

Bodybuilders visionaries not freaks

by Shaun Cody

Rory Leidlymeyer surveyed the chaos and crowds in Hub Mall and asked the woman in front of him what was going on. "Mr. USA is coming," she announced, looking up at the 6'1" and 260 lb. Leidlymeyer. "Really?" he said with a smile.

Around the Hub Administration offices, there was a carnival atmosphere. Huge lines formed before the booths where Mr. Canada and Mr. USA would appear as part of the Health Week activities. The line up was composed almost totally of males.

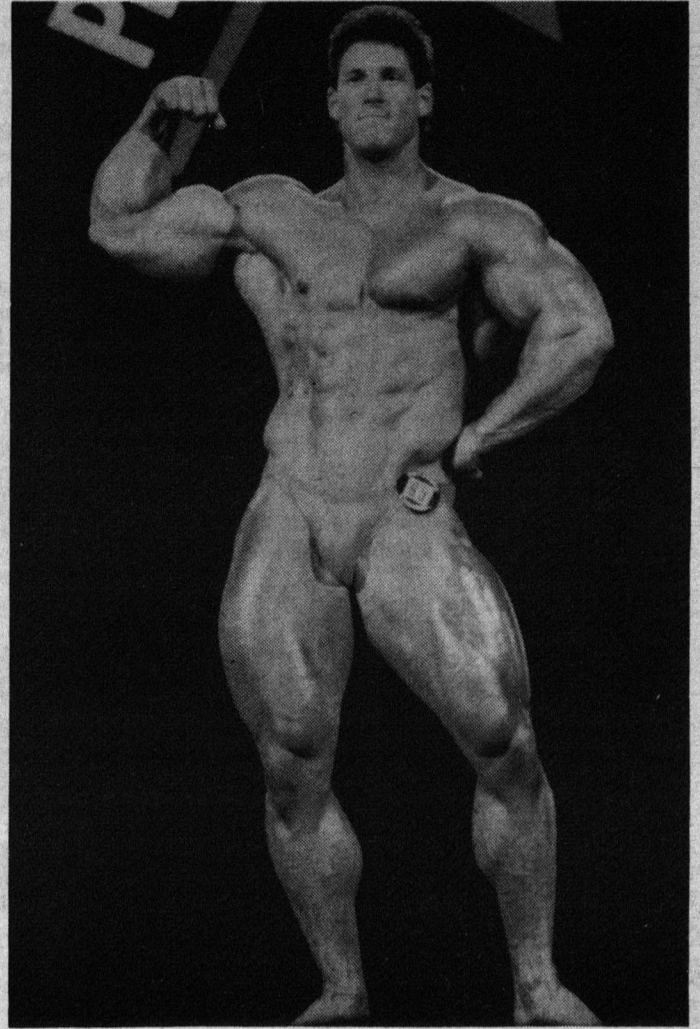
Mr. Canada, Marc Gagne, and Mr. USA, Rory Leidlymeyer, were herded into the Administration office by a jubilant secretary. "Let's see some bodies, guys. Take off your shirts, guys. I think you should take off as much as you can. There's a lot of anxious women here," urged the secretary. The bodybuilders glanced at each other and appeared unamused at being treated like slabs of meat.

"At least take off your coats," she pleaded. "I can't," protested Rory, "then I'll shrink." For the half hour that the bodybuilders occupied the booths answering questions and signing pictures, I watched the crowd. Many simply wanted to gape at Rory and Marc and see if they were human.

The real questions I wanted Rory and Marc to answer were how they felt others looked at them as bodybuilders and, moreover, as people. Talking to Marc and Rory, I realized that bodybuilding and its athletes may come to be seen not as freaks, but visionaries.



I call (bodybuilding) body perfection - everyone has one distinct, unique body and they don't just build it up. They perfect it.



Marc Gagne

Marc Gagne (Mr. Canada)

Is this your first Mr. Canada win?

This is the first year I've won Mr. Canada. I'm the first person from western Canada to win it. I'm from Edmonton.

How old are you now?

I'm 26 years old now, and I started serious bodybuilding when I was 20. I played around with weights before, but I didn't really start until I was 20.

How big were you when you started?

I was about 170 lbs. That was about five and a half years ago. Now I weigh about 240 lbs in contest shape (diets, etc.), and I go as high as 270. It all depends what training cycle I'm on.

Do you feel the public's attitude towards bodybuilders has changed?

Definitely. Even in the last year and a half I see a change. A lot more people are lifting weights, training their bodies. More people want to look bigger now, and they don't see bodybuilders as freaks as much.

Bodybuilders have to concern themselves with more than just the exercises, don't they?

It's not just lifting no, not at all; the weights are just one segment. There is a lot you've got to know about. The most important thing is diet, then training, then (nutritional) supplements. There's certain exercise routines, certain training cycles, certain diets, and you've got to know how to put everything together. In bodybuilding, everything comes together for the perfect body.

