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# ***An Interview With Frank Zane - "Mr. Olympia"***

**By: Dennis B. Weis**



It seems like only yesterday, but 40 years ago (April 1977) I received a letter from a bodybuilding promoter, friend of mine, in Anchorage, Alaska.

In the letter he mentioned that he and the Anchorage Health Club were going to present the 1977 Mr. Anchorage Physique Contest and that Frank Zane was to be the guest poser.

This event was going to take place at the Sidney Lawrence Auditorium on June 11th. Upon reading the letter I noticed an additional enclosure. It was a brochure with a photo of Frank Zane and an official announcement that he would give a bodybuilding seminar (shortly after the Mr. Anchorage awards presentation).

Wow, one of the world's best bodybuilders will be in Anchorage next June to showcase the total training preparation necessary for competing, at the 1977 IFBB Mr. Olympia contest.

A few months prior to receiving the information about posing exhibition and seminar, my interest in Zane had been piqued from the media copy he had been releasing in issues of Iron Man magazine with a headline that typically read:

**THIS IS THE YEAR OF ZANE!** (I would soon realize the startling impact of that milestone statement as he would go on to win the coveted **IFBB Mr. Olympia Crown** in October of 1977 and in 1978-79 as well.)

Heck, I was getting pumped thinking about the absolute "must attend" bodybuilding extravaganza and seeing and hearing this IFBB Mr. America, Mr. World and 3-times NABBA Mr. Universe winner so I sent for an advanced ticket.

## **Body-Building Extravaganza Weekend Agenda**

**Thursday, June 9th** – I boarded a commercial airliner, in Ketchikan, Alaska, destination Anchorage, to attend all the events of the weekend bodybuilding extravaganza.

**Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup>** – Frank flew from Santa Monica, California and arrived at the Anchorage International Airport at noon. Later in the afternoon, he discussed bodybuilding with the news media for publication and broadcasting, all of which are important factors in developing increased popularity of bodybuilding throughout the world.

At around 6:00 p.m., Frank and the AAU National Physique Chairman, Ralph Countryman (who had been flown in from Oakland, California to be head physique judge for the contest) was given a scenic tour of the Anchorage area, compliments of Anchorage Helicopter. At 7:30 p.m. that same evening, a welcome reception was held at the Sheffield House hotel in honor Frank Zane a legendary Mr. Universe Winner.

**Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup>** – Its show time and the Mr. Anchorage physique contest was presented to an enthusiastic crowd at the Sydney Lawrence Auditorium. Preceding the awards presentation was an unsurpassed Zane posing exhibition.

Frank rocked the house with his flawless exhibition of a superbly proportioned physique. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that Frank had perfected the art of posing and physique presentation.

Shortly after the guest posing and awards presentation, our pulses quickened as we moved onto the much anticipated breakout **"MR. OLYMPIA SECRETS" -SEMINAR** that was to be a two hour and 10 minute Frank Zane **No Bull**-winning edge, lecture-discussion, question-answer forum seminar.



The day after the seminar I had the opportunity of a . . . “real” face-to-face interaction most memorable bodybuilding “19” Question and Answer interview with **Frank.**

He graciously allowed me the opportunity to interview him over lunch, aka-Interview Meal, at a restaurant, three months prior to his first Mr. Olympia win.

