

BEYOND THE  
THE BILL PEARL STORY  
UNIVERSE

BILL PEARL  
WITH KIM SHOTT

**Beyond the Universe**

**The Bill Pearl Story**

**By Bill Pearl**

**with Kim Shott**

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Beyond the Universe - The Bill Pearl Story

by Bill Pearl with Kim Shott

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## Dedication

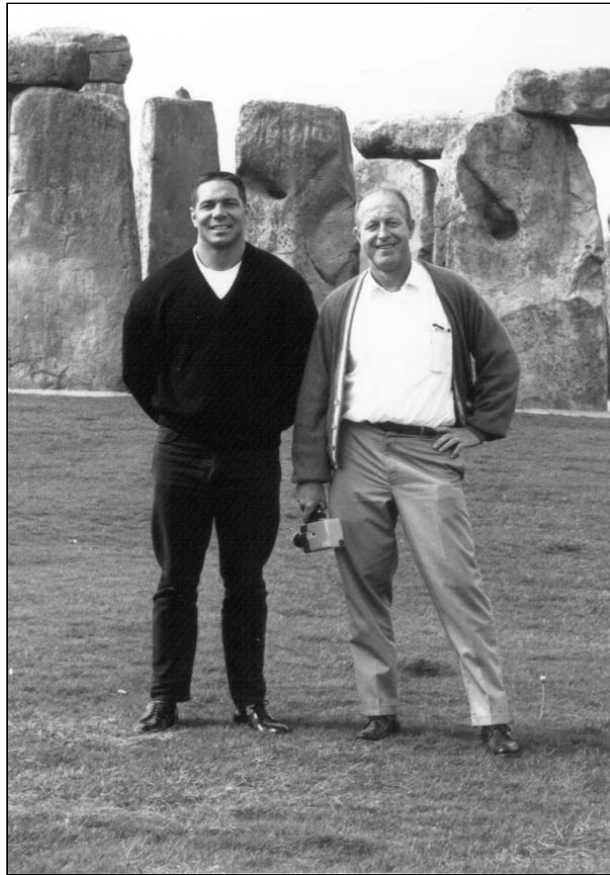
I dedicate this book to my wife, Judy. Through her love and support I have been able to obtain a higher state of self-fulfillment. Bill Pearl



*Judy and Bill at an awards ceremony.*

## Acknowledgments

In compiling this book, *Beyond the Universe*, it was necessary to secure information from several sources other than my own memory. I have, therefore, quoted and used several outlets for material. Many people have given time, advice, information, encouragement, help and allowed me the use of their photographs and publications to compile and complete this project.

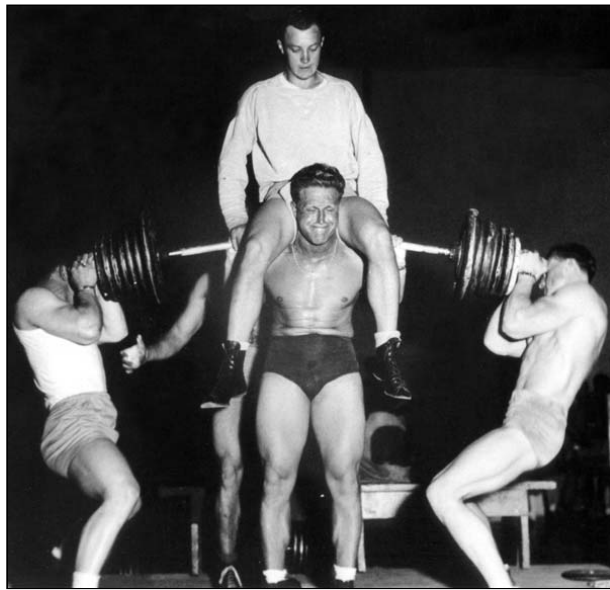


*Leo Stern and Bill in 1961 with Stonehenge in the background. Leo was seldom without a camera.*

I would like to thank all of them and a small portion by name in alphabetical order: Mike Arciniega, Bob Autry, Joanne Autry, Jennifer Brown, Lloyd Kahn, Kathi Hilmes, Raymond Long, Jake Grabow, Jim Mess, Jim Morris, Gene Mozee, Judy Pearl,

Bob Rogers, Kim Shott, Max Shott, Brandie Thornley, Jacob Thornley, Richard Thornley, Kimberly Pearl Wyniarczuk, Roman Wyniarczuk, David Young and Harold Zinkin.