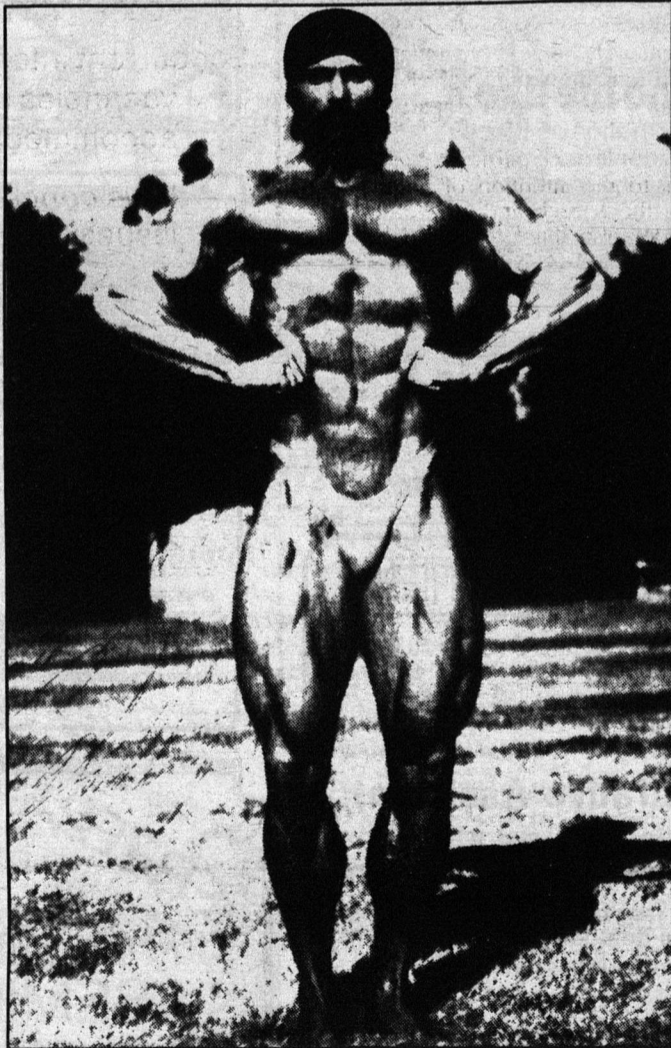
What about the popular conception that bodybuilders are all the result of drugs?

That's along time bias against bodybuilding. It was a place to dump everything. Bodybuilding used to be the little dingy gym with all the huge guys in it. Now, that's not true. You've got fitness centers with fat people in their color-coordinated outfits, but you've also got mainstream sort of places where there's a real mix, from fairly serious weight trainers to real bodybuilders, and it's harder to accuse something that's more acceptable. And people are awfully naive if they think hockey players, football players and most pro athletes don't take drugs. They all need to because it's the only way they can handle a schedule that physically demanding.

Do you make a living from bodybuilding?

Yes. I own Thor's gym in Edmonton. I train a lot of people. For example, I train my family doctor. There are things I know about training that he doesn't. One point I should make is that we keep referring to bodybuilding. I don't call it that. I call it body perfection - everyone has one distinct, unique body and they don't just build it up. They perfect it.

Marc, how much stronger are you now than when you started training? How much has your maximum gone up in, say, the bench press?



Rory Leidlymeyer

By around 300 lbs. I could bench around 200 lbs when I started and now my maximum is over 500 lbs. But there was a time just before I started (weight training) when I had a hockey injury and could barely bench 80 lbs. It's really a matter of how much better I feel now than I did then. I doubt many people can understand how good you feel when you're training and perfecting your body. You can heal injuries and rehabilitate them and old injuries disappear when you work out properly. I think bodybuilding is the ultimate sport; you look better and feel better.

Rory Leidlymeyer (Mr. U.S.A.)

How long have you been training?

Since I was four years old. I guess I was a gym brat. My father would go to the gym, I'd go with him to the gym.

When did you take up serious bodybuilding?

When I was in high school, I was into

football and other sports really heavily. Yet, when I was 18, I was 6'1" and 140 lbs. I decided to really start bodybuilding.

So you were pretty slim when you started? (laughing) Yeah, I was pretty thin.

When did you first compete?

In 1979, I competed in the L.A. (Mr. L.A.) I came in as a complete unknown and won. Then things really took off. I've gotten into a lot of other things since. I've done a lot of modelling; from Sports Fitness to Penthouse to Images Calendar. I'm getting into acting, theatre roles, doing Marlon Brando kind of stuff.

You train many promising young bodybuilders. How do you feel when guys you've trained come up and surpass you in competition? Bob Paris, for example. (Bob Paris trained with Rory and went on to beat him in the 1983 Mr. America heavyweight class)

(smiles) I get asked that all the time. I train a lot of people, and I have a philosophy about it. I call it (weight training for muscular development) body perfection. God has



My goals have always been symmetry, proportion, and balance. That's what's needed in any body.

given us all a special body. Each of us perfects his or her body until it is as perfect as that body, our body, can be. I was sitting around my living room with Bobby (Paris) one day and I said to him "You and I will meet on stage (in competition) one day. We will both be as perfect as we can be on that day. One man will win. The other will not be beaten. Do you understand why I say that?"

You mean both men have conquered themselves? Won personal victories?

Yes, exactly. So you ask if I mind when my pupils surpass me? No way. I'm really happy to see others go on.

Are your attitudes unique among bodybuilders?

Maybe. There are other things that differentiate me. I'm the most controversial person in bodybuilding. I'm a rebel with a cause. I'm outspoken. I am not a good politician or a diplomat (within the sport). That's just not me. (diplomatic)

What do you see as the present attitude

continued on page 8
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