

# EXERCISE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR

Putting aside his several pets for the moment, the versatile Arthur Jones is concentrating on a contraption that builds strong bodies several ways by BARRY McDERMOTT



**F**unny thing about Arthur Jones: he doesn't look like a swashbuckler. Anything but. At 52 his face is too craggy, his eyes aren't quite blue enough and there are distinct bags under them. He lives in a sleepy central Florida hamlet called Lake Helen, definitely not a hot spot. Still, there are clues that give away his other life. For one thing, Arthur Jones keeps a 12-foot, one-eyed alligator around the house.

Behind his disguise as Mr. Middle Age, Jones is an adventurer, airplane pilot, onetime mercenary, moviemaker and inventor. He has been bitten by 1) rattlesnakes, 2) lions, 3) men and other dangerous critters. He has married four times, been near death even more often and figures that there is hardly a country he has not visited—at least on a bombing run.

So much for flashbacks. This is to report that Arthur Jones has now turned his full attention to sport, and if he has not yet left a lasting mark on it, he has dented it up a bit. Jones has become a *confidant*. Dick Butkus invites him over for dinner. He has Don Shula's private phone number. Mercury Morris rides in his airplane.

This new celebrity status derives from the Nautilus machines Jones invented. They are a collection of weird contraptions designed to make athletes run faster, jump higher and play longer. The Miami Dolphins use Nautilus machines. So do most other NFL teams as well as a growing list of colleges, high schools, health clubs and YMCAs.

The sports world is always looking for its next Hula-Hoop and right now Nautilus equipment seems to be it, the hottest thing in physical training. There are 50 variations, each designed to work a specific muscle group. Sales have in-

Relaxed among his reptiles, Jones feels one way to fix critics is to put them in the pit.

creased 200% each of the last four years and orders are backlogged, even though a Nautilus installation can run from several thousand dollars to about \$20,000. Nautilus machines are used by track athletes and basketball players. Businessmen, housewives and weight lifters are equally enamored with Nautilus results. Orthopedic surgeons buy them for rehabilitating their patients. Nautilus training centers are opening up across the country. One in Dallas has 50 machines, and there are people outside the doors at 6 a.m. waiting to get in.

The machines are about as bizarre as their creator. Some models look as if they belong out on the north 40, getting in the wheat. Many come with seat belts and there is one in which the athlete has to crank himself into position. Basic to them all is the isolation and concentration of force on the muscles exercised.

Not everybody loves Nautilus. Some critics, notably body builders, have resisted and ridiculed the machines, but their boos have been all but drowned out. Jones recently installed the 665-pound, one-eyed alligator in a pool outside his research gym and says he is contemplating building a door that opens onto a greased slide into the alligator pond and marking it **BODY BUILDERS**. Jones does not like people who do not like his machines.

Larry Gardner was the trainer of the world championship 1971 Dallas Cowboys and 1973 Miami Dolphins. "Let us just say that Nautilus isn't any better for strength building than the conventional methods of physical training," he says. "I think it is, but let us just suppose that all things are equal. Even so, Nautilus is better for three reasons: safety, since you don't have to worry about a barbell falling on you; flexibility, since you get a full range of motion from the exercises; and form, since most injuries in training occur when the person is out of position. The Nautilus machines are designed so you have to use good form to use them."

The tributes go on. Mike Reid, Cincinnati's All-Pro defensive tackle, had a chronic case of bad knees when he came out of Penn State, a condition that survived four operations. After the Bengals installed Nautilus equipment in 1972,

Reid was able to play an entire season without a knee injury for the first time in his career. That was reason enough for teammate Pat Matson to open two health clubs in Cincinnati and outfit them with Nautilus machines. Pete Brown, the Bengals' director of player personnel, now has a Nautilus franchise in seven Midwestern states.