From among the many thousands of loyal fans who have been helpful to me in my career of weight training and the close friendships I have acquired, I would particularly like to thank Leo Stern.



*Leo Stern doing a heavy support lift with 885 pounds in 1944.*

Co-author, Kim Shott, would first and foremost like to thank Bill and Judy Pearl for an opportunity of a lifetime. Kim would also like to thank those who've directly and indirectly contributed to the creation of *Beyond the Universe* including, but not limited to: Lawson Inada and Sandra Holstein for their guidance and inspiration, Dr. Bill Gholson for his editorial style and rhetorical skill, and both Ellen Cullmer and Karen Kendrick, whose invaluable transcription of taped interviews led to the seven-hundred-fifty-page foundation of this book. Finally, Kim would like to thank Max, Eli and Sam Shott for their unwavering support and encouragement.

Kim and her husband, Max, own and operate an orthopedic and sports physical therapy clinic in Ashland, Oregon.

## **Titles and Awards**

- 1952 Mr. San Diego, 3rd place (San Diego, California)
- 1952 Mr. Oceanside (Oceanside, California)
- 1953 Mr. Southern California (Los Angeles, California)
- 1953 Mr. California (Los Angeles, California)
- 1953 AAU Mr. America (Indianapolis, Indiana)
- 1953 NABBA Mr. Universe, Amateur (London, England)
- 1956 Mr. USA, Professional (Los Angeles, California)
- 1956 NABBA Mr. Universe, Professional, Tall Man's Class  
(London, England) 1961 NABBA Mr. Universe, Professional  
(London, England)
- 1967 NABBA Mr. Universe, Professional (London, England)
- 1971 NABBA Mr. Universe, Professional (London, England)
- 1974 WBBA World's Best-Built Man of the Century (New York,  
New York) 1978 Entered into WBBA Hall of Fame (New York,  
New York)
- 1978 Elected the IFBB National Chairman of the Professional  
Physique Judges Committee (Acapulco, Mexico) 1988 Entered  
into Pioneers of Fitness Hall of Fame
- 1992 Entered into Gold's Gym Hall of Fame
- 1994 Guest of Honor of the Association of Oldetime Barbell &  
Strongmen 12th Annual Reunion 1994 Entered into The Joe  
Weider Hall of Fame
- 1995 AAU Lifetime Achievement Award



1996 American Powerlifters Federation Hall of Fame

1997 International Chiropractors Association Sports & Fitness

Man of the Year 2000 Spirit of Muscle Beach Award

2001 World Gym Lifetime Achievement Award

2001 Society of Weight-Training Injury Specialists Lifetime

Achievement Award 2002 Canadian Fitness Award for 60+ Years

of Inspiration to the Industry 2002 *National Fitness Trade Journal*

Lifetime Achievement Award 2003 *Iron Man Magazine* Peary &

Mabel Radar Lifetime Achievement Award

## Introduction

Most people dream, some aspire and a few succeed. Even after all the years I'd spent in school I never learned to harness my own aspiration for success. I assumed there were those destined for great things leaving the rest of us destined to be in awe of them. It wasn't until years after I'd made a phone call to one of bodybuilding's legends that I'd come to understand there really is a hero in us all.



*Co-Author Kim Shott*

Helen Keller once wrote, “No pessimist ever discovered the secrets of the stars or sailed to an uncharted land, or showed a new way for the human spirit.” Yet, whether it's the society we live in or human nature, realizing a dream is often met with pessimism. In my case, whether it was starting college at the age of sixteen, living in New Zealand coaching softball, or working with Bill on this book, I knew deep down that I couldn't fail achieving goals I wanted so badly.

By the time I met Mr. Bill Pearl I'd matured past my youthful arrogance when I thought I'd take the world by the horns to the stage where I realized the world had much bigger horns than I'd

bargained for. Still, I went to Mr. Pearl's office with a stomach full of nerves and a briefcase containing a list of publications, including only one short story and a poem, that served merely to show I was extremely wet behind the ears with regard to my writing career.

It's been five years since we started collaboration on *Beyond the Universe* and I'll never forget the first meeting we had. Bill said to me, as he offered his hand, "So we're both in this to the end—for the good of it or bad?" I took his hand, gladly, without having a clue how difficult and at times frustrating, but overwhelmingly satisfying the journey I was embarking on was to be. I finally learned what makes a champion.

A champion has to always push harder than they think they can. A champion has to have a fire in his or her belly no one can squelch. A champion has to believe their dream will be realized so that when their break comes they don't hesitate, they don't squander it, they take it by the horns and ride it for all its glory until the bitter end of victory.

