

Nancy Di Nino

Living "Outside The Box Of Life"

In fitness and bodybuilding it's always been said that genetics has the final word on the physique you can build, but as has been proven countless times, willpower, hard work and persistence can be a stronger tool than good genetic makeup. But then, what if someone has it all? Very occasionally do you find someone who has everything, and one of the gifted is Nancy Di Nino, which is why she's living outside the box of life and is something greater.

Get ready for an exceptional experience, because Nancy is not just a pretty face and body, but a very clever and focused woman, a very hard worker since she was a kid, and someone with such energy that eventually she will get everything she wants in life. After meeting her I would say the sky is the limit for Nancy.

Born in London, Ontario in Canada of Italian and Venezuelan descent, Nancy has an older sister, Tizia, who is also her closest friend. Her early life was shared between study and sports alike. She started gymnastics at just seven years old, and later passed a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Sociology & Criminology with honours at university. She started conditioning during her years as a young gymnast, but at the beginning of high school, when she was around 15, Nancy signed up for her first real gym membership so she could continue the strict training regime she developed with gymnastics.

Nancy was always very strong for her size and gender, as she used to beat the boys in arm wrestles at school and could leg press more than some men as well, which fascinated everyone. All her friends thought young Nancy Di Nino was kind of a mini-superwoman.

She has always been a very active person, having started as a competitive gymnast and taken up dance later on. She's also a hip-hop dancer and a professional salsa dancer who performed at the Bacardi World Salsa Congress in Puerto Rico. Nancy trained all throughout high school, lifting weights to keep in good shape for the other sports she was involved in, such as volleyball, track and field and cheerleading. This all gave her excellent conditioning growing up, as from the age of seven she was averaging over 700 abs exercises a day...This woman has *never* been out of shape!

For her 5'4" (162cm) in height, Nancy weighs 135-138lb (61-62kg) off-season and gets down to 125-128lb (57-58kg) at contest time. In fact, Nancy only recently took up figure competition, but there is definitely a place waiting for her among the pros.

However, don't think Nancy's only worries are training and competing, she works as a Correctional Officer in a men's jail, and her job is neither a boring nor an easy one: "Well, working as a Correctional Officer in a men's jail, there is always a story to be told. What I see in a day is what most people won't see in a lifetime. A typical day could consist of anything from a drug overdose, saving someone's life to a



Michael Palmer

suicide attempt, a stabbing, or finding unidentified objects, called “contraband”, inside certain body crevices where they don’t belong.”

I feel that Nancy is a special person with a very unique story to be told, someone who can motivate others to improve not only his or her own body and health, but their whole life too.

BodyFitness: What did your physique look like before you got into weight training?

Nancy Di Nino: I always had a strong athletic physique due to the fact I started as a competitive gymnast since a very young age. I was always envied for my six-pack abs since ten years old from all my fellow classmates, wondering how someone so young could have a six-pack set of abs already! I had good overall shape, however, not any detailed conditioning, and was always a little “thicker” in the butt and legs, which I will say comes from my genetics and ethnic background.

BF: What changes did you immediately notice and how did it change your life after you began weight training?


NDN: Once I started training, I couldn’t believe that my body was capable of such changes. Like I mentioned, I always struggled with having a heavier, thicker-set bottom half, genetically speaking, and once I started leaning out...it was the most rewarding experience. It’s funny because you train, and await changes, however, looking at yourself each day you don’t always notice the immediate changes. They often appear slow and inadequate...but the best feeling is training for weeks at a time, not really paying attention, just focusing on the “hunger” that you place on the next body part that is victim to your intense workouts, while visualizing what I see as “the art structure your body will transform to”. Then one day, usually shortly before you step foot on stage, you take a look at yourself in awe. It is that moment of satisfaction that penetrates your continued love and drive for training and to continually set goals for yourself. You take a look in the mirror, you ask yourself, “Is that really me?” And the answer stares you right in the face. This is when your life begins a complete change, as you feel mentally empowered through your journey of accomplishment. You feel invincible!

BF: Were your parents or friends supportive of your decision to pursue fitness?

NDN: My parents weren’t really that supportive and have just started to come around. They had such negative impressions of bodybuilding and fitness, but now start to understand not just the physical aspects of this industry but also the emotional and mental aspects that develop. I think once they saw me in magazines, and one time while travelling together a fan recognized me at a garage. Then they realized the influential position I was in. Through my success in my career, not only on stage, but through interviews, fitness modelling, being a freelance writer and a hosting correspondent, they now understand I have become quite an inspiration and positive role model



Paul Buceta

 **Shelley Geoffrey**

to many people across the world. So, it's more the mental and emotional influence that I have had on friends and fans that has been most rewarding thing, and being of good service to others to help them achieve their health and fitness goals. My friends have always encouraged me to enter fitness competitions. It was me that always doubted myself. They knew I had the dedication, drive and commitment that was needed to succeed, especially since I always give a 150% to all I do...once I put my mind to something, you can't stop me!

