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SHOSHANA TREICHEL
AND HER LONG STRANGE TRIP

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By Marty Gallagher

*Bodybuilding Champion,
mother, Alaskan gym owner
and so much more...*

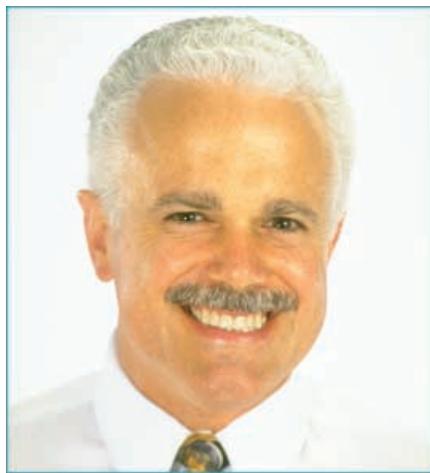
Some people cram so much living into life that even the unembellished retelling makes your head spin. Most people shy away from life, they play it safe, take the path of least resistance and at the end of the road look back wishing they'd done this or tried that. Shoshana Treichel has grabbed life by the throat and shook it hard; she has wrung every drop of excitement, heart break, adventure and contentment from life so far and her tale is far from finished. Retelling her saga makes the head spin. Let us begin at the beginning. "I was born Shoshana Rosenblatt in Rapid City, South Dakota. My father was a civil engineer and my formative years were spent growing up in Santa Maria, California. In high school we moved to England." This abrupt change broadened Shoshana's experience base and her newly discovered wanderlust took her in rapid succession to Holland, Germany and finally Spain, where she lived for a year and a

Photo by Bill Comstock

half. Things just kept accelerating. “My parents and I moved to Tel Aviv when my father took a position with the American Embassy. I relocated and attended Tel Aviv University.” Always an extrovert, Shoshana had been involved in arts and the theatre in particular. She was blessed with a superb singing voice and took to vocal-related endeavors with ease and aplomb. Talented and extroverted she applied to the most exclusive theater company in the United States: the New York Theatre Institute. Lee Strasburg was the founder and had been instrumental in the careers of Marlon Brando, Robert DeNiro and Al Pacino. Strasburg himself appeared as aging gangster Myer Lansky in *Godfather Part II*. Shoshana applied and on the strength of a video tape was summoned to New York for a formal audition.

You didn’t just apply, plopping down your money and start classes at this super-exclusive school; acceptance was predicated on passing a grueling, nerve-wracking audition process. Shoshana was shocked to discover that not only would the Guru of American acting coaches, Lee Strasburg, judge her at the audition but a special celebrity guest judge would be critiquing her as well: Sir John Gielgood. Along with Sir Lawrence Olivier, Sir John was the greatest living English stage actor. This audition would make the finals of *American Idol* look like a cakewalk. Pulling out all the stops, Shoshana dazzled the panel and was accepted. This was a very big deal as thousands of applicants apply but only a select

few are actually accepted. “I returned to the United States from Israel in 1985 after being accepted into the Theatre Institute. I was a musical stage actress and had aspirations of appearing in Broadway musicals.” A life altering experience occurred in 1986. Shoshana had been in New York less than three months when she was mugged by a roving street gang. “I was young and carefree in New York when one evening I was at-



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tacked by a gang and it really sent me spinning physically and psychologically.” The traumatic event destroyed her theater career but the injury recuperation process exposed her to the world of health and fitness. “One of my colleagues at the Paris Health Club on the Upper West Side of Manhattan told me about the power of lifting weights. After much hemming and hawing, I decided to accompany him to Better Bodies, a small Lower

East Side gym where local celebrities like Gladys Portuguese (later to marry Jean Claude Van Dame) and Vanessa Del Rio trained.”

Better Bodies was a hot bed of bodybuilding back in the eighties and everyone who was anyone made the pilgrimage to Brian Moss’ urban fitness oasis when in the Big Apple. Shoshana started off weak and broken. “In my first workout a 45-pound empty bar caused me to struggle in the bench press.” She pushed through the pain and persevered. After a few weeks the process took hold and mentally and psychologically something clicked inside her. “I intuitively knew that fitness and bodybuilding would be an integral part of my life from this point forward.” Another fortuitous event occurred when she was channel surfing one afternoon and stopped to watch as an amazingly built woman go through a weight workout directed by a demanding trainer. “I was newly exposed to the world of bodybuilding and hungry to learn what ever I could...lo and behold as I was flipping through the channels I stopped when a well known female bodybuilder, Diane Garrity, appeared. I watched intently as she was put through a super tough workout by her TV trainer – John Parrillo. Later on I met Gladys Portuguese at Better Bodies. We hit it off and began training together. I then had my first exposure to Parrillo methodology and took to it immediately. I knew from my acting and singing how hard serious people work in order to excel and I instinctively knew the Parrillo approach was the one for me. John insisted on hard work



In 2000 she realized another dream when she opened Shoshana's Gym in Kodiak, Alaska. "I stocked my racks with Parrillo products and began another chapter in my life."

and strict, disciplined adherence to nutrition. This struck a resonant chord in me and confirmed what I had learned in theatre: to really excel you have to work really hard. I wanted to compete as a bodybuilder and vowed that one day I would train with John Parrillo."

