

Norm Cates'

CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF TRUST

George Jackson and TG - The Gym

*40-Year Veteran Club Business Guru and World Class
Creator/Operator of Unique Club Environments*



The Jackson Family (L to R - Daughter, Krista; Wife, Cheryl; Son, James and George Jackson)

JULY 2023

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CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF TRUST

George Jackson and TG - The Gym

40-Year Veteran Club Business Guru and World Class Creator/Operator of Unique Club Environments

By: Norm Cates

America has an abundance of great health and fitness club entrepreneurs, developers and operators. All across the country, we have individuals who've devoted their entire lives to this industry... each with the *single goal* of providing their communities with unique, well designed and professionally built clubs that are packed with a variety of exercise equipment, machines and services.

George Jackson is a 40-year veteran of our industry, and when you read his story, you're going to feel compelled to **Tip Your Hat** to George for what he's achieved over those 40 years. I sure did! And, importantly, you will be astounded by encyclopedia of names he will share when giving credit to those whom he has worked with along the way. I sure was!

Back in March, the day before the 2023 IHRSA Convention and Trade Show began in San Diego, I had the great pleasure of visiting George Jackson at his Southern California club chain. Together, George and I visited four of his clubs, and I met some of his key partners and staff.

George has given his Southern California, Arizona, and now, Florida regions of America a lineup of truly very special clubs... clubs that once I'd spent the day visiting and touring them with George, I left shaking my head in total amazement. Folks, during my 49 years of involvement in our health and fitness club industry, I've had the pleasure of visiting thousands of clubs in cities all across America, Canada

and Mexico. And, after that vast experience since 1974, I will say here and now that George Jackson's chain of clubs he calls **TG - The Gym** are some of the most impressive I've ever seen anywhere.

It's now my great pleasure to present to you all an in-depth interview with *one of our industry's greatest entrepreneurs, the one and only... George Jackson. ENJOY!*

An In-Depth Interview With George Jackson, Owner of TG The Gym

Club Insider (C.I.) - George, where were you born, and where did you grow up?

George Jackson (GJ) - I was born and raised in San Pedro, California, near the Los Angeles harbor. My grandparents migrated from Croatia during *World War I*. My grandfather was a longshoreman from 1924 until he retired in 1958, and sadly, he died on the day of his retirement party. My grandfather also survived the largest non-nuclear explosion (Halifax Explosion, December 6, 1917, see the book: *Too Many to Mourning*).

My father was born in Wilmington, California and graduated from *Banning High School*. He was also a longshoreman and marine clerk from age 20 to 66 when he retired. On average, my father worked six days a week and had periods during the year where he worked 72 days in a row. He passed away in 2005. My mother was born in Chicago, Illinois and moved to San Pedro when she was 12 years old. She graduated from *San Pedro High School*. She worked on an assembly line from high school graduation until I was three years old. She passed away in 2008.

I have three younger sisters and an older stepbrother and a sister from my father's first marriage.

C.I. - Where did you go to school, and what did you study? What sports did you play?

GJ - My elementary school, *Crestwood Elementary*, was a block from our house. My middle school, *Dodson Junior High*, was about 5 miles from our house, and I biked to and from every day. As a child, I loved to play sports: basketball, baseball, football and tennis, but surfing was my passion and



George Jackson

skateboarding when the waves were flat. My mother did not drive, so I got to practice every day either by bike or running.

I earned money mowing other peoples' lawns and had a newspaper route from 11 to 14. At 14, my mother got me the perfect job at Cabrillo Beach (in San Pedro) where I worked in the bait shop on the pier. On weekends, I worked from 6AM to 2PM and had my surfboard ready when there was a surf. And, I had all the fishing poles I needed to fish between customers. My side hustle was selling fish I caught to the fisherman who did not catch anything that day. I saved as much money as I possibly could to go on a surf trip all over the world, starting in Hawaii, then South Africa, Japan, Indonesia (Bali, Sumatra, Java, Lombok),

(See **George Jackson** Page 8)



Inside the Insider: Edition #355

■ Body Diversity: Its Impact on Fitness Marketing - **By:** Sara Kooperman, JD and Sydney Rothchild

■ What If All of Your Members Were Raving Fans? - **By:** Herb Lipsman

■ When It Comes to Decision Making, "Real" Always Trumps "Feel." - **By:** Chris Stevenson

■ Question: How Do You Set Up Success? - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton

■ Steve and Sally Goldman, Owners of the Weymouth Club, Honored

■ IHRSA Announces New Staff and Promotions

■ And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody!** This is your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **355th monthly edition!** I'm really **happy** that you're reading this edition, and I'm also very **thankful** that you've tuned in again as I proceed on my keyboard with my monthly habit of "Telling-It-Like-It-Is!"

■ **Is AMERICA a GREAT COUNTRY, or WHAT!? Hmm... hmm... hmm! HAPPY 4th OF JULY!!! GOD BLESS AMERICA! GOD BLESS YOU ALL!**

■ Our friends at **IHRSA** have announced some big staffing news. Read all about it in the **Press Release** on **Page #17**.

■ Long-time industry veterans, and *Club Insider's April 2012 Cover Story Subjects*, **STEVE AND SALLY GOLDMAN**, Owners of *Weymouth Club*, were recently honored as the recipients of the 2023 Gardner Ward Chase Memorial Award for lifetime contributions to New England Tennis. Congratulations Steve and Sally! And, folks, be sure to read the **Press Release** on **Page #15**.

■ Our friends and *Club Insider Advertiser*,

Daxko, announce an expansion of their leadership team with the appointment of **Wes Gillette** as *Chief Product Officer*. With over 17 years of experience pioneering solutions, Gillette brings a wealth of expertise in product excellence to drive the company's vision of enhancing user experiences, fostering rapid innovation, facilitating seamless integrations and prioritizing valuable customer feedback. In his role as CPO, Gillette will spearhead product innovation, developing a forward-thinking product strategy that directly caters to the evolving needs of the health and fitness industry. Leveraging his deep understanding of market dynamics and customer insights, as well as his extensive product management experience, Gillette will ensure Daxko stays at the forefront of industry trends. Welcome Wes! And, folks, check out the **VFPnext Ad** on **Page #5**.

■ As part of their 40-year anniversary celebration, *24 Hour Fitness* is launching an initiative with *Playworks* to inspire the next generation to live a more active and healthy lifestyle. Playworks is a national nonprofit organization that helps children transform their physical and emotional health through the power of play. Children today engage

in active play 50% less than their parents did, putting their health and wellbeing at greater risk than ever before, which this new partnership aims to address. **Good stuff folks, Stay Tuned!**

■ **TRX**, a global leader in functional training equipment and education announced the acquisition of **YBell**, an Australian revolutionary fitness equipment company known for its innovative designs and versatile training tools. This strategic acquisition enhances TRX's cutting-edge, multi-purpose, patented product offerings and training solutions. The acquisition will further enhance TRX's ecosystem enabling fitness enthusiasts, personal trainers and gym owners the access to a comprehensive range of functional training equipment and related education. A YBell certification is already offered as part of the TRX education curriculum in addition to YBell content securing a key place on the TRX Training Club App, which now features over 1,000 fitness classes and many weekly live classes.

■ **Self Esteem Brands (SEB)**, parent company of a global portfolio of fitness, health and wellness franchise brands, announces the official launch of **SUMHIIT**



Norm Cates

Fitness (pronounced "Summit Fitness"), its first studio brand available for franchising worldwide. The brand was officially unveiled at *FIT Summit* in Singapore. The SUMHIIT Fitness brand launch is part of SEB's aggressive global growth strategy: the company aims to have 10,000 fitness, health and wellness clubs and studios open worldwide by 2030. **WOW! Stay Tuned, Folks!**

(See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

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"Insider Speaks"

Body Diversity: Its Impact on Fitness Marketing

By: Sara Kooperman, JD & Sydney Rothschild

In recent years, there has been an increase in the range of body types companies have begun to include in their advertisements. One such example is Peloton's recent rebranding in a new advertisement. In a 90-second video promoting Peloton's app, real people of all shapes, sizes, fitness levels and ages were seen using the app to take classes at home. Previous advertisements were predominantly filled with extremely fit athletes using their equipment, so this rebranding is a significant change for the company and its audience. The portrayal of overweight participants in marketing campaigns has become a subject of debate. While inclusivity and body positivity are both extremely important, concerns arise regarding the potential health and economic implications that could follow promoting individuals with obesity in marketing campaigns.

