

20 QUESTIONS: ARTHUR JONES

*the man whose nautilus exercise machine started america sweating
talks about the important things in life: younger women,
faster airplanes and bigger crocodiles*

Arthur Jones is a man of many interests. The inventor of the hottest exercise equipment began his career as a World War Two bomber pilot and afterward began to seek out real adventure. He flew free-lance cargo missions all over Central America and Africa, tracked big game and hosted a TV show called "Wild Cargo" in the Sixties. He holds strong views on subjects as diverse as pumping iron and geopolitics. He regales listeners with tales of mercenary strike missions and coups that failed. He boasts that he has eluded hit teams that emerging nations have dispatched to stalk him, but when pumped for details on the subject, he demurs. Apparently, if you have to ask the price of danger, you can't afford to take the chance.

Warren Kalbacher tracked Jones to his closely watched compound in central Florida. "We rendezvoused beside a darkened airstrip," Kalbacher tells us. "Somehow, it seemed to set just the right tone for the interview, but Jones was in no hurry to begin taping. He insisted that I meet every one of his reptiles, tour his immense video-production complex and pit my strength against his latest Nautilus prototype. It was a tough assignment, but somebody had to take it on."

1.

PLAYBOY: We couldn't help noticing the pistol, the locked door and the television-camera surveillance. Do you resent interruptions, or are you worried that somebody's gaining on you?

JONES: If you have any doubt about the extraordinary security measures around here, walk out the door and across the lawn. Roll the dice. The stakes are your ass. If you think I'm joking, try me. Recognition has a price. The price is danger.

2.

PLAYBOY: Nautilus equipment has achieved a great deal of recognition. Gym shorts and jockstraps are *de rigueur* in a gentleman's wardrobe. Do you possess an uncanny marketing sense, or were you the man with the right product at the right time?

JONES: I hadn't the slightest idea of becoming involved commercially. In 1948, I was staying at the Y.M.C.A. in Tulsa, and I built the first serious attempt at a Nautilus machine. Later that year, I built another one, and I kept building them wherever I went. I built them by the hundreds. They're sitting in schools, police-

department gyms and rotting in jungles all over the world. I was building machines for my own purposes. I was interested in efficiency of exercise. In 1970, I built a prototype machine and hauled it to California and put it on exhibit, more or less to see what would happen. The roof fell in. People started writing and calling and placing orders for machines that did not exist. I told them there was nothing to buy. They said, "When you have them, we'll take one of each."

3.

PLAYBOY: What got you interested in exercise? Were you a 97-pound weakling who wanted to develop biceps to impress girls?

JONES: I was never a 97-pound weakling. Even as a child, I was considerably stronger than average and have been most of my life. But from a very early age, I was interested in exercise. I started lifting weights, training with bar bells long before it was popular. In the Thirties and Forties, you did it in secret, because you didn't want your friends to know. I wanted the benefits of weight training, but I didn't want to be branded a lunatic.

With the introduction of the bar bell into this country around the turn of the century, it became possible to produce degrees of muscular development and strength previously thought impossible. The adjustable bar bell—a bar and plates with holes in them so that you can add weight—was almost magic. When people did what appeared to be impossible, they became freakish. Perhaps some people were overawed by the first examples of weight lifters who developed their muscles to a very large size. All the myths started: If you lifted weights, you became muscle-bound. That's totally untrue. Weight lifting of any kind makes you more flexible. Weight lifters are very close to being on a par with gymnasts and even ballet dancers in certain ranges of motion. And you were slow and clumsy and dumb. Quite the contrary. I really don't know what the relationship is between the size of a man's muscles and his I.Q.

4.

PLAYBOY: If the bar bell worked like magic and you kept your workouts secret, what made you think you could improve on that?

JONES: I noted as far back as the Thirties

that some bar-bell exercises produced very rapid rates of growth and some did not. A bar bell provides one-directional resistance—straight down as a result of the force of gravity. But human beings are rotational animals. We don't move in straight lines. We move by rotating around the axis of a body joint. You move your hand, for example, by rotating around the axis of your wrist. Even if a movement is in a straight line, it's the result of two or more rotational movements.

So the first requirement when it came to improving the bar bell was to design a device that provided rotational resistance for exercise. With a bar bell, you're exercising part of a muscle, and you will develop that part of the muscle. But then another part of the same muscle is not being exercised; it doesn't receive any benefit.

