

# Above and Beyond with Frank Sepe

IFM Gets an Exclusive  
One-On-One Interview with  
Innovator and Fitness  
Leader Frank Sepe as He  
Takes the Industry by Storm!  
By Michelle Shaw



Recently in New York City, I had the rare opportunity to meet and interview the most photographed bodybuilder and fitness model in history, Frank Sepe. As Frank filled me in on his journey from humble beginnings in Long Island to becoming a leader and innovator in the fitness industry for over fifteen years, it's no wonder that he is hailed as one of the top fitness and nutrition gurus to date! He has brought the sport of Bodybuilding to the forefront of mass media with his extraordinary physique and extremely handsome face.

Frank has won bodybuilding titles, written best-selling fitness and nutrition books, been recruited as a personal trainer for celebrities and has seen all facets of the world of fitness and nutrition. Not only has Frank been one of the most respected editors in top magazines, he has also graced the covers of countless magazines and romance novels; as well as being a famed photographer. Frank is a fitness media expert both on television and radio, and now he takes center stage on the Home Shopping Network (HSN) to be able to connect and impact a larger audience. This fitness and nutritional expert, author, and celebrity trainer experienced tremendous success with the launch of his Fitness as a Lifestyle Collection and can be seen on HSN Live TV and hsn.com. Frank is taking the fitness industry by storm as a mentor to motivate people to develop a positive change and outlook to their lives and is here to share his journey with IFM!

**Michelle Shaw:** When you were younger, what inspired you to begin weightlifting?

**Frank Sepe:** My father was my inspiration for my decision to start lifting weights. When I was a kid people always used to say, "Wow your dad has big arms" or "He is strong". I will never forget the time, I was sitting outside on the front steps of our house in Queens and my dad was watering the grass. All of a sudden the Police were chasing this guy down the street and my dad dropped the garden hose chased down the guy and threw him to the ground and held him there until the other cops could catch up and arrest him. That had a huge impact on me. Plus, like a lot of 13-year-old kids, you start to become more self-conscious about your appearance and as a really skinny kid this affected me more than others. So I started using my dad's weight set, that he had in the basement. I loved it from the second I started lifting. It just felt right. My older brother Scott also got the weight lifting bug and he won a Natural Teenage Bodybuilding



**Frank Sepe – one of the most photographed fitness models in history, poses with his wife Lisa Grunewald.**

Show. My family has good genetics when it comes to physique so in turn I had an advantage and my career in bodybuilding took off with the support of my family.

**MS:** What does your competitive record look like?

**FS:** It's funny. So many people think I competed lots of times. The fact is that I competed for three years. I did one show a year. The first show I did (the 1994 NPC Eastern USA Bodybuilding Championships) I competed at 240 pounds and won the heavyweight division and most muscular award. I was just a kid and I beat 35-40 year old veteran bodybuilders and they weren't too happy about that. The second show I did was the 1995 NPC Metropolitan Bodybuilding Championships and I won the heavyweights and overall championships at a bodyweight of 251. That was a lot of fun. Then I did my first Pro Qualifier and placed 5<sup>th</sup> at bodyweight of 263 at the 1996 North American Bodybuilding Championships. After that I stopped competing and start modeling, writing and moving on with my life. It is so funny that even today people will ask me if I read that about myself on the bodybuilding chat lines? And it will say stuff like, he sold out, or he never would have been pro or whatever negative stuff you can possibly think of. I really think it is funny that after all this time people are still commenting on my bodybuilding days. I must have made some impact on them. LOL!. I love lifting weights and will forever and I did enjoy my bodybuilding days, it was just time to do something else. 13 years later here we are. Plus I am still involved in bodybuilding as both an NPC and IFBB judge.

**MS:** You are known as one of the most photographed fitness models

in history; being featured on hundreds of magazine covers magazines all over the world. Tell us how you got into fitness modeling,