Inclusivity and Body Positivity Body - Inclusivity and positivity are two concepts that work together to promote acceptance, respect and celebration of diverse body types and sizes. Societal body standards have been known to prioritize a narrow (thin) and often unrealistic goal of "the perfect body," which can lead to body shaming and discrimination. Body inclusivity advocates a push for equal representation of different body types that are typically underrepresented in mainstream media. These advocates encourage diverse representation across all platforms, including social media, print advertising and videos. Body positivity goes beyond representation and focuses on creating a positive attitude towards one's body and the bodies of others. The movement aims to counteract body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem and harmful body issues through self-care and self-love. It emphasizes the importance of promoting mental and emotional wellbeing along with physical health, as positive body image can positively impact an individual's overall self-esteem and quality of life. To summarize, the body-positive movement seeks to challenge societal beauty standards, promote a healthy acceptance of one's physical being and celebrate the diversity of all bodies.

Body Diversity in Brands - The fashion industry used to consist of young, skinny, female models on runways, magazines, advertisements and commercials. The body positivity movement argued how when companies and brands marketed

their products with a sole type of model, they were telling others who did not have that body type that they were not included in the brand. They were not welcome in their clothes and not invited into activities. There was a societal concern that this emphasis on being "thin" was influencing young women (and men) towards unhealthy medical conditions such as anorexia and bulimia. This push to be "fit" and "healthy" equated to being skinny, and this over-emphasis was negatively influencing and affecting society. It was not until around 2010 with the rise of social media that the current body positivity movement started to make waves in industries through content creators on Instagram and Facebook advertising a healthy acceptance of diverse body shapes.

Social Media Pushed Diversity and Nike Followed - From discussing their own hardships in learning to love themselves to pushing for brands to be more inclusive, social media forced changes to occur. For instance, clothing retailer Aerie launched their "Aerie Real" campaign in 2014 that pledged to not airbrush or retouch their models and showcased models with diverse body types. The campaign positively resonated with consumers who were tired of seeing the same "perfect" bodies everywhere they looked to shop. Many brands soon followed, including fitness brands such as Nike, which released their first plus size collection in 2017. Their campaign included model Paloma Elsesser, influencers Grace Victory and Danielle Vainer, and hammer thrower Amanda Bignson. In a press release Nike said how they wanted, "to celebrate diversity and inclusivity of sport, the space will not just celebrate local elite and grassroots athletes through visual content, but also show Nike plus size and para-sport mannequins for the first time on a retail space."

Dangers of Celebrating Obesity - While the movement continues to grow with more brands and markets becoming more inclusive, it makes one wonder what downsides could follow in promoting larger body types? Although diversity in media is extremely important, promoting obesity without context or a direct focus can inadvertently normalize unhealthy lifestyle habits. It may also potentially discourage an obese individual from taking proactive steps towards a healthier future for themselves.

Obesity is defined by the World Health Organization as, "abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a

risk to health."

If marketing campaigns celebrate obesity without addressing the associated health risks, it may divert attention away from the importance of wellbeing and potentially downplay the significance of maintaining a healthy life. According to the CDC, individuals with obesity are at an increased rate for many serious illnesses and health conditions including coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and certain forms of cancer. Obesity is a common, serious and costly chronic disease that continues to increase across the United States. Ignoring the health risks through celebrating obesity without considering the potential life impacting consequences can be very problematic as the conversation then lacks the importance of a balanced diet, exercising and taking care of one's overall wellbeing.

Economic Considerations - Along with health concerns, there are also economic implications that follow promoting obesity. The healthcare costs related to obesity are considerable and place a notable burden on healthcare systems around the world. A study published in 2021 from the *Journal of Managed Care and Specialty Pharmacy* found that adults with obesity in the United States compared with those with a healthy weight experienced higher annual medical care costs by \$2,505. In addition, the effects of obesity raised costs in every category of care including inpatient, outpatient, and prescription drugs. In 2022, the CDC announced that obesity costs the U.S. healthcare system \$173 billion each year. Therefore, not only possibly increasing unhealthy lifestyles but further increasing healthcare costs and straining medical resources.

Balancing Inclusivity and Health - The world has changed, and we now need to find a balance between inclusivity and health considerations. Promoting body positivity and inclusivity cannot come at the cost of disregarding health risks typically associated with obesity. One solution is to push for a more encompassing approach to body diversity in marketing. For example, campaigns can emphasize overall wellbeing, self-care and self-love rather than just focusing on size; doing so would highlight the importance of individuals' health and encourage positive lifestyles regardless of body size.

Wellbeing and Empowerment - Promoting healthy behaviors like regular physical activity can inspire individuals to prioritize their wellbeing while still



Sara Kooperman, JD

being inclusive. Providing education and empowering people to make their own informed decisions about their health would be another great step in finding a balance. Marketing campaigns can be a means of promoting a new product while also delivering accurate information about healthy living choices and taking care of oneself. Companies (and our health clubs) can also use responsible representation, which refrains from glorifying or promoting unhealthy habits and focus on showcasing people who embrace their bodies and make healthy life choices. Overall, inclusivity and health are both important, which is why balancing the two is the only way we can promote a society that can celebrate diversity and still prioritize the wellbeing of individuals.

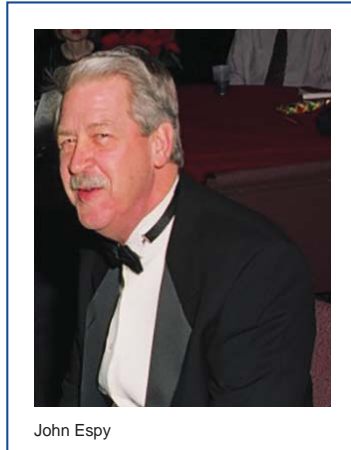
(Sara Kooperman, JD, CEO of SCW Fitness Education, WATERinMOTION, and S.E.A.T. Fitness sits on the Gold's Gym Think Tank and the canfitpro Advisory Panel and was a Founding Board Member for the Women In Fitness Association (WIFA). Recently nominated for the IDEA Fitness Leader of the Year Award, Kooperman won the 2022 Most Innovating Fitness Pro by Fitness Industry Technology Council. She is also an inductee into the National Fitness Hall of Fame, an Illinois State Businesswoman of the Year and a panelist for IHRSA's Talks & Takes Monthly Talk Show.)

(Sydney Rothschild, a Marketing Intern at SCW Fitness Education, is a rising sophomore at Loyola Marymount University where she is studying psychology and is an active member of Agapé, a service organization that focuses on destigmatizing mental health.)

...Norm's Notes

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■Folk, as I write this **Note**, I am deeply **SAD**. Why, might you ask? When you go through life, you're very lucky to have had **great friends in your life you can call FRIENDS FOR LIFE**. Well, **JOHN ESPY** was one of my *few friends for life*. Today, I was informed that **JOHN**, a close friend of mine for the past 30+ years, had passed away. His passing happened down in Dothan, Alabama, where John had gone to be with his **102-year-old Momma. MAY JOHN ESPY REST IN PEACE! And... I cannot forget this: *Roll Tide!***



John Espy

■**FRIENDS and COLLEAGUES...** I received the following writing from **GEORGE "MITTS" HOMOKAY**, a former *Rome Free Academy High School* football teammate and classmate of mine. George got his nickname: "**MITTS**" because he's got the **biggest hands** I've ever seen on anyone, anywhere. Because "Mitts" took the time to send this to me, I read this missive from start to finish. And, after I had read it just one time, I concluded that I simply would not be doing my duty as your **Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** were I not to share this truly brilliant commentary with you all. Written by **ZHOU DAXIN**, this writing applies to **ALL** of us, no matter **WHO** we are, **WHERE** we are, **WHAT** we do in life and **WHAT** our age or sex is. *I urge you not to skip over it AND to share this with people you know and love.* Zhou Daxin's latest novel, *The Sky Gets Dark Slowly*, is a sensitive exploration of old age and the complex, hidden emotional worlds of the elderly in a rapidly aging population. In it Daxin writes, and I quote him here:

"Many elderly speak as though they know everything, but of old age they are in fact as ignorant as children. Many elderly are, in fact, completely unprepared for what they are to face when it comes to getting old and the road that lays ahead of them.

In the time between a person turning 60 years old, as they begin to age, right until all the lights go out and the sky gets dark, there are some situations to keep in mind, so that you will be prepared for what is to come, and you will not panic.

ONE - The people by your side will only continue to grow smaller in number. People in your parents' and grandmothers' generation have largely all left, whilst many of your peers will increasingly find it harder to look after themselves, and the younger generations will all be busy with their own lives. Even your wife or husband may depart earlier than you, or than you would expect, and what might then come are days of emptiness. You will have to learn how to live alone, and to enjoy and embrace solitude.

TWO - Society will care less and less for

you. No matter how glorious your previous career was or how famous you were, aging will always transform you into a regular old man and old lady. The spotlight no longer shines on you, and you have to learn to contend with standing quietly in one corner, to appreciate the hubbub and views that come after you, and you must overcome the urge to be envious or grumble.