Nautilus might turn out to be Jones' greatest success. In seeking his fortune, he has been a barnstorming pilot, a snake broker who sold several hundred thousand pounds of reptiles a year and an animal importer-exporter. He has operated airlines in Latin America and airplanes in Africa, doubling as a mercenary and filmmaker. Because Jones has never had a feel for what to do with money after he has made it—other than to spend it—he has wound up with little to show for his adventures.

Above all, Jones is a man in search of an audience, a raconteur who dominates whatever stage he is on. He finds no need to be humble and offers no apology. What other men would regard as gross defeats he sees as victories.

"I've done 50 things in my life, any one of which another man would give anything to have done once," says Jones. "I've been the length of the Congo, Nile and Amazon. I've captured an adult crocodile and an African elephant. I've invented a camera mount that is so steady you can use it from a helicopter flying in a whirlwind and the picture will be in focus. I've run a jeep into a tree at 60 mph, been bitten by poisonous snakes 24 times, and hundreds of times by nonpoisonous snakes, survived a couple of plane crashes that weren't my fault, been chewed up by a lion and several other cats and been shot six times, axed once and stabbed on occasion. It's been exciting."

The Jones face tells the story of that excitement. His head has a perpetual forward tilt, as if he were peering over the top of eyeglasses, courtesy of a broken neck suffered when a lion bit him. He smokes cigarettes incessantly and gets little sleep. But Jones has the muscular body of a 25-year-old. He gives the appearance, perhaps deliberately, of a man a moment away from violence.

There is reason: Jones is always ready

with countless tales of enemies and murky plots against him. Without smiling he says, "I've killed 600 elephants and 73 men in my life, and I'm more sorry about the elephants." Among the men who know Jones best, none will dispute his stories of mayhem—but most feel



Straining mightily, Mercury Morris works on a machine named for a nautilus seashell.

they are told for theatrical effect like, say, wearing sunglasses at night. A typical yarn has Jones becoming incensed when he learned a body builder had offered one of Jones' sons a marijuana cigarette. Versions of the subsequent battle vary, but the most-told one has Jones beating somebody unmercifully, with appropriate kicks and head smashings. One gets the idea. "I think it's a story that Arthur likes told," says an acquaintance. "It sort of keeps the townspeople in line." It also gets the attention of football coaches.

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Whether his intention is to outrage or grab attention, a story by Jones evokes reactions ranging from terror to laughter. He has a deep, distinctive voice, one that viewers of his old *Wild Cargo* television show would instantly recognize. As he gets involved in an anecdote his ears wiggle, his head jerks forward and his shoulders twitch. His speech is more lecture than conversation, the words often coming out in capital letters for emphasis. Listening, one gets the feeling that Jones has never been wrong. If he has, no one has found out.

Jones' manufacturing plant in Lake Helen is a large prefab steel building covering three blocks, a place frequently visited by coaches, trainers, athletes, professors, the curious and, occasionally, the unbalanced. On a recent day there were several pro football players, Butkus included; a couple of college athletes; a university professor; a body builder who drives 200 miles several times a week so he can work out on Nautilus equipment; "Sammy," who has lost well over 111 pounds while exercising under controlled conditions; a former Mr. America and another young man who said he wanted to be one; and a visiting chiropractor who claimed he could increase a person's strength by giving him a neck massage. To all of them Nautilus was an irresistible lure.

Said the professor, Dr. Stanley Plagenhoef of the University of Massachusetts, "Jones must be a mechanical genius. It's hard to figure out these machines after you see them already assembled, let alone try to make them."

After they study the Nautilus equipment the visitors study Arthur Jones and listen to his tales of adventure, most involving animals, which he finds more agreeable and occasionally as intelligent as people. "I had a jaguar once who learned how to open doors," Jones says. "I've seen elephants show more sense than people. If you can believe this, I knew a guy in New Orleans once who actually kept a goose tied up in his backyard. Now you know that a goose can be just about the meanest, most irascible creature on this earth. Can you imagine keeping one in your backyard? And then the guy had the gall to get mad when my jaguar tried to eat his goose. Some people think I'm crazy, a maniac. But they leave me alone."