Kim Shott

# Chapter I - Lessons

## A Bag of Tools

*Isn't it strange that princes and kings  
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings  
And just plain folks like you and me  
Are builders for eternity?  
To each is given a bag of tools,  
A shapeless mass and book of rules,  
And each must build, ere life has flown,  
A stumbling block or steppingstone.*

R. L. Sharpe



*Possibly in the best condition of his life, at the age of 41, this photograph was taken of Pearl immediately after winning the NABBA Professional Mr. Universe crown in London, England.*

“What in the hell am I doing up here! I’ve been standing at attention for over an hour! The judges have us turning every which way but loose. The only thing that they haven’t had us do is to turn our backs to the audience, drop our posing briefs and show the cracks of our ass. Enough is enough! When am I going to learn? Forty-one years old and still letting others control my life! You would think I’d have learned something competing in these contests over the past 18 years and I have. Nothing has changed; nothing is going to change when it comes to judging physique contests.”

Those were a few of the thoughts running through my mind while standing on stage at the Victoria Palace in London, England, on Friday, September 17, 1971, for the prejudging of the Amateur and Professional NABBA Mr. Universe contests. The show was billed, “The Physique Contest of The Century.” Virtually every top bodybuilder in the world was competing, except Arnold Schwarzenegger, the reigning champion for the past three years.



*Bill waving to the audience as Chris Dickerson, 1970 AAU Mr. America (far right), happily smiles and claps to show approval.*

Joe Weider and Arnold Schwarzenegger had goaded me into entering the contest. Weider began by publishing articles in his fitness magazines asserting that I was afraid to compete against the current crop of bodybuilders. Arnold chimed in with similar remarks. I could understand Arnold's desire to compete against me. It made sense that he wanted my name added to his list. I was one of the few top bodybuilders he hadn't defeated.

In truth, if Leo Stern, my coach and dear friend, hadn't talked me into it, I wouldn't have entered. I had retired from competition after winning the 1967 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe title. I couldn't have cared less about what Joe or Arnold had to say. However, Leo took their snide remarks more personally. With every phone call it was, "Why are you letting these guys take shots at you? Get off your dead ass and do something about it!" With that in mind, I made it known in all major physique magazines that Bill Pearl would compete in the 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest. This would definitely be the last chance for everyone to have a crack at me.

That time had come. Standing on stage being compared to Sergio Oliva, Frank Zane, Reg Park, Tony Emmott, Kassem Yazbek, Roy Duval, Chris Dickerson and approximately one hundred twenty other great physiques from around the world, the audience murmured, "Where's Arnold?"

Why hadn't he competed? It was obvious he was in top physical condition. The following weekend he entered and won his second IFBB Mr. Olympia title in Paris, France. If my memory serves, only two contestants vied for the title.



*Bill reaching to shake Arnold Schwarzenegger's hand for winning the 1967 NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe title.*

What I know for certain is that a few weeks prior to the NABBA Mr. Universe contest, Leo and I attended a warm-up posing exhibition given by Arnold in Santa Monica, California. Weider approached Leo to say, "What do you think?" Leo replied, "Arnold's in great shape." Weider went on, "He's going to compete in the NABBA Mr. Universe in a couple of weeks." Leo replied, "Pearl's going to rip him a new one."

Weider and Stern had known each other since the mid 1940s. It may have been that Joe's respect for Leo's judgment of physiques caused him to realize that Leo was serious with his comment. Possibly Weider decided it was too much of a risk to take the chance of Arnold's being beaten in a physique contest by someone nearly old enough to be his father. At that time, Arnold