THREE - The road ahead will be rocky and full of precarity. Fractures, cardio-vascular blockages, brain atrophy, cancer... these are all possible guests that could pay you a visit any time, and you would not be able to turn them away. You will have to live with illness and ailments, to view them as friends, even; do not fantasize about stable, quiet days without any trouble in your body. Maintaining a positive mentality and getting appropriate, adequate exercise is your duty, and you have to encourage yourself to keep at it consistently.

FOUR - Prepare for bed-bound life, a return to the infant state. Our mothers brought us into this world on a bed, and after a journey of twists and turns and a life of struggle, we return to our starting point --the bed-- and to the state of having to be looked after by others. The only difference being, where we once had our mothers to care for us, when we prepare to leave, we may not have our kin to look after us. Even if we have kin, their care may never be close to that of your mother's; you will more likely than not, be cared for by nursing staff who bear zero relation to you, wearing smiles on their face all whilst carrying weariness and boredom in their hearts. Lay still and don't be difficult; remember to be grateful.

FIVE - There will be many swindlers and scammers along the way. Many of them know that the elderly have lots of savings, and will endlessly be thinking of ways to cheat them out of their money through scam phone calls, text messages, mail, food and product samples, get-rich-quick schemes, products for longevity or enlightenment... basically, all they want is to get all the money. Beware, and be careful, hold your money close to you. A fool and his

money are soon parted, so spend your pennies wisely.

Before the sky gets dark, the last stretches of life's journey will gradually get dimmer and dimmer, naturally it will be harder to see the path ahead that you are treading towards, and it will be harder to keep going forward.

As such, upon turning 60, it would do us all well to see life for what it is, to cherish what we have, to enjoy life whilst we can, and to not take on society's troubles or your children's and grandchildren's affairs for yourself. Stay humble, don't act superior on account of your own age and talk down to others - this will hurt yourself as much as it will hurt others.

As we get older, all the better we should be able to understand what respect is and what it counts for. In these later days of your lives, you have to understand what it means, to let go of your attachments, to mentally prepare yourself. The way of nature is the way of life; go with its flow, and live with equanimity.

For all of us, a nice read, very beautiful, very true! Hardly the day started and... it is already six o'clock in the evening. Barely arrived on Monday and it's already Friday. ...and the month is almost over.

...and the year is almost up. ...and already 50 or 60 or 70 years of our lives have passed. ...and we realize that it is **too late to go back...**

So... Let's try to take full advantage of the time we have left... Let's not stop looking for activities that we like... Let's put color in our grayness... Let's smile at the little things in life that put balm in our hearts.

And yet, we must continue to enjoy serenely the time that remains. Let's try to eliminate the 'after'... I do it after... I will say after... I will think about it after... We leave everything for 'later' as if 'after' was ours.

Because what we do not understand is that:

after, the coffee cools...
after, priorities change...
after, the charm is broken...
after, health passes...
after, the children grow up...
after, the parents get older...
after, the promises are forgotten...
after, the day becomes the night...
after, life ends...

And all that '**after**,' we find it's often too late... So... leave nothing for '**later**'... Because in always waiting for later, we can lose the best moments, the best

experiences, the best friends, the best family...

The day is today... The moment is now...

We are no longer at the age where we can afford to postpone until tomorrow what needs to be done right away.

So, let's see if you'll have time to read this message and then share it. Or maybe you'll leave it for... 'later'... And you won't **ever** share it '**ever**'... Even share with those who are not yet 'seniors'.

May you be well and happy...

■**JUSTIN** and I want to say **Thanks for reading Club Insider!**

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■**God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home** to all of our troops who have served around the world. **God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 49-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of *Club Insider*, now in its 30th year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

Make It Fun!

...George Jackson

continued from page 3

Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Fuji and all over Mexico. To the surfers reading this, we surfed *Ulu's* with five others, *G-Land* with four of my surf friends, *Nias Empty*, *Desert Point* without a soul in sight, and *Bingin's* before it had a name (we called it Spot X).

I started fitness training in a friend's garage at age 14 (1973), and I continued at the very small gym at *San Pedro High School*. A friend had the key to the high school gym so we were able to train at night after school. I started reading *Iron Man* and *Muscle Builder* magazines (later becoming *Muscle & Fitness*) and wanted to be able to train with all the top body builders in Venice.

After I graduated from San Pedro High School, I worked as a longshoreman my first two years of college. I played college tennis but still surfed as much as possible. Between working full time, playing college tennis and a full course load, my grades suffered for the first time in my life, so something had to be done. I still remember how much I wanted to be on the *USC Tennis Team* but realized I could not work full time to be able to afford to stay in school, get good grades and play tennis four hours a day. The last two years of college, my Dad was able to help me get a job as a security guard at the dock he worked at, *Indies Terminal*. My job was to make sure nothing was stolen from the docks at night, from 10PM to 6AM. Most nights, I was able to study all night. My supervisors were ex-marines and made sure I made my rounds every 15 minutes even when nothing was going on at the terminal. After one year, they trusted me with the whole terminal when nothing was going on. During those two years as a security guard, I saw lots of stuff go on that I would not and could not discuss with anyone. The great part of this job was that it was a Union job, and I was

paid well, enough to pay for my tuition at USC. Even back in 1981 and 1982, it was still over \$20,000 per year. On the days that I did not have to work (usually Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday), especially during the Summer, we would have lots to do every day. That consisted of a surf session from 5AM to 9AM, skateboarding from 9AM to 10AM, tennis from 10AM to 1PM and hitting the gym from 4PM to 6PM, in between eating as much as we could.

As I mentioned, during my whole childhood and through high school, I played all the major sports: baseball, football and basketball, along with surfing and skateboarding. At 14, I started playing tennis, and that year, I also ran my first *Palos Verdes Marathon*. I finished 5th in my age group; I ran it the following year and finished 1st in my age group. I credit weight training with keeping me strong for all the sports I played.

Fortunately, I had friends that were very good at tennis, and they let me play with them. This helped me develop into a good tennis player quickly. I had a very good senior year of high school tennis and played college tennis as a freshman and sophomore. Weight training continued to be a regular part of my training. Junior and senior years of college were focused on finishing with good grades. During my senior year, I joined a gym near USC's campus called *City Gym*, which was a hard-core gym in Downtown LA next to the Convention Center. I trained with friends and really started getting serious about training and putting on some muscle.

In 1982, I graduated from USC with an accounting degree and started working in downtown LA at *Peat Marwick* (now *KPMG*) and the largest Big 8 firm at the time. I was fortunate to work in their small business advisory group and was able to work with quite a few companies that went public after we finished their audits. I got a lot of great experience working in various industries during two years at *KPMG*.



TG Mesa - Team, Family and Friends

I moved to Venice Beach and joined *World Gym* on Main Street with my friend and roommate. Prior to joining, we checked out both *World Gym* and *Gold's Gym*. We liked them both but ended up joining *World Gym* because the day we checked it out, **Arnold Schwarzenegger** and **Franco Columbu** were training together, and being able to see them train was something we were looking forward to. **Joe Gold** signed us up, and after joining, we were going to do a chest workout. It was a Monday evening, and it was busy. The club was about 4,000 square feet, and the workout area was on the second floor. It was close enough to where we lived that we either walked or rode bikes, which worked out well, because there was not much parking there.

Our first workout did not go so well. We started at the bench press. As I was loading a 45-pound plate on one side, I did not realize it had narrow bar holders, and the plate came off the bar hitting with a loud bang. Joe Gold came running from behind the counter and started yelling at me. If it weren't for **Eddie Giuliani** convincing Joe to give me another chance, I would have been kicked out. It could have been the end of my gym career even before it ever got a chance to get started!

For the years 1982 and 1983, I worked hard as a CPA at *KPMG* and trained hard at *World Gym* at least six days a week. I finally started to make some gains, small incremental gains in size, but good gains in strength. I also started eating

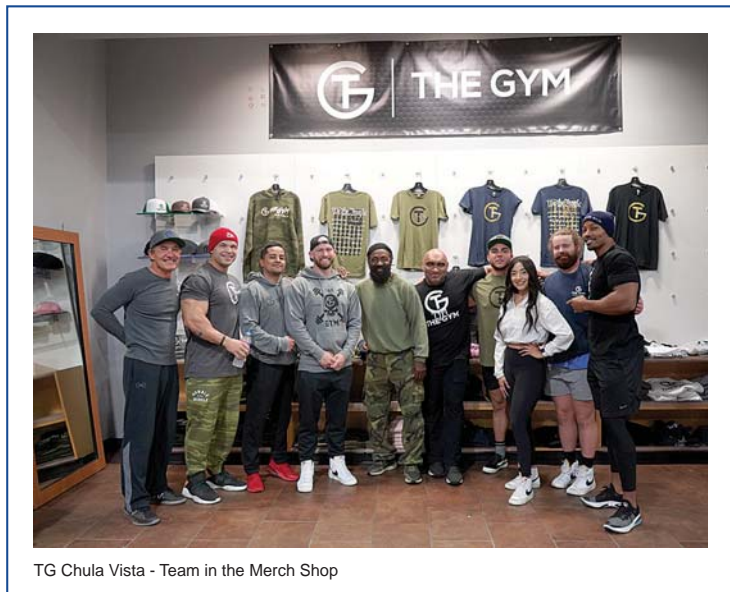
much cleaner and healthier meals.

