely a sponsor could be found *somewhere*, he reasoned. In 1953, *The Jack LaLanne*

790 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

791 Richard Campbell, Christopher R Martin, and Bettina Fabos, *Media and Culture: An Introduction to Mass Communication* (Macmillan, 2011), 149.

792 William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (University of Illinois Press, 1993): 170.

Show was the only one of its kind, excepting Paul Fogarty's *Keep Fit Corps* that aired only in Chicago and had fewer (if any) commercial ties. The historic Kraus-Hirshland study, which would rudely awaken the nation to the sorry state of physical fitness of American children – at least, according to media reports – would not be published until the following year, but nevertheless, morning “setting-up” exercise programs had proven popular on radio, and the growing audience of *The Jack LaLanne Show* seemed to indicate that setting-up shows could succeed on television, too. Emboldened by these facts, on January 1, 1954, Jack LaLanne assumed complete ownership of and fiduciary responsibility for *The Jack LaLanne Show*.⁷⁹³ He also began to investigate the health food supplement industry, in search of potential replacements for Bartlett. Both tasks, however, proved far more difficult than he expected.

Health Foods and Supplements in the 1950s

Scholars Daniel Hall and John Fair have recorded the early history of the nutritional supplements industry, and in their study, they observed that the market for supplements began to grow rapidly in the postwar era.⁷⁹⁴ According to Hillel Schwartz, however, John T. Andreadis's Regimen weight loss product was the first supplement to reach outside the bodybuilding market in the years following World War II.⁷⁹⁵ Andreadis

⁷⁹³ La Lanne Incorporated, “United States Patent 83803 – Jack la lanne show,” filed 22 October 1959, issued 25 April 25, 1961. The patent describes the show as “a television program featuring demonstrations, instructions, and advice in the field of physical culture and nutrition.”

⁷⁹⁴ Daniel Hall and John Fair, “The Pioneers of Protein,” *Iron Game History*, May/June 2004, 23–34. Examples include Walter Marcy's House of Health, which began advertising in bodybuilding magazines in 1948; bodybuilder Irvin Johnson's Hi-Protein Food, which he first sold in Peary Rader's Iron Man magazine three years later, in 1951; and, that same year, weightlifting magnate Bob Hoffman's York Vitamin-Mineral Food Supplement, soon followed by his own High-Protein Food in 1952.

⁷⁹⁵ Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies, and Fat* (Free Press, 1986), 7. Andreadis began marketing weight-loss products in 1946, with his Glamour Mold Self-Massage Kit and Hollywood Two-Way Plan, but it was not until

sold \$16 million worth of his weight-loss drug Regimen before the United States government fined and imprisoned him for falsely advertising the product's benefits.⁷⁹⁶ In fact, the lack of government regulation over the supplement industry in its infancy had led to consequences far worse than false advertising. Popular weight-loss supplements of the 1930s included the likes of dinitrophenol, an ingredient commonly used in commercial pesticides. Human ingestion of dinitrophenol can assist in weight loss, but side effects include nausea, vomiting, and death.

Use of dinitrophenol as a weight-loss agent was finally prohibited in 1938 for obvious reasons, but the demand for health foods – as opposed to pills, shakes, and powders – continued to grow quickly. Thanks in large part to lithe new fashion standards and film stars in the postwar era, interest in weight loss and reducing skyrocketed in the early 1950s, and the pivotal year, according to historian Roberta Pollack Seid, was 1951. By then, Americans had come to realize that the abundance of the postwar world often led directly to an expanding waistline. Automobiles and spacious refrigerators allowed people to buy more food during a typical trip to the grocery store, while burning fewer calories. “The opportunity, and the temptation, to overeat were becoming omnipresent,” Seid explains.⁷⁹⁷ Despite this explosion of interest in health foods and reducing, Jack struggled to find any sponsors who possessed both the financial wherewithal necessary to

the early 1950s that he entered the supplement industry, with an appetite suppressant called Propex. Propex was soon followed by Regimen, which claimed to be a “wonder drug for fat people”, offering “no-diet reducing.”

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid., 7; Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, “United States V. John Andreadis” (U.S. Department of Justice, September 1, 1966); and “U.S. Acts to Seize Regimen Tablets, Pills to Cut Weight,” *New York Times*, 11 January 1964.

⁷⁹⁷ Roberta Pollack Seid, *Never Too Thin: Why Women Are at War with Their Bodies* (Prentice Hall Press, 1989), 104-105, 129. Seid explains that, between 1952 and 1955, sales of diet soft drinks increased by a staggering thirty thousand percent. So great was public demand for dieting information that New York Times Magazine writers resorted to the “ransack” of medical and nutrition journals for advice, though even these contained only “an odd mixture of fact and fantasy.”

fund his show and the imprudence necessary to ignore the shortcomings of the television sponsorship system itself.

It was, eventually, yogurt that came to his rescue. Though humans have eaten yogurt since ancient times, according to nutritionists Mauro Fisberg and Rachel Machado, researchers only began to understand the health benefits of yogurt in the twentieth century.⁷⁹⁸ In fact, Yami Yogurt founder James Rice became one of the first manufacturers to market the health benefits of yogurt in America, publishing nation-wide advertisements for his product beginning in 1949.⁷⁹⁹ Those ads purported Yami Yogurt to be “scientifically produced... by the scientist-Monks of the famous Rosell Institute” in Quebec, and claimed that it could “retard the growth of intestinal toxins.”⁸⁰⁰ According to one testimonial, from a Mrs. N.T. of Los Angeles, Yami Yogurt could even transform someone’s life “into a thing of Real Meaning.”⁸⁰¹ By the 1950s, yogurt had gained considerable popularity as a health food, not only thanks to Rice’s farfetched claims and extensive marketing efforts, but because of the real digestive benefits of yogurt.

Early in 1954, Jack reached a deal with Rice: he would promote Yami Yogurt on *The Jack LaLanne Show* and, in exchange, Rice would help defray production costs. The partnership, which paired a television show about healthful exercise and diet with a new health food product rapidly gaining in popularity, promised plenty of synergistic benefits.

798 Mauro Fisberg and Rachel Machado, “History of Yogurt and Current Patterns of Consumption,” *Nutrition Reviews* 73, no. S1 (2015): 4-5. Migrants in the Middle East fermented milk in the intestines of slaughtered animals to prevent it from spoiling thousands of years ago, but it remained commercially unviable due to its taste until Frenchman Daniel Carasso, founder of Dannon, mixed it with jam in the early 1930s, and the first yogurt factory in the United States did not open until 1941.

799 Yogurt remained commercially unviable due to its taste until Frenchman Daniel Carasso, founder of Dannon, mixed it with jam in the early 1930s, and the first yogurt factory in the United States did not open until 1941. Rice, for example, began making yogurt on his farm in Auburn, Washington, and founded the Yami Yogurt company in 1924, but large-scale operations took twenty-five years to develop.

800 “Oak Farms Presents Yami Yogurt (Advertisement),” *Paris (Texas) News*, May 3, 1951, 11.

801 “I Want to Say Thank You (Advertisement),” *Long Beach Telegram*, January 28, 1949, 20.

There was only one problem: “It tasted *terrible*,” Jack lamented. To stomach the stuff on his commercials, he mixed it with — of all things — whipped prunes. While some might question whether the yogurt was any more palatable *a la* prune, Yami Yogurt’s sales grew thanks to Jack’s endorsement. “I made some guys millionaires,” Jack said of his efforts to promote Rice’s company.⁸⁰² While he claimed to have invented the idea of including prunes with yogurt, Dannon had, in truth, begun producing its still-familiar Fruit on the Bottom product in 1947.⁸⁰³ Nevertheless, Rice apparently funded a study on the benefits of yogurt with prunes. In their 1955 article, researchers Francis Ferrer and Linn Boyd concluded, ironically, that the “laxative habit” of yogurt could conceivably cure the “disturbing symptom” of constipation caused by the stress of the “constant verbal barrage [of advertisements], via radio and television,” to which Americans were subjected.⁸⁰⁴

PROMOTIONAL STUNTS

Aside from the unpalatable nature of the product, the Yami Yogurt partnership worked well – but only for a short while. By the mid-1950s, the entire sponsorship system – which had started to show signs of wear around the time that Jack parted ways with George Bartlett and his Kevo-Etts – had started to truly unravel, as networks themselves vied with advertisers for control of programming. Some advertisers had grown weary of the system, too: production costs were rising, and the heavy-handedness

802 Donald Katz, “Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal,” *Outside* (November 1995), 78–82, 162.

803 Dairy Farmers of Canada, “The History of Yogurt,” n.d., <https://www.dairygoodness.ca/yogurt/the-history-of-yogurt>.

804 P. Ferrer Francis and J. Boyd Linn, “Effect of Yogurt with Prune Whip on Constipation,” *American Journal of Digestive Diseases* 22, no. 9 (1955): 272.

of commercially-sponsored shows could alienate potential customers. "Sponsored entertainment might serve advertisers' needs, but if audiences were alienated by heavy-handed sponsorship, broadcasting would not be able to sell them things," explains historian Cynthia Meyers.⁸⁰⁵

By fall of 1954, driven by his vision for the future of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, and probably acknowledging the inevitable fate of *any* sponsor under the failing system, Jack, together with Elaine Doyle, began a historic marketing campaign to turn the LaLanne name into a famous brand. That decision coincided with an important milestone in Jack's life: on September 24, 1954, he turned forty years old. For Jack, forty represented middle age, at least; or perhaps considering his father's early death, even more than that. Forty also represented a marketing opportunity: a chance to better connect with the millions of middle-aged Americans who, in the abundance of the postwar years, found themselves increasingly out of shape and out of energy. Jack later published a book titled *Abundant Health and Vitality After 40*. He also, much more famously, chose forty as the age at which to begin performing a number of annual aquatic endurance stunts, ostensibly to commemorate his birthday, but also to raise publicity for *The Jack LaLanne Show*.

No one knows where Jack found the inspiration to perform these stunts. One suspects, however, that Elaine, with her experience in broadcasting and aquatic performances, played some role in suggesting them. Or perhaps fellow physical culture

⁸⁰⁵ Cynthia B. Meyers, "The Problems With Sponsorship in US Broadcasting, 1930s-1950s: Perspectives from the Advertising Industry," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 31, no. 3 (2011): 355.

entrepreneur Vic Tanny planted the seed in Jack's mind when the chain-gym owner sponsored an endurance swim to advertise his chain of gymnasiums in Southern California. While Tanny was a great innovator in the gymnasium business, he was not the first to use feats of strength to generate publicity. Eugen Sandow rose to fame by publically defeating the strongman Charles Sampson in a lifting contest, and by claiming to set world records in similar performances. Bernarr MacFadden celebrated several birthdays late in life by performing long-distance endurance walks, fasting, and even by parachuting out of airplanes. And of course, Jack's first break in show business came about because of the viewer interest he generated by performing push-ups throughout the *Les Malloy Show* in 1951.

In 1993, a reporter questioned Jack about his motivations for performing the stunts that he did. Jack replied: "Not that I am comparing myself to Jesus, but why did Jesus perform miracles?" Continuing that same comparison, Jack went on, "He had those twelve cats around him – but I just had me. But what's a miracle, anyway? If you take some fat guy and take 50 pounds off of him, that's a miracle... You see, the miracles are within us."⁸⁰⁶ Even with the benefit of historical perspective, though, Jack's feats do indeed seem virtually miraculous. Much later in life – into his seventies – Jack returned to the water to perform even more impressive stunts, like towing 70 boats over a mile through the Long Beach Harbor while handcuffed. He said he did these things "to prove to myself that anything is possible.... People believe in Jack LaLanne, and I want to

⁸⁰⁶ Carol Ann Weber, "Jack LaLanne: The Man and His Passion," *Muscular Development* (March 1993): 166.

show them anything is possible at any age.”⁸⁰⁷ Jack’s feats seemed to make the impossible achievable, for anyone, at any age. He owes a great deal of his lasting fame to that fact.

Golden Gate Swim

Two days after Jack’s fortieth birthday, on the morning of September 26, 1954, a cool dawn rose over the San Francisco Bay. Thick fog rolled off the icy bay waters, hugging the shoreline and pouring down around the brilliant orange towers of the Golden Gate Bridge. By midday, the fog had cleared, and Jack stood with his back toward the sun in the strong breeze over the water beneath Fort Point, weighed down by a metal aqualung nearly as heavy as he was.⁸⁰⁸ His steel watch glistened against the black backdrop of his wetsuit; his oversized flippers smacked against the ground. The watch was Jack’s timekeeper, and it was precious. His underwater swim would test both his endurance and speed, as the aqualung only held enough air to sustain Jack for forty-five minutes. In fact, three weeks earlier, on Labor Day, Jack had practiced the swim and nearly died when he ran out of air.⁸⁰⁹

On 26 September, Jack fully intended to swim the Golden Gate strait from San Francisco to Marin County entirely under water, a distance of one and one-half miles. That particular fall day promised a tide run-out of five and a half feet — the biggest of

⁸⁰⁷ “Age No Stone Around Neck of LaLanne,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 27 August 1984: A9.

⁸⁰⁸ “‘Frogman’ Swims S.F. Bay Underwater,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 28 September 1954; and Charles Fredericks, “Heavy Odds See Against Success Of Underwater Golden Gate Swim Test,” *Provo Daily Herald*, 26 September 1954. The aqualung weighed 120 pounds; Lalanne weighed 171.

⁸⁰⁹ “Jack La Lanne Times Gruelling Performance with Waterproof Watch,” *Oakland Tribune*, 28 September 1954; and “Lalanne Swims Golden Gate Under Water With Aqualung,” *Nevada State Journal*, 28 September 1954.

the year, and the strength of the shifting current would prove treacherous. “That’s one of the handicaps,” Jack said. “I can’t even try to battle that tide once it starts moving.”⁸¹⁰ But he had taken precautions: a swimming coach by the name of Jerry Hawryluk would guide him through the murky waters on a small pilot skiff. Hawryluk would dangle a 1000-watt light bulb strung from a long pole — like an illuminated carrot — through the water to lead the way. In case the waters proved too choppy for the boat, Jack carried a wrist compass for direction. A bright red balloon tied around his waist would let spectators follow his progress from the shore.⁸¹¹

And there were lots of spectators. Fans of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, hundreds of them, lined up along the shoreline and cheered. Reporters for local papers and the United Press International came out, too. Jack joked with them: “Anyone who cares to come along is welcome – the water will be real invigorating!”⁸¹² Bettors watched, too, and placed odds on his success at two to one against.⁸¹³

At first, even those odds seemed generous. The winds, together with the rising tide, swept Jack so far off course that he swam twice the width of the channel before receiving the signal that he had reached the northern shore. He finally emerged victorious, hands clasped overhead like a prizefighter who had just knocked out his opponent, seemingly hardly fazed: “I feel great, man. I’d like to go back across on the

810 “Plans to Swim Gate – Under Water,” *San Rafael Daily Independent Journal*, 25 September 1954, 5.

811 Charles Fredericks, “Athlete Will Try Golden Gate Swim: Under Water All Way; Use Aqua Lung,” *Nevada State Journal*, 26 September 1954.

812 Ibid.

813 “Bettors Say Golden Gate Swimmer Won’t Make,” *Kalispell Daily Inter Lake*, 26 September 1954.

surface now.”⁸¹⁴ He was discouraged from making the attempt, as by that time the tide would no longer accommodate such a swim. On the surface would have been Jack’s only possibility for a return, as his aqualung had left just three minutes’ worth of air after the forty-two-minute journey.⁸¹⁵ He was probably playing it cool, anyway, as he had made a habit of doing. After Jack had set his push-up mark a year earlier, a reporter commented on the feat. “He said that it really was as easy as it looked on television. But I saw it up close, and it was not so soft.”⁸¹⁶

Though the feat had celebrated Jack’s fortieth birthday, that framing came only in hindsight. At the time, he refused to discuss his age with reporters. “Every year I like to do something that shows how young I am, because you are only as old as you feel. And I feel young,” he insisted.⁸¹⁷ Besides, he added, “we physical culturists are ageless.”⁸¹⁸

The following Monday, Jack appeared in his wetsuit for a half-page ad in the *Oakland Tribune*, with the headline, “Jack La Lanne Times Gruelling Performance with Waterproof Watch!”⁸¹⁹ The Milens watch cost twenty-four dollars and eighty-five cents, and was ideal for construction workers, desk workers, truck drivers, and channel swimmers. Fitness enthusiasts were not mentioned. The ad was, perhaps, the first foreshadowing of the burgeoning LaLanne-sponsored commercial empire to follow.

More importantly, the stunt generated unprecedented publicity for *The Jack LaLanne Show*. Newspapers across the country reprinted the United Press International

814 “Lalanne Swims Golden Gate — Under Water,” *Daily Review*, 27 September 1954.

815 “Lalanne Swims Golden Gate Under Water With Aqualung,” *Nevada State Journal*, 28 September 1954.

816 James Abbe, “Abbe Airs It,” *Oakland Tribune*, 22 July 1953.

817 “Culturists Swims Icy Golden Gate Channel” *Bakersfield Californian*, 27 September 1954, 34.

818 “‘Frogman’ Swims S.F. Bay Underwater.”

819 “Jack La Lanne Times Gruelling Performance with Waterproof Watch!” [advertisement], *Oakland Tribune*, 27 September 1954, n.p.

story; even the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, published in Tokyo, included a photograph of Jack a few days after the event.⁸²⁰ KGO-TV executives subsequently invested more money in Jack. Two months later, for example, they let him stretch his vocal muscles on air, with a “wake-up tune” each show accompanied by newly-hired accordionist George Cerruli.⁸²¹ It became a regular feature.

Escape from Alcatraz

Emboldened by the success of his Golden Gate swim, Jack planned an even bigger, better event. The following year, in 1955, he returned to the water, and this time, he said, he wanted to crack the legend of “The Rock:” Alcatraz Island.⁸²² Since FBI director J. Edgar Hoover had announced the opening of a federal penitentiary on Alcatraz, in 1934, the treacherous, remote island had become infamous. It housed some of America’s most dangerous and notorious criminals: Al Capone, George “Machine Gun” Kelly, the “Birdman of Alcatraz,” Robert Franklin Stroud, and over 1500 other men who served time in what was designed as America’s first maximum-security prison. Surrounded by the freezing waters and perilous currents of the Pacific Ocean, a full mile from the mainland, inmates and onlookers alike consider “America’s Devil’s Island” inescapable. To this day, the federal government denies that anyone ever escaped Alcatraz — although five inmates are listed as “missing and presumed drowned.”⁸²³

Beginning with the 1937 movie *Alcatraz Island*, Hollywood embraced a mythic vision of

820 “‘Frogman’ Swims S.F. Bay Underwater.”

821 Ellis Walker, “Video Notes,” *Daily Review*, 22 November 1954, 22.

822 “Swim Ends Legend of ‘Rock’,” *Oxnard Press Courier*, 11 July 1955.

823 Federal Bureau of Prisons, “The Rock: Historical Information,” n.d., <https://www.bop.gov/about/history/alcatraz.jsp>.

Alcatraz that was synonymous with brutality, punishment, and violence. “‘Freedom’ would seem the last thing to come to mind when thinking about Alcatraz,” explain scholars Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange.⁸²⁴

But, at least since the age of 15, Jack had found success at virtually everything he tried: athletics, his gym business, bodybuilding, television, and romance. For him, anything *was* possible — even escape from The Rock. So just before eleven o’clock, on July 9, 1955, he leapt into the chilly waters around Alcatraz, garbed only in brief trunks and a swimming cap. Even in summer, the temperate climate of Northern California meant that the water would have measured a chilly 55 degrees: about the same temperature that elite athletes often use in ten-minute ice baths to soothe sore muscles. Jack’s swim, however, took much longer than ten minutes. Though the distance from Alcatraz to Fisherman’s Wharf is only one mile as the crow flies, the strong currents meant that Jack had to traverse the equivalent of two and one-half miles, at least a half-hour’s journey in good conditions.⁸²⁵

Like his Golden Gate swim, Jack and his team planned the escape from Alcatraz carefully. To better his chances, Jack held the “birthday celebration” in July, before the cooler September days when he would actually turn forty-one. On that date he also enjoyed “an infrequent favorable current,” aiding his effort and cutting the journey’s

824 Tina Loo and Carolyn Strange, “‘Rock Prison of Liberation’: Alcatraz Island and the American Imagination,” *Radical History Review* 2000, no. 78 (2000): 27.