BF: How did your training philosophy and principles change from early days to the present?

NDN: You can't even compare training for a fitness or bodybuilding competition to another sport. This is one of the few sports where everything you eat and consume matters, and one of the only sports that require you to sometimes deprive your body of good nutrients and foods such as fruits and vegetables just to look good. When I trained for gymnastics, I watched what I ate but not to this extreme. And dance, the same. This sport, taught me HOW to eat. It educated me on foods and provided me with structure. I had no idea about the power of food and what it can do for you. And although I was always determined and driven, training for a figure competition gave me unbelievable mental strength. It gave me the "eye of the tiger". I have never been so focused before in my life, where nothing else in the world matters. You will sacrifice everything to ensure you eat, sleep and train at best...with no interruptions.



Nancy on stage.

Barry B. Brooks

grunting and groaning, working through the pain. At the same time, I develop a loving mindset as I visualize every rep and movement and what the outcome will look like presented on stage. I love that feeling and it makes it all worth it! Knowing I worked so hard to look good and bring my legs and glutes in at best. It gives me such a satisfying sense of gratitude. I also love training shoulders. I really feel that having a nice shoulder-line really defines a women's physique giving her a nice "statuesque" look.

My least favourite body part to train is chest. That is probably because I don't really feel like I see any significant development or feel that is a defining factor in my overall physique. For men, it is the complete opposite as they want a big defined chest, but with women, it's really just about being firm in that area and having help with perhaps the additional areas, if you know what I mean, ha-ha. I have always had a pretty lean chest area.

BF: Prioritise the importance of diet, supplementation, training, and other factors needed to make gains for you.

NDN: The most important are what I call my three lifelines: diet, training and sleep. And let me first say that I do feel that in order to achieve successful results, it is imperative that all three components are exercised simultaneously, meaning you need all of them for things to work out. For me, and my advice to many others is that diet and nutrition is everything. It doesn't matter if you train for three hours, or do 300 abs exercises, you will never achieve lean results without proper nutrition. Food is fuel, and food is the key to moulding your physique. I put diet ahead of training, only because my body is at a stage now where I have already cultivated a fair amount of muscle and conditioning so that now I can continue to tweak and fine tune. My diet

of cardio every morning on an empty stomach, and then usually train. Then I do another cardio segment in the evening that runs up to one hour. All cardio sessions vary from three-mile runs, incline walking and integrated plyometrics such as jump lunges and squats that mock track and field training. I the final 8-12 weeks of training a third cardio/track and field conditioning segment is added with sprints, drills and hill running...Are you tired yet? Ha-ha! The judging criteria for figure is lean muscle mass - having good amounts of lean muscle with little separation, having good shapely lines and a healthy overall appearance. Having said that, due to the fact that I do already carry enough muscle, I do not lift heavy nor do I go into a "bulk-up" off-season. I actually only really lift heavier on my shoulders and back which could use some more size, however, my arms and legs are lighter in weight. The key is to be "tiny and tight", having good shape and conditioning, so the majority of our exercises centre on a variety of leg shaping and plyometric movements to attain this. When it comes to sets and reps, I will do usually four sets and the rep range will vary from 10-15.

BF: Which are your personal favourite and least favourite body parts to train and why?

NDN: I love training legs first and foremost and second to that is shoulders. Funny, as with training legs, there is somewhat a "love-hate" relationship there. For me, as I find legs the most challenging to work, I like to get it over with early in the week. Every time it's like I anticipate tackling that workout, and in the back of your mind you dread it and can't wait until it's done, and during the workout you are



Interviewing Arnold with Bob Cicherillo at the Arnold Classic weekend in 2007.

BF: Could you give our readers some details of your current training principles?

NDN: My training regime is very intense. I train a total of six days a week with one day off (usually Sunday). When it comes to weight training. I train each body part once a week. I start on Monday and train legs, Tuesday I train shoulders, Wednesday I train back, Thursday I train arms and Fridays I train chest, and combine that with leg shaping plyometrics training to hit my legs yet another time to help with the shape and conditioning. Oh, and that is just the beginning! Now let's integrate the cardio segments. I do cardio six days a week. On average, which is 14-16 weeks out from competition time, I do two hours or more of cardio A DAY! Yes you heard me...I do one hour



Nancy works as a correctional officer in a men's prison.