C.I. - George, when and how did you become involved in the health and fitness club industry?

GJ - Near the end of 1983, my manager at *KPMG* calls me in his office and tells me he received a call from *Gold's Gym* to bid on some accounting and consulting work. He asks me to join him for the meeting, and this is the first time I met the owners of *Gold's Gym*: **Pete Grymkowski**, **Ed Connors** and **Tim Kimber**. At the time, *World Gym* only had that one location in Santa Monica, whereas as *Gold's Gym* had started advertising in *Muscle & Fitness Magazine* and already had 70 licensed gym locations in the USA and Canada.

We were hired to do a review of *Gold's Gym* financial statements and consult them on the offer they had from **Richmond Chandler III** to purchase *Gold's Gym* for **\$6 million**. *Richmond Chandler* was a *McDonald's* franchisee from Canada who owned 18 locations at the time. He wanted to replace the *Gold's Gym* license program with a *McDonald's* style franchise system. At the time *Gold's Gyms* revenues were **\$2.2 million** from gym revenues, gym license fees, clothing sales and book license fees.

The *Gold's Gym* job was a super small assignment for *KPMG*, so my manager allowed me to be the lead on the job. During the engagement, I got to know Pete, Ed Connors and Tim pretty well. Pete did not like the fact that I was a member of *World Gym*, so he gave me a membership to *Gold's Gym*, and I started training there. It was a different environment than at *World Gym*, but it still had an amazing community of lifters and some awesome workout intensity. I got the opportunity to train alongside so many other great bodybuilders, coaches and celebrities: **Gary Strydom**, **Charles Glass**, **Tom** (See *George Jackson Page 10*)



TG Chula Vista - Team in the Merch Shop

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It's a dynamic approach to debt recovery that maximizes cash flow and member experience.



...George Jackson

continued from page 8

Platz, Mike Christian, Robby Robinson, Gregory Hines, Hulk Hogan and so many others.

In late 1984, the owners of Gold's Gym - Venice offered me the opportunity to join the team as their CFO. I accepted and was super excited to be involved as the gym license business and apparel sales were growing quickly. Initially, I worked on establishing accounting processes and procedures, adding accounting staff and working with **Paul Grymkowski** to hire staff to assist him with gym licensing administration. I was so fortunate to get involved in most aspects of the gym business: gym operations, apparel designs and purchases, gym licensing and the first Gold's gym supplement line. It was such a great experience working with the Gold's Gym team at the time: the now late Pete and Paul Grymkowski, Ed Connors, Tim Kimber and our friend, **Derek Barton**. We were a super small team but achieved great growth during the time I was there. I am so grateful to Pete, Tim and Ed for this opportunity to get involved with the gym at such a high level at a very young age... I was 23 years old.

C.I. - That is incredible. Please take us through some key career moments prior to *TG the Gym*. Please certainly tell us more about the people along the way.

GJ - In 1984, Ed Connors gave me the opportunity to invest in *Gold's Gym - Reseda* (Reseda, California), which was one of the first five Gold's Gym licenses. There, I was able to work the 11PM to 5AM shift a few days a week and got my first experience as a Gym Owner / Operator. I still worked at *Gold's Gym - Venice* as the CFO.

In 1985, Ed Connors introduced me to **Steve O'Brien**, and we became partners in *Gold's Gym - Walnut Creek*.

Steve and I are still good friends and were also partners in *Muscle Sport Productions*, a physique event production company from 2011 to 2022. Also, Ed Connors introduced me to **Scott Kubitz**, and I invested and was the accountant for the Gold's Gyms in El Paso, Texas.

In 1986, while working at Gold's Gym - Venice, Ed Connors informs me that the Gold's Gym licensee in San Diego (Pacific Beach), California (3rd Gold's Gym licensee) is being evicted by their landlord and asked if I would be interested in being part of the team to get a new lease and reopen the gym. This is where I was super fortunate to be introduced to **Rick Stephenson**. Rick Stephenson was an *Army Ranger*, who had just completed his service, and a competitive bodybuilder. He was excited to become the primary owner and operator of the gym. Rick and his team have been operating that gym over 37 years now. **Brad Rutherford** has been part of the crew for over 35 years, **Ed Schoenborn** for over 25 years, and **Ted Bleckman**, who opened the gym for over 20 years. The rest of the crew continues to serve the community every day with the same passion and disciple as from day one in 1986. I have been extremely fortunate to serve a small supporting role on Rick's team for the past 37 years, as the Accountant and a Partner; all the credit for this gym's success is solely due to Rick and his team.

From 1986 to 1996, I engaged in the opening and operating of several Gold's Gym, primarily in California: *Huntington Beach, Santa Cruz, Oceanside, Northridge, San Marcos, Scripps Ranch, Vista and Upland*. Some of my partners during this period include: **Dave Zachry**, who is currently *National Account Rep for Matrix*, and **Jon Loyd**, my *Partner at Gold's Gym - Northridge*. At our San Diego gyms: **Lou Desantis, Dan Chalberg, Manny Reyes, Jon Depolo, Frank Colletti** and many others who contributed so much to



Muscle Camp with Joe Weider and the Muscle Camp Crew - 1990

the success of these gyms. I am so grateful to all of my partners over these years for all their contribution to making all of our gyms so awesome.

Along the way, I was also a partner in the *Joe Weider's Muscle & Fitness Camps* with **Marc Missioreck, Dave Zelon** and **Bill King** from 1988 to 1992. I was fortunate to get to know all the great bodybuilders of this era: **Lee Haney, Rich Gaspari, Lee Labrada, Mike Quinn, Shawn Ray, Gary Strydom, Samir Banout, Mike Christian, Robby Robinson, Luis Frietas, Cory Everson, Lenda Murray, Anja Langer** and **Carla Dunlop**. I also got to know some of the past era greats: **Tom Platz, Bill Pearl, Frank Zane, Bill Grant, Franco Columbu, Rachel McLish** and so many others. For those who experienced the Muscle Camp, it created great lifelong memories. For me, it was the great team of staff, educators and trainers that we assembled to serve the campers: **Tom Deters** (*Director of Education*), **Bob Lefave, Chris Aceto, Tracy Olrich, Dave Doolittle, Darryn Willoughby, Dave Kuykendall, Tom Purvis, Rainer Hartmann, Jodi Podesta, Sandra Blackie, John Gust, Scott and David Hartle, Beth Deters, Lynn Conkwright, Nathan Poole, Pete Aquilino** and **Vincent Scalisi** plus so many others who worked as trainers and staff at the camps.

1996 - 1998 - During all my surf trips to Indonesia, we always had a layover in Singapore, a day going and another day coming back. Even in the 1980s,

Singapore was a very modern, expensive and vibrant city with no gyms to train in. Every time I traveled there and could not find any new gyms, I would say that, if no one were going to open one, I will figure out how to get it done. After a lot of people saying Singaporeans will not go to the gym and not being able to find local financing, I found a group to help finance a project, and we opened *Planet Fitness Singapore* in 1997 and added a second location in 1998. Since the gym infrastructure did not exist in Singapore in 1997, we used our U.S. team to assist in sales training. **Frank Colletti** and **Victor Verhage** led the big charge to train and educate a personal training team. Our U.S. architects, **Glen Salcedo** and **Dan Chalberg**, worked on facilities. It was a tremendous success from day one, and we had over 2,000 members prior to opening. We had a great crew of local Singaporeans who took the chance to work with a bunch of crazy Americans. Victor Verhage did a fantastic job of educating and training the trainers to be great in a brief period: **Alan Tay** (Superman), **Kim Hock, Damien Lee, Sally, Johanna** and so many others. Our sales staff and management, **Daniel Khor, Claris Lim** and all the others. From a gym operations perspective, it was an awesome experience with an amazing group of dedicated trainers, sales and front desk staff plus great cleaning crews!

In 1998 - 1999, a lot of change happened with gym industry acquisitions and consolidations. All of our Gold's Gym licenses happened to be expiring at the same time as the sale of Gold's Gym corporate, and it represented an opportunity for us to sell most of our gyms to *Bally Total Fitness*. We kept two gyms, changing them to World Gym.