Her theatrical career, derailed by the attack and delayed by the extended recuperative period, was put on permanent hold when she met and married Harry Cotler. He was a podiatrist and the newlyweds moved to Florida. "I immersed myself in the fitness industry. I was going to become a fitness professional and began taking classes and obtaining certifications right and left. Before my Florida relocation,

I fulfilled one long standing dream when I competed in the Atlantic States Bodybuilding Championships and came in 5th place in 1987." Shoshana's acting background and ability to project personality was apparent. The judges told her she had "a hell of a lot of stage presence but needed more muscle maturity." Taking up where she left off in Manhattan, she jumped feet first into the red hot Florida bodybuilding scene. Shoshana quickly linked up with bodybuilding heavy hitters such as John Defendis, Joanne McCartney, Penny Price and Mike Quinn. "I trained hard and won the novice class at the Florida State Bodybuilding Championships in 1988. I placed high in the Southern States

in 1989." Shoshana became pregnant after the Southern States and took some time off. "I did not hit the stage again until I flew to California to do the Natural Universe in 1991 where I finished 2nd." She established herself as one of the top up-and-coming talents on the Florida bodybuilding scene and even trained the Miami Dolphins for a short while. Shoshana had no sooner gotten settled and situated then a series of disasters befell her in quick succession.

"We lost our house in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew. I was pregnant at the time and lost my child. Our new house and my husband's practice were gone and I was devastated." Tore down on a multitude of fronts, Shoshana decided to move far away from Florida. Her choice was as unusual as her unpredictable personality. "After the succession of awful experiences I felt I could no longer live in Florida: we decided to explore the possibility of moving to Alaska. My husband was presented with an opportunity to start a new practice on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula." Shoshana traveled north with an open mind regarding permanent relocation. "To my way of thinking Alaska was a land of opportunity. My first stop was Gold's Gym in Anchorage, owned by Lindsay Knight. He and I hit it off. I loved the rugged beauty of the landscape and we decided to relocate. My husband established a new practice and I got into the gym business. That was 1993." Shoshana moved to Kenai and traveled to Anchorage to work. Call it fate or irony or ironic fate, "Lindsay

Knight, it turned out, was a great friend of John Parrillo and John visited Alaska each year to judge in bodybuilding competitions and lead seminars put on by Lindsay.” After nearly a decade of following Parrillo methods and using Parrillo products, Shoshana met John and Dominique Parrillo for the first time. “As soon as John and Dominique walked through the door I literally leapt with glee. It was thrilling. I had dreamed of being trained by the guru for seven years. We all went to dinner and I got to know both of them on a personal level. Later I went to his bodybuilding judging clinic and was a participant in his extensive, comprehensive training seminar.”

Though Shoshana thrived in Alaska, not everything was peaches and cream. “In 1996 I divorced my husband and became the primary care giver to my daughter. I had to come up with a way to be financially independent.” Shoshana explored the possibilities of opening her own fitness facility and all the while continued to expand her knowledge base. Her pure brain power led her to be accepted into an advanced course at the nation’s most prestigious institute for higher learning: Harvard University. “In 1999 I was accepted into the graduate program in Medical Stress Reduction through Exercise and Nutrition at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It took six months to complete my studies. The entire time I could not wait to return to the rugged wilds of Alaska.” All the time she had been in the Kenai she had been competing in bodybuilding



“I have an endorsement contract with the auto make Hummer and they provide me with the newest 2005 H2.”

competitions. “I competed and guest posed in numerous contests and jumped at an opportunity to perform at the “Mr. Israel” bodybuilding championships on Kibbutz Afiq in 1998.” In 2000 she realized another dream when she opened Shoshana’s Gym in Kodiak, Alaska. “I stocked my racks with Parrillo products and began another chapter in my life. I decided on a new goal: I would compete in the master’s division of a national level bodybuilding show.” By the year 2002 her gym was a financial success and she was in love again with a new man. “I began a wonderful relationship with my future husband Jake Treichel.” Jake was a coast guard helicopter mechanic, certified rescue diver and an excellent athlete. “Jake and I first met when he hired me to train and prepare his nutritional schedule for the Anchorage

regional bodybuilding championships. He not only won his weight division – he won me!”

She decided to get serious about her bodybuilding career. “I wanted to take my physique to the next level so I arranged to have one of my good friends from Gold’s Gym in Anchorage come and run my gym. This allowed me to fly to Cincinnati and train with John.” She made the best of her extended visit and returned home with a detailed game plan, a whole batch of new exercise techniques and a brand new nutritional approach that she and John had hatched. Shoshana felt certain her customized Parrillo approach would allow her to physically exceed everything she had achieved to this point. After a year of putting ‘the plan’ into action, it was time to pull the trigger. In 2004 Shoshana placed high in three con-