

# Live, laugh, lift: Nevada City man Terence Plotsky, 80, sets powerlifting world records

News [FOLLOW NEWS](#) | August 17, 2021



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A regular face around the South Yuba Club, Terence Plotsky recently broke weightlifting records for his age and class. The 80-year-old Nevada County resident says he works out to get better and to “keep this cycle from closing.”

*Photo: Elias Funez*

When you walk into the South Yuba Club, it’s not too difficult to find Terence Plotsky.

He’s the long-haired, bearded 80 year old, cracking jokes with a British accent and lifting incredible amounts of weight.

“I have a British sense of humor,” said Plotsky. “You either like it, or you hate it.”

Most like it, said South Yuba Club personal trainer Ian Figueira.

“He’s the life of the party here,” said Figueira. “(Plotsky) is really kind of like the gym mascot here. He comes in and motivates everybody. He checks in with everybody. Usually, it’s my job to keep people accountable, but he’s usually the one keeping people accountable. He’s the one that keeps us all going.”

Plotsky, who stands about 5-foot, 10-inches and weighs just under 200 pounds, first started lifting weights as a way to maintain a

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His first foray into the sport came in 2018. There were a few logistical hiccups, but like most things in his life, Plotsky overcame the obstacles in front and rose to the top of his field.

Plotsky found success in his first competition and even set a world record in his age and weight class for the deadlift. But shortly afterward he suffered a severe knee injury that would prevent him from competing in 2019. Then COVID-19 forced 2020 competitions to be canceled. Now, in 2021, Plotsky is back at it, and picking up right where he left off.

In mid-July, Plotsky competed in the Drug Tested USPA National Championships in Palm Springs, where he set world records in his weight (198 pounds) and age (80-84) class for the bench press and deadlift.

“Do you know what the key to breaking records at 80 is? Get to 80,” Plotsky said with a laugh.

Plotsky competes in the RAW category, which features three disciplines — squat, bench, deadlift — and a total combined score. Plotsky set world records in the bench press (170.8 pounds) and the deadlift (264.5 pounds), and a national record for his combined RAW score (578.7 pounds).

“I don’t do it for the records — I may be lying about that — but that’s not my first goal,” said Plotsky. “My first goal is always to get better. And, my biggest goal is to keep this cycle from closing.”

Plotsky gives a lot of credit for his achievements to Figueira for helping him with his form, and to Cooper for pushing him to compete and managing him along the way.

## FROM THE STREETS OF LONDON



Terrence Plotsky, seen working on deadlifts with South Yuba Club personal trainer and fitness director Ian Figueira, has lived a life full of hard work, including time as an Olympic swim coach.

*Photo: Elias Funez*

Plotsky is no stranger to adversity, hard work and perseverance.

“Nobody gave me anything,” said Plotsky. “I didn’t take it from anybody. I earned it. I work hard at what I do.”



"There's two things you learn in an orphanage," he said. "You learn to run and you learn to get strong. Until you're old enough, you've got to run away from the other kids. Then you get stronger and take over."

With few options, Plotsky said he found work outside the law, but realizing the path he was on would likely lead to imprisonment, he ventured out of London and into the world at the age of 17.

"Back then you didn't need any money, all you needed was a thumb and you could hitchhike all around," Plotsky said.

He spent time with a Sherpa tribe before making his way to Greece, then Israel where he found work and housing in an English-settled kibbutz.

He eventually became a lifeguard and later a swim coach.

"It was a wonderful life," Plotsky said. "It was a gig and a half."

Swimming had always been a refuge of sorts for Plotsky. One of the orphanages he was at as a child had a pool, and he would spend his time swimming laps as a way to drown out the noise and chaos that was happening around him.

"That was my retreat," he said.

Plotsky would go on to develop a swim team at the kibbutz and later trained Israeli Olympic swimmer Shlomit Nir, who competed in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City and the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany.

## COMING TO AMERICA



Plotsky works with a trainer earlier this month at the South Yuba Club in Grass Valley, where he regularly works out.

*Photo: Elias Funez*

Plotsky said he's been athletic all his life, but first got into lifting at age 74 as a way to be better prepared to help his daughter Maya, who is in a wheelchair, in case of an emergency.

"If there was accident or something happens, I'd never forgive myself," he said. "That was the inspiration."

Plotsky's love for his daughters has been the biggest motivator in his life, and what brought him to the United States.

After researching ideal living locations for those with disabilities, Plotsky decided Santa Monica was the best place for his family.

That's when Plotsky, who owned a successful T-shirt business at the time, moved his family from Israel to Southern California.

"I sold that business and came here in 1979," he said. "And, America has been very, very good to me."

Plotsky would go on to become a highly successful businessman before retiring a few years ago and moving to Nevada City with his daughters Maya Plotsky and Nava Cooper.

"I love it here," said Plotsky. "And the (South Yuba Club) is amazing. It's very, very friendly."

Most weekday mornings Plotsky can be found at the South Yuba Club in Grass Valley, getting in a good workout and a few laughs with his fellow gym-goers.

“Staying fit and having a good sense of humor,” said Plotsky of the key to a happy life. “I think having a sense of humor is key to this whole damn thing. Not enough people laugh in life, and it’s getting worse.”

In addition to Plotsky’s workouts, his daily routine also includes a series of vodka and orange juice drinks spaced throughout the day.

“I’ve been drinking vodka and orange for 50 years,” said Plotsky. “It’s like my doctor said, ‘Don’t stop doing what you’re doing.’”

Next up for Plotsky is the World Championships held in November in Costa Mesa.

“I promise you, I will break my own records,” Plotsky said.

Figueira has no doubt he will.

“He’s got the strength, he’s got the will power and he’s definitely got the motivation,” he said.

When Plotsky looks back on his journey from an orphanage in London, to coaching Olympic swimmers in Israel, to being a successful businessman in Southern California, to being a world record holding powerlifter, his reflection is simple yet profound.

“I think the key to my life is that it happened, and I took advantage of it,” he said. “I look at it this way: Everybody dies, but not everybody lives.”

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