

# A Day, A Life, A Lesson

## Getting Serious about Gluteal Reconstruction

By Charles Peeples



Vivian Camphor

*I read the news today, oh boy!* Most of a year will have elapsed by the time you're reading this, and the headline I refer to will have faded, if you ever paid much attention at all. And despite its grim aspects, this item was, at least initially, offered almost with as much mirth as shock. The media's seldom at a loss for sophomoric puns when it comes to certain features of human anatomy, especially one with so many cute names. *And though the news was rather sad*, I can't say that I had to laugh. You don't laugh at stuff like this.

*Though the holes were rather small*, they were enough. She was a young British woman, and she'd died in Lower Merion after having her buttocks augmented with injections administered by a transsexual character that even Gran Guignol would have found too grotesque for popular consumption. If we can derive any good from this ghoulish tale, let it be in bringing attention to the folly of a widespread practice which reflects the distorted priorities of our media-image-driven society.

Our obsession with bootie is perfectly understandable, courtesy of Nature's hard-wiring, and I'd include myself in the multitudes of men reduced to incoherence (*I just had to look*) by the

gluteal proportions of a J-Lo. I'm not going to worry about the logic of this trigger-mechanism but it makes more sense to me than the obsession most other men seem to have with oversized mammaries; as *those* fixtures are comprised largely of fat tissue anyway, they can do little more on their own than shrink or sag, hence their enhancement's just as understandable as revising a misshapen nose, jaw or teeth, otherwise immutable through personal effort.

The gluteals are different; they're *muscles*, and they happen to be among the largest, most powerful muscles in the body. Anyone current in the field of strength and conditioning will add that in terms of functional movement they're also among the most important, as they're our primary engine -the epicenter- of our locomotion. And sadly, as an adult, unless you're a highly-competitive athlete or a regular lifter (or genetically-gifted), your gluteals are likely weak and under-developed -especially if you work at a desk. In the case of most women -and you can quote me on this: "*clinically-atrophied*." Ironic, considering all this focus on their appearance. While this deficiency comes largely out of ignorance and laziness, centuries of societal conditioning are responsible as well; like many things women simply weren't supposed to have/do (like voting, driving, holding high public office and corporate positions, etc), having well-developed musculature has been taboo. In *From Russia With Love*, the 1958 Ian Fleming 007 epic, the otherwise flawless beauty's derriere is described as "so hardened with exercise that it had lost the smooth downward feminine sweep and now, round at the back, and flat and hard at the sides, it jutted like a man's." That was *then* -the era of Marilyn Monroe and her doughiness (and men were men). But when Sir Mix-A-Lot released "Baby Got Back" two decades ago he touched on that primal impulse I alluded to earlier. With greater acceptance and awareness of advanced physical development in females,



Vivian Camphor

we now know that gluteal development like that of forty-four year-old figure and body-building competitor Vivian Camphor represents a *choice*, rather than fate or luck.

One current strength and conditioning theory postulates that some of our joints aren't really supposed to move as much as others: the knees and lower back, for instance, are meant to function more as stabilizers -limiting movement, while the ankles and hips are supposed to be more mobile. That's one reason why all those crunches and twists are passe, and variations of planks (bridges) and other "core" work are de rigueur. Thus limited hip strength and mobility means lower back and knee problems. We see it all the time, from the soccer girls with torn ACLs to their chair-bound daddies with lumbar issues.

So the notion of stuffing some alien substance -dead weight to boot- into the caboose (or calf, or pecs, or anywhere) as a substitute for muscular development is beyond idiotic, other than for sleazy quasi-medical practitioners who see gold in them thar hills, and if it takes a senseless (in the most literal sense) tragedy like the one in Lower Merion to highlight this insanity and get it right, so be it.

The key to working any muscle is to understand its principal function, and that of the gluteus maximus is hip extension, which essentially means moving your thigh backward (that- not knee flexion- is also the *principal* function of the hamstrings, so if you want to size up the personal trainer kid in your health club, ask him how best to train hamstrings- I'll bet he sends you to a leg curl/knee flexion machine. You perform hip extension every time you step up, squat, lunge, ride a bike, swim, or even when you just walk. But to have any *noticeable* effect, you need to perform this movement with the high intensity-short duration effort key to muscle development. Form follows function. We function on our feet -lifting ourselves and other stuff (the harder the better), using our hip muscles. And there's no such thing as "getting too big" -unless the object in question is covered with layers of lard. That's another story.

So if you're serious about building those twin engines, skip all the gimmicks, gadgets and soft-core on-the-mat-in-leotards stuff, and stick with the basic proven functional whole-body-movement variations on squats (including one-legged), lunges, deadlifts, kettlebell-swings, plyometrics, etc. Rather than trying to go into detail in this limited space I'd recommend checking out YouTube where you can find countless video-clips demonstrating in live motion these and any other exercise that exists. And as Vivian demonstrates, knowing what the glutes actually do can allow you some challenging improvisation without gym equipment. No glutes, no glory! *We'd love to turn you on...*



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