David Ford

compliments everything I do in the gym. It dictates what I see in the mirror. It's amazing the power of food and how your body can respond with the changes in your diet.

I also feel sleep is very important, which sometimes, I must admit, I fall victim to taking my own advice. Sleep is essential for muscle recovery and growth and to help prevent high levels of cortisol, which is your stress hormone. If I am unrested everything else suffers, my training, my energy levels are low, performance and hence I crave naughty foods...that is why it is so important for me to have a good night sleep. In addition to supplementation, I also feel proper water intake, stretching and some form of meditation and or visualization are essential ingredients in my success. Visualization I am a firm believer of and practice it throughout the day...as whatever you focus on expands, so if you see and visualize your success, you are one step closer to achieving them. Visualizing everything from your training, posing, and how you present yourself on stage, how you feel under the lights, etc, is all part of making gains.

BF: What is your bulking up/off-season diet like?

NDN: I touched upon this subject in the previous area. Being a fitness model and figure competitor, I really don't have a "bulk-up" off-season. My off-season diet is still pretty structured, and let me tell you, my trainer Mike D. (trainer of champions) makes sure of that. We like to keep me within 10-12 pounds of my competition weight so that we don't spend most of the on-season trying to catch up and me killing myself trying to shed fat off. Instead, Mike's philosophy is keeping a reasonable weight and good condition to build in the off-season so we can lean out more steadily in the on-season. Hence, that's the reason why I am doing one-hour



David Ford

Above all, Nancy is a complete athlete.



She is also a sought after model that all the best photographers want to work with.

Michael Palmer

cardio sessions year round. I even did cardio on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day! (Yes, I am a bit of a psycho that way...ha-ha). As for the diet and nutrition, Mike still has me on an off-season diet that has small portions, eating every two hours, six or seven times a day. What he will do is up the carbohydrate portions, add more variety of vegetables or fruits and add a cheat meal in here and there. Yes, it's pretty rigid to say the least.

BF: What is your pre-contest diet like and when do you start it?

NDN: I like to give myself plenty of time so I usually start 14-16 weeks out, really starting to clean up, and then 12 weeks buckling down. It really depends on the shape and condition I am starting at. Similar in structure to my off-season diet, I continue to eat every two hours on the dot, approximately six to eight times a day, depending on how early I get up in the morning. My diet is very strict and very bland. Although I am pretty good with having the discipline to adhere to it, I know many would find it quite difficult sticking to such rigidity. It consists of no wheat, no gluten and no dairy (I know what you are thinking!) The only fruit I eat is grapefruit, seeing it is a natural fat burner, and that I would eat prior to training or a cardio session. My vegetables are narrowed down to asparagus or green beans. Each meal has a calculated amount of protein depending on how many weeks out I am, with only my post-workout meal having a low glycemic carbohydrate, which is either a quarter- to half-cup of oatmeal or cream of rice or 4oz of yam. My protein sources interchange throughout the day, between portions of six egg whites, 4oz of tuna, 5oz chicken or steak, 5oz fish and a protein shake. It will have no seasonings at all, I eat it plain. My philosophy is go hard or go home, so I would not rather taste anything tempting at all.

BF: You need to be very disciplined and focused to do that. How important is the fitness and figure lifestyle to you, and what do you think about the current trends in the sport?

NDN: Fitness is very much part of my career and my life. It defines a great part of who I am. Since I was a little girl, starting gymnastics and dance, I have known that I wanted to be on



Woman of a thousand faces, from sexy to sophisticated.

Michael Palmer

stage in some shape or form and knew I was a born entertainer and performer. Outside of fitness too, I am so fortunate that God has blessed me with such creative talent that allows me to express and inspire people across the world, which is what I wanted. To be a worldwide role model! Although I do love competing as a figure and fitness athlete, I use my education and outgoing personality to market and promote myself in the industry making the path for a career through modelling, appearances and being a hosting correspondent for various events such as the Arnold Schwarzenegger Sports Festival documentaries and webcasts over the last two years.

As far as the current trends of the sport, gosh, that is a whole debate and discussion topic for itself, however.

BF: If you could change anything in the sport of bodybuilding and fitness, what would it be?

NDN: I don't even have to think about this one! To provide more prize money for women competing in the sport of bodybuilding, fitness and figure. Furthermore, for women to gain equality in the sports when it comes to the overall financial compensation, reporting and print coverage, sponsorships, you name it. Let's face it, the money is with the men and it still makes my stomach turn that the same athletes can get up on a stage and the men will make three to five times more than a woman. And then they wonder why top competitors stop competing or retire from the stage. Women fail to see the worth in investing their own time, money and sacrifice for minimal reward, not to mention the wear and tear on their bodies. I think I have made my point clear.