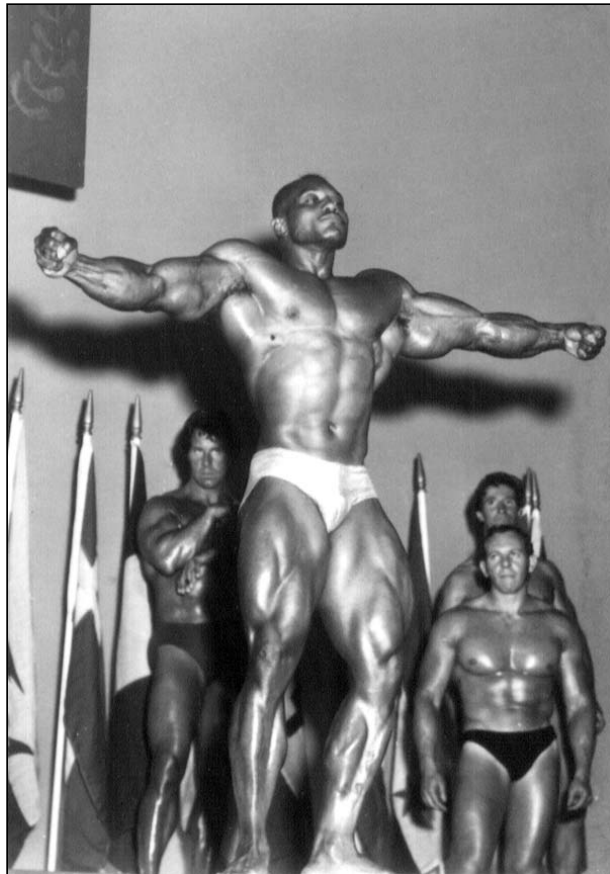
was under contract to Weider. His magazine touted him as “The World’s Greatest Bodybuilder.” Nearly every issue featured training articles, supposedly written by Arnold, along with endorsements for everything Weider sold. In retrospect, I believe Arnold would have competed if the decision had been left to him. He was one of the fiercest competitors I’ve seen on stage. His motto should have been, “Win at all cost.” With all due respect, several years later, Arnold apologized for making the 1971 NABBA Mr. Universe challenge. He commented that he understood the burden he had placed on me at that stage of my life because he had reached that stage of his life.



*Arnold Schwarzenegger and Joe Weider congratulate Bill when he was inducted into the Pioneers of Fitness Hall of Fame, in 1988.*

To make the prejudging more interesting for the audience that year, one of the major competitors was so obviously bombed out of his head, he was having difficulty responding to the judges’ instructions. Sergio Oliva helped the entertainment by standing in the line-up loudly complaining that he was hungry, as his two-hour pump-up was causing him to deflate like a slow leak in the Hindenburg. To further add to the audience’s delight, Reg Park, a previous three-time winner, kept up a running word battle with Oliva on how bad each of them thought the other looked. My main concern was getting offstage. After standing in a flexed

position for over an hour, my calves had cramped so badly I wasn't sure I could move. The cramping began during the comparison portion of the prejudging and we still had the overall posing and final comparisons to go through.



*Sergio Oliva on stage at the 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest.*

Before competition began, an incident occurred that might have had a slight difference in the outcome of the contest. A young Belgian boy, about eleven years old, had been brought backstage, to see and possibly meet some of the contestants. The father nudged the boy, his autograph book in hand, toward Sergio. BIG MISTAKE! The moment the boy got into his space, Sergio shouted something like, "Get the hell out of here! I don't have time for autographs! See me after the show!" The outburst shocked the father and son to the point where you could actually see dismay on their faces.

Regaining his composure, the father began pushing the boy toward me. The boy walked over, his head down, autograph book at arm's length, afraid to make eye contact. Having seen the crestfallen look on the child's face, I signed my name and then picked him up and placed him on my shoulder as he flexed his skinny arm while his father snapped a photograph.

The next time I saw his father, he was looking at me while sitting at the judge's table with a smile on his face, nodding his head up and down, mouthing the word, "Yes—yes—yes."



*Bill Pearl with a young Belgian fan, Chris Vandebroele, backstage at the prejudging of the 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe.*

The following day, Cecil Peck, the Master of Ceremonies, announced Bill Pearl as the overall winner of the 23rd annual NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest. The audience roared its approval, but some of the major contestants apparently felt

differently. Frank Zane, winner of the NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe, the year before, was obviously upset. He verbally showed it by claiming that the two of us hadn't been properly compared, side-by-side. Sergio Oliva hadn't let up, not because he was still hungry, but because he wouldn't receive the \$5,000.00 bonus promised to him by Arthur Jones, of Nautilus Gym Equipment, if he had won the contest. Reg Park was still slightly vocal commenting on the judging, saying something like, "Where did they find these guys?" Chris Dickerson, winner of the 1970 AAU Mr. America title, remained a gentleman by standing in the background smiling at everyone without a bad word to say. He seemed to take my victory in stride.

I had coached Chris through several years of his bodybuilding career and I recall reading an article where he was quoted as saying, "You never want to get to the point where you think you know more, or are better than the person who taught you." Chris eventually had his day. He went on to win more professional bodybuilding titles than anyone in the history of the sport.

The 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest ended my almost twenty-year bodybuilding career. I had made the promise that if I got through it, I would be forever thankful.