825 “Swim Ends Legend of ‘Rock’”; “Swims Handcuffed from Alcatraz,” *Corpus Christi Times*, 11 July 1955, 5B; and Liz Osborn, “Ocean Temperatures Along the California Coast in Summer,” n.d., <https://www.currentresults.com/Oceans/Temperature/pacific-ocean-temperature-california-summer.php>.

effective distance down to about two miles.⁸²⁶ Furthermore, he did not actually start his swim from the island itself. Instead, he began in a boat a bit south from the coast, since Alcatraz Warden Paul J. Madigan refused to grant him permission to leave from the island itself. Madigan disapproved of the entire feat, in fact, and steadfastly insisted that Alcatraz was escape-proof. “The water is too cold and the currents too swift” for an escape, he said.⁸²⁷ So Jack’s pilot boat drifted as close to Alcatraz as the guards allowed, about 200 yards off the island: the best approximation of an escape under the circumstances.⁸²⁸

To make the escape swim even more daring, Jack swam handcuffed – just as an escaped inmate would presumably have had to do. To prevent the cuffs from cutting into his wrists during the swim, Jack wrapped his wrists in thick tape. To maneuver without full use of his arms, he relied on a “modified side-stroke with a strong scissors leg kick,” reported the *Associated Press*. “At each downward thrust of his manacled arms, his head was well submerged,”⁸²⁹ causing him to rather resemble a well-muscled porpoise rippling through the water.⁸³⁰

To protect himself from the cold, Jack coated himself in grease — a technique that, according to legend, Captain Matthew Webb first employed in 1875 to stay warm during his historic swim of the English Channel. Webb smothered himself in porpoise fat, but modern swimmers often employ Vaseline or lanolin instead. Evidence suggests that

826 “Handcuffed Man Swims from Alcatraz to S.F.” *Long Beach Telegram*, 11 July 1955, A5.

827 “Strong Man Pulls Alcatraz ‘Escape’,” *Albuquerque Journal*, 12 July 1955.

828 “Handcuffed Oaklander Swims from Rock to S.F.” *Oakland Tribune*, 11 July 1955, 2E.

829 “Swim Ends Legend of ‘Rock’.”

830 “Handcuffed Oaklander Swims from Rock to S.F.”

this does, in fact, help retain body heat, and also reduces chafing over long distances.⁸³¹ Some swimmers suggest using as much as fifteen pounds of grease, but Jack probably did not use quite that amount; had he done so, reporters might have remarked on a rather unflattering, perhaps gelatinous, appearance.⁸³²

All told, bookmakers placed odds of Jack's survival at five to one against.⁸³³ Apparently, they had not learned their lesson the previous year. Jack, of course, knew what he was doing, and fifty-six minutes after he departed the boat, he reached the rocks by Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco.⁸³⁴ He emerged from the water, teeth chattering but hands held above his head, triumphant — and still bound together.⁸³⁵ A police officer freed him from the cuffs, and Jack immediately performed 30 push-ups to prove he was not entirely exhausted. "I'm not tired at all," he protested. "Just cold. I could have gone farther."⁸³⁶

The escape from Alcatraz brought Jack more fame and media attention than even his Golden Gate swim. Major newspapers including the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* carried the story on their front pages.⁸³⁷ The following month, long-distance swimmer Jose Cortinas duplicated Jack's feat, and, perhaps driven by envy, topped it by making the return swim, as well, all while handcuffed.⁸³⁸ However, if

831 "Handcuffed Oaklander Swims from Rock to S.F."; and Roy J. Shephard, "A Polar Bear Swim, Anyone? Risks and Counter-Measures." *The Health & Fitness Journal of Canada* 8, no. 1 (2015): 18.

832 "Is Grease an Aid to Survival in Extremely Cold Water?" (The Straight Dope, 2011), accessed online at <http://boards.straightdope.com/sdmb/showthread.php?t=603682>.

833 "People. Noted," *El Paso Herald-Post*, 11 July 1955, 22.

834 "Handcuffed Oaklander Swims from Rock to S.F."

835 "People. Noted."

836 "Swims Two-Mile Lake Handcuffed," *Somerset Daily American*, 11 July 1955, 6.

837 "Man Swims from Alcatraz in Handcuffs," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 July 1955, 1; and "Strong Man Wearing Handcuffs Swims Across Two-Mile Alcatraz Channel," *The Washington Post*, 11 July 1955, 1.

838 "Cuban Swims From Alcatraz in Manacles," *Los Angeles Times*, 11 August 1955, 13.

Cortinas attempted to steal some of Jack's thunder, he failed: nearly every article mentioning Cortinas ended with a reminiscence of Jack's pioneering swim one month prior.⁸³⁹ Other copycats sprang up along the West Coast.⁸⁴⁰ All of the media paid off; allegedly, Jack could "not keep up with hundreds of TV leads for his food supplements," in the following months.⁸⁴¹ His name began to be mentioned in local papers alongside other San Francisco television personalities like John Harvey, Billy Reynolds, and Patty Pritchard.⁸⁴²

839 Ibid., and "Swimmer to Try Alcatraz Route," *Bakersfield Californian*, 9 August 1955: 30.

840 The Nevada State Journal, for example, reported in August that Fritz Hertlein would attempt to break Jack's world-record underwater swim by travelling 12 miles through Lake Tahoe. See "Aqua-Lung Swimmer Will Try Tahoe Under Water Wednesday," *Nevada State Journal*, 28 August 1955, 11.

841 "Men and Women" [advertisement], *Oakland Tribune*, 18 September 1955: 36A.

842 "San Lorenzo Fetes Opening of Freeman Market," *Daily Review*, 21 September 1955, 32.



Figure 22. The Alcatraz swim was highly publicized. Photograph from the LaLanne collection.

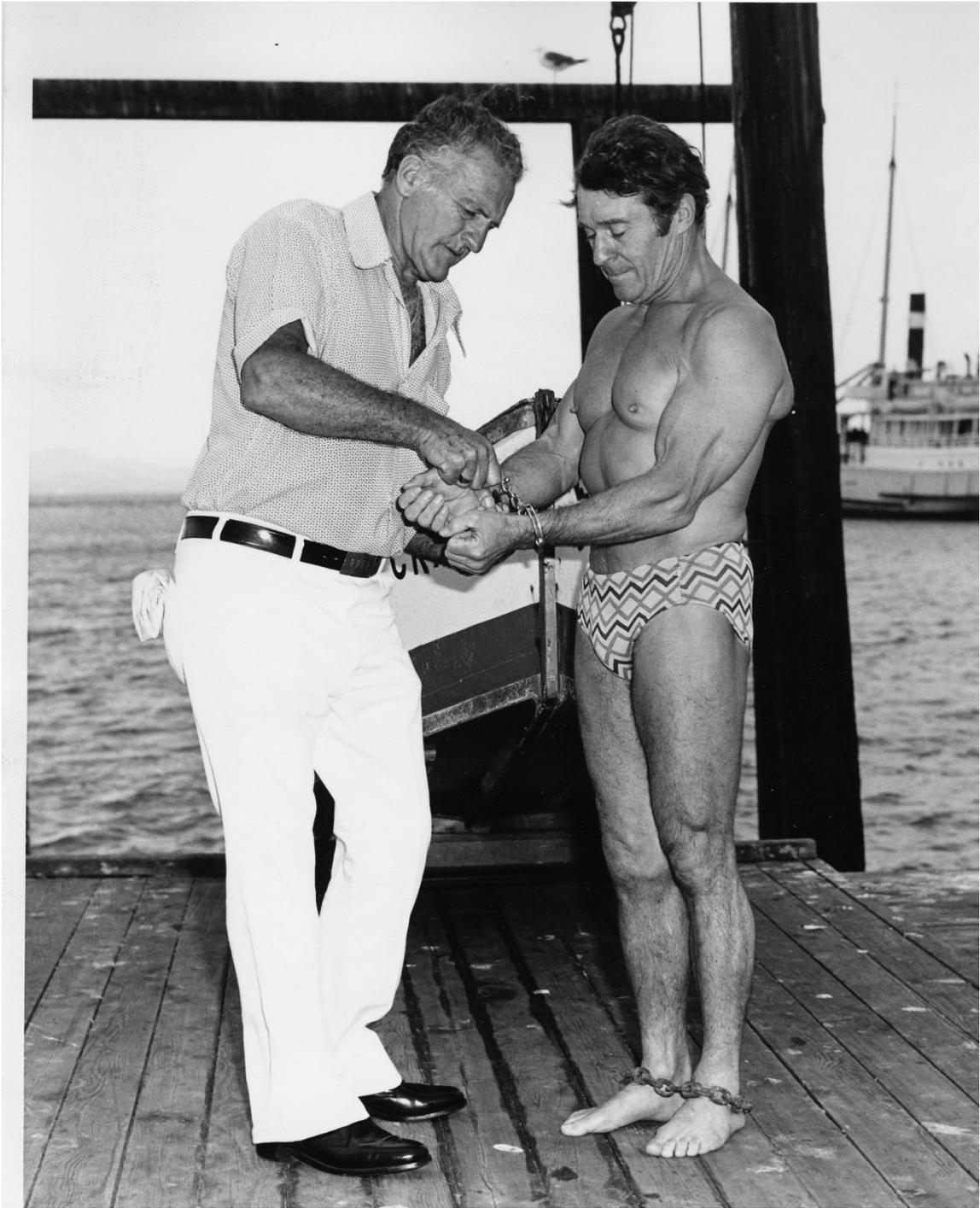


Figure 23. Jack is handcuffed and shackled before attempting his now-famous escape.
Photograph from the LaLanne collection.



Figure 24. Jack emerges from the water after his successful swim. Photograph from the LaLanne collection.

A New Sponsorship Strategy

The food supplement Jack advertised around his escape from Alcatraz was called, simply, “Jack LaLanne’s Private Formula,” and, in keeping with the trends of the time, promised to reduce the appetites of users. Spurred on by the enormous publicity

generated by his escape from Alcatraz, Jack decided shortly thereafter to break with James Rice and Yami Yogurt for good. Instead, in 1956, he founded his own eponymous health-food company, began work on a full product line, and assumed sponsorship of his own, eponymous show. He lusted for and reveled in the comfort that came from total control over his fortune, even though he had little interest in the business itself.

He began by hiring Millard Fillmore Williamson – who went by the name of Mel – to develop most of the early Jack LaLanne products. According to authors William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, Williamson’s eldest sister introduced him to physical culture. She trained at Jack’s gym in Oakland, and later became “one of America’s first women bodybuilders.”⁸⁴³ Williamson started training with Jack also, and soon became a Muscle Beach regular. He possessed a strong physique and an even stronger grasp of chemistry. According to Elaine, Williamson formulated Jack’s early products, including the first: Vita-Lane, a vitamin and mineral supplement that Jack sold on the air with great success. Williamson, after earning his undergraduate degree in Food Science from the University of California at Berkeley, later founded his own health-food company, Fillmore Foods.⁸⁴⁴ Fillmore Foods was eventually rebranded as the MLO Products Company, and is today a major manufacturer of soy-based health foods and supplements.⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴³ William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, *History of Modern Soy Protein Ingredients* (Soy Info Center, 2016): 1386. This claim that Williamson’s sister was one of America’s first female bodybuilders seems slightly tenuous, given the legacies of women like Ivy Russell and Pudgy Stockton, and the number of female athletes at Muscle Beach. See, for example, Jan Todd, “The Legacy of Pudgy Stockton,” *Iron Game History* 2, no. 1 (January 1992): 5-7.

⁸⁴⁴ LaLanne, *Jack 101*; and La Lanne Incorporated, “Vita Lane,” US patent number 83801, submitted 22 October 1959, issued 12 September 1961. The patent described Vita Lane simply as a “mineral and vitamin food supplement.”

⁸⁴⁵ “MLO/GeniSoy Unveils ‘Chocolate Drenched Premium Soy Nuts,’” [press release], *New Hope Network*, 8 March 2002, accessed online at <http://www.newhope.com/supply-news-amp-analysis/mlogenisoy-unveils-chocolate-drenched-premium-soy-nuts>

Jack followed Vita-Lane with a bevy of pills, potions, and products, including a “Hi Protein Food” (the name of which was undoubtedly stolen from Hoffman’s York brand; Hoffman himself copied the name from bodybuilder Irvin Johnson). Jack also began selling desiccated liver tablets in 1956; and a salt- and sugar-free whole-wheat bread in 1957.⁸⁴⁶ Jack advertised them all on television, but distribution fell to Elaine. She enlisted an attorney and accountant to manage Jack’s business affairs, and arranged with a local wholesaler to put Jack’s products on the shelves of local grocery stores.⁸⁴⁷

Jack’s salesmanship and Elaine’s business savvy built La Lanne, Inc.’s health products into a huge hit. But they had little management experience; and even with professional help, they encountered roadblocks. In a story told many times over, Jack explained how, in 1956, he realized how convenient many Americans would find a meal-replacement shake, given the hectic pace of modern life. At his behest, Williamson produced a drink made of soy, milk, and kelp, filled with vitamins and minerals. It tasted “noxious,” but sold well.⁸⁴⁸ “I was the one who came up with the idea of two shakes a day followed by a sensible dinner,” Jack gloated.⁸⁴⁹ “After my product did so well in the market, Carnation came out with their own instant breakfast. I sued for patent infringement and agreed to a cash settlement in exchange for allowing them to continue

846 La Lanne Incorporated, “Jack La Lanne,” US patent number 121739, submitted 9 June 1961, issued 17 July 1962, for “Food supplement products including a mineral and vitamin food supplement, a high protein food supplement, and a food supplement sold in the form of desiccated and de-fatted whole liver tablets”; La Lanne Incorporated, “Jack La Lanne’s Bread, US patent number 105176, submitted 26 September 1960, issued 9 October 1962, for “bread”; “Vitamin Prices Are Down” [advertisement], *Daily Review*, 28 January 1958, 3; and “Our Boy Is Back!” [Advertisement] *Daily Review*, 22 March 1956, 19.

847 LaLanne, *Jack* 101.

848 Katz, “LaLanne is Still An Animal.”

849 Connie Marie Jones, “Jack LaLanne the Fitness Legend,” *Whole Life Times: The Journal of Wholistic Living* (March 1998): 41.

selling their product."⁸⁵⁰ No evidence of the lawsuit can be found, nor any patent records for Jack's version of Instant Breakfast.⁸⁵¹ Despite any legal unpleasanties, La Lanne, Inc., continued to thrive; and in the years to come, Jack and Elaine expanded it exponentially.

The Other Stunts

As publicity events, the Golden Gate and Alcatraz swims were enormously successful and did much to transform the LaLanne name into a brand. In fact, nearly every article written about Jack today makes at least some mention of the series of feats he performed both in the 1950s and again, later in his life. However, while Jack claimed to have performed some sort of fitness test on his birthday every year between the ages of 40 and 45, the actual timeline is a bit muddled. Today, his website states that in 1956, at the age of 42, he performed 1,033 push-ups on Art Baker's variety show, *You Asked For It*. In truth, Jack performed 1,033 push-ups in 23 minutes on air, but he did so on 10 June 1953, not 1956.⁸⁵² The event, though not associated with a birthday, did get some media attention, Jack remembers. "Going on Art Baker's show, that kind of got things going," he said in an interview in 2003.⁸⁵³ While that increased publicity is, ultimately, the most important historical aspect of the event, many modern journalists have taken his proffered date of 1956 at face value; others have confused the story entirely. "Jack came on *You*

⁸⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁸⁵¹ Shurtleff and Aoyagi claim that Williamson did not begin producing Instant Breakfast for Jack until the mid-1960s, but their own timeline is somewhat inconsistent.

⁸⁵² James Abbe, "Birth of Communist Russia on TV Newsreel Tonight," *Oakland Tribune*, 27 May 27, 54E; and James Abbe, "Local Boys Who Made Good Star Here on TV and Radio," *Oakland Tribune*, 10 June 1953, 54D.

⁸⁵³ Karen Herman, interview with Jack LaLanne on 12 September 2003, Archive of American Television, accessed online at <http://emmytvlegends.org/interviews/people/jack-lalanne>

Asked For It and swam handcuffed from Alcatraz to the edge of San Francisco,” wrote *Vanity Fair* reporter Maureen Orth in a 2011 memoir.⁸⁵⁴ While both those events occurred, they were in no way connected – and simple reflection suggests the impossibility of incorporating a long-distance swim as part of a variety show.

Jack *did* attempt a birthday stunt in 1956. The escape from Alcatraz had set a high standard in endurance swimming, so Jack took an entirely different approach. His goal: to waterski, on one ski, from Aquatic Park to the Farallon Islands and back, a distance of 53 miles. It is not known why Jack chose this particular stunt – the Farallons are not particularly well-known, nor associated with any legends like Alcatraz. Perhaps the youthful image associated with waterskiing inspired him; regardless, as with all of his endeavors, Jack embraced the feat wholeheartedly. Rather than using a boat, however, he commissioned a helicopter, piloted by Jackson Hughes, from one of the most prominent and established companies in San Francisco.⁸⁵⁵

Helicopters are not cheap, and so, to practice, Elaine towed Jack around San Francisco harbor by boat. Eventually that proved insufficient, and so Hughes agreed to a trial run. Jack struggled through several attempts. He had difficulty balancing, and occasionally Hughes flew too high, leaving Jack dangling in midair. Elaine rode in the chopper as a passenger; she found the entire affair exhilarating.⁸⁵⁶

On 2 October 1956, at 8:30 A.M., Jack, Elaine, and Hughes set off from Aquatic Park. As Elaine remembers the event today, Jack chose that day for his trip because of

854 Maureen Ort, “Jack LaLanne was My Beloved, Kooky Neighbor,” *Vanity Fair*, 24 January 2011, accessed online at <http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2011/01/maureen-orth-jack-lalanne-was-my-beloved-kooky-neighbor>

855 “Muscleman Is Flop in New Act,” *Oakland Tribune*, 2 October 1956, 12E.

856 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

unfavorable weather on his actual birthday.⁸⁵⁷ Regardless, according to Elaine, Jack and his team departed San Francisco on 2 October amidst much fanfare and media coverage, and, as soon as he left the pier, he was skiing “like a pro.”⁸⁵⁸ Actually, when Jack left Aquatic Park, he tripped and dropped his lead and had to restart.⁸⁵⁹ It took him ten minutes to recover; apparently, the scant practice he had had proved insufficient. The rest of the stunt fared even more poorly. Hughes called off the whole thing after traversing just 12 of the 53 miles.⁸⁶⁰ Jack’s progress had slowed to half of what the pair had estimated, Hughes explained, and the pilot feared that they would run out of fuel before reaching their destination. By noon, the chopper had landed back at Aquatic Park.⁸⁶¹

Somehow, Jack escaped too much media coverage of his failure. The *Oakland Tribune* declared the stunt a “washout,” and a “flop,” explaining that “muscleman Jack La Lanne tried another ‘impossible’ feat today — and found it just that.”⁸⁶² The *San Rafael Independent Journal* included just a picture of the event, accompanied by the caption “Good Try Anyhow, Jack.”⁸⁶³

While his misstep en route to the Farallones undermined Jack’s push for publicity, he returned the next year, in 1957, to the Golden Gate Channel, where he swam towing a 2,500-pound cabin cruiser. Onboard stood several local personalities, including radio host

857 Ibid. Interestingly, on September 25, 1956 – the day before Jack’s actual birthday – seven unnamed swimmers “unsuccessfully tried to swim from the Farallones [sic] to San Francisco,” according to the *Oakland Tribune*, and at least one of the seven was personally coached by Jack. See “Farallones Swim Halted by Cramps,” *Oakland Tribune*, 13 August 1957, 2E. According to the article, Paul Herron, a Sacramento high school teacher coached by Jack, attempted to swim from the Farallones to San Francisco the following year, in 1957, and again failed.

858 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

859 “Muscleman Is Flop in New Act.”

860 “Photograph,” *San Mateo Times*, 3 October 1956, 4.

861 “Muscleman Is Flop in New Act.”

862 Ibid.

863 “Good Try Anyhow, Jack,” *San Rafael Independent Journal*, 3 October 1956, 6.