Until recently, Jones kept an albino crocodile, the predecessor of the one-

eyed alligator, in a big tub outside his Lake Helen home. Jones also has a six-legged tortoise, a small wildcat called a jaguarundi, a slew of scorpions and baby pythons that belong to his 30-year-old wife Liza, who is an entomologist, a big lizard, plus miscellaneous spiders and insects.

Jones says he is averse to publicity, but that is a bit hard to take. Once one of his planes crash-landed when he was opening a snake show in Cincinnati. The pilot claimed he could not lower the landing gear, but there is a story that Jones paid him \$1,000 to belly in the plane, a guarantee of front-page coverage. Jones denies it. Terry Flynn, a United Press International reporter at the time, remembers watching Jones prove why a mongoose can always beat a cobra in a fight. "He walked into a room where he had these snakes, flicked a cobra so it would sit straight up, then began popping it on top of the head, jerking his hand back before it could strike him. I was convinced he was crazy."

Jones once traveled with a large lion which he locked in the bathroom of his hotel room while he made calls. After hearing the lion roar, the maids refused to clean the room, and the big cat ate or destroyed most of the room's furnishings, beginning with the bathroom door.

On another occasion in Mexico, Jones was in a pit with several boa constrictors, which he says are basically harmless unless you are a rabbit, when one of the snakes latched onto his arm. A man outside the pit grabbed the snake's tail and pulled. He got the snake away smartly—but several of its teeth remained embedded in Jones' arm. The man was convulsed with laughter. Jones grabbed the snake, doubled it up for use as a black-jack and chased the man, beating him over the head with the reptile.

Fighting weaves a zigzag pattern through Jones' life. He admits to being a mercenary on occasion. "I've run airlines in Latin America and flown planes in Africa," he says. "What else do you need to know? You can say we were engaged in antiterrorist activity, only drop the 'anti.' You're just creating outrages. Whatever the other side does, you do just a little worse."

Jones has had a lifelong fascination with airplanes. He now has three—a Beechcraft Baron, a Cherokee Six, a big twin-engine Fairchild propjet—plus a helicopter. He began flying in 1939 and

logged some 20,000 hours before he tired of counting. Between 1963 and 1967 his logbooks show that he flew in 57 countries. And for each hour of flying he has two stories to tell, especially from the days when he was hauling animals; like the time he flew a load of fish to Tampa for some South American clients.

"We hadn't been airborne but a few minutes when one of the owners of the fish accidentally started a life raft inflating, which can be a dangerous thing in a crowded airplane. First he tried to bite a hole in it, which was something to see. Finally someone punctured it with a screwdriver. We had a fuel stop scheduled for the Dominican Republic, which just happened to have a fresh military coup under way. Needless to say, the soldiers were quite interested in our plane, since it was a converted B-25 bomber. I took off from there so fast that I fouled one of the engines. One of the passengers was pounding me on the back and screaming hysterically while pointing out the window at the engine, which was putting out some ominous-looking smoke. Then we ran into a hurricane over Miami, landed and had to take off again because the fish were in danger of spoiling. When we got over Tampa the tower refused to believe anyone could be flying in that weather. They thought it was a prankster on the radio. We finally made it. I won't even go into the trouble we had with the customs officials who blocked our plane with their car at one point in Miami, until I revved up one of the props and got the plane moving. The prop would have made scrap iron out of that car. Earlier the customs people were hinting around to see if I would be interested in bombing Cuba."

Jones is always working under an overload or self-imposed stress; he is so furious when he hears of a competitor downgrading his Nautilus machines that much of his day is spent explaining how he is going to defeat his business enemies. At a recent convention the competition installed one of its machines in a hotel lobby and went out for an evening of conviviality. Imagine their surprise when they returned to the hotel at 2 a.m. and discovered their machine disassembled and spread out on the lobby floor with Arthur Jones and several of his assistants taking photographs of the parts.