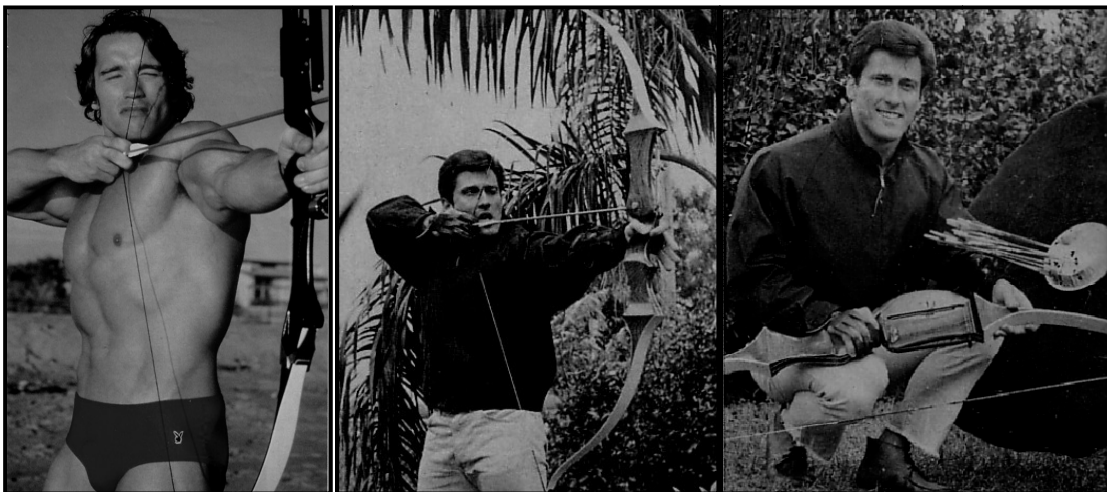
Up on review of the audio interview I couldn't help but notice background noise pollution (banging, clanking of silverware/dishes, and customer chatter).

Hindsight suggested we should not have been seated by the kitchen but rather in a secluded corner of the restaurant (away from the kitchen and front doors, i.e. customer & street traffic noise) prior to the peak-period lunch hour.

Fortunately Frank's voice inflections were very precise and clearly understood, to me, so all in all the audio interview turned out just fine.

**Please** understand that the insights and expressions contained in the following transcribed interview are what worked for Zane personally, and in no way means you will aspire to an entrepreneurial dream of becoming a Mr. Olympia by following them. The information will at the very least inspire you to new levels of commitment to the way you train in the future.

**Dennis: It has been noted that you are an ardent archer (shooting in the 400 field). Do you still practice this sport?**



**Frank:** About the only practice I get is when I go shooting with Arnold Schwarzenegger. and Dan Howard. I introduced both of them to archery. As a matter of fact, Dan is quite good at it because he's been shooting skeet and rifle for a long time.

He is trying to get me to go shooting with him so that he can beat me, but I really haven't had time for archery because I've been training a lot lately. This summer I'll probably start shooting a little bit more because it's very relaxing and I enjoy it.

**Dennis:** **Chuck Sipes (1968 IFBB Mr. World) told me once that cable training movements seem to make his performance in archery much steadier. Have you experienced anything along this line?**

**Frank:** I've just noticed that when I've been training regularly and in really good shape I'm better at archery. I don't do too much cable training except before a show. Of course, the last month before a show I'm not doing any archery anyway, so I've never had a chance to make that observation.

But years ago when I was doing archery in a big way, I did do some cable training to help strengthen my back because I was shooting relatively heavy poundage bows. I think either weight training or cable training is effective for strength to make you better at archery.



▲ Chuck Sipes    ▲ Arnold    ▲ Don Peters

**Dennis:** **A few years ago *Muscle Builder Power* magazine carried an article relating to the group training that you, Draper, Waller, Columbu, Arnold and Katz were into at Gold's Gym. What little things do you guys do to help each other in training?**



◀ The original **GOLD'S GYM** at 1006 Pacific Avenue in Venice, California was considered to be the world-wide 'MECCA of Bodybuilding'

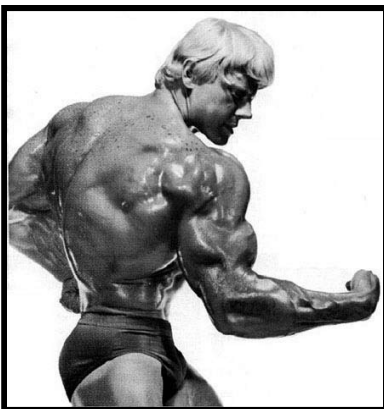
**Frank:** Actually we weren't really training together – we were just in the gym at the same time. When we're in the gym at the same time it sort of creates what they call a collective atmosphere. Each person has his own intensity, which contributes to the total atmosphere of the gym. It just creates a special feeling in the gym that makes you train harder.