Another problem with movement is that the strength of a human being changes. It varies as your advantage of leverage gets better or worse. With a bar bell, as a consequence, you're always limited by the amount of weight you can handle in your weakest position—which is not necessarily the starting position. In the bench press, for example, when the bar is resting on your chest and you start to lift it, you're fairly strong. But you're rapidly growing weaker as you reach the so-called sticking point. Then you suddenly become much stronger again; and at the very end of the bench press, as far as your muscles are concerned, you're infinitely strong, because you have the advantage of leverage. You're locked out. You could move the world in a bench press. You could handle 1,000,000 tons if your bones could support them.

But by using a bar bell in a bench press, you're limited by the amount of weight you can handle at the sticking point. At the end of the movement, you may be able to handle 300 pounds. But you're forced to train with the 100 pounds you can handle in your weakest position.

5.

PLAYBOY: Was there a sticking point in your development of the Nautilus machine?

JONES: It was a long, slow process. I started out trying to solve the problem of adding variable resistance to the bar bell by adding chains to one: At the start of a movement, most of the chain would be

lying on the floor, so that as you lifted the bar bell, more of it came into the air, thereby adding weight. That helped, but it didn't solve the problem, because in some cases, you need a decrease in the weight. In others, you may need an increase and then a decrease. I tried pulley devices. I tried hanging by my knees from a trapeze. I tried hanging by my heels, but that has certain problems, especially when you fall on your head.

6.

PLAYBOY: So inventing that Nautilus shell-shaped device was your big breakthrough.
JONES: I was living in Africa in 1968 and, as usual, I'd built myself a machine. It was something of an improvement, but it was still a long way from being what I wanted. One night, I got an idea that I thought had great merit. I immediately called one of my people and, together, we drew a part over the telephone. I said, "Build it and have it here by eight o'clock in the morning." Well, we installed it and it did not work. It was a total, absolute, abysmal failure. But it failed so obviously that for the first time, I understood why.

I knew how to modify and rebuild it. Immediately, other problems presented themselves. I stayed with it night and day and slowly solved the problems, one after the other. The Nautilus machine is a thinking man's bar bell—nothing more or less. For the first time in history, a machine provides exercise for all of the muscle structure through a complete range of motion.

7.

PLAYBOY: Just how many ways can you build a strong body?

JONES: There is only one way to build a strong body, and that is to exercise against a resistance that is high enough to provide overload. For an old lady, that may mean getting out of her chair and walking across the room. For someone else, it may mean doing squats with an 800-pound bar bell. When you exercise with overload, you're sending a signal to your body saying, "This muscle is asking me to do things that I cannot do. It's expecting me to perform the impossible—so make me stronger." And the body will respond to that by growing, if it can. Exercise itself doesn't produce anything. It's a catalyst that stimulates your body to grow.

8.

PLAYBOY: How did you acquire your exercise expertise?

JONES: There aren't any experts in any field. There are people who are arrogant enough to announce they're expert. There are other people who are dumb enough to believe them. I went to the ninth grade. I don't consider myself an expert on anything. I've been curious all my life. I have

done research all my life in a wide variety of fields.

At the moment, we're doing large-scale research with a gynecologist in an attempt to determine what, if any, beneficial results can be produced for pregnant women by training them before, during and after childbirth. We're entering into our sixth year of research with poisonous snakes. We're nine years—and many millions of dollars—into research into computerization of medical tools and exercise equipment. Of course, I would like the research to develop into something of value.

9.

PLAYBOY: As a big-game hunter, did you ever venture so far into the jungle that your bearers got frightened and fled?

JONES: I never used bearers. I usually traveled light. As Daniel Boone said, "I've never been lost, but sometimes I didn't know where I was for a few weeks." If you're lost and you're the leader, it's not a good idea to tell the other people that you're lost. Besides, most of my hunting has not been for the purpose of killing. I was never a trophy hunter. You don't see stuffed heads or tigerskins on the floor. I have some rattlesnake hides, but those are from snakes we were raising for research and they died of a virus.

I've captured animals alive all over the world for the purpose of relocating them. In some cases, they were going to be killed in a certain area and I moved them to where they could survive. I was in the animal business, buying and selling them to zoos and petshops, for quite a number of years. I look back on that with a lot of regret, because I don't particularly approve of zoos. Many of the types of animals I worked with are now almost extinct.