In 1968 Jones was at least \$500,000 in debt after an ill-fated wild animal moviemaking scheme in Rhodesia ended in

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a squabble with the government and the confiscation of \$1,670,000 worth of his equipment and belongings, including two airplanes and a helicopter. Rhodesia claimed the seizure was to settle Jones' debts. Jones, who insists he was square with Rhodesia, called it theft.

"Well," said wife Liza after they arrived back in the U.S., "what do we do now?"

"I can go to General Motors or Ford because they're the only ones who can afford me," said Arthur. "They'll say, 'What do you do?' And I'll say, 'Anything you want, better than anyone you've ever had.' They'll say, 'How much do you want?' I'll say, 'Well, half a million to start. That will about pay my debts. But after six months I will need a raise.' And that will end that conversation."

Instead Jones borrowed \$2,500 from a sister and built a machine he dubbed "The Blue Monster." It was the first practical Nautilus, a pullover-torso model. Liza made the upholstery for it. Jones loaded it onto a trailer and drove non-stop to a weight-lifting meet in Los Angeles, arriving with \$7 and an expired credit card in his pocket. People were interested. In 1971 the Kansas City Chiefs became the first pro team to buy the machine, and Jones says a year or so later he turned down \$15 million from a group of investors who wanted 49% of his company.

To call Nautilus a weight-lifting machine is a vast oversimplification. The core of the apparatus is a small cam fashioned in the shape of the interior of a nautilus seashell, the cam's silhouette being similar to an archer's bow. Basically the cam allows resistance to be varied throughout the exercise so that as the strength of the muscles changes, the load they are asked to move varies correspondingly. The result is minimal exercise time and maximal muscle growth and strength gain. Jones recommends that workouts on his machines be restricted to 45-minute sessions three times a week.

"At first people don't believe it," says Nautilus advocate Casey Viator. "I was skeptical, like everybody else who thought they had to work out four hours a day seven days a week to get any results." Viator won the 1971 Mr. America title after training on Nautilus equipment. Now he is 23, has a 31-inch waist, a 51-inch chest and upper arms that are

almost 19 inches in circumference. He stands 5'8" and weighs a bit over 200 pounds. He follows no special diet. In fact, on a recent promotional trip across the country, Viator never skipped the bread, potatoes or dessert. And he has not done sit-ups in three years because Jones calls them superfluous.

Viator was part of a controversial Nautilus project termed the Colorado Experiment that was conducted in May of 1973 at Colorado State University. In 28 days, under the supervision of Dr. Elliott R. Plese, a professor of physical education, and several other faculty members, Viator showed an increase of 63.2 pounds of muscular mass while exercising on Nautilus machines. In that period, he took part in 14 high-intensity workouts, each averaging almost 34 minutes.

To be sure, there were extenuating circumstances. Viator had lost part of a finger in an industrial accident four months before and had not trained since. His weight and strength had declined appreciably, so he could be expected to make some gains upon resuming training. But the results were spectacular. "If I hadn't witnessed it, I don't think I could believe it," Plese noted a year later.

Many people still refuse to accept the result. A competitor in the weight-training field claimed that the "before" photos had been retouched to make Viator appear smaller. One Colorado State educator was so shocked by Viator's transformation that he badgered Jones and Plese for the "secret" food supplement that he thought must be responsible for the additional weight. Jones finally told him, "It's elephant dung. I discovered a tribe of super warriors in Africa who used it in their diet."

"I *knew* it," cried the man triumphantly. "Where can I get some?"

"People don't want to believe the truth," says Jones. "They want a secret, the 'magic belt' that will take inches off their waist, the high-protein supplement that will make their muscles grow. They want vitamins to make them younger, health foods, organic vegetables. A balanced diet and exercise are the secrets to good health. But you try and tell that to one of these muscle-head guys, and they don't want to listen. They still take all the pills, all the vitamins and all the growth drugs."