My wife, Judy, and I returned to our normal lives in Pasadena, California, working in our gym twelve to fifteen hours a day. The only fanfare was a nice write-up in the *Pasadena Star News* and the members of the club surprised us with a party and a gift of a flintlock rifle, which I hung on our office wall. All requests for articles, exhibitions and seminars were turned down. My competitive bodybuilding career had gone full circle from being elated at winning the 1953 AAU Mr. America contest to wanting to forget the 1971 NABBA Mr. Universe contest. Competitive

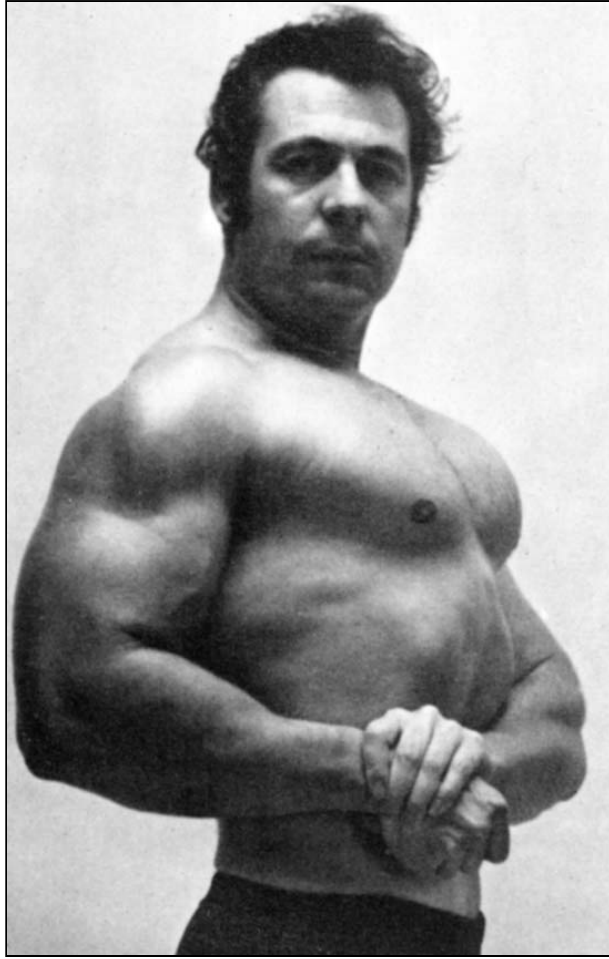
bodybuilding had changed into a sport that I no longer wanted to be a part of. With growing disappointment, I had watched the sport of fitness become a drug-based, dog-eat-dog business. I was one of the few competitors onstage that day that wasn't taking any form of anabolic steroids.

Below is an article written by George Coates for *Iron Man Magazine* in early 1971.

### **Why Bill Pearl is Entering the NABBA Mr. Universe By George Coates**

Bill Pearl is almost 41 years old. He has once again decided to enter NABBA's famed Mr. Universe Contest to be held as usual in London in September. I'm sure many people are wondering why. Why should this man who has been at the top longer than any other physique star lay his hard-earned reputation as the world's best-built man on the line against fellows half his age?

There are many reasons. Bill, like a lot of other people, loves the sport he has done so well at for over 20 years. He hates to see the game being abused in any shape or form. He is particularly appalled at the methods certain top physique men are resorting to in their quest for greater muscle size. Bill has a 14-year-old son and he swears if his boy has to take drugs and do some of the other crazy things these physique men are doing, he would sooner his boy never touched a barbell.



*George Coates in the early 1960s. George and Bill have been friends since the start of Bill's bodybuilding career. He was a contributing author for a number of physique magazines.*

We all know that so many young men have radically changed the course of their lives, always for the worse, through the use (or should I say OVERUSE) of tissue-building drugs. Rumour has it that some men in the weight game have actually died as a result of taking these drugs. Bill wants to do all in his power to rid the weight game of DIANABOL and its counterparts. These drugs have their part in medicine, but they are NOT needed by ANYONE who desires to be healthy, fit and strong through the use of barbells!

Another reason that Bill has decided to enter this, his final contest, is due to the fact that for years he has silently endured ridicule and uncouth comments by a certain magazine with "the

trainer of champions” at the helm. For years this magazine would provoke people like Bill, Reg Park and the one and only John Grimek by running “polls” to supposedly determine who was the world’s greatest bodybuilder. In the final ratings, all three would appear way down their list. It got to be quite ridiculous! They would be rating men who would look like boys standing next to this trio of giants way up on their top ten, or top twenty, or whatever.