In 2000 - 2002, I was involved as an investor and partner in the first Gold's Gym in Taipei, Taiwan and the first World Gym with **John Caraccio** in Tai Chung, (See *George Jackson Page 12*)



TG Chula Vista - George Jackson (R) with Head of Maintenance, Antonio Martinez (L)



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...George Jackson

continued from page 10

Taiwan. I opened *World Gym - Lake Forest* in 2003 with partners **Mike Hibner, Jeff Dilts** and **Mike Cicchetti** and *World Gym - Vista* with **Todd Danner** in 2010 (See **Photo** on **This Page**). Todd is still the owner and operator of this gym, which is *TG Vista*. Todd's dedication and daily discipline to this location are incredibly excellent every day.

C.I. - George, when and how did *TG - The Gym* come to be? And, how did you pick the name?

GJ - In 2018, our license agreement with World Gym for San Diego and Vista was expiring. Once again, this represented a great opportunity to start our own brand, unique and specific to the communities we had created in our gyms since 1986. The World Gyms in the High Desert (Victorville) license agreement was also expiring in 2018, and they were interested in partnering with us on a new brand. **Mark Lyons, Jacob Lewis, Rick Stephenson** and I got together and decided *The Gym* was the very best name to describe our brand. The TG logo took some time to create, but the logo turned out great and our apparel line has been a huge success. We have become known as "TG," and we have expanded the brand with *TG Supps* (our supplement line), *TG Café* and *TG Wellbeing*.

C.I. - With your most recent club openings, you now have nine locations. Please describe your typical club (acreage, square feet, amenities, programs, services, etc.).

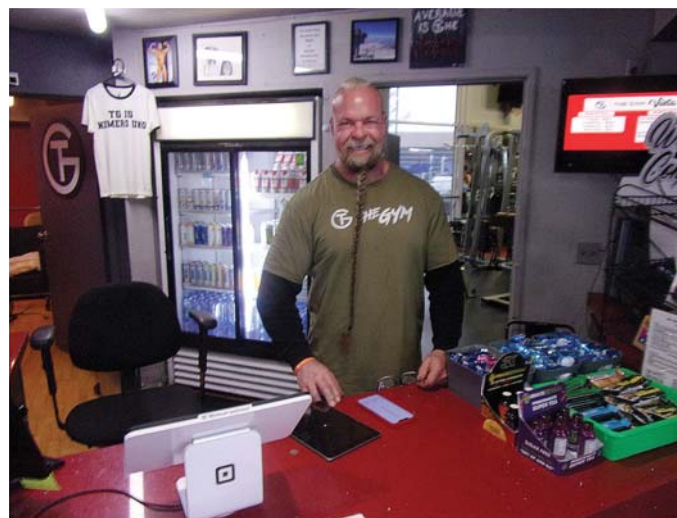
GJ - *TG San Diego, TG Vista, TG Victorville, TG Chula Vista, TG Ramona* and *TG Apple Valley* are our six California locations. *TG Mesa* and *TG Phoenix* are our two Arizona locations and *TG Dunedin* is our first Florida location. We are hopefully adding a second Florida location in the next few months.

Each gym is different in size,

ranging from 12,000 square feet to our Mesa, Arizona location that's 40,000 square feet. The focus of our brand is on serious fitness and serving our community of lifters and serious fitness enthusiasts. When you join TG, you graduate to a new level of gym environment and intensity. The environment is like nowhere else; it is very unique and very special to us. We are gym rats running a gym, all of us bringing that passion and experience to work with us every day. There are so many unique aspects of TG, one being how we treat personal trainers. We believe that personal trainers and coaches are an essential and vital part of TG, and we want them to make their living and career in our gyms. To assist in making that happen, we allow them to provide their services to their clients without charging them rent or taking any portion of revenue they generate from their clients. They just must be members, and their clients must have a membership. We have personal trainers at our San Diego locations who have been there since 1986. We welcome entrepreneurial trainers to all our TG locations.

TG Wellbeing is a service to our members and non-members, providing clinical services from doctors, nurses and other health care professionals to enhance performance, recovery and offer more private workout spaces in some of our locations.

TG Café provides healthy meals throughout the day to all our members, including meal preps for those getting ready to compete. We developed our own brand of coffee when we partnered with a charity group in Mexico to help provide education and housing for an orphanage; 20% of the proceeds from TG Coffee go to help this orphanage. We actively search for opportunities to be involved in our community. We volunteer and financially support the *Mitchell Thorp Foundation*, an organization that supports children with life threatening diseases



Todd Danner - TG Vista Owner/Operator

and disorders with an annual 5K run/walk and other events that have helped raise awareness of what the foundation does. We have helped raise over **\$3 million** over the years. I have been a *Volunteer Board Member* for this foundation for over ten years. We also support many other charities in all the communities where we have gyms.

C.I. - Please tell us about your typical member.

GJ - A typical member is 18 to 35 years old and interested in training hard and serious about his health and fitness. Our older members have been with us for 20+ years and still love to grind. We create communities of serious lifters, and we work hard to serve their needs every day. Once you train at a TG and love it, it becomes hard to train anywhere else ever again. We work hard every day to make sure we have the best in old school equipment and new equipment, keep our gyms clean and well maintained. Most of all, we are ready to serve our members.

C.I. - What is your typical management set up in each club? What is the total number of employees in your typical club, including breakdown of full-time and part-time.

GJ - All our gyms are owner-operated, some with three or four owners, others with one or two. The *Owner/Operator* works the front counter and is the face of the gym, customer service, sales and whatever is necessary to serve our members. We do not have any corporate offices, and my job

is to support each of the Owner/Operators in any way I can so they have whatever is necessary to serve our members. Since we do not have Personal Trainers on staff, no group exercise classes, day care or group training, we operate most gyms with a staff of only front counter (customer services) and a few sales staff; almost everybody works full-time. My goal when setting up a new gym is always to make sure the deal is structured to sustain the Owner/Operator and all the people that work in the gym for the long term, which is 30+ years.

C.I. - Please list your key staff members (name, title, tenure).

GJ - I will break this down by location:

TG San Diego:

Rick Stephenson, Owner/Operator, 37 years;
Brad Rutherford, Owner/Operator, 36 years;
Ed Schoenborn, Owner/Partner, 25 years;
Nick Cox, Owner/Partner, 4 years.

TG Vista:

Todd Danner, Owner/Operator, 14 years.

TG Ramona:

Peter San Nicolas and his family, Owner/Operator, 33 years.

TG Chula Vista:

Steven Kruckenberg, Owner/Operator, 6 years;
Josh Geske, Owner/Operator, 2020 plus
TG Wellbeing;
Keanu Latinette, Owner/Operator, 2020;
James Ortiz, Owner/Operator, 2020 plus
TG Café.

TG Victorville and TG Apple Valley:

Mark Lyons, Owner/Operator, 20+ years;
Jacob Lewis, Owner/Operator, 20+ years.

TG Mesa and TG Phoenix, AZ:

Ernie Wachs, Owner/Operator since we opened 2021;

(See **George Jackson** Page 13)



George Jackson (R) with TG Ramona Owner/Operator, Peter San Nicolas (L)



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...George Jackson

continued from page 12

Elias Wilsey, Owner/Operator since we opened 2021;
Adam Santos, Owner/Operator, 2022;
Brian Snider, Owner/Operator, 2023;
Justin Drappo, Owner/Operator, 2023.

TG Dunedin, FL:

Travis Michael, Owner/Operator since we opened in 2023.

C.I. - Please tell us about your partners in the business.

GJ - Norm, there are not enough pages in *Club Insider* to describe my awesome partners in each of our gyms! If we started with TG San Diego, as I mentioned earlier, I would need to dedicate the entire issue to review 37 years of operating history. The history of TG San Diego is long and rich in character and reputation. I think most of the *Mr. Olympia* winners have trained in our gym at one time or another. Also, tons of celebrities: **John Cena**, **Dwayne the Rock Johnson**, **Alex Rodriguez**, **Drew Brees** and **Junior Seau**. I need Derek Barton down here to help us out with listing all the people. Rick Stephenson and his crew are simply the best in the gym business. Since we opened in 1986, there was no EFT or gym management software yet

and no certified personal trainers. Rick believed from day one that we had to earn our members' **TRUST** and their business every day, and if we achieved that, they would be excited about renewing their membership. So, for 37 years, we have **not relied on EFT**, and the only options to join for all these years are *day pass*, *week pass*, *3-month*, *6-month* or *12-month*. We keep our prices fair and the gym clean and in excellent working order every day. For those reading this article, during your lifetime, I strongly recommend coming to train at TG San Diego; it is an experience that you will always remember fondly. It's simply one of the best gyms in the World, ever! Our brand is based on this heritage and legacy that Rick Stephenson and his team have created over the past 37 years. Beyond Rick, let me mention a few of our current and key partners:

Todd Danner was a *Member* at our Gold's Gym in San Marcos, California in the 1990s and the main reason we opened TG Vista in 2010. His passion for bodybuilding (former competitor) and dedication to the gym make this such an awesome place to train. Our cleaning staff at this gym is so great, and we have much appreciation for what they do every day. This gym is closest to where I live, and I am fortunate to be able to train in this great gym at least four times

a week.