BF: What does your mate think about your interest in the fitness lifestyle?

NDN: Well, I don't really have to worry about that right now, but when I do again, they will have to understand and support me 100%. It takes a lot for a person to understand what we do. We don't live typical nine to five jobs. Our lives centre on travel, diet, training, and being in the public eye. It can be unavoidably a very selfish sport due to the demanding nature of it all.

BF: Well, this can be very difficult at times cause not everybody can stand the stress. Anyway, besides the sport, what are your other interests?

NDN: I love to dance, hence me being a professional Salsa and Hip Hop dancer. So I love going to Latin and R&B Hip Hop Clubs. I also love watching movies, hanging out with friends and enjoying some quiet time for spiritual reading and motivational development of myself.

BF: What are your goals in life, short- and long-term?

NDN: Short-term I would like to buy a house, relocate someplace where there is no cold winter, continually improve on my physique, and land a magazine cover this year! And continue with my TV personality in hopes of getting a TV contract with a fitness series or something similar. And long-term to continually attract good things in my life personally and professionally. Continue to inspire people across the world with their own goals and dreams!

BF: Do you have any current idols or heroes?

NDN: My parents and God.

BF: OK, Nancy, I think we've fully covered your sports and professional career, but before letting you go, are you ready for a few last questions on your likes and dislikes?

NDN: No problem, shoot when you want!

Favourite music: R&B and soul, hip-hop and Latin/salsa music.

Favourite movies: *Heat, Blow, Jerry McGuire, Crash, Stayin' Alive, Flashdance.*

Favourite colours: black, white and red.

Favourite books: *The Power of Intention, Inspiration, The Secret.*

Favourite foods: Italian foods such as bruschetta, Caesar salad and garlic bread, cheese, pizza, and I love sweets...from carrot cake to ice cream and cookies...it's better I just stay away or else I turn into the cookie monster!

Least favourite foods: Sushi...ughhhhh! Indian.

Favourite bodybuilders: Shawn Ray, Flex Wheeler, and of course we can't forget about Lee Haney and Arnold Schwarzenegger!

Favourite fitness/figure girls: Davana Medina and Monica Brant.

Favourite things to do when you're having fun: I love to just hang out with close friends, talk and enjoy candid laughter. I also love to dance, watch movies, travel, and meet new people who are inspired by life!

Favourite holiday spot: I haven't been yet but would love to go to Tahiti! Someplace where there are peaceful sounds of beach water with clear blue water and white sand and sun...paradise!

BF: Is there anything else you want to say or rant about for closing this interview?

NDN: I am very grateful to be part of BodyFitness magazine. I love the fact that the

Paul Bucala



Nancy is working towards many things in her life and has an insatiable will to do more.



Michael Palmer

Nancy Di Nino is living outside the box of life.

very nature of the sports of bodybuilding and fitness can unite and draw people together across the world that share similar passions and interests. That is such a wonderful blessing! Being of Italian and Venezuelan descent I have a great appreciation for countries outside North America, and I will admit that I do find the people of these other countries to be much more passionate towards the sport at times.

In general, I love to surround myself with people who have a great "vibe" and passion. People who "think outside the box", who want something greater, and who love pursuing their passion and dreams and who think all things are possible in life if you have a mindset to work towards it. I really believe in karma and whatever good you put out into the world, it comes back to you ten-fold.

Be sure to stay updated with all that's happening to me by going to my website at www.nancydinino.com and my Myspace page at www.myspace.com/nancydinino. Be sure to sign up for the email update and blog lists so you don't miss all the exciting things I have in store for you. No, I can't tell you all right now but be sure to plug in to find out. Whatever the case may be, don't be surprised if you catch me staring at you through the pages of a magazine like this one or on your TV screen sometime soon... ha-ha!

Well, as I said, it's an amazing experience meeting this dynamo and I'm sure that you will agree with me that someone with such a body and such inner strength cannot be held back, and sooner than later she will fulfil her dreams. Here at BodyFitness we are sure of Nancy's success and wish her all the very best.

BF

NANCY'S FIGURE COMPETITION HIGHLIGHTS

2006	North American Figure National Championships	11 th , B
2006	Canadian Figure National Championships	7 th , Medium
2006	Ontario Provincial Championships	3 rd , Medium
2005	Fitwings Model Search at the Olympia	4 th