There are a lot of guys in there training hard. What we do for each other is maybe comment on some guy's weight or maybe help him or watch him while he is doing a set. Let's say I'm doing a set and Arnold is watching me do it.

I'm gonna just do more, just automatic, like him or anybody else being there who is a hard trainer would help me do more in my training. We criticize each other also; we may go through our posing routine after a workout and we'll see and mention what's good and what could be improved upon.

**Dennis: Give some of your impressions of these above mentioned men and their training programs.**

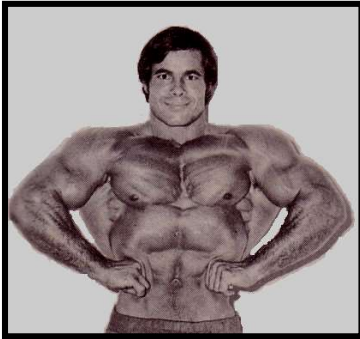
**Frank: O.K.**



◀ **Dave Draper**—Basically he trains short. He trains early in the morning, maybe at 7 a.m.; his workout is typically 1 hour and 15 minutes. He doesn't follow any set routine. What he sometimes does and what he used to do in the past, is to come into the gym and do a few sets with me and more or less go off on his own program. He trains very much in the instinctive fashion.



◀ **Ken Waller**—Trains with very heavy weights and doesn't train real fast. He takes a long workout, like 3 or 4 hours. Waller is a big eater and likes to eat a lot of ice cream and just have a good time. He makes up for this by training extremely hard and long with heavy weights.



◀ **Franco Columbu**—Is very strong and will never do bench presses with less than 350 pounds even when he's out of shape; he'll warm up with that. Because he's so strong this is what helps him have such muscle mass and muscularity.

He doesn't train very hard most of the time, but in the summer before a show he always does.

He has good metabolism and good leverages which is pertinent to handling heavy weights. He doesn't really have to stay on a very strict diet to get muscular so he's pretty fortunate in a lot of respects.



◀ **Arnold**—Is probably the hardest trainer that I know. When he was competing he trained extremely hard and it was very hard for anyone to train with him because he worked out so intensely. He really put a lot into it.



◀ **Mike Katz**—Long workouts – 6 to 8 hours. He was very strong. If he had paid more attention to his weak points he would have done much better in competition. He is still very good, however.

**Dennis: What went on behind the scenes at say the 1976 Mr. Olympia contest for a Super Star such as yourself?**

**Frank:** I went over to the auditorium (VETERANS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM in Columbus, Ohio) two hours early to find out what time we were to go on. After I found out I figured 20 minutes before, I would start getting ready; since I was two hours early I took a nap for one hour and then woke up and talked to a couple of people 'til 20 minutes before time to go on. Nothing special happened.

**Dennis: Being such a well known personality, have you had any intrusions on your privacy?**

**Frank:** I have never had any gross intrusions on my privacy. My home life is very private. People recognize me at the gym. I will usually speak to them in more detail after my workout.

Sometimes travel is very intense due to the environment and needing time to yourself. Sometimes the fans don't understand that. All they want to know is what I do to build arms, so when you are a little impatient because that question has been asked a thousand times on this trip alone, they don't understand. Generally people have been very nice to me wherever I go, so I really can't complain.

**Dennis: What are your main reasons behind conducting bodybuilding seminars?**



**Frank:** Number one: I do it to make more money, naturally. The main reason I do seminars I think at this time bodybuilding is getting more publicity and people want firsthand information on how the top guys train, how they approach their workouts, etc.

So with this thought I am putting out firsthand information on how I train. This approach seems to get around some of the misconceptions that people have about bodybuilding.

**Dennis: Why did you pick bodybuilding rather than powerlifting to compete in?**

**Frank:** I did power lift years ago when I was coming up. I was living in Pennsylvania and it was popular at the time, but I don't really have the structure for it. I chose bodybuilding because I felt that I had the structure and should maximize on that potential.