Peter San Nicolas (See **Photo** on **Opposite Page**) and his family have owned TG Ramona for over 33 years. Peter started working at this gym when he was 17 years old and bought the gym from his boss and owner in 1989. He rebuilt the building in 2004 and created an awesome gym for the community of Ramona. Peter is passionate about training and bodybuilding, a current *IFBB Pro* and talking about competing again. Peter, and his sister, who run the gym, have created an amazing community for lifters and the community of Ramona to get educated and fit.

Mark Lyon and **Jacob Lewis**, Brand Partners since 2018, and Owners and Operators of TG Victorville for over 20 years and TG Apple Valley that opened in 2022. Every time I visit TG Victorville, I cannot believe that they share a wall with a 70,000 square-foot *In-Shape Health Club*. They compete every day for members and win with the awesome atmosphere they create in both their gyms. Jacob Lewis is working on starting the *TG Gym Licensing Program*, so anyone interested can reach out to him on our website (the-gym.com/#the-business).

Steven Kruckenberg, **Josh Geske**,

Keanu Latinette and **James Ortiz** are our TG Chula Vista Partners. We opened this gym in November 2020, right in the middle of the pandemic with the motto *Never Closed and Always Essential*. This group of partners is extraordinary, entrepreneurial, innovative and shares the same passion for bodybuilding and the serving of our members like all the other TGs. Their heart for serving our community lifters and the community of Chula Vista is very inspiring.

I met Steven in 2017, when he said he wanted to open a gym, so I told him to come work at TG Vista and see how he liked it. Steven has a great passion for bodybuilding and is getting ready to compete for his *IFBB Pro Card* in July. I told him to be patient, and the right opportunity would come along. Wait he did, and I am so grateful for his patience. Steven put together the team in Chula Vista, and his leadership and commitment to helping the less fortunate in our community, in Mexico and around the world is awesome.

I'm so very grateful to Steven, Josh, Keanu and James for what they each contribute every day, and the TG future is very bright with this group of leaders. Our mission at TG Chula Vista, TG Mesa and TG Phoenix is to *Glorify God* every day. When that is your mission, great things are possible every moment.

(See **George Jackson** Page 15)

What If All of Your Members Were Raving Fans?

By: **Herb Lipsman**

Imagine how successful your club would be if all of your members were *Raving Fans*... A Raving Fan is a member who loves the club so much they feel compelled to brag about their club to friends and acquaintances regularly. What produces a Raving Fan? This is the easy part. Raving Fans love the club because:

- They feel the club provides them perceived value that exceeds what they pay, often by a wide margin.
- They feel treated like VIPs by club staff.
- They are proud of the club because of how clean and well-maintained the grounds and facilities appear to be.
- The club's reputation provides them a sense stature and feeds their ego.
- Everyone on the staff seems to know their name and engages with them on what matters most to them.
- They believe the club cares about them personally.
- Club management operates the club in an efficient, competent manner.
- The club keeps up with the times to remain relevant.

■ Club management listens with empathy when they voice a concern, complaint or suggestion.

■ Club management and ownership keeps their promises.

■ They trust the club and its leaders.

How does a club achieve a high percentage of Raving Fans? Consider the following critical success factors in growing your percentage of Raving Fans:

1. Institute a culture that sincerely values its members and staff at every turn. You can't fake *culture*. Your culture is your brand. You may have vision, mission and values statements posted throughout your facilities, but the members can tell *What Matters Most* to the owners and management by the behaviors of staff throughout each day at the club.

2. Hire right. It is your people who interact with your members multiple times each day who make the greatest difference in member perceptions. Make sure that every hire has been carefully scrutinized to ensure they are a good culture fit and have the skills necessary to perform the job(s) they will be assigned to do.

3. Make sure that all employees have the training and tools necessary to perform their duties at a high level of proficiency.

4. Institute feedback systems that encourage members and staff to inform club staff of problems, concerns or opportunities for improvement.

5. Inspect what you expect. This involves a healthy dose of *MBWA* (managing by wandering around throughout the day to observe and listen to members and staff).

6. Develop an Error Recovery process and training program that empowers all employees to be problem solvers on the spot, rather than having to "ask a manager" to respond.

7. Show your genuine appreciation for the effort of your people, not just the results. Raving Fans want to know that management and ownership appreciates their favorite employees as much as the members do.

8. Get to know your employees and members on a personal level, turning them into allies. Allies will make suggestions to help the club get better. Adversaries will complain and expect a battle every time they bring a problem to the attention of club management.

9. Keep your promises.

10. Communicate in a variety of ways that meet the needs of each member in the way they prefer to get their club information.

11. Fess up to the membership when the club is at fault with honesty and integrity.

12. Show the members that you respect them by letting them *Look Under the Hood* when it comes to how decisions are made and how work is performed behind the scenes. It has always amazed me the reaction of members who get to see how a golf course is maintained, or how a busy kitchen is operated during peak times, or how the laundry department is operated, or the planning that goes in club events or programs. Most members have no idea the extent of the work that goes on to enable the club to provide the programs and services they experience. Once they see for themselves, they typically have a much greater appreciation for the staff.

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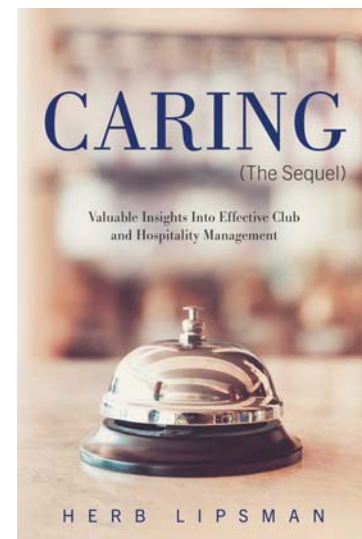
Nearly all the ingredients in my recipe for creating Raving Fans have one thing in common... little or no additional cost. These ingredients simply require club managers to shift the focus of their team members to different priorities (*What Matters Most*) from the many worthless



Herb Lipsman

tasks they currently have them performing. Good luck!

(Herb Lipsman is a veteran of the club industry, having managed some of the most prestigious athletic clubs and golf/country clubs in the Houston, Texas market over the past 30 years, most notably *The Houstonian Hotel, Club and Spa*. Lipsman has served on the Board of Directors for *IHRSA*. He was appointed by Mayor Bill White to serve as Chairman of the Mayor's Wellness Council for the City of Houston. Lipsman has also been invited to speak at numerous industry conferences and conventions around the world, including the U.S., UK, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Italy, Russia and Mexico. Most recently, Lipsman authored and published his book *Caring - The Sequel: Valuable Insights into Effective Club and Hospitality Management*. Learn more about Herb and order his book at www.herblipsman.com.)





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...George Jackson

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TG Mesa and TG Phoenix, are led by partner and long-time friend, **Ernie Wachs**. We owned a gym together in the Chicago, Illinois area, and the story of him uprooting from Chicago after being born and spending the first 63 years of his life there is quite incredible. It started with a call and him saying he liked the brand name and logo. During the pandemic, when all the gyms were closed and he was not working, I asked him a question: If you could live anywhere and we could open a gym together, where would it be? He answered Arizona, and when I asked where in Arizona, he said Mesa. The next call was to our real estate broker, **Jake Bordelon**, *NNN Fitness*, and he gave me a listing of five former gym properties for sale in Mesa. I called Ernie back and asked if he could fly to Arizona on Friday. He did, and long story short, we made a purchase offer on March 1, 2021 and started operating TG Mesa on April 1, 2021.

In the early 1980s, he opened and operated a *Powerhouse Gym* in Illinois, changed the name to *World of Fitness* and has worked in the fitness industry as an Owner/Operator, General Manager for a few large fitness chains, and thankfully, as the Owner/Operator of TG Mesa and TG Phoenix since 2021. His faith is an inspiration to all who work at TG Mesa and TG Phoenix and to all our members. Since April 2021, in each of his gyms, he carefully crafts the *Bible Verse of the Week* and oversees *Bible Study* in the gym for the members and staff, in addition to daily prayer for staff and our members. His 40 years of experience are a huge asset to our young and growing teams in TG Mesa and TG Phoenix.