Don Sherwood, beauty pageant winner Sharron Gleason, and broadcast executive Lee Flaherty. “It was quite a test!” commented Elaine, but, unfortunately, no historical evidence exists to prove that Jack completed the feat as she describes.⁸⁶⁴ Some photographs do, indeed, depict Jack towing a small boat with several passengers, but no newspaper accounts of the event can be found.⁸⁶⁵

The same fate befell his forty-fourth birthday celebration, when he allegedly traveled from San Francisco to the Farallones in 1958. No evidence, not even photographs, suggest that Jack ever accomplished such a thing. Unknowns aside, Jack had abandoned his endurance swims by the late 1950s. He would not return to the water with such fanfare for over a decade. He simply did not need to: his celebrity, and the success of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, provided more than enough glamour and fanfare of its own, and he could not justify taking the time to train for such dramatic stunts. In fact, 1959 – the year after his supposed successful Farallon run – would mark the true beginning of Jack’s worldwide physical culture business.

CONCLUSION

In 1954, Jack LaLanne was a name familiar to many in San Francisco Bay area. Five years later, in 1959, it was familiar to many across the entire country. The name expanded beyond television and became a brand when Jack chose to depart from the failing sponsorship system and begin selling his own products. It expanded further still thanks to the enormous publicity that Jack and Elaine generated together during the second half of the 1950s.

⁸⁶⁴ LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

⁸⁶⁵ Untitled and undescribed photographs from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Feats.”

In fact, that publicity should be considered significant not only for its sheer magnitude, but also for how it positioned the LaLanne's business for the future. By showcasing Jack's fitness in a very dramatic and obvious fashion – through the seemingly-impossible birthday stunts – Jack and Elaine effectively demonstrated the potential benefits of regular exercise and, at the same time, began to spread the image of Jack LaLanne as “larger than life.”

Of course, the true value of any brand comes not from its ability to mark ownership, but rather to its ability to convey benefits to individuals external to the brand itself, and to generate sales.⁸⁶⁶ While the LaLannes established their brand in the 1950s, its value remained limited until the next decade, simply because they lacked the infrastructure necessary to deliver products or information to anyone outside of the San Francisco Bay area. In other words: Americans across the country might have recognized Jack's name, but they had no way of watching him on television or of buying his products. To change that, the LaLannes first had to make significant changes in their personal lives, and they started by moving south, to Los Angeles and Hollywood.

⁸⁶⁶ Jan Lindemann, “What Is A Brand?” in *The Economy of Brands* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 3-8.



Figure 25. Jack shaking hands with TV show host Art Baker. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (ca. 1953).



Figure 26. A photograph of Jack in preparation for his failed Farallon Islands stunt.
Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

Chapter 8: The LaLannes in Hollywood

Even amidst the staggering beauty of California, Los Angeles shines: a City of Angels in the Golden State. “Even the most obtuse observer,” historian Carey McWilliams writes, “can *feel* that.” Crossing through Kern County, the land of Jack’s childhood, towards the ocean, the air seems somehow softer, the sky sparkles more brightly, the blue cleaner and crisper, and the radiant warmth of the California sun falls lazily over the countryside. Towering mountains to the east and north stand guard, protecting the tidal basin in which the city rests from both desert dusts and ocean rains. Days burn hot, and nights run cool; the lights from the city quiver, like diamonds against the stars.⁸⁶⁷

For many, southern California’s beauty represents “Oz come true... ordinary America transformed, made magic,” a magic that existed even before Walt Disney brought his own brand of wonder and delight there.⁸⁶⁸ No wonder that Los Angeles was designed as “the City Beautiful,” rich with parks, greenbelts, and landscaping. By the end of the 1920s, Los Angeles ranked as the United States’ fifth largest city, thanks in part to the two million Americans who migrated to California between 1920 and 1930. Over half of these people settled in Los Angeles, including many prosperous Protestants of European descent. They came searching for dreams in a countryside beautiful enough to

⁸⁶⁷ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Gibbs Smith, 1946), 8.

⁸⁶⁸ Kevin Starr, *Material Dreams: Southern California Through the 1920s* (Oxford University Press on Demand, 1991), 66.

hold them; or running from nightmares in a city grand enough to hide them. Some of these new Angelenos brought with them unprecedented wealth, relative to the area's historical standard. The confluence of human and economic growth, wrote *New Republic* author Bruce Bliven in 1927, created "an easy optimism, a lazy prosperity which dominates people's lives. Anything seems possible, the future is yours, and the past? There isn't any."⁸⁶⁹

Throughout the 1930s, the automobile fueled Los Angeles's growth. By mid-decade, more cars entered the city each day than were registered in the entire state of New York. Los Angeles's street system favored urban sprawl, and it stretched over thirty miles out from the city in every direction. In the years leading up to the Second World War, the government invested more than \$150 million in building an eight-thousand-mile highway system connecting Los Angeles County as a single giant metropolis. Automobiles brought tourists, too, who made up ten percent of L.A.'s economy by 1930. Over one and a half million people visited the region each year. And, for resident and tourist alike, the most popular destination for recreation and leisure was the beach — or, more accurately, the beaches. The Los Angeles area boasted over half a dozen, including Venice, Ocean Park, Playa del Rey, Manhattan, Hermosa, and Redondo — and, of course, Santa Monica and its Muscle Beach, where Jack brought his message of health and fitness in the 1940s.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

Above all else, Los Angeles had Hollywood. Movie production in America began in New York and New Jersey; but around 1907, producers began to migrate west, enticed by the warm climate and golden beaches, which made for ideal scenery (and provided a comfortable distance from Eastern debt collectors). Filmmaking ranked number one among Los Angeles industries by 1920; six years later, the value of the film industry exceeded that of every other industry in the state. During the 1920s, while the European filmmaking industry recovered from the devastation of World War I, ninety percent of all films made in the world came from Southern California.⁸⁷¹

Hollywood cultivated both the cinema and physical culture, interweaving them into the broader milieu of American culture, according to historian Heather Addison. “Words like ‘beauty,’ ‘health,’ ‘exercise,’ ‘athleticism,’ and ‘outdoor life’ became a routine feature of the commentary on Hollywood,” she writes. “It was a place where rigorous physical standards were accepted almost without question.”⁸⁷² Fans poured over movie stars’ diet and exercise routines, which received extensive publicity as early as the 1920s; and envied their lavish lifestyles. Historian Shelly McKenzie agrees that the Californian lifestyle as portrayed by Hollywood generated interest in physical culture and a bodily aesthetic. “In the 1950s, [thin] fashion ideals still coexisted with voluptuous film stars such as Marilyn Monroe and Jane Russell, who provided an alternative model of feminine beauty.... But as the decade progressed, thin became the only ideal body type for American women,” she explains.⁸⁷³ Men, too, faced a heightened pressure to conform

871 Andrew Rolle and Arthur C Verge, *California: A History* (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 545–46.

872 Heather Addison, *Hollywood and the Rise of Physical Culture* (Psychology Press, 2003), 36–37.

873 Shelly McKenzie, *Getting Physical: The Rise of Fitness Culture in America* (University Press of Kansas, 2013), 62.

to physical ideals, though theirs revolved around an athletic — not necessarily muscular — persona. Film critic Richard Armour suggested that the 1950s “might well be remembered as the ‘Age of the Chest,’” due to the popularity of historical epics featuring more muscular male leads.⁸⁷⁴ In fact, Jan Todd and Michael O’Brien argue that in *Hercules* (1958), Steve Reeves redefined the very image of heroic masculinity as portrayed in Hollywood — an image which has since become closely intertwined with muscularity in nearly all forms of media.⁸⁷⁵

Maybe it was inevitable “that LaLanne would drift southward to the land... which boasts such healthy bodies,” television critic Terrence O’Flaherty observed in 1960.⁸⁷⁶ “California is the capital of the Body Culture,” agreed David Abramson, years later. “This one state has spawned skateboarding, sailboarding, the triathlon, mountain biking, and hang gliding, and the world’s first health-food supermarket.... A marketplace for the body, too diverse to total, has very deep roots in California: the state is laboratory, factory, and display case, all rolled into one.”⁸⁷⁷ *The Jack LaLanne Show* grew up in California, too. In fact, the heightened awareness of the corporeal — together with its close proximity to Hollywood and historical association with promise, glamour, and rapid growth — made southern California the logical locale for Jack’s increasingly popular television program.

874 Jan Todd and Michael O’Brien, “Breaking the Physique Barrier: Steve Reeves and the Promotion of Hercules,” *Iron Game History* 12, no. 4 & 13, no. 1 (August 2014): 9.

875 *Ibid.*, 8-29.

876 Terrence O’Flaherty, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall,” *San Francisco Gate*, 1960, 29.

877 David Abramson, “True West,” *UltraSport*, April 1987, 37-41.

So, inevitable or not, in December of 1958, *The Jack LaLanne Show* entered the Southern California market, airing throughout Los Angeles County. It was not Jack's first foray into Southern California media, for he had worked briefly with KABC three years prior. But this was the first time his show gained a solid foothold there. According to the *Oakland Tribune*, *The Jack LaLanne Show* found instant success in Los Angeles. "In Los Angeles big shoulders bring a big following," television critic Bill Fiset wrote, "and LaLanne is now so popular that when he appears on Sunset Blvd. (in a white silk shirt driving a white convertible and with a white shepherd dog beside him), people ask for his autograph."⁸⁷⁸ In two years' time, *The Jack LaLanne Show* would become the highest-rated early-morning television program in the greater Los Angeles metropolitan area.

This chapter reconstructs Jack's meteoric rise to national stardom, and the histories of the people and events that made it possible. It also explains how Jack invested himself, his persona and his salesmanship entirely into LaLanne, Inc.; and how Elaine skillfully leveraged that investment into a profitable business. The commercialization of Jack and *The Jack LaLanne Show* eventually became a point of gentle mockery, but by that time, Jack, Elaine, and their few business partners had earned millions.

THE DECISION TO MOVE SOUTH

It was 1958, seven years after the momentous phone call from his high school friend Vincent Francis – the call that had launched *The Jack LaLanne Show* – when Jack

⁸⁷⁸ Bill Fiset, "The TV People," *Oakland Tribune*, 23 July 1959: E23. The German Shepard, Happy, was a gift from actress Zsa Zsa Gabor; as will be explained, Happy became a well-known character on Jack's show.

learned of another opportunity. This time, it came from not a friend, but a rival: Vic Tanny. Tanny, as previously mentioned, had founded the first American chain of luxurious, modern health clubs in Southern California. Following World War II, Tanny expanded from his original location on Muscle Beach into a chain of clubs, and he and Jack were, therefore, competitors in the gym industry. Jack often insisted that Vic had stolen the very *idea* for a modern health club from his own 1936 gym, but in reality, Vic drew his inspiration from Arthur Gay, who had, since 1893, owned a well-heeled gym in Rochester with elegant amenities like tanning booths and massage rooms. Vic had trained at Gay's gym as a boy.⁸⁷⁹

In 1958, however, Vic – a boisterous businessman and incurable womanizer – was expanding his gym business to over sixty locations nationwide, and needed to attract customers.⁸⁸⁰ To stay abreast of these rivals, Tanny invested “untold millions of dollars” in a relentless television advertising campaign focused on attracting women to his health clubs in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Tanny hired spokespeople with remarkable physiques for his television spots, including bodybuilder Charlie Stahl; and the curvaceous Betty Brosmer, who would later marry physical culture media mogul Joe Weider and be known thereafter as Betty Weider.

879 Born in Rochester, New York, in 1912, Tanny began training at Gay's famous gymnasium in 1931, and opened his own gym in Rochester in 1935, at the age of 22. The following year, Tanny did visit Jack's newly-opened club, and Jack's modern décor and exercise machines impressed Tanny and inspired him to bring a similar grandeur to other locations in California, said Elaine. But Arthur Gay's earlier gym featured similar amenities, and, when Tanny died in 1985, Jack admitted that Vic had indeed been the first “to reshape the concept of a gymnasium from a room where grubby men simply sweated under barbells into one where chromium-plated, controlled weights were set in carpeted suites with adjacent spas, tennis courts, and swimming pools.” See Ben Pollack and Jan Todd, “American Icarus: Vic Tanny and America's First Health Club Chain,” *Iron Game History*; and “Vic Tanny of Gym Fame Dies at Age 73,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, 12 June 1985, 9A.

880 Tanny may have been the first to reshaped the concept of the gym, but by 1958, several competitors had sprung up – most notably Ray Wilson. Wilson founded Silhouette “reducing” salons marketed exclusively to women; and American Health Studios, a chain of gymnasiums nearly identical to Tanny's.

As Jack's fame grew, Tanny decided to reach out to him, too. By 1958, Jack's Physical Culture Studio ranked far behind his television show on his list of priorities, defusing any potential conflict of interest. Further, Jack made an ideal spokesman for Tanny gyms: he knew the business intimately, and he had the body to prove it, along with a remarkable gift for salesmanship. Although the financial details of the arrangement remain unknown, Jack agreed to star in several commercials promoting the Tanny chain. He made the trip south, and filmed the series of spots at KTTV (now a local Fox affiliate) in Los Angeles. Jack was busy with his own show then, and well-accustomed to commercial production, so he initially paid relatively little mind to the whole affair: it was a good way to spread his name and image, and worth some money, but nothing more.

As it turned out, the ads for Tanny carried more consequence than Jack had imagined, reminiscent of his appearance on *The Les Malloy Show* a decade earlier. "The commercials must have caught the eye of the station manager," Elaine explained, because KTTV approached Jack shortly after they first aired, asking him to film *The Jack LaLanne Show* for their station – live. In comparison to the much smaller San Francisco market, a live show in Los Angeles presented an intriguing opportunity. Jack had thrived in San Francisco, but Hollywood could mean access to the entire nation. At the time, KTTV was a growing Los Angeles station with seemingly unlimited potential. Formerly a CBS affiliate, KTTV had been restructured as an independent station and had recently

secured an exclusive contract to broadcast Dodgers' baseball games.⁸⁸¹ The station was therefore well-situated to help Jack build upon his fame.

There was just one problem: live performances would mean Jack had to live in Los Angeles, four hundred miles from his current home – and from Elaine, with whom he had been in a relationship for over five years. At first, Jack was unwilling to abandon his established San Francisco broadcast; but he had to face the fact that it was impossible to remain in San Francisco while filming in Los Angeles. Not even someone with his boundless energy could defy the laws of physics enough to be in two places at once, and while limited recording technology was available at the time, the early television industry virtually mandated live broadcasts for shows like Jack's.⁸⁸² Live broadcasts offered a sense of intimacy and immediacy to which audiences responded. Recorded film, in contrast, "lack[ed] that intangible sense of depth and trueness," explained television critic Jack Gould in 1952. Film broke "the link between human and human. The viewer loses his sense of being a partner and instead becomes a spectator. It is the difference between being with somebody and looking at somebody," he wrote.⁸⁸³ Jack's own "stage presence" — his ability to convey a sense of intimacy to viewers — played a large role in his show's success. The same could be said for the hosts of other hugely popular shows, like Art Linkletter and his *House Party*; or Garry Moore's *I've Got a Secret* (on which

881 "KTTV-Dumont Affiliation Planned April 11," *Broadcast*, 19 March 1951: 61; and "KTTV (TV) To Telecast Dodgers-Giants Contests," *Broadcast*, 5 May 1958: 68.

882 According to scholars Raymond and Ederyn Williams, television inherited from print and radio a long-standing tradition of media content as a "discrete event." Most consumers immediately accepted the television as a new appliance, capable of broadcasting a musical concert, a public address, or a sports game in real time; but the modern notion of programming or scripting a show took many more years to develop. See Raymond Williams and Ederyn Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (Psychology Press, 2003), 88.

883 William Boddy, *Fifties Television: The Industry and Its Critics* (University of Illinois Press, 1993), 80–81.

Jack's competitor, Debbie Drake, once appeared). For those reasons, both Jack and the producers at both KGO-TV and KTTV were reluctant to resort to taped broadcasts of *The Jack LaLanne Show*.

By this time, Jack and Elaine had begun to dream of the possibility of a nationally-syndicated show, and it was painfully obvious that Hollywood provided a far better chance than San Francisco to turn Jack's program into something more impactful than a daytime matinee or game show. Hollywood had emerged as a major production site for syndicated television; and ultimately, both Jack and Elaine believed that expanding to this new market could, in fact, lead to syndication. Syndication was a relatively new phenomenon in the late 1950s, designed to maximize exposure and profit, and was at first viewed by many critics with skepticism. Furthermore, Hollywood studios – the provenances of motion pictures' golden age – produced shows that many considered to be “pretty much uninspired, formulated, hackneyed assembly-line products that could boast fast production and fast profit, but little strain in the creative process.... [but] whatever preoccupation there was with quality and with the endless struggle against sponsors' dicta, fears and endless interference existed in New York and Chicago — not in Los Angeles,” television director and writer Rody Serling explained in 1957.⁸⁸⁴ But the fast production, fast exposure, and fast profit Hollywood provided were exactly what

⁸⁸⁴ Boddy, *Fifties Television*, 74–75. Hollywood's relationship with the television industry in the 1930s and 1940s is a complicated subject. Many major studios had, in fact, followed the new media very closely since its invention, but a confluence of external factors, including the influence of the US government, limited their involvement with production and broadcasting. See Janet Wasko, "Hollywood and Television in the 1950s: The Roots of Diversification," in *History of the American Cinema: Transforming the Screen, 1950-1959*, edited by Peter Lev (University of California Press, 2003): 127-146.

Jack and Elaine wanted: getting out the message was the important thing, not the creative process.

Of course, the LaLannes also craved the fame, fortune, and all the dreams one typically associates with a Hollywood career. In fact, even the derision of critics like Serling was somewhat tempered by Hollywood's long-standing romantic reputation as the most glamorous locale in the City of Angels and association with the film industry.⁸⁸⁵ Hollywood had what Jack later referred to as "glamour," the power of personality that has historically been and remains today "one of Hollywood's most bankable assets," according to historian Christine Becker.⁸⁸⁶ For historian Warren Susman, the emphasis on personality in American culture coincided not with the rise of the film or television industries; but much earlier, with the material change from a producer to consumer culture in the early twentieth century. New forms of media promoted personality as an "object" that could be purchased.⁸⁸⁷ Susman writes:

The new personality literature stressed items that could be best developed in leisure time and that represented in themselves an emphasis on consumption. The social role demanded of all in the new culture of personality was that of a

885 William Boddy, "The Studios Move into Prime Time: Hollywood and the Television industry in the 1950s," *Cinema Journal* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1985): 23. Hollywood's significance for the small screen developed more slowly. According to film studies scholar William Boddy, Hollywood producers resisted diluting their industry's focus until the mid-1950s. Only then did Hollywood witness "a new configuration of the motion-picture and television industries... and the entrance of major studios in the television series mark," Boddy explains.

886 Christine Becker, *It's the Pictures That Got Small: Hollywood Film Stars on 1950s Television* (Wesleyan University Press, 2008): 1. Glamour is difficult to define in an academic sense "Stars are those performers whose name alone is sufficient to draw audiences," offers Heather Addison. "They have some unique quality or set of qualities — a 'personality' — for which audiences are willing to pay," she writes. James Bennett argues that television stars were "invented" in the mid-1950s, with the increasing involvement of Hollywood. Studios "cultivated, recognized, rewarded and... fought over" new television personalities, who themselves gained legitimacy simply due to their public recognizance. See Bennett, *Television Personalities: Stardom and the Small Screen* (Routledge, 2010): 42; and Addison, *Hollywood and the Rise of Physical Culture*, 70.