**Dennis: Do you like to train at home or at a health studio?**

**Frank:** Home gym training is convenient, but I would never do it again. The atmosphere is just not the same as a place such as the World Gym (in Santa Monica) where I train.

**Dennis: Are there any foods which tend to smooth you out over a period of time?**

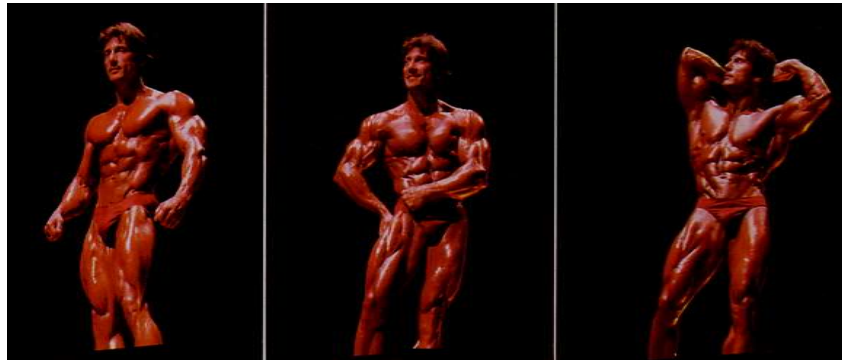
**Frank:** Simple sugars (ice cream, milk), bread, potatoes. Carbohydrates in great amounts would smooth me out in a week or so. I never go overboard on any of these. I have always been closely in touch with my body so that I receive a signal from overtraining or overeating and then I cut back accordingly.

**Dennis: Have you ever gotten seriously ill to the point that you had to terminate all training?**

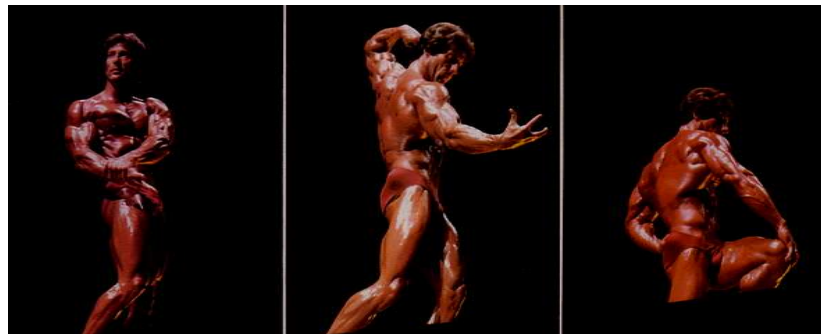
**Frank:** A few years ago I came down with the flu. I got an antibiotic injection at somebody else's recommendation. I got a violent skin reaction and lost 35 pounds in one month. I was down to 160 pounds. I was in bed for a month and after I recovered I started training again and gained 25 pounds in two weeks (up to 185). Shortly after that I was back to normal. Other than that time I have never been seriously ill.



**Dennis: Do you have any tips for the bodybuilder entering his first contest?**



**Frank:** Practice posing, be in as good a shape as possible. Be CONFIDENT in yourself. Project a good IMAGE on the stage. Read some of my courses about POSING.



**Dennis: How does a man such as yourself maintain a positive family relationship when engaged in contest preparation?**

**Frank:** It is difficult to maintain a good family relationship especially the last month before a contest. With me it's only my wife and I; she is very understanding and knows what I am going through. She is an excellent photographer and helps me in this way.

The best thing about my wife (relating to training) is that she gives me very severe criticism; she has never really told me that I look fantastic, but maybe one day she will. I've done all my best training and contest wins after I got married.

You have to be around understanding people when training for a contest. I always look at it this way – I realize that my wife is going out of her way to help me train. You really can become quite insensitive to what other peoples' needs are because all of your attention is directed on yourself. So

you should realize that you OWE them something, and make it up to them when the competition is over. Don't be selfish in this respect.