Speaking of young and growing Owner/Operators, we have some great ones in Arizona. Starting with **Elias Wilsey**, I am grateful to Steven Kruckenberg for inviting him to an initial tour of our gym properties. Elias is one special individual. His passion for bodybuilding earned him his IFBB Pro Card last year, and he is getting ready for his first pro show in the next few months. Elias, along with Steven and Josh, all trained at TG San Diego, so they are grounded in the essence of the TG history and brand. You must come train at TG Mesa, our 40,000 square-foot facility nicknamed the *Iron Jungle* just to meet Elias. His friendly, welcoming smile and attitude will get you excited to train. Another newer partner **Adam Santos** has so many skill sets: personal trainer, management and marketing, organizational skills, bible study leader, and the list go on and on. Our two newest partners, **Brian Snider** and **Justin Drappo**, are currently experiencing the joys of the long hours in opening a new gym. TG Phoenix opened April 2023, and it is one amazing gym at 28,000+ square feet and the nicest finishes of all our gyms.

I am so grateful for all my

partners in the TG brand and the passion they bring each day serving our community of serious lifters and serious fitness enthusiasts.

C.I. - Let's talk about the competition in your market. Typically, how many clubs would you estimate are within a 15-minute drive time of your clubs?

GJ - In each of our markets, we have on average 7 to 15 fitness centers in a 15-minute drive. All the major chains, *Crunch*, *24 Hours Fitness*, *LA Fitness*, *Planet Fitness*, *Chuze*, *EOS*, *Equinox*, *Anytime Fitness*, *Snap*, *Lifetime*; and many regional chains, *Mountainside Fitness*, *YouFit*, *1440 Fitness*; and independent operators are present. So, all our gyms have a lot of competition. At TG Vista, you can see the signs across the freeway for a huge 50,000 square-foot LA Fitness to the right and a Planet Fitness to the left, both less than a block away. The competition is always going to be here, and our teams work hard to focus on serving our members and controlling what we can control, which is everything within our gym environment.

C.I. - What have your greatest challenges been? What was the single most difficult moment?

GJ - Over the past 40 years in the gym business, there have been many challenges, errors, bad decisions, mistakes and hardships. Each one we learned from and grew by overcoming it. The past challenges and errors are great because they provide perfect hindsight to learn from and are totally necessary for the growth of the teams in each gym. The most difficult part of being an Owner/Operator is the responsibility involved each day and the sacrifices necessary to serve thousands of members in each gym every single day. This is good time to thank my wife, **Sherry**, for her support (even on vacation when I still must work a few hours each day), and my children, **Krista** and **James**. Also thank Rick's wife, **Agnetha**; Ernie's wife, **Audrey**, and all the families of all my partners for their support because it is very much needed and very much appreciated!

C.I. - What has been the most **FUN** aspect of your career?

GJ - Every moment of this journey, I feel like God could not have provided me with a better career. I am so grateful to be able to do what I do every day and for all my TG partners.

C.I. - What have you experienced in the industry that you'd like to experience again?

GJ - Opening another gym in a different country... I'm hoping to make that happen again. Maybe, France where I just returned from, Canada, New Zealand, Australia or maybe a TG Wellbeing and Resort in Bali, Indonesia. I'm looking for partners, so contact me at (619) 548 - 5337 if you are interested.

C.I. - Finally George, please share any advice you wish you knew when you began.

GJ - Wow, after 40 years, I have lots of advice and am ready to share it with anyone interested in partnering with us in the TG brand. We are always looking for experienced Owner/Operators ready to graduate to a new level of serious fitness. Contact us anytime!

C.I. - George, are there any topics we missed or you'd like to discuss?

GJ - Our gyms never closed during the pandemic, with the motto *Never Closed and Always Essential*. This was not meant to be a rebellion; it was for the health and wellbeing of our members. We will continue to promote the fact that a good immune system is the first and most important element in the defense against any virus. Daily, vigorous exercise, strength training, a healthy well-balanced diet, proper amounts of sleep, Vitamin D (get in sun and outdoors) and managing stress are the main ingredients to maintaining a good immune system. My prayer is that we have learned that closing gyms during pandemic like COVID-19 was not the right approach, and as an industry, we take a stand against

any future shutdown with similar viruses.

■ ■ ■

Wow, there you have it folks! What a career! What an encyclopedia of people/names along the way. In closing, I want to thank **George Jackson** for all of his time and effort that he spent giving me an all-day tour of four of his amazing Southern California clubs and for his time and effort that he put into assisting me with the drafting and production of this *Very Special Club Insider Cover Story*. **Stay Tuned!!!**

(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 49-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of *Club Insider*, now in its 30th year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President, and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. You can reach Norm by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)

Steve and Sally Goldman, Owners of the Weymouth Club, Honored

WEYMOUTH, MA - **Steve and Sally Goldman**, longtime players, coaches and owners of the decorated *Weymouth Club* in Weymouth, Massachusetts, have been selected as the recipients of the 2023 *Gardner Ward Chase Memorial Award* for their lifetime contributions to New England tennis. The Goldmans, of Milton, MA, were celebrated at the *New England Tennis Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony* on June 11 at the International Tennis Hall of Fame in Newport, Rhode Island.

The husband-and-wife duo purchased *Weymouth Club* in 1988 and have since made it their mission to create a family-friendly health, fitness, wellness and recreation center dedicated to continuously improving the member experience by delivering **MORE** (meticulous facilities, outstanding programs, results and exceptional service).

A staple in Massachusetts' South Shore, The *Weymouth Club* has helped produce countless high school and college players and introduced many more to the game through programs like its award-winning *Tennis, Fitness & Arts Camp* and more. In 2000, the Goldmans created *South Shore Initiative*, a nonprofit with the mission to help young people reach their full potential in fitness, sports and academics. The organization was created to give scholarships to deserving players.

Individually, Sally was a highly-ranked *USTA Junior Player* who competed in both regional and national tournaments.



Steve and Sally Goldman

She also played on the *Quincy High Varsity Team* and went on to play No. 1 singles on the men's team at Bentley. She became the No. 1 adult player in New England and competed on the original *Boston Lobsters* team. Sally is the current girls' *Head Coach* at *Thayer Academy*. Her team won the 2022 *Sportsmanship Award*, voted on by all teams in the league.

Steve was a high school and college player himself, playing at *Quincy High* and *Parsons College*. He then became a ranked adult tournament player in New England. As a coach, Steve was named *USPTA New England's Coach of the Year* in 1996.

When It Comes to Decision Making, "Real" Always Trumps "Feel."

By: **Chris Stevenson**

We have used a concept for years that has helped us tremendously with our ability to make good decisions when running health clubs. It's called "real versus feel." The idea is that, when it comes to decision-making, it is always best to go with "real" instead of "feel." Feel is based on emotion and theory. Real is based on data and facts.

This may sound simple, but it is harder to execute than you think. Emotions are strong and can take over at times. This is especially true of negative emotions. While it's human nature to let feel dominate real, doing so often leads to poor decision-making.

Imagine you are at your club on a Monday. You sell ten memberships in the morning, have a great staff meeting and sign up four new personal training clients. Then, in the middle of the day, an angry member cancels her membership because she is dissatisfied. Finally, in the early evening, you sell ten more memberships and receive five amazing *Facebook* and *Yelp* reviews.

What would you say when somebody asks you how your day was?

"It was horrible!" you might say before explaining, "An angry woman came in and yelled at us and canceled her membership!" The latter statement is true,

but the former is not. You had a great day other than a tiny glitch. While the negative moment had a significant emotional impact, the truth is that 95% of your day was incredible. You may feel your day was horrible, but that doesn't reflect reality.

Learning to curb emotion and rely on data will dramatically improve your ability to make effective decisions. Let me give you two examples from our experience to illustrate my point.

We ran a sale called, "Your Friend, Your Rate." The premise of the deal is that every member can have someone join at the member's own rate. Rates at the club have increased over the years, and there were people who joined in the presale in 2010 who paid a really low membership fee. You can imagine that a current member who joined at a current rate might get upset about somebody joining after them and getting a lower rate.

Our member service team expressed this concern when we recently decided to run this particular special again. They argued that so many members got mad and were hard to console the last time we ran the sale. As there was no data to back this feeling up, and the campaign had previously been successful in generating new membership sales, we decided to run it again anyway. But, this time, I made our member service team tally how many higher-paying members

actually complained.