887 Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (Pantheon, 2012), 283.

performer.... Special books and courses were developed to meet demands in this area alone. In these books and articles exercise, proper breathing, sound eating habits, a good complexion, and grooming and beauty aids were all stressed. At the same time, clothing, personal appearance, and ‘good manners’ were important... The new stress on the enjoyment of life implied that true pleasure could be attained by making oneself pleasing to others.⁸⁸⁸

All these things mattered in Hollywood, too. Film and television stars functioned as ideal figures, living proof of the possibility of a successful life. For many, the expensive cars, fashionable clothes, and well-maintained bodies of Hollywood’s elite represented the pinnacle of that success.⁸⁸⁹

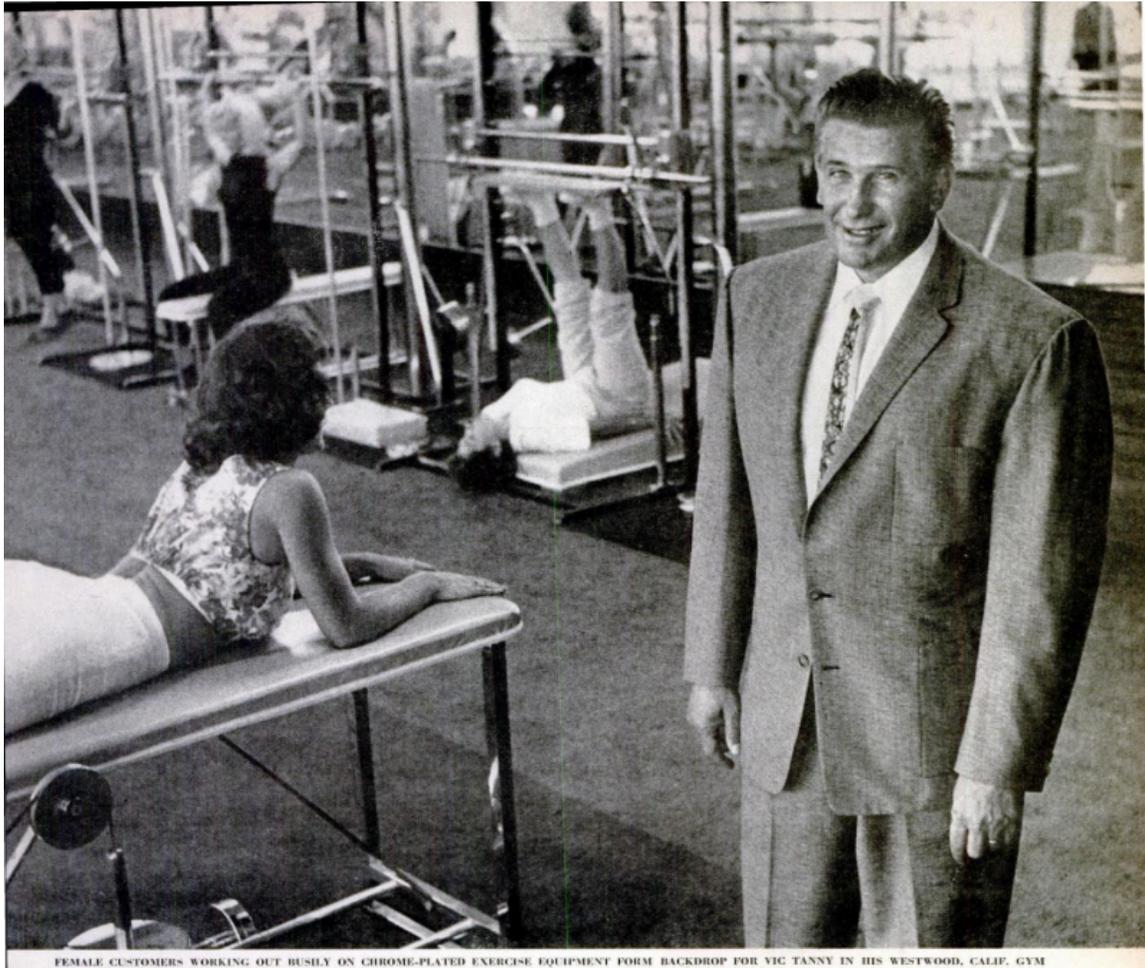
So, besides the logistical advantages Hollywood provided, the glamour of Los Angeles and its film industry seemed poised to enhance Jack’s own reputation, merely by association. That glamour was innately connected with physical culture – a reality that scholars have only recently begun to investigate, was a fact that both Jack and Elaine quickly grasped.⁸⁹⁰ Despite the complicated logistics of producing live television shows in cities four hundred miles apart, they agreed to take on the LA show – with the caveat that they could still produce their San Francisco show, too. That decision, and the events

⁸⁸⁸ Ibid., 276, 280.

⁸⁸⁹ Addison, *Hollywood and the Rise of Physical Culture*.

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid., 147. “Images make individuals more conscious of external appearance, bodily presentations and “the look,”” Addison writes. “A culture dominated by words tends to be intangible and abstract, and reduces the human body to a basic biological organism, whereas the new emphasis upon visual images drew attention to the appearance of the body, clothing, demeanor and gesture.” Historian Tolga Ozyurtcu explicitly recognized the importance of southern California to the legacies of Jack, Tanny, and many other physical culturists in his 2014 manuscript, “Flex Marks the Spot: Histories of Muscle Beach.” He argues that, in the decades after World War II, “the promise of sunshine, health, and good living [was] captured in iconic images of the toned and tan beach athletes. See Ozyurtcu, “Flex Marks the Spot: Histories of Muscle Beach,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (The University of Texas, 2014): 3.

that occurred in the eighteen months after it, would change the lives of the LaLannes forever, and finally make former “girl Friday” Elaine into a television personality in her own right.



FEMALE CUSTOMERS WORKING OUT BUSILY ON CHROME-PLATED EXERCISE EQUIPMENT FORM BACKDROP FOR VIC TANNY IN HIS WESTWOOD, CALIF. GYM

Figure 27. Vic Tanny in one of his luxurious health clubs. Jack claimed that his own Physical Culture Studio was the original inspiration for Tanny's clubs, although this is very unlikely. Photograph from LIFE Magazine (1958).

SPRING-SUMMER 1959

Having committed to the Los Angeles venture, Jack devised a plan to take advantages of all the opportunities that market offered, without sacrificing the established presence he had built in San Francisco. In theory, the plan was simple: Elaine would host the San Francisco show while he stayed in Los Angeles and filmed a full week of recorded shows. After one week, they would trade markets – Elaine traveling south to L.A., and Jack north to San Francisco – so that his loyal Northern California viewers would not be deprived of his presence. He informed Elaine of this new arrangement on his way to the airport to film in Los Angeles for the first time.⁸⁹¹

According to Elaine, she accepted the challenge gracefully, and, with production help from KGO-TV station manager Freddie Jorgensen, she arranged to film the San Francisco show. But she balked at Jack's next request. When he told her that she would need to lecture in his stead, as well, Elaine burst into tears: "I can't do a health lecture," she protested. Jack remained unmoved. Elaine knew his philosophies better than anyone, he reasoned, and therefore no one was better suited for the task. And so, early in March of 1959, Elaine presented "Health in Action" to the Burckhalter Elementary School Parent-Teacher Association in Oakland; the next week, she spoke to the advisory council of the Phoebe Hearst Elementary School; and soon, Elaine admits today, her time on the lecture circuit imbued her with a confidence she had never before experienced.⁸⁹²

⁸⁹¹ LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

⁸⁹² Interview with Elaine LaLanne by Jan Todd and the author, 8 January 2016.

In the spring of 1959, Jack and Elaine spent little time together, apart from the occasional shared meal at a showy Los Angeles restaurant. By the end of that year, however, what has since become known as the “golden age” of live television was declining, and more and more studios were pre-recording shows that had few temporal aspects, like game shows, dramas, and *The Jack LaLanne Show*.⁸⁹³

The LaLannes realized that taping their shows could relieve them of their weekly commutes. Even still, the move to taped shows came gradually. First, they formed an arrangement with Film Line Production Associates, an early recording studio in Los Angeles; and then convinced KTTV to air Jack’s taped shows, allowing him to pre-record a week’s worth of content in Los Angeles to be shown in both that market and in San Francisco – and anywhere else in the country, assuming the LaLannes could, in the future, convince stations in other cities to broadcast it as well. Tapes of *The Jack LaLanne Show* filmed in Los Angeles and broadcast of KTTV then aired on KPIX in San Francisco, but they ran alongside live performances by Elaine on KGO-TV until May of 1959, when the transition was finally completed.⁸⁹⁴

The recording process at Film Line Production – and the benefits thereof – made clear to Jack and Elaine that their future, and the future of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, lay in Los Angeles. Having realized as much, the decision to move was an easy one, Elaine said. As a young girl, her father had often remarked that “home is wherever I hang my hat,” and Jack and Elaine adopted that as their own philosophy. The move itself,

893 Jerome Bourdon, “Live Television is Still Alive: On Television as an Unfulfilled Promise,” *Media, Culture & Society* 22 (2000), 532.

894 James Abbe, “‘Sound of Violence’ to Tell Story of Crime Syndicate,” *Oakland Tribune*, 29 April 1959, 26D.

however, proved more difficult. Jack had been born in San Francisco, spent his teenage years in Berkeley, and lived and worked as an adult in Oakland. He had traveled a little; he knew how to find Muscle Beach, but almost nothing else in Los Angeles. Elaine had spent much of her adult life in the San Francisco Bay area, too. Even simply finding a home in Los Angeles, proved difficult, and the LaLannes quickly learned – to their dismay – that homes there were both expensive and elusive. California’s population nearly doubled between 1950 and 1970. After the war, demand for housing skyrocketed along because of the influx of returning veterans and newly-married couples, with commensurate increases in costs of real estate.⁸⁹⁵ Jack and Elaine earned a good living from their television work already, but the price of a new home in Los Angeles, while manageable, still seemed exorbitant. Jack’s marital status also made this more complicated. By this time, he and Elaine were fully committed to each other, but Jack was still legally married to Irma Navarre, who had rights, of course, to Jack’s property.

Finally, a friend recommended a property in Hollywood Hills, and Jack and Elaine had to have it. It was an opulent home, overlooking the two magic kingdoms – Disneyland, and Hollywood itself – and together they bought it. They loved the house. “On a clear day we could see the ocean, and the view at night was like [an] illuminated treasure chest,” Elaine remembers.⁸⁹⁶ Bob Ottum described the palatial LaLanne residence in an article for *Sports Illustrated*:

895 The California Department of Transportation, “Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: Context for National Register Evaluation” (Sacramento, 2011): 17.

896 LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

The LaLanne house sits in the Hollywood Hills, tucked away on steep and winding La Presa Drive. The house is not quite above the smog line, and it's just a few blocks above Sunset Boulevard and Mann's (formerly Grauman's) Chinese Theater and the Scandia and the tourists peering hopefully into every passing face. All through these hills, the familiar Spanish influence persists: the heavy roofs and lacy black iron gates and curved driveways. That's all one ever sees from the street in the Hollywood Hills. The good stuff — the statuary and towering yews and swimming pools and cabanas — is always in the back.⁸⁹⁷

From such a privileged vantage point, it looked to Jack and Elaine as if they had the world at their fingertips. The Hollywood Hills home was also a statement of aspiration. It was a home for a star – or stars – and is emblematic of their transition from local television personalities to national and even international stars.

On August 19, 1959, Jack finally divorced Irma.⁸⁹⁸ One month later, on September 24, 1959, Jack and Elaine eloped, with little fanfare and less planning. They hopped on a plane to Las Vegas; Jack bought his new wife neither a ring (he borrowed one for the ceremony) nor flowers. The newlyweds played a few rounds of blackjack and roulette, and then made the return flight to Los Angeles on the same day.⁸⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

In the whirlwind of the summer of 1959, Jack and Elaine had moved hundreds of miles from their longtime home, eloped, committed to an ambitious and exhausting work schedule, and found themselves responsible for operating a sizeable business. Most any other couple would have succumbed to the stress, the lack of sleep, the overwhelming

⁸⁹⁷ Bob Ottum, "Look Mom, I'm an Institution," *Sports Illustrated*, 23 November 1981.

⁸⁹⁸ Alabama Center for Health Statistics, Alabama Divorce Index, 1950-1959 (Montgomery): 811.

⁸⁹⁹ LaLanne, *Jack 101*.

responsibilities, the uncertainty. The LaLannes, with their seemingly-boundless energy, just kept moving.

While their relocation to Southern California had not been easy, it was an important next step in the trajectory of the LaLannes' lives as fitness entrepreneurs. Southern California's proximity to Hollywood only served to enhance both the reach and the visibility of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, thanks to both the recording and broadcast power of major production studios, and a heightened awareness of the physical body. Over the next three years, the LaLannes would continue to leverage their "star power" and Hollywood location to grow their brand even more.

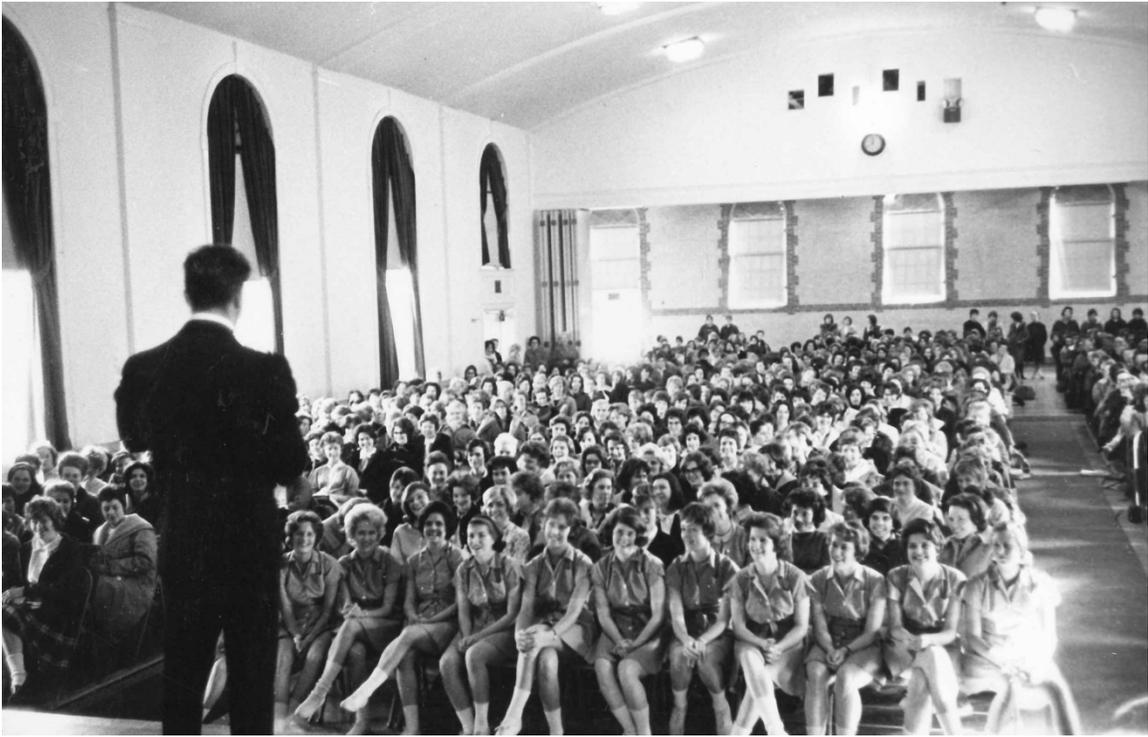


Figure 28. Jack delivering a health lecture to women of the Lasell Junior College in Auburndale, Massachusetts. The size of the audience helps to explain why Elaine felt so nervous about lecturing in Jack's stead. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

Chapter 9: Branding Jack, Part II

By 1959, Jack and Elaine were living in Hollywood, and their schedules had grown hectic. As they had hoped, since his show began airing in the Hollywood area, Jack had begun to amass an avid following of celebrities searching for ways to appear more glamorous themselves. “Gary Cooper and Merle Oberon meet at each other’s houses to exercise before the TV set,” wrote Associated Press movie and television reporter Bob Thomas in May of 1959, just months after *The Jack LaLanne Show* began airing in Los Angeles. “Gilbert Roland, Francis X. Bushman and many other stars swear by him,” Thomas concluded.⁹⁰⁰ One writer for the *Kansas City Star* later observed that if so many celebrities used Jack’s methods, “the guy must have something!”⁹⁰¹ Thousands of Jack’s new Angeleno viewers agreed. In fact, the Los Angeles show had captured so much attention that Elaine was forced to hire her cousins to handle the incredible volume of mail the LaLannes received every day. During the little time they were able to spend away from the recording studio, where they now filmed recorded shows, Jack and Elaine themselves filled orders: hundreds, even thousands of orders. They once sold Glamour Stretches on a two-for-\$5 sale. “We had five-dollar bills coming in in buckets,” Elaine remembered.

Managing that volume of sales – while also maintaining their demanding filming schedule – required that the LaLannes organize their business more formally. In doing so, they created the opportunity for even more growth, more exposure, and more success. As

⁹⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁰¹ R.J.H., “His Crusade for Physical Fitness Stirs TV Here,” *Kansas City Star*, 8 May 1960, 10F.

any entrepreneur knows, however, the transition from sole proprietorship or partnership to full-fledged corporation is not an easy one. In fact, some studies suggest that the exit rate for new organizations – even capital-intensive ones – may be as high as eighty percent.⁹⁰² This chapter explains how Jack and Elaine, despite their lack of formal business experience, thrived while many others failed.

HIRING KEY PERSONNEL: LYLE WESTCOTT & HANK AKERBERG

Jack and Elaine's first move was to use the money from product sales to hire much-needed staff, beginning with the Compton advertising agency — one of the ten largest marketing organizations in the country with extensive work in television — to help organize the promotion of *The Jack LaLanne Show* and Jack's fairly sizeable array of health foods and supplements in the show's disparate markets. Compton was a New York-based firm founded in 1937, that employed 750 people to serve its 24 clients, which in 1959 included Proctor & Gamble, Goodyear Tire, and the New York Life Insurance Company. This suggests that the LaLanne marketing team, headed by Lyle Westcott, was competent, sizeable, and well-positioned to support *The Jack LaLanne Show's* national expansion. In the 1960s, Compton attracted several more clients of the highest profile: U.S. Steel, General Electric, and Johnson & Johnson. Compton and Westcott helped transform these brands into household names, just as they did for Jack.⁹⁰³

902 Mathew L. A. Hayward, Dean A. Sheperd, and Dale Griffin, "A Hubris Theory of Entrepreneurship," *Management Science* 52, no. 2 (February 2006): 160.

903 "Compton Advertising," *Advertising Age*, September 15, 2003, <http://adage.com/article/adage-encyclopedia/compton-advertising/98407/>.

Westcott in particular became a cornerstone of the LaLanne business, to which he was firmly dedicated. "We were so fortunate to have people who really cared," Elaine said, gratefully. Eventually, Jack and Elaine realized that it simply made more sense to formalize their relationship with him. They reached a mutual agreement with Compton to hire Westcott away from the agency to become their in-house marketing executive.

At the suggestion of Ray Ross (who distributed Jack's health food products in the San Francisco market), they also hired a general manager. Ross had further suggested that the LaLannes consider his brother-in-law, Hank Akerberg. Akerberg possessed an impressive resume. At age 18, he began studying to become a pilot, a goal he achieved in less than two years.⁹⁰⁴ In 1930, he accepted a position as second copilot at a private air plant, in Los Angeles, and moved south.⁹⁰⁵ He would remain in southern California for the rest of his life. According to *Sport Illustrated* reporter Huston Horn, very shortly after moving to Los Angeles, Akerberg left the air plant to join Macmillan Petroleum Corporation, a California business that sold motor oil and other refined products directly to consumers.⁹⁰⁶ Though the exact details of Akerberg's various job titles is unknown, he eventually found his way to Macmillan's marketing department, where he became a vice president, the position he held when the LaLannes hired him.⁹⁰⁷

Perhaps the untapped potential of the LaLanne brand appealed to Akerberg's innate ambition enough to lure him away from Macmillan; or perhaps Jack managed to

⁹⁰⁴ United States Department of Commerce, "Fifteenth Census of the United States," for Los Angeles County, 5 April 1930: 4B; and "Henry C. Akerberg," U.S. City Directories for Los Angeles, 1932: 108.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁰⁶ Huston Horn, "LaLanne: A Treat and a Treatment," *Sports Illustrated*, 19 December 1960, 29. Horn claims that, by 1958, Akerberg had worked for Macmillan for thirty years, which cannot be exactly true given government documents that show Akerberg worked as a pilot in 1930. However, Akerberg could have joined Macmillan as early as 1932.

⁹⁰⁷ "Exercise on TV," *Sponsor*, 1 October 1962, 45.

offer him a lucrative salary in addition to 7.5% equity in LaLanne, Inc. Regardless, as luck would have it, Akerberg's time with Macmillan had prepared the Washingtonian well for his work with Jack and Elaine: the petroleum company's direct-to-consumer model relied to no small extent on advertising, and the company counted itself among the first to advertise on television, with KFI-TV in Los Angeles, so Akerberg knew the market intimately.⁹⁰⁸

Akerberg was "strictly business," Elaine remarked, but, like Westcott, he and the LaLannes became close friends.⁹⁰⁹ "Hank Akerberg's the greatest there is," said Jack.⁹¹⁰ That statement was not flattery: Akerberg, perhaps more than any other single individual except for Elaine, orchestrated Jack's nationwide business empire. "What LaLanne knows about making muscle and reducing 'saddlebag thighs,' Akerberg knows about making profits," Horn wrote.⁹¹¹

PRODUCT REORGANIZATION

Akerberg's acumen proved vital to the business, especially because Jack had steadfastly eschewed any formal business arrangements, preferring to deal in handshakes rather than contracts. "I've never been interested in business," he insisted. "I let my associates take care of that.... Jesus had to have a little help, didn't he? He had those twelve cats working for him. Well, that's like me.... I never thought about money. *Money*

908 "The Business of Broadcasting," *Broadcast Advertising*, 10 May 1943, 38.