10.

PLAYBOY: Jungle borders are known to be porous. Are any foreign powers still out to dun you for customs infractions?

JONES: I haven't been over their hit lists lately. In 1968, I had built a studio in a place called Rhino Hill near Salisbury, Rhodesia. When things began to fall apart there, I came back to this country, and after I left Rhodesia, Ian Smith's government seized all my assets: seven ground vehicles, two aircraft, a brand-new helicopter, 5,000,000 feet of film, two studios full of equipment, cameras, weapons, ammunition, family records going back two centuries, my wife's insect collection and children's toys. I'm not all that enamored of the government over there. But don't ask me to give you rational explanations for other people's insane actions.

11.

PLAYBOY: Were you a fearless leader?

JONES: Anybody who's not afraid is a damn fool or a liar and probably both. But I refuse to live in fear.

I was sitting in a boat one time in the Caprivi Strip in Africa and I glanced back over my shoulder and made eye contact with a large crocodile that was stalking me from a distance of about 12 feet. Within another second or two, he'd have had me. That was obviously his intention. It didn't upset me, you know. Why worry about what didn't happen? You'd better concern yourself with what might happen next.

12.

PLAYBOY: You once risked your life to save a co-worker from the jaws of an angry lion. Were you aware of the danger then? Or was it a reflex action?

JONES: It would not have gone through my mind to do anything else. There's a tendency not to want to get involved, which I suppose is fear of some sort. I don't consider myself brave. I've spent a good deal of my life avoiding danger. Any time you've looked out the plane window and seen an engine burning off the wing, you've had all the adventure you want. But if you lead an active life, if you get around the country or around the world, you're going to have adventures.

13.

PLAYBOY: You've stalked big game, watched aircraft engines burn and spent years training with weights. Wouldn't you agree that you've had a *macho* lifestyle?

JONES: It's silly, the connotation people try to put on *macho*. People who stand around on the beach flexing their muscles irritate me. I didn't wear short-sleeved shirts when I trained with weights.

Violence is not something to joke about. Toughness is fake. The real tough people in this world don't go around bragging about it. If you've been there, telling you about it is unnecessary, because you know. And if you haven't been there, you're not capable of understanding. If it's necessary to hurt someone or kill him in self-defense, you should do it and not worry about it.

14.

PLAYBOY: Do you have an arsenal of excuses for sloughing off and not using your machines?

JONES: I've worked out, on and off, for more than 40 years. My lifestyle has been such that I haven't always been in a position to exercise. You lay off a day and it becomes a week, and one thing leads to another; and when you're working 18 hours a day, seven days a week, it's hard to get around to it.

But as soon as I got back where I could exercise, I would go back to it. You'll always go back, because once you've experienced life in good condition, you cannot fail to notice the difference. It's so superior; you have much more energy. I can work longer hours, require less sleep, shrug off slight illnesses better. You feel
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"We own the largest television-production facility in the world. It makes NBC's look like a shithouse."

much better when you work out—and that doesn't mean six years: If you haven't made meaningful improvement in two weeks, you're doing it wrong.

15.

PLAYBOY: Is there anything Nautilus machines can't do?

JONES: They cannot develop the female bust. They can develop the muscles underneath it. They can strengthen those muscles, and it will have an effect upon the bustline. But as far as the breast itself is concerned, they can do nothing for that.

16.

PLAYBOY: What attracted you to films and video? Did you feel that only Arthur Jones could do justice to the Arthur Jones story?

JONES: In the Forties, I was doing something that had never been done, something that no one believed was even possible at the time: capturing adult crocodiles. I made a trip to Africa and captured 189 of them in excess of 11 feet and thousands smaller than that, and I brought them back to this country. I made a film of that for my own amusement, with no idea that I would ever sell it. But I did sell it to ABC, and it was used and rerun many times and it became something of a classic. They asked me if I had any more, so I went back to Africa and captured gorillas and chimpanzees and made a film of that. One thing led to another and, eventually, I found myself making films full time. I did everything just short of manufacturing and processing the film stock. I designed special photographic vehicles and camera mounts and lenses and edited the films.