**FS:** Because of all the lifting I was doing, I was starting to get noticed. I was 19 or 20 and had 5 years of solid weight training behind me so I had a good physique. A modeling scout at a bodybuilding show discovered me and pretty soon after that I was modeling for designers such as Armani and booking a lot of modeling work. I got more involved in fitness modeling and to make a long story short, I have been on hundreds of magazine and Romance Book covers, was a spokesperson for MET-Rx for over a decade and pretty much did everything you can possibly do as a model in the fitness industry; TV, Magazine Covers, Ads, feature stories, commercials. Throughout all of this I started an exclusive personal training and fitness consulting business and have worked with celebrities, professional athletes and everyday people, helping them reach their fitness goals. Working with people one on one is my passion and that led me to writing. I wanted to help people achieve their goals. This passion to help led to writing articles, columns or contributing as a source to dozens of different magazines. TV shows became interested in me and I started appearing on shows like The Howard Stern Show, Conan O'Brien, Regis and Kelly and dozens of news shows. Then I became the Fitness Expert for the ESPN show Cold Pizza and did a live segment called Body Talk every Monday for over a year. I think one thing led to the other and then I published my first book *The Truth—The Only Fitness Book You'll Ever Need*. That really opened doors for me. The book got a lot of recognition and based on its success, I wrote two additional books, for that publishing house, which included doing radio, TV and seminars around the world regularly. This made me want to pursue writing even more and then I became the Group Editor for a media company which included three health publications, including the MET-Rx magazine. Then I started my own magazine called MAQ (Men's Athletic Quarterly) which we sold over a year ago. I think I am the type of person who constantly needs to evolve. I get bored easily and I am not happy doing one thing at a time. I am a huge multi-tasker who always has numerous projects going on at once.



Frank pictured here with Brett Michaels of *Poison* fame.

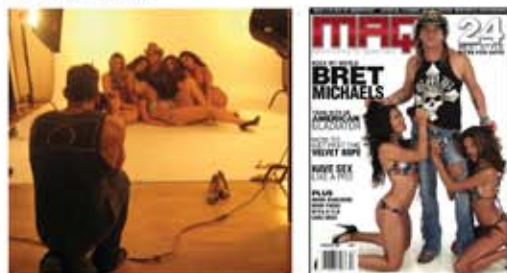
**MS:** You now have your own brand on the Home shopping Network, with around 90 million viewers! Tell us about the Frank Sepe, Fitness as a Lifestyle collection.

**FS:** I am very appreciative for the opportunity that HSN has given me. My goal is to make fitness fun and affordable for everyone across North America. Now being on HSN, I have the opportunity to directly connect and impact a huge audience. I recently introduced my Fitness as a Lifestyle Collection on the Home Shopping Network (HSN) and hsn.com. The collection involves all of the components to achieving one's health and fitness goals, as well as for healthy lifestyle transformation. My fitness style encompasses almost all conditioning activities, and will continue to be focused on adding innovation to the health and fitness categories. My first product, The Fitness Disc<sup>®</sup> The Premier Workout System combines a small footprint more effective total with big exercise benefits and you can get core training, weight resistance, and a cardio workout; a head-to-toe fitness solution. It was important for me to develop a product that anyone could easily use and obviously afford. The Fitness Disc actually sold out in three hours in its first debut on HSN. I was shocked and couldn't be more pleased at the feedback we got! I joined HSN by partnering with Ingenious Designs (IDL), its wholly owned subsidiary, which was founded by entrepreneur and inventor Joy Mangano and in my opinion Joy is a genius when it comes to every facet of developing a brand. My brand is exclusive to HSN and we have numerous products in development and I will be appearing regularly on the network. Jan 25<sup>th</sup> is my next scheduled date. Check HSN for franksepe.com for air dates.

**MS:** You have gone above and beyond what a traditional fitness model would ever do.

What's your belief system when it comes to being an incredibly accomplished and successful entrepreneur?

**FS:** I am the type of person who needs challenges

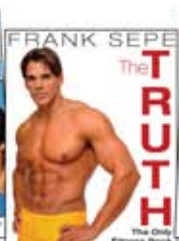


Frank on the other side of the lens, photographing the cover of MAQ magazine.

and goals to meet. That is what makes me tick. I am a very down to earth person who is now driven by the passion he has for what he does and the love for his family. That may sound comy! But it is true! I think you can safely say that the path I have followed is unlike any others. I don't think there's anyone in the fitness industry that can say they have followed the same path as me. I started off as a bodybuilder, moved to a top fitness model and personal trainer, author of best-selling books, Editor-in-Chief of MET-RX magazine, Group Editor of three additional fitness publications, and co-owner of MAQ, Men's Athletic Quarterly magazine. I've been a marketing consultant for one of the top sports nutrition companies in the world, have run a media company and as a published photographer, I've shot multi-million dollar ad campaigns, celebrities and a slew of professional athletes. The photography was supposed to be a hobby. LOL! Now with my own brand on HSN and various other projects in works, I don't ever look back, I just look forward to getting to where I want to be. I don't think anything is impossible. There will be many negative people trying to pull you down or they will be happy to throw roadblocks in your way but that is why you have to always stay positive and true to what you know you are capable of.

**MS:** You are the author of five different fitness books. Your first book *The Truth* was a fitness best seller; what is your new book about?