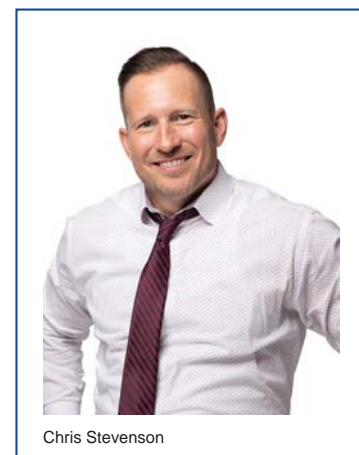
During our one-day sale, we sold more than a hundred memberships. The total number of complaints? Three. It was a worthwhile endeavor. "Feel" said everyone complains, but "real" showed us that almost no one complained, less than 0.15% of the membership base.

The second situation centered on whether to close our childcare area because usage of the site was steadily dropping. But, some members used it frequently, and their children loved it. Moreover, we are very attached to our members and their children, so closing the area felt uncomfortable. It felt like the wrong thing to do. We then did a deep dive into the data and noticed several things.

The first thing we noticed was that the numbers were trending downward. Only 3% of the membership base had used the childcare area this year, and only 0.03% used it regularly. Next, we learned that the demographic of our city is aging to the extent that local schools bring in children from other areas to keep classrooms full. Finally, to top it off, one of the most common pieces of negative feedback that the club was getting through its Net Promoter Score was that the gym was crowded and lacked adequate floor space for fitness.

All of that data showed us that, by closing our childcare area, we would disappoint very few members, and there was a substantial likelihood of making many more members happier by utilizing that area as more floor space for exercise. Of course, we still felt bad for the members who used childcare, but we were confident that closing it was the right decision.

"Feel," said this was wrong because it would make entire families sad, especially children we loved and had so much fun hanging out and playing at the club. "Real," told us that shutting it down was right because the trends, data, and facts said so. "Feel" was emotional,



Chris Stevenson

and "real" made sense. We did a great job navigating the change, but that is for another article.

Feelings do have value, but they should never trump data. Anytime you have to decide, distance yourself emotionally and allow statistics to steer you in the right direction. You may get lucky occasionally by following your "feel" of a situation, but you rarely go wrong when you act on what's "real."

(Chris Stevenson, former Power Ranger stuntman, is the Founder of The Empower Group, a full-service consulting firm with services ranging from staff training, workshops, full facility management and more. Stevenson has over 20 years of experience in many aspects of the health and fitness industry. In addition, he is an international speaker who regularly presents at IHRSA, Athletic Business, Club Industry and many other fitness and business events. From health and wellness to business strategies. Chris can be reached by phone at 818-519-6038 or email at chris@stevensonempowers.com.)



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Question: How Do You Set Up Success?

By: **Jeffrey Pinkerton**

I am sure you want your members to be successful at your facility. But, how do you define success? Here is a speculative stab at an answer: A successful member is someone who uses the facility regularly; is on a pathway of improving their physical, mental and emotional health; appreciates the features and benefits offered; enjoys the experience; and values what he receives in return for his monthly membership fee. Now, the more complicated question: How do you ensure success? And, if you could increase your members' chances for success, how much energy and effort would you invest in setting him on and keeping him on the right path?

When our four kids were in school,

we were serious about studying. My wife and I were both good students through school, and we wanted to instill the same work ethic in our children. Our kids were also busy --possibly over-scheduled-- athletes, so time management, organization skills and studying strategies were often part of our parenting. My wife's and my personality complement each other well. She is a high school English teacher who loves literature, creative writing and poetry. She strived to help our children become great writers, thoughtful communicators, analytical thinkers and idea sharers. I have a science degree and love systems, psychology and orderly things. I appreciate processes and predictable outcomes, experiments and data. We both loved school growing up. We both love learning. And, as it turns out, we

both love notecards.

When our kids were in elementary school, we introduced them to notecards, or you might call them flashcards. With a question on one side and an answer on the other, the notecard became the standard for studying in our house. It also became the topic of many conversations about the difference between "reviewing" for a test and "studying" for a test. Reviewing involves looking over notes, scanning through the textbook and skimming over some sections. Reviewing is a passive activity. This is not the same thing as studying. Studying is an active process. Studying involves practice questions, recall or review of the right answer, and repetition, repetition, repetition. Read the

(See **Jeffrey Pinkerton** Page 18)



Jeffrey Pinkerton

IHRSA Announces New Staff and Promotions

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Liz Clark, President & CEO of IHRSA, the Global Health & Fitness Association, announces the hiring of new staff members and the promotion of a team member.

Pamela Kufahl joined June 19 as *Senior Director of Communications* and will lead external-facing campaigns, drive social media content, and produce a wide array of member and industry-facing articles, documents and resources such as the popular *Health Club Consumer Report* and *Global Report*.

In addition to supporting the communications and social media needs of the organization, Pam will help create economic, research and industry insight tools for both U.S. and international members, suppliers and federation partners. These tools help promote the industry domestically and to international media, NGOs and policy organizations. IHRSA will soon announce additional

international team members in Asia and Latin America.

Pam joined IHRSA from *Club Industry* where she was *Director of Content and Engagement*, and previously *Editor-in-Chief*, a post she assumed in 2004. Pam is an award-winning writer and industry journalist who earned a graduate degree from the *University of Kansas* and an undergraduate degree from *Washburn University*. She resides in Kansas City, Missouri.

"I am pleased to welcome our new team members and to promote a hardworking member of our team to an expanded role," Liz said. "Pam Kufahl is a well-known and widely respected industry veteran who brings a tremendous depth of insight, writing and content production expertise, and strategic vision to support our evolution into an advocacy, communications, and international engagement-oriented association."

Rubble "Ru" Kazi recently joined IHRSA as *Membership Coordinator*. He is pursuing a graduate degree in Russian Studies at Indiana University and earned his undergraduate degree from Georgetown University. He resides in Bloomington, Indiana.

Sami Smith was promoted in May to IHRSA's *Senior Manager of Digital Communications*. She initially joined the association's Public Policy team in 2020 as *Communications & Public Relations Assistant*. In her expanded role, Sami leads the production of digital content for the Association's website, marketing emails, content management systems and content optimization and strategy. She is a graduate of *Keene State College* and resides in

Los Angeles.

Saacha Vitale has joined IHRSA as *Global Membership Representative*, working from Serbia and supporting members where she works alongside longtime *IHRSA Europe Director, Florian Cartoux*, in addition to servicing member firms in Asia-Pacific and Latin America.

"Sami Smith is a vital member of our team whose work helps connect our members, promote our industry, and

advocate for the industry at large. Ru Kazi will help provide essential support to serve existing member partners and help expand IHRSA's resources, and Saacha is an important addition to our strong Europe-based team. Ru, Saacha, and Pam help build out our team in important ways, and I am excited to bring them aboard so we can take our member service, engagement, and advocacy to the next level," Liz added.



Pamela Kufahl



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...Jeffrey Pinkerton

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card's question, say the answer out loud, flip the card, check the answer. If you got it right, it goes in the "good" pile. If you got it wrong, it goes in the "needs review" pile. My kids took notecards to track meets, on bus rides to football games and road trips to soccer tournaments.

We didn't require that our kids use notecards. But, we constantly discussed the benefits, the convenience and the power of notecards. If our kids weren't seeing success in school, the conversation quickly turned to notecards... As in, "Are you *not* using notecards? You need to. They work."

Notecards are a proven pathway to success in school. And, there is a ton of science around why they are so

great. According to the digital flashcard app, **Brainscape.com**, there are three reasons why they are so effective: (1) they help create stronger neuron connections through active recall. (2) they engage metacognition, an act of self-reflection that helps us realize what we know and what we don't know. (3) they create confidence through repetition.

Question: Why is there an article about notecards in *Club Insider*?

Answer: If there is a proven way for members to be successful, you need to tell them, *all the time*. Not just once during a tour, or the day they join. *All the time*. Every chance you get. Repetition, repetition, repetition.

Group fitness is a proven pathway to success in fitness and a pathway with a much higher success rate than the flip side, working out alone. There's a ton of science behind the power of a shared experience, the benefits of social connections, the advantage of having the workout as a scheduled part of your day (it reduces decision-fatigue by pre-loading the decision), even down to the physical performance and enjoyment benefits of working out with music and moving with others synchronized to music (a phenomenon known as "social motion").

And, sure, maybe you don't require your members to do group fitness, but through every marketing channel and every member onboarding opportunity, you should be highlighting the benefits, the convenience and the power of working out

in groups... As in, "Are you *not* trying group fitness? You need to. It works." With that message, on repeat, you'll stack the cards in favor of members' long-term loyalty to your facility and lifelong (and longer life) success.

■ ■ ■

To learn more about the power of group fitness and setting up your members and your marketing for success, visit **www.mossa.net**.

(Jeffrey Pinkerton is the Business Development Manager for MOSSA. Jeffrey can be reached by phone at 770-989-4737 or email at jeffreypinkerton@mossa.net.)

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