Altogether, I made more than 300 films, mostly for television. I had my own national series, called *Wild Cargo*. When we started Nautilus, we began making films for advertising and promotional purposes; and then, as more sophisticated electronic video equipment became available, we switched over to video tape.

17.

PLAYBOY: Your inventory of TV-production equipment appears rather large. Do you intend to penetrate the nation's living rooms with programming the way you've penetrated its gymnasiums with Nautilus equipment?

JONES: I'm going to try. I'm not greedy. I just want it all. We own the largest television-production facility in the world. It makes NBC's look like a shithouse. That's not my opinion, it's theirs. They've been here and left in a state of shock. I'm sure we own more video equipment, more elec-

tronics than anyone else in the world. Television is proliferating—new networks, direct-to-home satellite broadcasting, video discs and video tapes. The first thing all those developments will require is programming—massive amounts of it. So you've got to have production facilities. There's no surplus of them in the world. Today, you may have to book a facility six months ahead. You just don't buy that kind of equipment off the shelf. Some of it you have to order years ahead and it takes a long time to wire it up and get your people trained. By the time things really begin to happen, we'll be just about the only game in town.

18.

PLAYBOY: Can you prosper in a field that has tripped up the likes of Freddie Silverman? Will we be tuning in Nautilus sitcoms before long?

JONES: Highly unlikely. I'm not uninterested in entertainment. Gordon Liddy and I have made a deal for a talk show; we're working on a pilot. We don't yet have anything we feel is ready to be released, but if and when we do, we'll release it. I hope I can bring people something of value that will be interesting, but it must have an entertainment component. Labeling a presentation educational is generally the kiss of death.

As far as competing with the networks is concerned, I wouldn't touch their type of programming with a ten-foot pole. Most of it is abysmal. But you don't succeed by attacking the establishment. You succeed by starting a whole new industry in a new direction; and, eventually, people follow you. But by then, it's too late: You're so far ahead, they don't even know what the hell

they're trying to copy. Eventually, the networks will attempt to compete with me.

Intelligent people don't watch television very much, for the simple reason that there's nothing on there fit to watch and they have the brains to realize it. Wait till they have something to watch!

19.

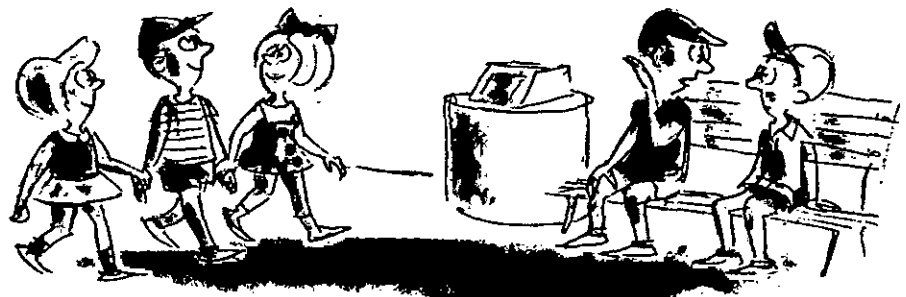
PLAYBOY: So there is life for Arthur Jones after Nautilus and crocodiles.

JONES: My balls are not crystal. As far as I'm concerned, when I'm dead, it's over. There is no longer a universe; it doesn't exist and it never did. So I would like to live as long as possible and mind my own business and do things that matter— younger women, faster airplanes and bigger crocodiles. That's the bottom line.

20.

PLAYBOY: "Younger women" places first among that trinity. Would that be a reference to your 20-year-old wife?

JONES: Yup. Certainly is. I'm living one of my fantasies. Terri has obvious attributes. She would certainly be on anyone's list of the most beautiful women on the planet. People notice her. About three years ago, we walked into a restaurant in Las Vegas, and Terri was all spiffed up, of course—and you know how people glance around a restaurant when other people walk in—well, about 100 men stood up and gave her a spontaneous ovation. I don't think they even noticed me. Later that night, we went to one of the big shows, and there were 50 stark-naked women—no dogs—prancing around up on the stage, and half the male members of the audience were turned clear around in their seats looking at Terri: turning their backs on the 50 women on the stage! I take great pride in my wife's appearance. But I don't have her as something to show off. She's got a fine brain. She drives me, she encourages me, she gives me the motivation to keep doing things that perhaps otherwise I wouldn't.



George Hole

"I think it has something to do with his dad owning Dolan's candy store."