**Dennis: Is there some reason why some bodybuilders seem to win various body parts awards at the contests they frequently enter, but never win the overall title?**

**Frank:** They have made up what I call a personal fiction of themselves – some myth or fable they live by – so these people never win big contests. If you aren't winning you should train more seriously and come back looking totally different. You can do it if you put your wits to it.

**Dennis: Do you notice that some contestants in various contests have a sourball attitude about their placing in the contest?**

**Frank:** There are some sore losers at contests. They can only see themselves from their own point of view. They see no wrong when they look into the mirror. In their wives' and mothers' eyes they are the best. What they need to do is have someone who is knowledgeable in the physique standards evaluate them; have someone take some pictures of them and show them what they really look like. Only when one knows what his faults are will he be able to improve.

**Dennis: What do you feel the future holds for competitive bodybuilding?**

**Frank:** First, the influence of the book **Pumping Iron** and lately the film and the publicity that Arnold Schwarzenegger has received is helping this greatly. Arnold has always upgraded bodybuilding whenever he has gone.

**Dennis: Typically give the readers an idea of how you train in the Off Season.**

**Frank:** The off season for me is the months of November and December. I don't have any special training ideas in mind at this time. I will go to the gym once or twice per week. I will never use heavy weights during this time, maybe 60 percent maximum.

I train for total enjoyment and to get a pump, and that's all. I train fast and maintain whatever I can. I do 8 to 10 sets per body part. My reps might run 10-8-7 on three sets per exercise. It's very loose.

I try to keep very little structure to my off season training. What I do in the off season is to concentrate primarily on my weak body parts. I may take a total layoff on the rest of my body and just work my weak points.

I might, for example, work the back three times per week and nothing else, or calves or whatever body part I want to get up. So when I am ready to train seriously those (weak) areas have stayed good.

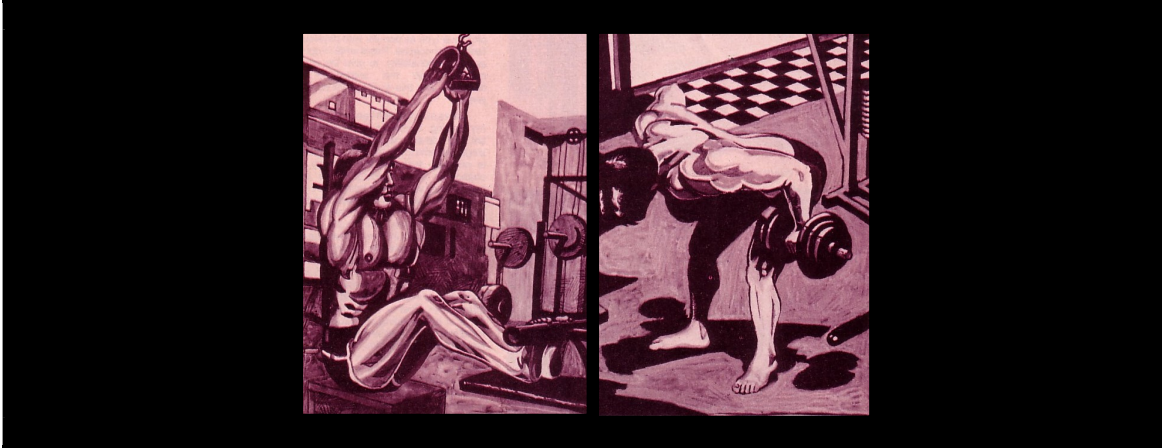
The strong areas have gone down but then when I train regular all the areas come up together. For me this is how I feel the off season should be used. My bodyweight generally goes down in the off season, as much as 15 pounds from my best contest weight of 195.



**Dennis:** I know you covered most of this in your super-seminar yesterday but how about telling me a little more about how you train for the Mr. Olympia title?

**Frank:** This usually begins in January. This gives me 9 months with which to prepare. I come in fairly light, weighing about 180. Gradually over the months I will increase up to around 200 one month before the show.