Last year things came to a head when an article was published attributed to Arnold Schwarzenegger, hurling rather unwarranted remarks at certain top liners, most of these being aimed at Bill Pearl in particular. I know Arnold Schwarzenegger. He would never write an article of that nature. He is a nice young man with a fantastic physique, currently associated with an organization that took similar advantages of Reg Park many years ago. In fact, Arnold and Earl Maynard (Mr. “U” of 1964) were visiting Leo Stern and me about six weeks ago, and believe me, big Arnold has nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for Bill Pearl. Being the gentleman he is however, Arnold would not comment.

Bill knows the only way he can compete fairly against anyone will be on neutral ground with fair and impartial judging. In other words, the NABBA Mr. Universe Contest!

Late last year, Bill and Leo Stern embarked on a one-year plan to prepare Bill and have him in the greatest shape of his life to compete in London. They had spared no efforts in this their final and most important undertaking. Every two weeks Bill and Leo get together and I feel deeply honoured to be allowed the privilege of attending most of these meetings, as the three of us will be associates in producing many magazine articles in the future.



To say Bill looks fantastic right now would be a gross understatement. As I write, the annual Mr. California Contest to be held in Los Angeles is only three days away. Bill is the guest poser in what may be his last public appearance in the United States. Most of the drug users will be in the audience and I will state here and now Bill will shock them right out of their seats.

Leo took some pictures of him last weekend and he is in unbelievable condition. You will be seeing some of these pictures soon. After the Mr. Universe Contest is over Bill and Leo will be disclosing some of the methods Bill has used to attain this fantastic condition. One or two phases of Bill's preparation for the Mr. Universe contest are closely guarded secrets and will be told after the great event.

Bill and Leo both hope all the top liners enter this year to decide once and for all the question, "Who is undeniably the greatest of the modern day bodybuilders?" I know one thing for sure and so does Bill, they don't play favourites in London. You have to be the best man there or you don't win. People like Oscar Heidenstam, Bert Loveday, Colin Sheard, Hal Wrigley and the rest of the judging panel are the most knowledgeable in the world.

I sincerely hope Bill Pearl can do it! I personally hope he can bump off the very best of the drug users and anyone else on the scene besides.

While the rest of the bodybuilding world awaits with bated breath what could prove to be the greatest ever NABBA Mr. Universe contest, Bill Pearl will be training with a vengeance and a quest. The quest being to put the game back on its feet where it belongs. To show everyone connected with the game that it's

possible to attain the physique they desire without resorting to the dangerous practice of using drugs. In this writer's humble opinion, it's not only dangerous, it's absolute madness. Bill Pearl will be using the sane and sensible methods he has always believed in with one or two innovations, which will be made public at a later date. I hope all readers of this magazine will join me in wishing Bill Pearl success in his final venture as a physique contestant.

## Chapter II - Superman? NOT!

### You Tell On Yourself

*You tell on yourself by the friends you seek,  
By the very manner in which you speak,  
By the way you employ your leisure time,  
By the use you make of dollar and dime.  
You tell what you are by the things you wear,  
And even by the way you wear your hair,  
By the kind of things at which you laugh,  
By the records you play on your phonograph.  
You tell what you are by the way you walk,  
By things of which you delight to talk,  
By the manner in which you bury deceit,  
By so simple a thing as how you eat.  
By the books you choose from the well-filled shelf.  
In these ways and more you tell on yourself.*

Author Unknown



*A Waverly Belle Cycle advertising poster from 1876, which is part of Bill's bicycle memorabilia.*

In late 1972, the idea struck me to take up competitive cycling. Like most transitions in life, my competitive cycling began as something else entirely. Judy and I bought bikes to take weekend rides and soon it became a group thing, with several members of the gym riding along. Then I was invited to join a group of competitive cyclists who raced a 30-mile circuit around the Rose Bowl on Tuesday afternoons. I upgraded to a \$3,000.00 customized bicycle and changed my leg workout weekday mornings to include a 35-mile course around Pasadena, Altadena, South Pasadena and Sierra Madre. I left Sundays open for other races or 100-mile “century” rides. My enthusiasm for cycling went on for nearly four years.