909 Elaine Lalanne, phone interview with the author, 11 September 2017.

910 Horn, "LaLanne: A Treat and a Treatment," *Sports Illustrated*, 19 December 1960, 29.

911 Horn, "LaLanne: A Treat and a Treatment," 30.

— any ass can make money. Who can be happy? That’s the question.”⁹¹² But even so, Akerberg was shocked to find that Jack had failed to copyright a single one of his existing products. That failure to protect his intellectual property constituted a serious misstep for a growing business.

So that summer, Jack and Elaine began the arduous process of registering patents and trademarks for Jack’s products and brand. Immediately, they ran into problems. Patent attorneys at the renowned firm of Townsend & Townsend offered insight: many of the products Jack sold, especially the Glamour Stretcher, had no explicit connection to his brand, image, or likeness. “At this point,” attorney Stanley Johnson wrote, “it is important that every item capable of being protected in LaLanne Incorporated be taken care of,” and noted in particular that many of the small pamphlets and similar written works that the company had published lacked any sort of copyright protection.⁹¹³ They doubted that the Glamour Stretcher could be trademarked or patented since, in truth, it comprised little more than a piece of rubber tubing. To “kill two birds with one stone,” Johnson suggested that the LaLannes print stickers and packaging that read “Jack LaLanne’s Glamour Stretcher, Quality Spot Reducing,” which would help strengthen the application for both a brand trademark and a product patent.⁹¹⁴ Over the next eighteen

⁹¹² Farr, “The Exercist.”

⁹¹³ Stanley Allen Johnson to LaLanne Incorporated, 27 August 1959, from the LaLanne collection.

⁹¹⁴ Letter from Charles E. Townsend of Townsend & Townsend to Stanley Allen Johnson, 19 May 1959, from the LaLanne collection. Johnson was the LaLanne’s personal attorney.

months, LaLanne, Inc. applied for and secured patents for many of Jack's health foods and supplements.⁹¹⁵

At the same time, Akerberg began pushing a totally overhauled approach to merchandising, beginning with a rethinking of the exercise paraphernalia Jack had devised. The Glamour Stretcher alone showed the makings of a hit product (and, indeed, LaLanne, Inc. sold as many as 40,000 units per month in the following years, at \$3.95 per stretcher), but other offerings lacked any such glamour. For example, Akerberg insisted that Jack change the name of his "Desiccated Liver Tablets" to the more tolerable "Liver, Iron, and Vitamin B-12 Tablets."⁹¹⁶ The worst offender was an apparatus for exercising the face. It consisted of a mouthpiece attached to one end of a four-inch string of rubber cord; the other end attached to a handle. The victim would bite down on the mouthpiece while pulling on the handle, exercising the muscles of the face and neck. "We discovered many of our students wore dentures," Akerberg said, justifying the discontinuation.⁹¹⁷ Even disregarding that particular apparatus Jack's facial exercises were questionable at best. Little evidence supported their efficacy, and one woman in California was almost arrested for "doing her LaLanne facial exercises while parked at a red light," reported *Television Week* magazine. The officer thought "she was too nervous to drive a car."⁹¹⁸

Akerberg also pushed Jack to expand his presence in other media channels. Jack had published two books, *Your Figure* and *Your Health Cookbook*, in 1953 and 1954,

⁹¹⁵ La Lanne Incorporated, "Jack La Lanne," US patent number 121739, submitted 9 June 1961, issued 17 July 17 1962, for "Food supplement products including a mineral and vitamin food supplement, a high protein food supplement, and a food supplement sold in the form of desiccated and de-fatted whole liver tablets"; La Lanne Incorporated, "Jack La Lanne's Bread, US patent number 105176, submitted 26 September 1960, issued 9 October 1962, for "bread."

⁹¹⁶ Horn, "LaLanne."

⁹¹⁷ Ibid.

⁹¹⁸ "One, Two, up, down, in, Out on Channel 7," *Television Week*, n.d.

respectively; but they could be more accurately referred to as pamphlets.⁹¹⁹ Some time in mid-1959, Akerberg began to conceive of a full-length publication; and the following year, Prentice-Hall published *The Jack LaLanne Way to Vibrant Good Health*. Admittedly, Jack employed a ghostwriter, John Wesley Noble, who wrote the book in Jack's voice, and the next two LaLanne volumes as well, all of which were printed by Prentice-Hall. "[I am] the only ghost with muscles in the world," Noble quipped.⁹²⁰ Local television critic Bill Fiset joked that Jack traded product for Noble's work. "LaLanne gets free adjectives and Noble gets free vitamin pills," he explained, "Which goes to show that exercise and desiccated liver, correctly handled, can make a lot of Jack."⁹²¹ Indeed, Noble's skill for writing, together with Jack's enthusiasm, made for persuasive reading. "A reader has to be pretty far gone before he loses interest in health or beauty," wrote one reviewer. "[Jack] preaches that it's never too late to start making a healthy body — every ninety days, he tells us, the body tissues replace themselves completely. It is a pleasant philosophy, and may convince many a reader to take a try at making the new cells better than the old."⁹²²

Between 1959 and 1961, LaLanne, Inc.'s merchandising grew exponentially. Rather than devising new contraptions, Jack instead lent his name to existing products. Anything even vaguely related to health, physical activity, or diet was considered a

919 Letter from Charles E. Townsend to Stanley Allen Johnson, 25 August 1959, from the LaLanne collection.

920 "John Wesley Noble," *Nevada State Journal*, August 20, 1975, 18.

921 Fiset, "The TV People."

922 B.H.H., "Good Health, Beauty Topic of New Work," *Anniston, Alabama Star*, 26 June 1960, 8–B. It should be noted that at times, Noble's prose (or perhaps Jack's ideas) do strike the reader as long and rambling. The book explains how to estimate an appropriate caloric intake, provide some healthful recipes, and illustrate proper technique for a variety of calisthenics. Most of its 224 pages, however, are filled with personal anecdotes, inspirational rhetoric, and pictures of Jack from his bodybuilding days (and a few of Elaine). Probably, Jack's reputation and marketing buoyed sales. To date, *The Jack LaLanne Way to Vibrant Good Health* has sold over 130,000 copies.

reasonable venture. By 1961, a fan could purchase a Jack LaLanne bathroom scale; a wide variety of Jack LaLanne cookware, including a set of barbeque utensils, pots and pans, cutlery, a blender, and the “WitWhip,” a one-handed egg beater; a huge assortment of Jack LaLanne supplements that included antacids, laxatives, and vitamins specially formulated for youth, the geriatric crowd, and everyone in between. He also sold a Jack LaLanne “trim suit” like the one he wore on television; Jack LaLanne beauty products; and several books by Jack LaLanne with titles like *Your Figure*, *Your Health Cookbook*, and *Foods for Glamour*.⁹²³ “I wouldn’t fool with products if they weren’t necessary to get the message across,” Jack insisted, but one wonders just how much the WitWhip convinced America of the need to exercise.⁹²⁴

Meanwhile, Westcott increased the intensity of advertising in media other than television. During one day in October 1959, ads for *The Jack LaLanne Show* appeared in over 300 newspapers in the Southern California area, between Santa Barbara and San Diego.⁹²⁵ The following month, KTTV trucks adorned with signs promoting the show patrolled “special events all over town.”⁹²⁶ Whenever a well-known publication, like *Newsweek* or the *TV Guide*, printed an article about Jack, LaLanne, Inc. would place

923 LaLanne, Inc., Jack La Lanne News Journal of Health and Beauty (self-published, 1961). The “journal” consisted of twelve pages, nine of which were fully dedicated to advertising. Though it was marked “Volume 1, Issue 1,” no other issues of the journal are known to exist. From the LaLanne collection.

924 Jim Scott, “The Conscience of a Million Housewives,” n.d., 21.

925 This comes from an unidentified, untitled page in the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled “Old Newspaper Articles, 1945-1960.”

926 Ibid.

newspaper ads all over the country reproducing those articles in their entirety.⁹²⁷ On TV, of course, Jack vigorously sung the praises of all of his new products.

ON TOUR WITH THE JACK LALANNE SHOW

To capitalize on their growing publicity and merchandising opportunities, Jack and Elaine embarked on a cross-country tour to promote what was quickly becoming the LaLanne brand. Westcott and Akerberg had conceived of the trip as the next step towards their eventual goal: nationwide expansion and syndication. Jack insisted that it was also the LaLanne's honeymoon; he and Elaine still had not really celebrated their marriage, but they simply did not have time for a more relaxing trip.⁹²⁸ "When you're feeling fit and healthy, nothing can stop you.... You've just got to expand. I have a message for people and I'll get it to them any way I can," he said.⁹²⁹ They stayed in New York for two weeks, performing and promoting the show, before returning to Los Angeles.⁹³⁰

The New York trip was just the start. Between fall of 1959 and summer of 1960, Jack and Elaine visited 18 major cities: Chicago in October; Dallas in November; Denver, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta. They visited Washington, D.C. in February of 1960, and wooed reporters at the *Washington Post*. Jack's strategy in the nation's capital mirrored the one he employed in most major cities: beef up his brand name as a physical culturist in new markets, all while projecting the image of a glamorous Hollywood

927 See, for example, "Former Sugarholic," [advertisement], *Gary (Indiana) Post-Tribune*, 8 May 1960, n.p.; "Helpmate for Herenow," *Newsweek*, 25 July 1960, 102; and Bob Lardine, "We're in Bad Shape!" *New York News*, 26 June 1960, 8. All articles are from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled "Old Newspaper Articles, 1945-1960."

928 "Exercise on TV"; and Schroeder, "Cupid Learned to Do Push-Ups."

929 Robert Anderson, "Preacher of the Bend and Reach," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 27 September 1959, 1.

930 *Ibid.*

television star. He and his new wife dressed well, wearing discreet but expensive jewelry and dapper suits in bright colors that accentuated their bodies. They dined in the finest restaurants, often with members of the media, and spoke often of Jack's childhood and family life. All the while, of course, they gushed on and on about the benefits of exercise and a healthful diet. "[Jack's] enthusiasm is too great for argument," explained reporter Lawrence Laurent.⁹³¹

Akerberg hoped to air *The Jack LaLanne Show* in 30 markets by 1961. It made it into 29. Jack and Elaine logged nearly 175,000 miles of travel in the eighteen months after their wedding, on a lecture circuit that took them from New York to Seattle to speak with anyone and everyone willing to listen.⁹³² Akerberg, for his part, orchestrated the expansion flawlessly. Rather than risk diluting Jack's brand equity or intellectual property, he purchased airtime directly from television stations. Rather than risk liquidity by leveraging the company with debt, he bootstrapped the expansion using the profits from the products Jack hawked during the show — sales of which, of course, increased as the show entered new markets. "We didn't have to borrow a penny," Akerberg said. "That is not to say there is not a lot of bargaining.... sometimes the station has different ideas than ours."⁹³³ In sum, producing and broadcasting *The Jack LaLanne Show* cost upwards of \$750,000 per year in 1960 — about \$6 million today. But, thanks to Jack's

931 Lawrence Laurent, "Bulging Ratings Require LaLanne Treatment, Too," *The Washington Post*, 11 February 1960, 53; and Rosella Broyles, "He Practices What He Preaches," unidentified newspaper clipping from the LaLanne collection, in the red binder titled "Old Newspaper Articles 1945-1960."

932 Lawrence Laurent, "LaLanne's Beefing Up His Brand Name, Too," *The Washington Post*, 3 March 1961, B6.

933 "Jack La Lanne's Nationwide Gymnasium," *Broadcast Advertising*, 5 December 1960, 46.

expansive product line, he could afford to retain total control of the whole venture, and all of the profits that came with it.

Westcott continued to expand the advertising effort over the next eighteen months of the LaLannes' extensive tour, including a massive advertising campaign to inundate Los Angeles-area residents with Jack's welcoming smile. In the six months between November 1960 and April 1961, television stations there broadcast 178 different commercials for *The Jack LaLanne Show*, each up to a minute long; radio stations broadcast an additional 120.⁹³⁴ Buses, cabs and news trucks throughout the city bore colorful, king-sized posters of Jack.⁹³⁵ Every grocery store in *The Jack LaLanne Show*'s broadcast area received direct-mail flyers advertising the show – over 1,250 in total.⁹³⁶ Other cities received similar (albeit less extensive) treatment. When Jack and Elaine arrived in a new locale, Westcott placed ads in area newspapers and in direct mail channels, and sent even more directly to local retailers.⁹³⁷

BUILDING A SOFTER, SMARTER IMAGE

Westcott and Akerberg began to revise Jack's public image, smoothing some of his rougher edges to appeal to an ever-broader audience. To make him seem more approachable, Westcott now tried to draw attention *away* from the physique that had originally helped Jack establish his reputation. He and Akerberg decided to cover it with

934 "Radio" and "On-The-Air Promotion," copies of correspondence without authorship from the LaLanne collection, n.p., n.d. These copies were photographed at the LaLanne's home in Morro Bay, California.

935 "Kingsize Bus Posters," "Cab Covers," and "News Truck Posters," copies of correspondence without authorship from the LaLanne collection, n.p., n.d. These copies were photographed at the LaLanne's home in Morro Bay, California.

936 "Trade Mailers," copies of correspondence without authorship from the LaLanne collection, n.p., n.d. These copies were photographed at the LaLanne's home in Morro Bay, California.

937 WFBM to Lyle Westcot, 24 July 1961, from the LaLanne collection.

the now-iconic jumpsuit Jack wore on his show. “We try to play down Jack's muscles,” Akerberg explained. “I don't mean there's anything wrong with having muscles, it's just that people tend to associate a muscular body with a muscle-bound mind.”⁹³⁸ The strategy worked. By insisting on emphasizing Jack’s intelligence and experience in physical training in advertising and interviews, Westcott distanced Jack from the traditional “dumb jock” stereotype. “Jack is the only muscle man I know who can make any sense without stripping to the waist and flexing his biceps,” television critic Terrence O’Flaherty wrote.⁹³⁹ Of course, even covered up, Jack’s physique was still stunning. “Jack fills [his] polo shirt like Marilyn fills a sweater, only the bulges are in different places,” wrote reporter Jeanette Branin in 1961.⁹⁴⁰

The LaLannes’ move to Hollywood became crucial to this new image, because it provided them better access to actors and actresses who already possessed mainstream appeal. Bette Davis was the first, and probably the most well-known, star to directly endorse Jack and his show, and her story became a powerful advertisement for him. Davis debuted on Broadway in 1929, at the age of 21, and moved to Hollywood the following year. She won two Oscars in the 1930s, and her popularity continued to grow over the next two decades. “Her appeal swept across generations,” gushed *The New York Times* after her death in 1989.⁹⁴¹ In 1957, though – near the height of her career – a tragedy struck.

938 Horn, “LaLanne: A Treat and a Treatment,” 31.

939 O’Flaherty, “Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.”

940 Jeanette Branin, “Let’s Get Personal,” *San Diego Independent*, 16 April 1961, 8.

941 Albin Krebs, “Bette Davis, a Queen of Hollywood, Dies at 81,” *The New York Times*, 8 October 1989.

Davis had recently moved into a rented home in Beverley Hills. She opened what she believed to be the door to a closet — and fell straight through to the unfinished basement below. The star suffered a broken back from the fall, which cost her a role in a Broadway production and left her in traction for the better part of a year.⁹⁴² “For a year I couldn’t move well enough to exercise and it defeated me completely,” she mourned. “I went to pot. My broken back was only part of it. I had problems we won’t go into, but when you say ‘pooh’ and don’t care, you end up with a depressing attitude toward yourself and toward anyone you meet.”⁹⁴³

Had it happened today, doctors and physical therapists probably would have rehabilitated Davis using some form of resistance training, and she would have made a swifter recovery. But in the late 1950s, much of the medical community *still* held prejudices against any kind of weight training, despite growing evidence of its therapeutic benefits.⁹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, according to historian Jason Shurley, even by the mid-to-late 1950s, most research on the subject “was still focused on determining whether there were any deleterious effects of weight training... researchers were not satisfied that the case could be closed on the possibility.”⁹⁴⁵ Therefore, it is very doubtful that any doctor would have recommended that Davis exercise to improve her condition.

942 “Bette Davis Smiles, Cries As Jury Awards Her \$65,700 Damages,” *Ocala (Florida) Star-Banner*, 23 June 1960, 5.

943 Ibid.

944 Notable are the works of Thomas DeLorme and Peter Karpovich. Dr. DeLorme, an amateur lifter who had matriculated into the medical school at the University of Alabama in 1939, began testing weight training as a rehabilitation technique for injured soldiers during World War II. Karpovich, a well-respected exercise physiologist at Springfield College, began to investigate the supposed dangers of weightlifting after being impressed by a demonstration of the York Barbell team. See Jan Todd, Jason P. Shurley, and Terry Todd, “Thomas L. DeLorme and the Science of Progressive Resistance Exercise,” *The Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research* 26, no. 11 (2012): 2913–23; and Jan Todd and Terry Todd, “The Conversion of Dr. Peter Karpovich,” *Iron Game History* 8, no. 4 (2005): 4–12.

945 Jason Paul Shurley, “Strength for Sport: The Development of the Professional Strength and Conditioning Coach,” (Ph.D. dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 2013): 162.

In fact, according to Peter Giannoudis, chairman of the Department of Trauma and Orthopedic Surgery at the University of Leeds, the prevailing philosophy with regard to back injuries in the 1950s held “that the injured patient was ‘too sick to operate on’ and was kept instead on... enforced bed-rest.”⁹⁴⁶ Bed rest, of course, will worsen many back injuries.

So, lacking any formal rehabilitation, Davis floundered, until she eventually stumbled upon *The Jack LaLanne Show*. “You probably won’t believe it,” she said in an interview in 1959 with famous American movie columnist Louella Parsons.

One morning I watched a man named Jack Lalane [*sic*] on TV who was teaching exercises and gymnastics. I tried to do some of them with him, and I was so stiff I couldn’t move. But I decided to stick with it and follow him every morning, and I did it faithfully for three months. I also started swimming and playing tennis, and soon felt like a different person. I had felt so miserable with my broken back... this complicated by osteomyelitis was a very trying period in my life.⁹⁴⁷

The physical activity gave Davis “a new outlook on life,” she said. Indeed, after a slow spell in the mid- and late-1950s, she enjoyed renewed success in her acting career throughout the 1960s.⁹⁴⁸

Whether Jack knew the full story of her broken back and slow recovery is unknown. One can only hope that he did not, as, when he later spoke of her, his comments seem overly harsh. “Bette Davis,” he told reporter Bob Thomas, “let herself get fat and sloppy; her career slid and she didn’t care. One morning she was turning the

946 P.V. Giannoudis, “Aspects of Current Management,” *Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery* 85, no. 4 (2003): 478.

947 Louella Parsons, “Bette Davis: ‘A New Outlook on Life,’” *New York Journal-American*, 2 August 1959, 3. Parsons was the first American movie columnist, who began her work in the 1910s for William Randolph Hearst.

948 Ibid.

TV dial and happened upon my show. Somehow, I talked her into taking part... now she looks terrific.”⁹⁴⁹ Obviously, Davis cared very much about her career; she would have worked to the best of her capabilities to heal her injury and rebuild her figure and her career. Perhaps, Jack meant to cast Davis as a sympathetic figure, one to whom his more desperate viewers could relate and look to for inspiration, but his heavy-handedness appears to be yet another example of the shaming he used to cajole women into following his instruction.