During the last month when I am training for muscularity, I will lose 4 or 5 pounds. So while it may seem as though I am bulking up over the months, I am really not; it is a gradual consequence of my overall training. Sometimes I feel a body part is not up to par during this training, so I will bring it up.



Using the back for an example: I will take a heavy back workout on **Monday:** doing as many as 25 sets. On **Tuesday:** (using different exercises) I will do 15 sets. **Wednesday:** 10 to 15 sets. Rest **Thursday.** **Friday:** is another heavy back workout much like Monday's schedule.

**Saturday:** just a very little amount of back work. Hitting it 5 days a week for two weeks I find the back really comes up. You can see how this could apply to other body parts as well. I never use specialization of this type any longer than a two week period.

**Dennis:** Allowing for long distance travel to contest sites in the U.S. or other countries, how do you adjust your training and nutritional program so that you don't lose your PEAK for the show?

**Frank:** I had an interesting experience in my trip to the 1970 Mr. Universe in London. The first time I went over there it was a disaster. I got in extremely good shape and looked fantastic when I left. The contest was on a Saturday so I left on Wednesday.

While in the process of flying over there I lost some bodyweight and a lot of sleep. So, on the evening of the show I was drained and lacking in energy. I learned from that experience and made adjustments in '72 by keeping my body a little heavier, and I left a week earlier.

All of this resulted in my being peaked out properly for the show. I think when you are going to a city you should take into account how far it is, what the plane ride is like, when you should arrive, when to end your training.

**Arnold put it into very good words. He said when he leaves he is already on vacation. He is relaxed and eats whatever he wants because all of the aspects of contest preparation are over with. This is the way it should be.**

**Upon the completion of this answer Frank and I mutually agreed to end the interview. We shook hands and I thanked him for making my trip to Anchorage an unforgettable bodybuilding experience. This was one of the first times that I traveled such a long distance and was not in any big hurry to return home.**

## **Special Bonus**

**I missed the opportunity back in the late '70s  
to have Frank Zane  
ANSWER MY BODYBUILDING QUESTIONS by MAIL.  
However  
my very good friend Roger Riedinger,  
owner of**



[www.bodybuildingworld.com](http://www.bodybuildingworld.com)

**received some personal and professional  
result producing advice from Frank Zane  
by MAIL!**

**Here with permission of release  
is one of letters (1978)  
that Roger received...**

# ZANE

P.O. BOX 366 • SANTA MONICA, CALIFORNIA • 90406

Dear Roger,

You have a pleasing symmetrical physique with good all around development and no glaring weak points. You should, however, concentrate on the following areas: lats- they need to develop more of a sweep and come out more to the sides. For this the best exercise is [DB rowing](#). Work your back this way 3 times a week: [wide grip front chins](#) 4 sets of 10 [leverage rowing](#) 4 sets of 10, [one dumbbell rowing](#) 4 sets of 10, and [pulldown behind neck](#) 4 sets of 10, and [dumbbell pullover](#) 4 sets of 10. (\*See pages 4 and 5 of course #2) Do this routine first in your workout.

Rest only about a minute between sets and try to increase the weight 5 to 10 pounds on each set, doing less reps per set if necessary as the weight increases. Lower the weight slowly and get a good stretch at the bottom on every set. Go for a pump with each set.

Next work chest. Do the routine on (\*page 6 course #2), 4 sets of 10 on each exercise working up in weight each set, Next work triceps: do 4x10 [parallel dip](#). The outer portion of your pecs need development and this can be improved by going down extra low on [dumbbell flies](#), [cable flies](#), and [parallel dips](#). Rest about 45 seconds between sets on chest and about 20 seconds between sets on triceps. Do the same abdominal routine (\* pages 7 and 8 course #1) at the end of each workout: [Roman chair situp](#) 1 set of 100 reps, [leg raise](#) 4 sets of 25 reps, [seated twist](#) 1 set of 100 reps. You should train 6 days a week and each workout should take no longer than 2 hours.