Two of my cycling partners, Dr. Jeff Spencer and Chuck Pranke, were U.S. Olympic cyclists. Both were great teachers, but never

in my wildest dreams did I come close to reaching their ability. One year I managed to place in the senior division of the California State Championships before my over-enthusiasm began causing problems. Coming home from a long Sunday ride, I discovered Judy wasn't waiting. "Where in the hell is she? It's our only day off and she's not here." This went on for several months before coming to an impasse. After listening to my complaints, she calmly went to a drawer to take out a pen and pad. "Do both of us a favor," she said. "Write down the number of hours you work in the gym each week." I wrote down sixty hours. "How much time are you spending on the bike each week?" Another twenty-seven hours. "What about your weight training?" I added an additional twelve hours. It came close to a hundred hours each week that I was either spending on myself or working in the gym. She calmly asked, "With the added time you spend for sleeping and eating, where do I fit in?"



*A 19-pound bicycle supporting a 230-pound Bill Pearl.*

To make matters worse, Judy was working longer hours at the gym, covering for me. I'd begun having health problems. Cysts had developed in my colon and had become abscessed. I refused to see a doctor, thinking the problem was hemorrhoids. Cutting back on cycling didn't help. Every time I rode, or lifted weights,

my shorts filled with blood. Afraid to see a doctor, thinking “colon cancer,” eventually it got to the point where I couldn’t work more than a few hours each day. Then a rumor began that I did have cancer. We began getting phone calls from around the country asking if the gym was for sale. Most of the intended buyers were hoping to steal it.

Something had to be done. Pain drove me to see a proctologist, chosen from the telephone yellow pages. Without any preliminaries, the doctor led me into a small room, had me lie on an examining table with my pants and underwear around my knees with my rear end hanging over the side. Applying a rubber glove, he smeared the middle finger with Vaseline. Without warning, he drove the finger up my ass to his elbow. My next memory was of lying on the floor, looking up, screaming, “You son-of-a-bitch! You just lost a customer!”

Harold Bailey, M.D., a true friend and longtime member of our Manchester Gym, came to my rescue. His more gentle examination discovered four large cysts that had gotten so badly abscessed he immediately arranged for surgery. While recovering, the realization hit that I was just as mortal as the next person, but far more self-centered. Once less time was spent at the gym, along with less time on my so-called hobbies, domestic problems were a thing of the past.

## Chapter III - My Formative Years

**From the poem "Roofs"**

*They say that life is a highway,  
And its milestones are the years;  
And now and then there's a tollgate,  
Where you buy your way with your tears.  
It's a rough road and a steep road,  
And it stretches broad and far,  
But at last it leads to a golden town  
Where the golden houses are.*

Joyce Kilmer



*A young Bill Pearl with a gleam in his eyes toward his future.*

I was born on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation near Prineville, Oregon, October 31, 1930. My father, born, Harold



Frank Pearl in 1903, my mother, born, Mildred Elizabeth Pasley in 1905, were primarily of American Indian descent. They were seventeen and fifteen years old, respectively, when they married. My sister, Fontelle, is four years older than my brother, Harold, who is three years older than me.

Dad was fair haired, fair skinned, never weighing more than 185 pounds at a height of six feet. He was nervous and always expected the worst, which caused him to suffer from a lifelong negative attitude. While growing up, the abuse and lack of love he experienced were the cause for much of his bitterness. His mother died when he was very young and his father had better things to do than to raise him. His grandmother took on the responsibility, until she died when he was 10-years old.



*Bill has never claimed to be camera shy.*

Dad was then shuttled back and forth between two uncles. Their only interest in him was as cheap labor. It was common for them to come home drunk and physically abuse him. He did chores before school, after school and had weekends to catch up. At fourteen, he rebelled; quit school, hired out as a field hand for room and board and very little pay. By the time I graduated from high school, he owned several restaurants, taverns, pool rooms, card rooms, pinball *jukebox* slot machine routes, clothing stores, a lumber mill and a producing gold mine near Grangeville, Idaho.

Because of his bitterness, little was known about his side of our family. As a teenager, I recall hearing him tell my mother that his father was still alive and residing in Seattle, Washington. Apparently, he had remarried and fathered siblings we hadn't met. My only association with his family came decades later while I was doing a guest appearance at a fitness store in Seattle. A sweet older lady introduced herself by saying, "I'm your father's younger sister." My response was, "You must be mistaken. My father doesn't have a sister." She then began reeling off my mother's maiden name, the names of Fontelle, Harold, along with other information that only a family member would know. She gave me a telephone number soliciting my promise to pass it on to dad. The two eventually made contact. The later years of his life were much happier because of their close association.