It was through a celebrity connection that Jack found his first now-famous canine companion, Happy – a huge, healthy, white German Shepard who made frequent cameos on *The Jack LaLanne Show*, much to the delight of any children who caught the beginning of the program. Jack received Happy as a gift from actress Zsa Zsa Gabor, he said. He had taught Gabor the benefits of physical fitness, and she presented him with the puppy out of gratitude. Jack highly valued Happy, telling one reporter, “Happy was one of a litter of twelve... Zsa Zsa gave me one, gave another away, and sold the other ten for thirty-five hundred to five thousand dollars apiece.”⁹⁵⁰ Whether Happy would be sold for that much in the 1950s cannot be substantiated. Clearly, however, he was worth far more to Jack, and the show in particular. There were, in fact, *four* different Happys starred on the show at various points during its 34-year run, in addition to a Walter (or maybe two; Walter’s name was short for “We All Love To Exercise Regularly”).⁹⁵¹ Gabor later launched her own home exercise video, called “It’s Simple, Darling,” incorporating tips

949 Bob Thomas, “Hollywood,” *Brunswick, Georgia News*, 7 May 1960, D9.

950 Michael Dorman, “The Man Who Started America Sweating,” *Newsday*, 22 September 1985: 17.

951 Diane Wright, “Exercise Guru Jack LaLanne Still Teaches, Stretches at 72,” *Albuquerque Journal*, B13; and David Winkel, “Jack LaLanne at 70,” *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, 6 November 1984, L/S1.

on diet, beauty, and romance – some of which she may have picked up from Jack.⁹⁵² Happy became an integral part of the introduction to *The Jack LaLanne Show*, and enticed children to watch the show along with their mothers.

One month later, in June of 1960, a public-relations article appeared in the *New York Times Sunday News* in which Jack portrayed Davis in a far more favorable light. Why he softened his stance on Davis is not known, but the difference in his attitude in just one month's time suggests that Jack's PR team urged Jack to retract his previous statements towards her. Of course, the *New York Times* is among the best places to do that. In the June 1960 article, Jack told the *Times* reporter that

My biggest fan in Hollywood is no glamor gal, but Bette Davis is certainly one of the finest actresses in the world. Bette insists I saved her life. It came at a time when she was feeling depressed after having injured her back. The ailment laid her up for a considerable period, and she soon began to feel sorry for herself. She sulked and put on poundage. Then one morning she caught my show and said, 'What the hell!' (that's her favorite expression), 'I might as well try his exercises.' Pretty soon, she lost all the excess weight. She went out and bought a new wardrobe. She felt great again. She once more became the Bette Davis everyone admired and loved.

Jack spoke of other celebrities in the article as well, like actor Gilbert Roland, "one of the greatest physical specimens I've ever seen, [he] also watches my show. Gary Cooper and

⁹⁵² Tom Spain, "Exercising Options in '94," *The Washington Post*, 23 December 1993, n.p.

his wife are constant viewers as are Merle Oberon, Marie Wilson and many, many other celebrities.” Jack then went on to explain that “not only movie stars, but women in general, have major problems when it comes to reducing the waist, hips, thighs and bust. Other gals fret as how to redistribute their weight. There are some women who worry about the best way to put on weight. For all these troublesome situations, there’s one sure remedy: exercise.”⁹⁵³

Shortly after the *New York Times* column appeared, actress Arlene Dahl began singing Jack’s praises in the *Chicago Tribune*. Dahl’s Hollywood career began in the 1940s, but her stardom shone brightest in the 1950s and early 1960s, with leading roles in movies and television alike. Dahl wrote a regular column “Let’s Be Beautiful” in the *Tribune* offering readers health and beauty tips, and she often incorporated Jack’s advice into her own.⁹⁵⁴ “Every morning for half an hour I follow the exercises given and demonstrated over TV by Jack LaLanne, one of Hollywood’s top physical culture enthusiasts,” she wrote.⁹⁵⁵ Dahl went on to describe Jack as “the man behind the vitality, health, and beauty of many top Hollywood stars... a dedicated and widely informed man whose intelligent approach to beauty is one I heartily recommend to all my readers.”⁹⁵⁶ The continued celebrity endorsement skyrocketed Jack to stardom. “When I hit Hollywood, the word got around,” Jack explained. “Then we started getting the actors.

953 Bob Lardene, “We’re in Bad Shape!” *New York Times Sunday News*, June 26, 1960, 8.

954 “Arlene Dahl Turns Comedienne,” *Chicago Tribune TV Week*, 10 October 1964, 14.

955 Arlene Dahl, “Shine When You Arise! Here is How,” *Chicago Tribune*, 5 August 1960, Part 3-11.

956 Arlene Dahl, “Moderation in Food and Exercise Vital,” *Chicago Tribune*, 9 September 1960, Part 2-2.

Gilbert Roland, Bette Davis. When the movie stars pick it up, then you've got it made.

It's the thing, the in thing to do. It took off like a bomb. It was incredible."⁹⁵⁷



Figure 29. Bette Davis with actor Gary Merrill (n.d.)

⁹⁵⁷ Jack LaLanne, interview by Jan and Terry Todd.



Figure 30. Jack with one of the Happys. Photograph from the LaLanne collection (n.d.)

CONCLUSION: SUCCESS AND ITS BACKLASH

The Jack LaLanne Show did indeed “take off,” but it also began to receive more and more criticism for its obvious commercialization. While Akerberg and Westcott devoted a considerable amount of attention to perfecting Jack’s personal appearance, emphasizing his intelligence, a large part of Jack’s appeal came simply from his earnest nature. The sheer number of new LaLanne advertisements and the heavy-handedness of some of the company’s marketing efforts undermined that aspect of Jack’s personality to a degree, and painted a picture of a salesman, not a teacher. In fact, as early as 1959, reception of *The Jack LaLanne Show* suffered from what many critics agreed amount to the blatant over-commercialization of an otherwise worthwhile program. “The show would be a million laughs except that La Lanne is too much the old-time pitchman,” television critic Paul Malloy lamented. “‘Buy my protein tablets,’ cries La Lanne, ‘it makes my job easier,’” he mocked. The pressure of Jack’s salemanship, Malloy explained, was quite off-putting.⁹⁵⁸ “If a woman keeps telling herself she has ‘the most beautiful bustline in the world,’ that’s the way it’s going to be, shrills Jack La Lanne on his TV show. If that doesn’t do it — and I rather doubt it will — there’s always La Lanne’s exercise books, protein tablets and ‘glamor [*sic*] stretcher’ — which looks like the cord from an electric iron,” he concluded.

Fred Danzig, writing for the *World Telegram* in 1961, agreed. “The show comes on strong,” he commented. “Its flaws are obvious. The stamp of commercialism is on it

⁹⁵⁸ Paul Malloy, “He Bulldozes Women into Losing Pounds,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 6, 1959, 6.

all the way.... He goes through 30 or 35 quick exercise on each show and breaks up the torso-bending for what he calls ‘little talks.’ These talks are high-powered, musclebound pitchman-style commercials in which La Lanne sells, as special No. 26, his book on physical fitness, his booklet on skin care, and his all-purpose skin cream for ‘only \$5 — a \$9.95 value for only \$5.’”⁹⁵⁹

Jack eventually spoke out against his critics. “No one pays me to do my daily TV show,” he protested.

It is very costly to buy TV time for five half-hour shows each week, and because we are not on a network, each station carrying the show must have films or tapes to play. This too is very costly. The original filming — the hundreds of film prints, production charges, shipping to stations — it all costs a lot of money.

Thus, the only way I can bring you my daily half-hour show is through the sale of products I believe in.⁹⁶⁰

But truthfully, Jack *could* have accepted network support had it been offered — admittedly, at the cost of control over his company and probably a significant portion of his profits. All of LaLanne, Inc.’s new product development, marketing, and legal niceties required a considerable capital investment; and, at the time, most other companies would have resorted to some sort of leverage to maintain such rapid growth.⁹⁶¹

959 Fred Danzig, “Inhale, Exhale — Smile!” *World Telegram*, July 6, 1961.

960 “Exercise on TV,” *Sponsor*, 1 October 1962, 45.

961 John R. Graham, Mark T. Leary, and Michael R. Roberts, “A Century of Capital Structure: The Leveraging of Corporate America,” *Journal of Financial Economics* 118, no. 3 (December 2015): 662. Prior to World War II, American firms shied from taking on additional debt and its concurrent risks to fuel very high levels of productivity, averaging leverage ratios of around 10% between 1920 and 1945. Between 1945 and 1970, that number nearly tripled.

Jack, however, insisted on maintaining total control over his brand. Not only did he avoid debt (and maintained tight control over the privately-held shares of his company), he also required that all LaLanne products be distributed by LaLanne, Inc. (with one exception: the San Leandro-based Homecraft Baking Company baked and sold LaLanne's Whole-Wheat Bread).⁹⁶² As a result, product sales became crucially important if the company were to remain viable. Furthermore, control itself seemed important to Jack. He even railed against Compton's suggestions for changing the LaLanne product packaging design and store displays, and he did not want to give up his ad-libbed commercials. "This puts quite a strain on me," he complained, as he strongly preferred to talk off the cuff.⁹⁶³

In some ways, Jack had become the victim of his own marketing success. While the campaign orchestrated by Westcott had clearly transformed Jack into a celebrity in his own right, his celebrity also exposed him to increasingly critical media coverage. In *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, editors Su Holmes and Sean Redmond explain that in modern American culture, fame is "bound up with" negativity. "The popular media are increasingly involved in 'damaging' the image of the star or celebrity through salacious, critical, and unflattering reportage," they explain.⁹⁶⁴ In her analysis of tabloid readers, scholar Sofia Johansson adds: "Sometimes you wanna hate celebrities."⁹⁶⁵

962 "Jack LaLanne's Nationwide Gymnasium," *Broadcast Advertising*, 5 December 1960, 47.

963 "Jack La Lanne's Nationwide Gymnasium," *Broadcast Advertising*, 5 December 1960, 47.

964 *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, edited by Su Holmes and Sean Redmond (Routledge, 2012).

965 Sofia Johansson, "'Sometimes You Wanna Hate Celebrities': Tabloid Readers and Celebrity Coverage," in *Framing Celebrity*, 343-358.

Some business strategists have argued that the approach Jack took to marketing was misguided. His steadfast emphasis on his audience, and forming a relationship with that audience, helped define the public image that he, Elaine, and the rest of LaLanne, Inc. carefully guarded. But directing that degree of attention and effort towards customer and reputation management left little room for product development and innovation. As a result, Jack ended up lending his name to a wide variety of products, many of which had questionable value for the consumer, and he opened himself up to criticism in the media. In a 1981 reflection on postwar marketing concepts, marketing professors Roger Bennett and Robert Cooper explained that the “strict adherence to the marketing concept [of the 1950s] has damaged American business. It has led to a dearth of true innovation and it has shifted the strategic focus of the firm away from the product to other elements of the marketing mix, elements that can be manipulated very successfully in the short run but which leave the business vulnerable in the longer term.” Of course, product development was never a core competency of LaLanne, Inc. Jack’s primary focus was always to deliver information about the importance of health and fitness – not to sell Glamour Stretchers. But it is also clear from the criticism his later products received that they lacked the ingenuity and care with which Jack had designed the equipment in his gym twenty years earlier.

Ultimately, it is difficult to evaluate how this impacted Jack’s legacy. In some ways, the money he earned from the sale of Glamour Stretchers and his plethora of other

products enabled LaLanne, Inc. to expand at a very rapid pace, and, in doing so, deliver Jack's message about health and fitness to a much broader audience than would have otherwise been possible. In other ways, however, that rapid growth may have changed his image in the public eye. Early in his career, Jack developed a reputation in part for his ability to convey a sense of intimacy with his audience through television. But by the 1960s, the sheer volume of his advertising surely undermined some of that intimacy, and while many still would have considered him their teacher, others would likely have considered Jack a celebrity, not an educator.

Chapter 10: The LaLannes in the '60s, '70s, and Beyond

As the fog rolled in on the gentle morning breeze of October 8, 1974, Jack LaLanne stood on the sandy beach of Aquatic Park Cove, staring off towards the Pacific Ocean.⁹⁶⁶ Compared to the full-muscled beauty of his youth, Jack's body now showed his age: his legs were noticeably thinner, holding just a trace of the powerful quadriceps he had built in his teens and twenties; his solid, tapered torso sagged now, and there was a hint of softness in the belly.⁹⁶⁷ But appearances can be deceiving. Jack had celebrated his sixtieth birthday just weeks earlier, and had spent the time since then preparing for a return to the San Francisco Bay. His outrageous plan was to repeat – even surpass – the feats he had performed fifteen years earlier to promote *The Jack LaLanne Show*. With hands and feet bound, he prepared to, once again, escape from the treacherous waters around Alcatraz and swim back to the mainland. This time, however, he would attempt the feat while towing a one-thousand-pound boat for the distance, just over two miles. “It’s the kind of stunt right out of the Count of Monte Cristo, Steve Brodie or Harry Houdini,” wrote reporter Jim Murray. And it was definitely dangerous:

An ebb tide can carry him farther from his target than he can swim toward it. A high wind and the boat can either 1) pull him off course; or 2) blow it right on top of him.... [Sharks] might not believe their luck at seeing an Hors D’oeuvre like that right in their kitchen. If a stray shark does come up under the helpless man, they might as well put an apple in Jack’s mouth.⁹⁶⁸

966 “What’s a Little Water to TV Star LaLanne?” *Defiance (Ohio) Crescent News*, 4 October 1974, 3; and Weather Underground, “Weather History for KSFO – October, 1974,” accessed online at www.wunderground.com/history on 26 April 2017.

967 United Press International photograph titled “Birthday Swim,” *Manchester (Connecticut) Journal Inquirer*, 4 October 1974, 7.

968 Jim Murray, “It’s a Long, Hard Swim, Well, Maybe Not,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 3 October 1974, E3.

Elaine had once again carefully orchestrated the event to prevent any such tragedy, enlisting the help of Jim Morino, a champion oarsman, to lead the four-man crew that would guide Jack across the Bay. Jack's entourage would also include a veritable fleet of sheriff's deputies, reporters, and local personalities, including Dr. James White, a San Carlos chiropractor; Fred Brooks, president of the American Boating Association; and Ann Fenner, a well-connected friend of Elaine's.⁹⁶⁹ Jack, for his part, had for weeks risen at four o'clock in the morning – as he always did – to lift weights for an hour and a half, then spent half an hour swimming and another half hour running. Later in the day, he sat for an hour in a bathtub filled with 100 pounds of ice. "I never get out of shape so the physical part about this [stunt] didn't really bother me," he said. "Getting used to the cold water was the problem," since Jack had, even as a sexagenarian, very little bodyfat to serve as insulation.⁹⁷⁰

Despite his training, Jack slept fitfully the night before the event. He dreamt of an endless swim, back and forth and back and forth between the Rock and the wharf, before a shark finally took pity upon the poor fool in the water and towed him to shore. When he rose in the morning he could stomach little more than a protein shake and some vitamin tablets. He dressed, in a warmup suit over his swim trunks and an orange bathing cap, and, upon arriving at Aquatic Park, boarded a small boat that ferried him to Alcatraz. Shortly before eight o'clock he plunged into the frigid, 57-degree water, limbs bound, hitched to a 10-foot boat filled with sacks of sand, and bereft of wetsuit or even

969 "What's a Little Water"; and Frances Russell Kay, "Evening to Please Is as Advertised," *Los Angeles Valley News*, 4 October 1974, 23.

970 "What's a Little Water."

protective, warming body grease.⁹⁷¹ “The eyes and ears of the world were with Jack that morning,” the press release read.⁹⁷²

Jack hit the water and felt the shock of cold as it ripped through his body – still strong, equally determined, but clearly weaker than it had been fifteen years ago. He began to thrash towards shore, in a mangled style somewhere between a breast stroke and a doggy paddle. As he swam, Brooks described to reporters the route they had planned together: “Jack will make a dogleg, heading west towards the Golden Gate Bridge and then back east. By leaving early, he can catch better tides that way.”⁹⁷³ Doctor White remained skeptical; he judged that the average person would last scarcely fifteen minutes in that water. The sheriff’s deputies, meanwhile, busied themselves holding a pair of eager and hungry sharks at bay, who had indeed come looking for an early lunch.⁹⁷⁴ Elaine began to sob quietly.⁹⁷⁵

Eighty-six minutes and two miles later, as he approached the pier, the boat Jack tugged was swept by the current and tangled his rope. Refusing aid, he struggled for six more painful minutes before stumbling ashore, as reporters waded into the water to capture the moment, attendants wrapped towels over Jack’s shoulders, and Elaine ran to embrace him, still crying.⁹⁷⁶ The LaLannes’ publicist, an energetic man named Joseph Bavaresco, warm in his own black velvet jacket, turned and shouted at the crowd: “All

971 Ibid.

972 Lyle Westcott, on behalf of The Jack LaLanne Company, to A. W. Vienna & Associates, 27 June 1975, 1-2.

973 “What’s a Little Water.”

974 “LaLanne Swims from Alcatraz,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, 4 October 1974, 2.

975 “What’s a Little Water.”

976 Ibid., and “LaLanne Completes Daring S.F. Swim,” *Pasadena Star News*, 4 October 1974, B5.

you spectators, show him how you like him!”⁹⁷⁷ As they cheered and began to sing “Happy Birthday,” all Jack could do was shiver and mumble the word “robe.” His lips were nearly too cold to form words. “Somebody put a robe on him, please,” begged Elaine, and the attendants helped Jack to the nearby Dolphin Club, where he slowly warmed himself in a hot shower and sauna.⁹⁷⁸

Twenty minutes later, when the feeling returned to his body, Jack marched triumphantly back to the press conference still in progress on the dock at Fisherman’s Wharf, where he casually cranked out twenty push-ups. “It was doggone rough out there,” he declared. “I never had any doubts that I would make it. But the tides are so tricky.... I’m sure that what I have done today will convince people that physical fitness does pay off. This nation is so decadent and so weak... but I’m sure that in a couple of years’ time we could become a first-class nation again. It all comes down to physical fitness.”⁹⁷⁹ He then announced that the next year, “for my sixty-first birthday, I’m going to do something in the New York harbor, but I won’t say what. For my sixty-second, I’m going to take two hundred rocks in a rocking chair.” When reporters asked Elaine if she would let him to continue with the death-defying stunts, she replied, with just a hint of sadness, “I’m afraid I don’t have anything to do with ‘letting’ him do anything.”⁹⁸⁰

In 1975, at the age of 61, Jack repeated his stunt from 1954, swimming the length of the Golden Gate Bridge entirely under water. At 62, rather than restrict himself to the

977 “What’s a Little Water.”

978 “60th Birthday Swim: Jack LaLanne Proves His Physical Fitness Claims,” *Long Beach Independent Press-Telegram*, 4 October 1974, A15.

979 “LaLanne Swims from Alcatraz”; and Philip Hager, “LaLanne Takes a Swim – and WHAT a Swim!” *Los Angeles Times*, 4 October 1974, A3, A24.

980 “LaLanne Takes a Swim,” A24.

rocking chair, Jack swam a mile in the Long Beach Harbor, again with hands and feet bound and towing 13 boats in honor of the United States Bicentennial. His last public stunt came nearly a decade later, at the age of 70, when he towed 70 rowboats over a mile through the Long Beach Harbor, to the *Queen Mary*, where this story began.

Jack's last feat, the 70-boat voyage to the *Queen Mary*, marked the end of the record-setting 34-year run of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, but by 1985, the LaLannes' place in fitness history had long been secured. In the 22 years since the show's international syndication, Jack and Elaine had received nearly 100 different awards and membership in halls of honor or fame for their work in the fitness industry. From inclusion in Berkeley High School's Hall of Fame, to recognition from the President's Council on Physical Fitness, to being immortalized in the concrete on the Hollywood Walk of Fame – Jack and Elaine had clearly done something that no one had ever done before.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF JACK

While the technology of the 1950s and 1960s seems primitive in comparison to some of these modern examples, the commodification of fitness is by no means a new development in the industry. Jack and Elaine were preceded by dozens of earlier fitness entrepreneurs, including men like Eugen Sandow and Bernarr Macfadden, in the first decades of the twentieth century. But the LaLannes were pioneers in a new kind of fitness industry that emerged in postwar America. It was a fitness movement driven by a new media – television – and the visual power of television surpassed that of even thousands of magazine photographs. While Maguire argues that “[Jack's] commercial techniques

were relatively undeveloped,” she acknowledges the importance of the historical circumstances that embedded LaLanne, Inc. “within a ‘leisure boom that arose at the intersection of postwar affluence, mass consumption, and popular interest in quality of life.’”⁹⁸¹ And it all came together for Jack and LaLanne when the show became internationally syndicated.

On October 25, 1962, Akerberg had mailed a sample reel of *The Jack LaLanne Show* to Lindy Eleveld, of International Television Services in Sydney, Australia.⁹⁸² He hoped that Eleveld might find Jack convincing enough to sell the show to station managers there; as one viewer remarked, Australia was seen as “quite an atheletes [*sic*] nation... getting ‘on the ball’ fast and coming out of her nineteenth century era.”⁹⁸³ In fact, Australia *was* an enticing market: it had suffered an economic recession during the early 1950s, and so television had not proliferated as quickly as it had in the United States following World War II. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the medium itself had become more prevalent, but the country largely lacked the facilities necessary to produce shows. As a result, nearly all Australian television programs were imported from the United States during that time.⁹⁸⁴ It was a growing, captive – and therefore potentially lucrative – audience for LaLanne, Inc. After watching the reel, Lindy Eleveld was sold. “I

981 Jennifer Beryl Smith (Maguire), “Bodies Fit for Consumption: The Culture Production of the Fitness Field,” Ph.D. dissertation, the City University of New York (2002): 40.