**FS:** I have written three books through Hay House Publishing, *The Truth—The Only Fitness Book You'll Ever Need*, *Frank Sepe's Abs-olutely Perfect Plan for a Flatter Stomach*, and *Truth Body Solutions—Nutritional Strategies for a Better Body and a Better Life*. I have two new books available exclusively on HSN. They are sold together in a package. The first book is "Fitness as





a Lifestyle." This book explains my three prong approach to living a fit and healthier lifestyle. The second book is Focus on FAQ's - 100 Most frequently Asked Fitness and Nutrition Questions". I think this is a great book, I took the most popular questions people have asked me over the years about exercise, nutrition and motivation and put them into one book. I am really proud of that book and think it is a great addition to anyone's fitness book collection, whether they are just starting out or have been working out for years.

**MS:** What are some of the HSN ventures you have coming up in 2010? What should we expect to see?

**FS:** In January, 2010, I will be doing a Today's Special on HSN for the Fitness as a Lifestyle Collection. I will be spending roughly 8 hours in one day profiling the Fitness Disc. I am looking forward to going on air and introducing this product to people who have not seen it before. I think this is the best piece of home gym equipment that works your entire body in its price category. I will be introducing new products as well as the disc during the entire year of 2010. You just have to check HSN.com or Franksepe.com for air dates. I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about my involvement with the Multiple Sclerosis Society I have three members of my family who unfortunately have been diagnosed with MS. I am going to be really involved this year to raise more awareness to the cause. I will be involved in walks, bike races and charity dinners. You can go to <http://www.nationalmssociety.org> for more info on MS. Check out my site for more info as well.

**MS:** You are also a famed photographer! Is this just a hobby for you?

**FS:** I picked up a camera because while I was working as the Group Editor, I was also running photo shoots for the magazine. So more often than not, the photos we were getting back were not that good. During one of the shoots, one of the photographers suggested that if I know what I want then I should shoot it myself. A week before that I purchased a camera because I felt like I needed a relaxing hobby. Being an ex.model I know which angles make people look the best, I just had to learn the technical aspects of photography and I picked that up pretty quickly. I have worked with a lot of good photographers in the past and had smart technical people around me, so it was an easy transition. I started shooting all the covers and editorial for all three magazines and that quickly turned into many outside projects. I shot dozens of ads for major companies, magazine covers, and a lot of fun projects like shooting for the UFC, MET-Rx, Ed Hardy, Brett Michaels, Trish Stratus, Rachell Leah, American Idol, MMA Fighters

(Matt Serra Uriah Faber), and pro athletes like NFL's (Richard Seymour). I only do stuff that interests me. I don't seek work or have a website for photography. I recently shot the MET-Rx 2010 Girls calendar ([www.metrx.com](http://www.metrx.com)). That came out really cool! Being on both sides of the camera I can offer this to any model who does a shoot. The truth is if you are worried about looking bad in a certain light then you are not in shape. Look good in every light. With the way Photoshop is today, fitness models don't look real. I think in a way it has made people who are trying to get in great shape aspire to something that is not an attainable reality.

**MS:** How different do you think your life would be today if you were to have pursued your bodybuilding career?

**FS:** With bodybuilding you are constantly dieting and training and it's very hard on your body. I have good genetics, but going from 230lbs to 300lbs is not easy on the body. If I would have kept with bodybuilding, I think that I would have developed some pretty serious health issues. I wouldn't have been able to evolve to where I am today or have a family. When you are bodybuilding, everything revolves around your training and dieting. It's all about you getting bigger and leaner and nothing else matters. It is not for everybody. Some people handle it better than others and can find that balance. I am a fan of bodybuilding and I think those who choose that path and are successful have to have a certain mindset for the sport.

**MS:** How do you make time for yourself, family and friends with so much on the go?

**FS:** You have to make the time. No matter how busy I am, I still make it a priority to spend time with my wife and son. At the end of the day what is more important answering your blackberry every 5 seconds or seeing your son eat spaghetti for the first time or chasing the dog around the house. You can't get those moments back and I don't want to regret not being there as much as I can. You have to find a sensible balance.

**MS:** From all of your accomplishments in life, what is your biggest to date?

**FS:** I am very blessed and happy with all of the things that I have accomplished over the years. I really can't point to one thing and say, wow that was my best accomplishment. Like I said before I believe that every step I have taken has led to another step. So I guess I can answer that question better when I get to the top of the ladder. Whatever the top of the ladder may be. That's what's fun about life, you never know what's next and you have to have the ability to adapt, reinvent and press forward.

**MS:** Frank, we appreciate you taking the time to share this with us! Thanks a lot!

**FS:** Thank you! Inside Fitness is the best fitness magazine in Canada and I want to thank you and Terry for the interview. Go to [franksepe.com](http://franksepe.com) for more info on me. Thanks! **IFM**