The Nautilus machines provide additional benefits. Surgeons and physical

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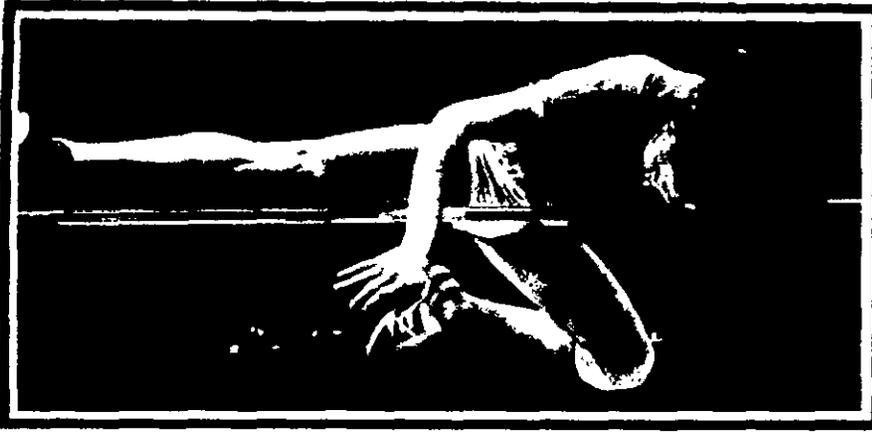
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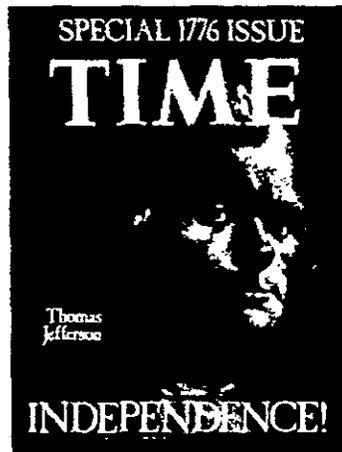
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therapists find them superior tools for rehabilitation work. Jones filmed Dick Butkus' knee operation last summer and is keeping a cinematic record of his progress. Next fall Jones wants to film every Georgia Tech football game until the inevitable knee injury occurs, then film the victim as he progresses from surgery to recovery while exercising on Nautilus.

A few weeks ago Jones launched perhaps the most ambitious of all his Nautilus projects, the ultimate convincer, a program he feels "will send shock waves throughout the sports world." Fittingly for a man of mystery, Jones feels that this latest adventure must be kept secret for the moment, even though he was able to offer certain clues. Among them: the test program is being methodically supervised by several people of unimpeachable character; it involves a large group of strong young men and three special Nautilus machines; finally, "nothing like it has ever been done before."

"What if there was a way to solve the oldtime bugaboo of neck injuries?" Jones muses, still not telling his secret. "What if one could properly strengthen the neck through isolated workouts? Imagine the effect it would have on sport." And what if after only two hours of such workouts, the machine proved that it had grabbed another problem by the collar? It had indeed, Jones revealed. And so much for secrets.

Arthur Jones finds himself in the curious position of a man who has spent his life fighting with people, and now has given them a tool to improve their health, the device to fix up a tennis elbow, to repair housemaid's knee or take the balloon out of a beer belly. Could Arthur Jones be Dr. Tom Dooley with muscles, the quintessential humanitarian, building Nautilus machines for the welfare of mankind? "You don't do things for that reason," he says. "Anybody who says he does is a liar. You're interested in a particular subject because it intrigues you. If someone else benefits from it, so be it. But that other stuff is junk. You start out doing something for yourself. If I get some money out of this, I'd like to make some more movies, but they'd have to be done without outside influence. I'd like to relocate an entire herd of African elephants in this country, and then try to save them from extinction. And I would like to bomb Rhodesia and stomp on the ashes."

Spoken like a true sportsman. **END**