982 Henry C. Akerberg to Mrs. Lindy Eleveld, 29 October 1962, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

983 Thelma Mason to Jack LaLanne, 21 June 1965, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

984 Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner, *The Media and Communications in Australia* (Allen & Unwin, 2001): 175.

can fully understand why the show has been so successful for you in the States,” she wrote, “and can see no reason why he should not be equally popular here in Australia.”⁹⁸⁵

There were, however, obstacles. By 1962, so much content had been imported from American sources that many Australian viewers and, subsequently, station managers had begun avoiding programs that made frequent references to products, locations, or other cultural aspects unique to the United States. Furthermore, many American stations had already experimented with broadcasting *The Jack LaLanne Show* at various timeslots, from early morning through late night, and found an early broadcast (around 9:00) to be most attractive. In Australia, however, television stations did not go on the air until 10:30 in the morning. Finally, the show would be subject to import duties, shipping costs, and other miscellaneous expenses, although Eleveld estimated these would still total less than the production costs of a new show. For all of those reasons, she suggested that the proposed partnership concentrate their efforts on the major metropolitan areas of Sydney and Melbourne, “rather than risk an early rejection” in smaller markets. “In this buyer’s market, [rejection] makes it very difficult to re-approach,” she explained.⁹⁸⁶ Akerberg agreed.

By January of the following year, Akerberg and Eleveld had reached a formal consensus: Eleveld would sell the show in an 18-month or two-year package, charging \$50 per show plus import costs. In return, LaLanne, Inc. agreed to pay Eleveld a 35% commission for her role in selling the show to station managers in Australia. That left

⁹⁸⁵ Eleveld to Akerberg, 7 November 1962, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid.

Jack and Elaine revenue of just over \$6,000 per package sale – less than one-half of one percent of their total revenue for the year.⁹⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the Australia deal was one of the most important in the history of the LaLanne brand, that could now claim that *The Jack LaLanne Show* was syndicated internationally.

In 1964, the team turned its attention towards the European markets. They employed a strategy identical to the one Akerberg had used so successfully in Australia, sending a demo reel to Hans Dormer of *Welt Film und Fernseh* (World Film and Television) in Germany.⁹⁸⁸ Dormer, with stereotypical German restraint, remarked that he held “a very good opinion of this show.” Unfortunately, he continued, “in general there is no television program in Germany in the morning. Therefore, we have to see if the stations react to this program in the same way we did.”⁹⁸⁹ Dormer’s hesitation may have been a bit of strategic negotiation, for he enclosed with his response a preliminary contract for sale of *The Jack LaLanne Show* across nearly the entire continent. Dormer wanted exclusive rights to East and West Germany, England, France, Spain, Italy, the Soviet Union, Austria, Switzerland, and over half a dozen other countries in Eastern and Central Europe for two full years, and for a 40 percent commission for his efforts.⁹⁹⁰ Legal counsel of LaLanne, Inc. balked at the proposal. “I have read over the proposed contract with the German agent and, frankly, object to the entire idea,” opined Stanley

987 Akerberg to Eleveld, 21 January 1963; and Eleveld to Akerberg, 15 January 1963, both from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

988 Lyle Westcott to Hans Dormert, 2 September 1964, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

989 Dormer to Westcott, 9 September 1964, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

990 Ibid.

Johnson.⁹⁹¹ Nevertheless, within two months the LaLannes had negotiated for a guaranteed profit on every sale of the show, even after accounting for expensive changes made necessary by differences between American and German broadcasting technology.⁹⁹²

By 1965, Akerberg no longer had to peddle the show abroad: people were coming to him, asking to represent Jack in various international channels. The London-based marketing and advertising firm Osborne, Alexandre, & Gabler wrote Jack directly to request a meeting “to discuss... prospects of any business development in Europe.”⁹⁹³ The Film Service Corporation asked about *The Jack LaLanne Show*’s availability in Brazilian markets; Westcott replied that perhaps the company might be interested in selling the show not only in Brazil, but across Latin America. One fan even wrote in, asking to represent Jack in Australia.⁹⁹⁴ Thelma Mason, of Alhambra, California, worked as a registered nurse and exercised to Jack’s show every morning. Blissfully ignorant of LaLanne, Inc.’s partnership with International Television Services in the Australian markets or how television actually worked, Ms. Mason generously offered to sell the show in the cities she planned to visit. “I don’t know which cities have TV broadcasting,” she admitted, “but can find out from the person I am going to stay with. Their daughter

991 Stanley Johnson to Lyle Westcott, 13 October 1964, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

992 Westcott to Johnson, 9 October 1964; and Dormer to Westcott, 14 October 1964, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016. Dormer’s letter of 14 October indicates that a contract had been agreed upon but not yet signed; notes on the physical letter “Stan will write 10/27” suggest that Stanley Johnson, the LaLanne’s lawyer, would formalize the deal in two weeks.

993 C.E.J. Osborne to Jack LaLanne, 23 September 1965, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

994 Lyle Westcott to Dick Thiriot, 19 January 1966, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

and her husband are TV performers.... If you are interested in my suggestion why not make an appointment to talk it over.”⁹⁹⁵

International Celebrity and Growing Commercialism

The new international presence of LaLanne, Inc. elevated Jack and Elaine’s fame, and the earnings they made from their business. As cultural studies scholar Graeme Turner explains, in the modern era – one marked by a broad intersectionality of media formats and cultures – celebrity itself becomes “a *branding* mechanism for media products that [assists] their fluent translation” across these dimensions. As a result, Turner continues, “a high-profile sports star like Michael Jordan or David Beckham [or Jack LaLanne] can become a ‘one-man superbrand’:

Celebrities are developed to make money. Their names and images are used to market films, CDs, magazines, newspapers, television programmes – even the evening news.... They are a financial asset to those who stand to gain from their commercialization – networks, record companies, producers, agents, managers and finally the celebrities themselves.... As the asset appreciates – the celebrity’s fame spreads – so does its earning capacity.⁹⁹⁶

That LaLanne, Inc. agreed to such small margins on the international sale of *The Jack LaLanne Show* indicates that the company recognized the importance of Jack’s international celebrity even as it grew. Indeed, a later press release crowed that “Jack LaLanne has become and is today the most dynamic man of fitness in America, and for that

⁹⁹⁵ Thelma Mason to Jack LaLanne, 21 June 1965.

⁹⁹⁶ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (Sage, 2013): 36-38.

matter, in the world. The influence he has exercised in the lives of countless millions of men and women... [is] staggering.”⁹⁹⁷

As Turner further explains, many celebrities stand to profit last from their endeavors, after agents, producers, managers, and other intermediaries take their cut. But Jack and Elaine clung tightly to their ownership of LaLanne, Inc., sharing only a small fraction of its equity with Akerberg and a handful of other carefully-selected key personnel. As a result, they had a powerful incentive to capitalize on their access to international markets and push the LaLanne brand hard. Accordingly, in 1964 alone more than half a dozen new LaLanne-branded products sprang up: elastic exercise bands, women’s fitness apparel, facial creams, the “trimsuit” (exercise apparel designed to help reduce through increased perspiration), and other fitness devices.⁹⁹⁸

From there, the LaLanne business venture continued to proliferate. In 1966, Jack began hosting a talk show on KTTV in Los Angeles, titled *The LaLanne Affair*.⁹⁹⁹ Then the company launched one of its most successful products since the Glamour Stretcher, a portable all-in-one exercise machine dubbed “The Fitness King.”¹⁰⁰⁰ While the competition in television (most notably that of the lithe and lustrous Debbie Drake) fizzled out, ratings for *The Jack LaLanne Show* stayed strong. “So far, [only] one exponent of the TV exercise show has managed to survive, and that is Jack LaLanne,”

997 “Jack La Lanne, America’s Ambassador of Life,” n.d., from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

998 Trademark and Service Name Properties of the Jack La Lanne Company, 22 October 1974, 2, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

999 “Jack LaLanne to Host Own Show,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 September 1966, C17.

1000 United States Patent Office, trademark registration for The Fitness King, filed 22 June 1966, granted 26 September 1967, from photographs taken at the LaLanne home in Morro Bay, California, January 2016.

observed television critic Hal Humphrey of the *Los Angeles Times*.¹⁰⁰¹ “I’ve outlived them all on TV, because I believe in what I am doing – it’s a religion with me and this is my church,” Jack insisted, but that was only part of it. The other part involved the clever management of Elaine and Akerberg, combined with the first-mover advantage Jack obtained by starting his show in 1951, a decade before Drake and other competitors. “LaLanne... has been at it for 15 years,” Humphrey noted in 1966, and “has his show syndicated to nearly 90 TV stations besides Channel 11 here and peddles a line of some 30 products bearing his name.”¹⁰⁰² Recognition of the synergy between the ever-expanding product line and the show enhanced both their pocketbook and awareness of their message about fitness.

It took another two full years of high television ratings and peddling products like “Jack LaLanne’s Massage-O-Ball” (advertised as “the amazing Swedish personal care secret that gets right to the point”) before LaLanne, Inc. returned to its gym-business roots.¹⁰⁰³ In October of 1968, the company announced a partnership with Ray Wilson, proprietor of a nationwide chain called European Health Spas. Wilson’s chain was advertised as “the most luxurious in the world with the latest techniques and facilities from Europe,” and like Tanny before him, Wilson had outfitted his gyms in carpet and chrome, to evoke elegance and glamour and to try to attract mainstream men and women. The health club deal serves as a remarkable testament to the value of the LaLanne

1001 Hal Humphrey, “Healthy Ratings Keep Jack Fit,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 May 1966, C14.

1002 Ibid.

1003 “Get on the Ball, Shape Up with Jack LaLanne’s New Massage-O-Ball!” [advertisement], *Kansas City Star*, 26 February 1967, n.p., from the LaLanne collection in the red binder titled “Old Newspaper Articles 1965-1973.”

name.¹⁰⁰⁴ Wilson agreed to invest \$10 million in new “Jack LaLanne European Health Spas” throughout Southern California, hoping that adding the LaLanne name would help to bring in more customers. Jack guessed that within 10 years that amount would rise to \$100 million.¹⁰⁰⁵

Indeed, less than two months later, a Jack LaLanne European Health Spa opened in Lakewood, California, described as the “chain’s most elaborate” and costing in excess of \$1 million to build. Over 50 Hollywood celebrities attended the two-day grand opening event.¹⁰⁰⁶ Whether Jack’s prediction proved accurate is not clear, but ten years later, the Jack LaLanne European Health Spas chain was the biggest in Southern California, with 31 locations from Riverside to San Diego.¹⁰⁰⁷

As was the case with his international syndication, Jack partnered with Wilson largely to obtain better brand-name recognition; LaLanne, Inc. earned little – if any – profits from the partnership. Exactly what happened to sour the gym deal is not clear, but instead of making Jack money, the partnership ended badly. According to Elaine, association with some unscrupulous businessmen ending up costing them. “I took a lot of screwings,” Jack mourned later in life. “I probably lost five million in the Jack LaLanne spa deal.”¹⁰⁰⁸ Elaine blamed the misfortune on Jack’s selflessness and trust. “Jack never thinks about money. He’s dedicated to people instead,” she said.¹⁰⁰⁹

1004 “Jack LaLanne – European Health Spas Merge,” *Reminder*, 24 October 1968, n.p., from the LaLanne collection in the red binder titled “Old Newspaper Articles 1965-1973.”

1005 *Ibid.*

1006 “Jack LaLanne Health Spa to Open in Lakewood,” *Long Beach Independent Press-Telegram*, 5 January 1968, n.p., from the LaLanne collection in the red binder titled “Old Newspaper Articles 1965-1973.”

1007 “Health Spas Feature Complete Physical Fitness Programs,” *Los Angeles Times*, 12 February 1980, F8.

1008 Donald Katz, “Jack LaLanne Is Still an Animal,” *Outside* (November 1995): 80-81.

1009 *Ibid.*

By the early 1970s, some critics had grown disgruntled with LaLanne, Inc.'s constant commercialism and its tendency to slap Jack's name on virtually anything and everything remotely related to fitness. As early as 1968, *TIME* magazine remarked that Jack "may come on strong."¹⁰¹⁰ In 1971, Gail Cottman, writing for the *Los Angeles Times*, described him as

Professor Harold Hill in the peddling department – not 76 trombones, but bread, soya crackers, vitamins, tonics, sauna suits, Biketts, gym towels, health books, reducing drinks, cosmetics, Jack La Lanne Nutrition Centers, the Fitness King (a professional home exercising until retailing for \$395), Jack La Lanne European Health Spa franchises, and an 18-year-old, self-sponsored TV show, watched by loyal disciples (estimated at 15 million – ages 18 to formaldehyde) who buy his products, support his multi-corporations and solidly believe *God Saves Souls and Jack Saves Bodies* – THEIR bodies.¹⁰¹¹

Jack continued to protest: "I've never been interested in business," he said. "*Money* — any ass can make money. Who can be happy? That's the question."¹⁰¹² But the incongruence between the professed purity of his intentions and the obvious heavy-handed nature of his sales pitches continued to raise eyebrows and gentle mockery throughout the rest of his career. It mattered little; as Cottman sardonically admitted, Jack had already built a following of millions, who eagerly clung to his every word and were quick to indulge themselves with whatever he was selling at the moment.

1010 "One & Kick & Two, And Stick Out Your Tongue," *TIME*, 16 February 1968, n.p., from the LaLanne collection in the red binder titled "Old Newspaper Articles 1965-1973."

1011 Gail Cottman, "Jack LaLanne Isn't Kidding," *Los Angeles Times West* magazine, 11 April 1971, 28.

1012 Louise Farr, "The Exercist," *New West*, 27 February 1978, 29.

FITNESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN POSTWAR AMERICA

Successful fitness entrepreneurs have always marketed something. In the early twentieth century, using the media of the day, entrepreneurs like Alan Calvert, Bob Hoffman, and Joe Weider published magazines so that they would have access to free advertising to push other types of products, like fitness equipment and supplements. Jack, however, happened along at precisely the birth of one of the most powerful forms of media the world had ever seen. Although he and Elaine undoubtedly overdid their sales pitches, in many ways their approach to fitness as a commodity was not at all new. Theirs was, in a way, the same formula Arnold Schwarzenegger later used when he leveraged his iconic physique and multiple bodybuilding titles into a leading role in the 1970 film *Hercules in New York*, for he knew that in order to “make it big,” he needed to become a mainstream celebrity. Schwarzenegger’s acting career garnered relatively little attention until he starred in *Pumping Iron* (1977), a dramatized documentary about professional bodybuilding, and *Conan the Barbarian*, five years later. To date, his films have grossed over \$3 billion worldwide.¹⁰¹³ Once catapulted into the public’s eye by the films, Schwarzenegger’s earnings and opportunities soared. He would go on to become an icon transcending the fitness world, but for Arnold, as for Jack, the first step was to become a “star.”

Though perhaps not as prolific as Arnold, mass-media fitness celebrities are today commonplace in advertisements for products promising to help one lose weight, build

¹⁰¹³ “Profile: Arnold Schwarzenegger,” BBC News, 31 August 2004, accessed online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3131155.stm>. Admittedly, Schwarzenegger is an imperfect example, as he earned a significant amount of money in real estate before turning to acting.

muscle, or both. Jillian Michaels, star of *The Biggest Loser* (a reality television show about weight loss), suffered from low self-esteem and overate as a child; as a young teenager, she weighed 175 pounds at a height of five feet, two inches. She began practicing martial arts to lose weight and gain control over her life. “Karate saved my life,” she said. “It all stopped the day I broke two boards with a kick.”¹⁰¹⁴ One might argue that it all *started* there, since Michaels went on to earn a certification as a personal trainer and opened her own gym before NBC cast her on *The Biggest Loser*. Today, Michaels stars on her own eponymous show, sells an ever-expanding line of fitness products, and boasts an estimated net worth of \$14 million.

Several well-known celebrities have even ventured into the fitness industry after earning wealth and reputation through other related channels, like professional sports. Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, a former wrestler for the World Wrestling Federation (WWF, now known as the WWE) and star of over a dozen action movies, began working with fitness apparel manufacturer Under Armour in 2016 to produce “Project Rock,” a cobranded line of gym bags, sneakers, and even smartphone apps.¹⁰¹⁵ Johnson has shown interest in politics, too, hinting at a possible presidential bid in 2020; in light of Donald Trump’s 2016 campaign, *The Washington Post* reported that Johnson has “a weirdly plausible path to a political career.”¹⁰¹⁶

1014 “Biggest Loser’s Jillian Michaels Once Weighed 175 Lbs.,” *US Magazine*, 16 June 2010, accessed online at <http://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-body/news/pic-biggest-losers-jillian-michaels-once-weighed-175-lbs--2010166>

1015 “Welcome to Project Rock,” 2016, accessed online at <http://projectrockofficial.com/>

1016 Alyssa Rosenberg, “Dwayne Johnson Says He Might Run for President. He Could Actually Win,” *The Washington Post*, 7 June 2016.

Like Johnson, Oprah Winfrey incorporated fitness into her public persona years after she became a cultural icon. Winfrey's childhood was "blighted by sexual abuse," and the resultant emotional turmoil reportedly led her to eat impulsively and gain excessive amounts of weight. Despite those hardships, she flourished in the broadcasting industry from an early age. She started her media career in college, at Tennessee State University, where she worked at local radio station WVOL; and in 1973, she began reporting as a news anchor on WTVF-TV in Tennessee. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* began in 1985, and, while she famously lost nearly 70 pounds by adhering to an all-liquid diet for several months, her weight fluctuated by huge amounts for the next decade. Yet Winfrey persisted with various fitness regimens, coauthoring a weight-loss book in 2005 and, in 2015, purchased 10% of Weight Watchers, becoming official spokesperson for the company that promotes community-supported weight loss. Weight Watchers' stock prices surged by *three hundred percent* in the weeks following Winfrey's endorsement, earning Winfrey millions of dollars and the company itself nearly \$1 billion – clear proof of the synergy between media personalities and fitness products.¹⁰¹⁷

It should come as no surprise that fit, attractive entrepreneurs have come to earn enormous fortunes and attract huge followings. Many scholars have argued that our current historical moment constitutes a new fitness boom, one marked by a proliferation of commercial technologies and interests intent upon quantifying and displaying bodies. Brad Millington characterizes this second fitness boom as commoditized, data-driven,

¹⁰¹⁷ Paul R. La Monica, "Oprah Loses 40 Pounds, Gains Big \$ With Weight Watchers," CNN Money, 22 December 2016, accessed online at <http://money.cnn.com/2016/12/22/investing/oprah-winfrey-lost-forty-pounds-weight-watchers/>

and networked; it is *highly* reliant on new forms of interactive media, especially social networking. He cites products like the Nintendo Wii, a video game console that allows “‘virtual’ forms of fitness participation;” and wearable fitness-tracking gadgets and garments, like the FitBit, that record and share one’s exercise habits on platforms like Facebook and through proprietary software. The result, Millington argues, is an era of fitness “presumption,” where individuals both produce and consume data that is subsequently monetized by corporations.¹⁰¹⁸

While Millington’s argument may be overly suspicious of new technology, he is right to point out that the market for cutting-edge fitness-related products and media has grown enormously. Maguire observes that between 1986 and 2000, the number of physical fitness features in popular media increased sixfold.¹⁰¹⁹ Marketing scholar Barbara Phillips describes American popular culture today as “obsess[ed] with fitness and exercise,” spending billions each year on fitness-related products.¹⁰²⁰ Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson strongly agree with Millington, writing that a “new modern and upgraded fitness culture” has already begun, and that within this new culture, “the highest goals and aspirations are commercialized.”¹⁰²¹ Many enthusiasts now believe that obtaining an “ideal” body like those of fitness heroes requires access to expensive

1018 Brad Millington, “Fit for Prosumption: Interactivity and the Second Fitness Boom,” *Media, Culture & Society* 38, no. 8 (2016): 1184-1200, quote from page 1186. Millington’s titular phrase, “the Second Fitness Boom” is a poor one; Jan Todd, for instance, has argued for the existence of many fitness booms in American history. See Todd, “‘Strength is Health’: George Barker Windship and the First American Weight Training Boom,” *Iron Game History* 3, no. 1 (September 1993): 3-14.