On your other training days do delts, biceps, forearms, thighs, and calf work. For delts do [DB press](#) or [PBN](#) 4 sets of 10, [upright row](#) 4x10, [dumbbell side raise](#) 4x10, rear incline raise 4x12. (\*see pages 2-3 course #2) Next do biceps and forearms: [Alternate db curl](#) 4 sets of 8, [incline db curl](#) 4 sets of 10, [dumbbell concentration curl](#) 4 sets of 10 and [reverse curl](#) 4 sets of 12 (Increase weight on each set when ever possible). Take about a 5 minute break here and then go into your leg work. For thighs start with 3 sets of 10 to 15 reps [leg extension](#), then 3 sets of 10 leg press, 5 sets of [parallel barbell squat](#) 10 reps each set (a

good way to increase weight on the squat is jump 50, 40, 30, 20 pounds on successive sets. I do 135, 185, 225, 255, 275 for 10 reps per set.) (\*See pages 5 & 6 course #1) For calves do [calf machine raises](#) 4 sets of 15, [seated calf raise](#) 4 sets of 15 and [donkeys](#) 6 sets of 20 with a partner equal to your bodyweight. On [donkeys](#) rest only long enough between sets to let your partner do his set. Finish off the workout with ab work as before. Train 6 days a week at the same time each day for about 2 hours or slightly less each workout, The leg work especially squats will build up your bodyweight.

You should gain about 10 pounds and slowly increase your bodyweight until you have this weight gained as hard muscular bodyweight. Follow this program for a good 4-5 months and then follow the program in (\*course #10) prior to your contest.

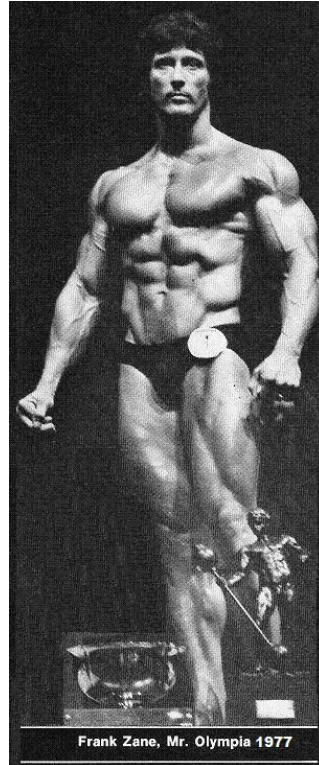
As far as diet goes follow the program in my (\*course #4 on diet). Your diet should be 60% protein, 30% fat, and 10% carbohydrates. Always have a protein drink with 2 oz cream, 6 oz water and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk egg protein powder (I recommend Blair's) and one egg yolk, one hour before you train. Sip it slowly. The low carb diet will help improve your muscularity. Stick to the program and have faith in it and you will succeed. Good Luck!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**\* A brief encapsulated description of the courses Frank referred to in this letter to Roger are as follows:**



## WIN WITH MR. OLYMPIA!



### FRANK ZANE SHOWS YOU HOW WITH THESE AMAZING BODYBUILDING COURSES

- Course # 1 – HOW TO BUILD CHAMPIONSHIP LEGS & A SMALL WAIST.**  
Use Frank's result-getting methods to develop winning calves, thighs, and a trim, muscular waistline.
- Course # 2 – DEVELOP A CLASSIC MUSCULAR UPPER BODY.**  
Seven courses in one! Complete programs for biceps, triceps, forearms, shoulders, chest, back and serratus training.
- Course # 3 – SECRETS OF ADVANCED BODYBUILDING.**  
Secret information of progressive variations of the split routine, posing, advanced nutrition, megavitamin training, mental discipline and concentration. An advanced bodybuilders training manual.
- Course # 10 – AT A ZANE BODYBUILDING SEMINAR.**  
This course is what bodybuilding training is all about! Whether you have attended a Zane seminar or not you should own this course. Learn how to use Frank's triple-phase method to win physique contests, how to train the last month before competition, Frank's Mr. Olympia training completely explained. Over 40 different exercises completely illustrated by Frank, guide to using food supplements, and much, much more.

**Note:** These courses are **out of print** and no longer available from Frank Zane.