1019 Maguire, *Fit for Consumption*, 12.

1020 Barbara J. Phillips, “Working Out: Consumers and the Culture of Exercise,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 28, no. 3 (2005): 525.

1021 Jesper Andreasson and Thomas Johansson, “The Health Guru: Masculinity and Fitness Coaching in the Blogosphere,” *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 278.

health clubs, specially-designed workout clothing and equipment, and countless performance-enhancing supplements and even surgeries.

Furthermore, they argue, fitness experts as presented in the modern media constitute nothing less than “heroes” to be revered primarily for their self-presentation – not knowledge of exercise or diet.¹⁰²² As Jack also understood, self-presentation is the major driver of economic success in the industry. Sociologist David Hutson explains that individuals can build “bodily capital” – essentially, social capital evidenced by a trim, muscular physique. Because such a physique requires a significant amount of time, energy, knowledge of the body, and perhaps even money to acquire, it comprises a reflection of those assets and therefore becomes a symbol of authority, regardless of whether the fit individual actually possesses the aforementioned characteristics.¹⁰²³

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, *The Jack LaLanne Show* ceased production in 1984. By 1985, Jack’s mission had come to fruition: as historian Benjamin Rader writes, the American “preoccupation” with physical fitness was “widespread.... Growing numbers of Americans tried to alter their lifestyles. They watched what they ate, tried to control their diet, exercised more, stopped smoking, and tried to reduce stress in their lives.”¹⁰²⁴ Or, as CBC reporter Dan Bjarnason put it one year earlier, in 1984: “This obsessive passion with fitness and bodybuilding is becoming downright maniacal.”¹⁰²⁵

1022 Andreasson and Johansson, “The Health Guru,” 278.

1023 David J. Hutson, “‘Your Body is Your Business Card’: Bodily Capital and Health Authority in the Fitness Industry,” *Social Science & Medicine* 90 (August 2013): 63-71.

1024 Benjamin Rader, “The Quest for Self-Sufficiency and the New Strenuousness: Reflections on the Strenuous Life of the 1970s and the 1980s,” *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 255-256.

1025 Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Digital Archives, “Fitness Craze Sweeps the Nation,” 25 February 1984, accessed online at <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/fitness-craze-sweeps-the-nation> on 27 April 2017.

From a quantitative standpoint, judging the efficacy of *The Jack LaLanne Show* with regard to the nation's fitness is difficult. The novelty of television and most Americans' unfamiliarity with the benefits of exercise meant that, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, little or no medical research was devoted towards understanding how television influenced individual exercise behaviors. This can be evidenced by the fact that one of the few significant general studies on the nation's fitness – the aforementioned Kraus-Hirschland study – was not even published until after the debut of Jack's show, and it made no connections to television. However, Hirschland obviously recognized the benefits of television for sharing fitness-related information, as she later starred in an exercise show of her own.

In fact, only in our current historical moment are researchers truly investigating the efficacy of health- and fitness-related programming on television. While that body of literature remains sparse, studies have indicated that television programs that improve individuals' beliefs in their *ability* to exercise are positively associated with exercise behavior.¹⁰²⁶ Shows that feature physically ideal hosts – like *The Jane Fonda Show* – show mixed results in this regard, as a negative self-comparison to the host can result decrease viewers' motivation. In their 2004 article, kinesiology researchers Julie C. Fleming and Kathleen Martin Ginis suggested that exercise-show hosts who seemed “more human and easier to relate to” would be more likely to actually change viewers'

1026 See, for example, Sook-Jung Kim and Bok-Hee Cho, “The Effects of Empowered Motivation on Exercise Adherence and Physical Fitness in College Women,” *Journal of Exercise Rehabilitation* 9, no. 2 (2013): 278-285; and Yan Tian and Jina H. Yoo, “Connecting With The Biggest Loser: An Extended Model of Parasocial Interaction and Identification in Health-Related Reality TV Shows,” *Human Communication* 30, no. 1 (2014): 1-7.

exercise behavior.¹⁰²⁷ Jack, of course, became famous largely for his ability to relate to and connect with his audience – a strategy which, this dissertation has shown, was very purposefully and carefully implemented. In 2009, Dawn Clifford and colleagues suggested that repeated exposure to informational health shows (such as over the course of a 13-week season) could lead to greater rates of positive behavioral change among viewers compared to one-off or limited episode viewing.¹⁰²⁸ Again, given that *The Jack LaLanne Show* ran for 34 years, and given Jack’s large fan base, one could reasonably assume that his show benefitted from many repeat viewers. Taken together, these studies strongly imply – but not prove – that Jack’s show would have had measureable benefits for the nation’s fitness, had any such measurements been taken.

Even from a cultural standpoint, Jack cannot be credited with all or even most of the rise of the fitness phenomenon in the United States. In fact, some scholars have characterized the fitness movement of *The Jack LaLanne Show*’s early years as a failure. Patricia Eisenman and C. Robert Barnett have compared the popularity of exercise during that time (1951 to 1963, the period discussed in this dissertation) to that of the 1970s and 1980s. They credit the “boom” that occurred only in the latter era to better scientific understanding of the body; and the involvement of women, persons over the age of 65, and families.¹⁰²⁹

1027 Julie C. Fleming and Kathleen Martin Ginis, “The Effects of Commercial Exercise Video Models on Women’s Self-Presentational Efficacy and Exercise Task Self-Efficacy,” *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology* 16 (2004): 93.

1028 Dawn Clifford et al., “Good Grubbin’: Impact of a TV Cooking Show for College Students Living Off Campus,” *Journal of Nutrition and Exercise Behavior* 41, no. 3 (2009): 194-200.

1029 Patricia Eisenman and C. Robert Barnett, “Physical Fitness in the 1950s and 1970s: Why Did One Fail and the Other Boom?” *Quest* 31, no. 1 (1979): 121-122.

However – while it would admittedly not do so on a *national* scale until the 1960s – *The Jack LaLanne Show* included all those aspects of fitness. The show was targeted at women; that Jack’s books emphasized the possibility and need for exercise and proper nutrition in older populations; and that Elaine’s deep investment in the business and participation on the show evinced the importance of family fitness. Jack also repeatedly stressed the importance of a scientific approach to fitness, although medical understanding of exercise’s effects on the body was admittedly limited at the time, and his own approach to fitness, while often sound, was not based on scholarly research.

Furthermore, Eisenman and Barnett overlook “the profoundly social reasons that we’ve directed so much attention to our bodies” since the 1970s and 1980s, explains psychologist Barry Glassner. Glassner argues that the staggering increase in portrayals of a bodily aesthetic in the media – which began with Steeve Reeves and the “age of the chest” in Hollywood, continued with Jack and his competitor, Debbie Drake, and exploded in the late 1970s and early 1980s – led directly to our current physical fitness movement. “Increasingly,” he writes, “the ideal images are also the standards against which [others] judge us.”¹⁰³⁰

Jennifer Smith Maguire agrees that one can trace the fitness boom of the 1970s and 1980s to “an expanding range of media... [including] exercise videos, which have been one of the most profitable sectors of the home-entertainment industry since the mid-1980s.”¹⁰³¹ Indeed, Jacki Sorensen started her Aerobic Dancing movement in 1972, and,

1030 Barry Glassner, *Bodies: Why We Look the Way We Do (and How We Feel About It)* (Putnam, 1988): 13, 173; and Clifford Putney, “Going Upscale: The YMCA and Postwar America, 1950-1990,” *Journal of Sport History* 20, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 165.

1031 Jennifer Smith Maguire, *Fit for Consumption*, 12.

ten years later, *Jane Fonda's Workout* became a bestselling home video.¹⁰³² Graham Thompson even posits that the fitness-media relationship was a mutually beneficial one: sales of portable cassettes and CDs gained popularity in large part because their portability lent them to application in the “often solitary” drudgery of exercise, which was “made less arduous by having some form of musical accompaniment.”¹⁰³³ As fitness-related media, especially videos, became increasingly popular throughout the 1980s, so too did the “corporeal style” of exercise, which implicitly equated a bodily aesthetic with good health. In other words, the desirable bodies shown in the media encouraged individuals to engage in activities like dieting and exercising not for the sake of health, but to “resemble the narrowly defined beauty ideal.”¹⁰³⁴

It is important to note that the fitness boom of the 1970s and 1980s was the product of many more factors than the spread of fitness media, and in fact was the eventual result of a number of cultural changes that directed increased attention towards fitness. Historians usually credit Kenneth Cooper's seminal book, *Aerobics*, first published in 1968, for sparking the jogging craze of the early 1970s, but Cooper's work became popular in large part thanks to its connection to the space race. Cooper worked as a US Air Force physician, and John Glenn, the astronaut selected as the first American to fly a spaceship (actually a Mercury capsule) around Earth, ran for exercise at Cooper's urging. Glenn became an instant celebrity after his successful mission, and millions of

1032 Beth S. Swanson, “A History of the Rise of Aerobic Dance in the United States through 1980,” master's thesis (San Jose State University, 1996).

1033 Graham Thompson, *American Culture in the 1980s* (Edinburgh University Press, 2007): 124.

1034 Pirkko Markula, “Firm but Shapely, Fit but Sexy, Strong but Thin: The Postmodern Aerobicizing Female Bodies,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 12 (1995): 425; and Bethan Evans, “‘I'd Feel Ashamed’: Girls' Bodies and Sports Participation,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 13, no. 5 (October 2006): 550.

Americans began running in hopes that they could become as physically fit and successful as him.¹⁰³⁵

Other cultural changes that contributed to the popularity of fitness included scientific advancements, the growth of the consumer culture, and a move away from the sense of entitlement that characterized the years immediately following World War II. As previously mentioned, improvements in medical knowledge further substantiated the connection between inactivity and illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, and stroke, and doctors increasingly encouraged patients to perform aerobic exercise for their health. Furthermore, the continued growth of the consumer-based economy that began in the postwar era increased the availability of leisure time for many Americans – time which could be spent on exercise. As part of that consumer-based economy, the proliferation of fitness-centric companies, like Nike, and the commensurate increase in advertising of fitness products – Spandex, sports bras, running shoes – further heightened awareness of the need for exercise.¹⁰³⁶ Perhaps more than anything else, the strong belief that self-sufficiency was prerequisite to a successful life framed fitness “as part of a larger strategy to gain status, power, and greater control over... personal relationships,” explains Rader.¹⁰³⁷

1035 Richard Davies, *Sports in American Life: A History* (Wiley & Sons, 2007): 378-380.

1036 Maguire, *Fit for Consumption*, 12-13.

1037 Rader, “The Quest for Self-Sufficiency,” 266.

CONCLUSION

The difficulty for the biographer is, of course, to quantify the life of a man like Jack LaLanne. In 1984, after 34 years of success, *The Jack LaLanne Show* finally ended, much to Jack's dismay.¹⁰³⁸ He would have watched his reruns forever, but the networks had tired of him. Yet those 34 years represent a tenure that exceeds even the most revered of television programs: Jack's show aired longer than the five shows *Rolling Stone* magazine rated greatest of all time – combined.¹⁰³⁹ Admittedly, in stark contrast to *The Sopranos* and *Seinfeld*, Jack's show involved no plotline and scarcely any script, but the length of his tenure speaks to the impact his show had on American culture. Despite the conclusion of *The Jack LaLanne Show*, Jack and Elaine continued to market their brand to the masses, turning the following year to home video to keep the show in the public eye, and lending the LaLanne name to a line of frozen vegetables.¹⁰⁴⁰

The next year, the LaLanne family sold their beloved Hollywood Hills home and moved to Morro Bay, a small fishing village about two hundred miles north of Los Angeles. The pace of life is slower in Morro Bay, and less stressful. They commissioned a home built to Jack and Elaine's specifications, with room for his many trophies, commemorative plaques and other memorabilia, and even much of his original

1038 Michael Dorman, "La Lanne Excelled in Fitness Salesmanship," *Syracuse Herald-Journal*, 25 November 1985, n.p.

1039 The shows selected were *Seinfeld*, *Mad Men*, *Breaking Bad*, *The Wire*, and *The Sopranos*. Obviously, other shows have outlasted *The Jack LaLanne Show*, but the *Rolling Stone* list puts the LaLanne's work into context. Rob Sheffield, "100 Greatest TV Shows of All Time," *Rolling Stone*, 21 September 2016, accessed online at <http://www.rollingstone.com/tv/lists/100-greatest-tv-shows-of-all-time-w439520/cheers-w439619>.

1040 Jesse Chavarria, "Shaw Plant to Produce Veggies in Venture with Jack LaLanne," *Santa Cruz Register*, 20 December 1985, n.p.

gymnasium equipment. They did not miss the “fast-lane life of Los Angeles,” they told reported Jeannine Stein in 1988.¹⁰⁴¹

In 1992, Jay Kordich published *The Juiceman’s Power of Juicing*. It skyrocketed to the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list, and juicing became America’s newest health fad.¹⁰⁴² Kordich’s story once again conformed to the standard health crusader biography: doctors diagnosed him with bladder cancer when he was a young man; eschewing conventional treatment, he self-administered an alternative juicing cure, drinking 13 glasses of apple and carrot juices every day. Nevertheless, he recovered, and “devoted his life to spreading the gospel of juicing,” demonstrating machines he had designed for that purpose at trade fairs and seminars, with little success.¹⁰⁴³ But in 1989, Kordich recorded his first infomercial extolling the benefits of his favorite practice, and people noticed.¹⁰⁴⁴ By 1992, three million juicers were sold in American stores every year, Kordich himself was a millionaire, and Jack and Elaine decided it was high time they join the juice craze, too.¹⁰⁴⁵

They began that year, partnering with the National Media Corporation to market the “Juice Tiger” brand of electric juicers. The infomercials they used, however, were far more heavy-handed than Jack’s early commercial efforts:

At the hour just after dawn, there they are, wide-eyed and wake on your TV screen: the perky people. Starring in their own 30-minute infomercials, they want

1041 Jeannine Stein, “Jack LaLanne Presses On: At 73, the Original High Priest of Exercise is Anything but Retiring,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 May 1988, accessed online at http://articles.latimes.com/1988-05-24/news/vw-3266_1_jack-lalanne

1042 Judith Blake, “At Last, Juiceman Cometh,” *Burlington, Indiana Times*, 29 April 1992, C1.

1043 Ibid.

1044 Catherine New, “Juiceman’s Jay Kordich is Trying to Rebuild a Juice Empire at Age 89,” *Huffington Post*, 20 May 2013, accessed online at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/20/juiceman-jay-kordich-rise-and-fall_n_3232665.html

1045 Blake, “Juiceman Cometh.”

to improve your life – for just two or four or maybe 10 easy payments. They will sell you miraculous products to gloss your hair, tone your thighs, smooth your skin and fix your negative personality. But most of all, they want to sell you a juice machine.¹⁰⁴⁶

It was not the couple's finest business decision. In 1996, the Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a recall on 77,000 Juice Tiger products, which could apparently shatter and fling dangerous plastic and metal shards at people nearby.¹⁰⁴⁷ The recall was a minor setback, and BeFit Enterprises, the current operating name of LaLanne, Inc., still sells juicers today. Much worse was Jack's obviously hypocritical denunciation of the fitness business. "There's so many people out there selling all these phony gadgets and writing books just to make a buck from weight reduction," he complained. "We have all these people selling their souls. These Michael Jordans and other guys selling hamburgers and hot dogs. That's the thing that really frosts me. Out there hawking this stuff and kids think that's how they got that way."¹⁰⁴⁸

What "frosted" Jack, of course, was identical to what his own business model had been. The plethora of Glamour Stretchers, jumpsuits, Kevo-Etts and yogurt with prunes had played no role in the construction of his own physique, nor in his physical accomplishments. Yet he and Elaine advertised all those things and many more without reservation, all while denying any material motive. They were by no means the first to promote an inefficacious fitness product; Eugen Sandow likely claims that title as well, followed by men like Charles Atlas and Earle Liederman in the 1920s and 1930s.

1046 Laurie Ochoa, "Juicing Phenomenon: New Trend is Growing Like Crazy," *Altoona, Pennsylvania Mirror*, 22 April 1992, D1.

1047 United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, "CPSC, National Media Corporation Announced Juice Tiger Recall Program," 26 March 1996, release #96-086.

1048 Candace A. Wedlan, "The Father of Fitness Just Keeps Going and Going and..." *Los Angeles Times*, 8 September 1997, S4.

Certainly, the LaLannes' vigorous marketing efforts have affected their legacy. In fact, many adults too young to have watched *The Jack LaLanne Show* on broadcast TV likely remember Jack primarily for his advertisements. They might even associate him with the charlatans whom Jack so vehemently despised. But a careful examination of Jack and Elaine's lives leaves little doubt that they were genuinely committed to their mission. Furthermore, as the first to sell fitness and fitness products on television to a mass American audience, Jack and Elaine helped to carry the fitness industry into the modern age. Over the next decade, while Americans spent millions of dollars on many products bearing the LaLanne brand, millions also watched and listened to Jack on television, learned the benefits of regular exercise and a healthful diet, and some even began practicing better habits in their own lives.

Jack never retired. He celebrated his ninetieth birthday in 2004, and two years later joked that "I can't afford to die. It would wreck my image." But five years after that, he contracted pneumonia. On January 23, 2011, at the age of 96, he died of respiratory failure in his home in Morro Bay, California. Elaine continues to run BeFit Enterprises, together with her sons: Danny, from her first marriage, and Jon, her son with Jack. Jack's daughter, Yvonne, practices chiropractic in San Francisco; her husband, Mark Rubenstein, is a pediatrician.

In 1999, aerobics star Kathy Smith interviewed Jack for a column in the *Los Angeles Times* titled "Blazing a Trail for Fitness and Better Lives." She wrote: "Jack and his message have triumphed. After decades of blazing trails alone, Jack LaLanne can look back with deep satisfaction, knowing that his once radical ideas are now

conventional wisdom.... The truth is that all of us owe him our deepest gratitude for working to make our lives better and healthier.”¹⁰⁴⁹ Smith is only partly right. Too often forgotten by journalist is the central – perhaps pivotal – role of Elaine in all of this. While Jack showered her with deserved praise and credit for her role in the LaLanne legacy, most journalists have failed to do the same. Trying to do justice to her role became an unexpected goal of this dissertation. But ultimately, Gustafson *was* right: Jack and Elaine LaLanne helped to make fitness part of mainstream American culture, which was, they professed, their ultimate goal – and so, in that regard, they triumphed.

His obituaries called him “the godfather of fitness,” but Jack preferred to liken himself to Billy Graham, the famous evangelist. “Everything comes down to believing — you have to *believe*,” he insisted. “My whole thing is believing. I believe *so strong*. If something saved your life, would you *believe* in it?”¹⁰⁵⁰

I never think of myself as a guru — especially getting the home training that I did, what with my mother always talking about being humble, appreciating what you’ve got and always pushing yourself down. So I’ve always had this feeling of inferiority. [And] we’ve had bad business deals and dealt with crooked people, but those things are just water under the bridge. That’s why the discipline that I have helps so much. You’ve got to be tough. Who said life is easy? You’ve got to scratch and fight for your principles or people will walk over you. You must have values. Life is not easy. It takes guts to live. Discipline is the difference between failure and success in life. When my life on earth is over, I feel that I’ll look back and be pleased about the seeds I have planted throughout the many years. I hope that lives have been changed for the better — because I have lived. I trust that God will be proud of how I’ve spent my life. Maybe he’ll give me a promotion for all my hard work... Or better yet, maybe a couple of golden dumb bells.¹⁰⁵¹

1049 Kathy Smith, “Blazing a Trail for Fitness and Better Lives,” *Los Angeles Times*, S5.

1050 Andrew Cohen, “Isn’t Life Just Great! An Interview with Jack LaLanne,” *What is Enlightenment* (Spring/Summer 1999): 46.

1051 This passage comes from four different sources, but no single quote has been edited in any way. See Christine Gustafson, “Jack LaLanne: Fitness Immortal,” *San Luis Obispo County Telegram-Tribune*, 30 September 1994, n.p.; Cohen, “An Interview with Jack LaLanne”; Carol Ann Weber, “Jack LaLanne: The Man and His Passion,” *Muscular Development* (April 1993): 168; and Dave Tuttle, “Jack LaLanne: Fitness Pioneer and Lord of Discipline,” *Ironman* (December 1990): 120.

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