*Bill and his father, Harold, in the mid 1960s.*



*Bill's dad in his late 80s with his half-sister, Evelyn Gerdes.*

There is no doubt that my father's negativism influenced our relationship. I never felt confident about approaching him with questions or problems. Our first meaningful dialogue occurred in my early twenties while we were exchanging comments on an upcoming presidential election. For the first time, I realized that he was speaking to me as an equal. Prior to this, the one-sided conversations were usually something on the line of, "You goddamned kids drive me crazy!"

One of his major complaints was my obsession for weight training. He couldn't believe my time wouldn't be better spent doing something more productive. The more he complained, the more determined I became to prove him wrong. In his defense,

some of his finer attributes were: being a self-starter, working for himself, not being afraid of challenges and being self-reliant, traits I'm glad to have inherited.

My relationship with my mother was the opposite. It was one of love. I always sought her advice when something important weighed on my mind. They spent their last years in Union Gap, Washington, two blocks from my sister and brother-in-law. Mom passed away at the age of seventy-five while sitting in her special chair, saying she wanted to take a long nap. She deserved it; she had virtually worked herself to death. Dad's final years were spent making wooden animals out of scrap lumber. Each masterpiece was equipped with revolving legs or wings that spun when caught in a wind. He sold to all comers by displaying his wares on the front fence of their home. He died at the age of ninety-three, leaving two dogs and thirteen cats for my sister, Fontelle, and my brother-in-law, Phil, to care for.



*Bill's mother, Mildred, in her later years.*

My earliest memories were of chaos and confusion. It seemed my folks were always working. Around the age of three or four, I'd wake up most nights knowing my folks weren't home and cried. This would irritate Fontelle and Harold, which caused me to cry even harder. When my parents were home, they'd be so exhausted that all they wanted to do was sleep. Eventually, they got so tired, Dad sold the business to rest. During these breaks, our home life was as normal as could be expected. When it came time to go back to work, they were usually ready. The constant fighting and arguing amongst Fontelle, Harold and myself was enough to drive anyone back to work. Yet, all the blame can't fall on us. We were used to fending for ourselves and survived by any means possible.



*Bill's mom and dad in the kitchen of their restaurant in Missoula, Montana, in the late 1950s.*

Some of my fondest early memories came from my folk's sporadic domestic separations. Usually Mom would take us to Chelan, Washington, to stay with her mother, Cora, our very understanding grandmother. Grandma was extremely independent and a disciplinarian. She lived alone in the middle of nowhere, in a brown-shingled house that was surrounded by apple orchards. Life with her was definitely more structured than the way we lived in Yakima. Her right eye had been injured and removed when she was a teenager. To cover the injured area, she wore an eye patch. Being so young and not knowing what had happened, I would ask if her eye was getting better. She'd always smile and answer, "Yes."

Memories aren't nearly as pleasant when recalling another of their intermittent separations. I was preschool age, which makes

circumstances more vague. What I remember is being outside in the dead of winter with my folks screaming at each other, as I was dragged between them. Dad must have won because the “three kids” were now staying with this cantankerous old bitch, Mrs. Bunton. We may have been there for a few months or a few weeks; it seemed like forever. We stayed in a small room that was separated from the main house. The only heat came from a wood stove. Fontelle and Harold would split wood before school; my job was to carry it in and to keep the fire burning. Mrs. Bunton would waltz in to toss a box of dry cereal on the table for breakfast and seldom be seen again, until she served bologna sandwiches and Kool-Aid for supper.

Every three or four days, Dad would drop by to give Fontelle and Harold school-lunch money. His route, servicing pinball machines throughout Washington State, was the reason he gave for not spending more time with us. Mrs. Bunton would appear the minute he drove away and the money would be gone.



*Harold, Fontelle and Bill, being nice enough to each other to have a picture taken.*

The only visit Mother made was a few days after I burned my leg by falling against the stove during a night trip to use the bathroom. Mrs. Bunton was so busy counting her stolen change she hadn't attended to the burn, which had become infected. When Mom saw how badly I'd been injured, we were out of there.

For most of our maturing years, the task of motherhood fell on Fontelle's shoulders. The three of us were assigned chores, but Harold and I learned that what we didn't do, Fontelle would. When she tried to control us, our response was to give her the "bird" or swear at her. This would upset her even more. Having to share the same bedroom with us until she was in her early teens didn't help. Harold and I slept in the nude knowing it added to her misery. One of the few things in her favor was the



standing rule that neither Harold nor I were allowed to hit her, especially in the chest, because she was “developing.” Yet, there was no rule about her hitting us. When she did hit, it wasn’t an open-handed slap, but a punch to knock our lights out. Our salvation was to outrun her; however, that seldom worked. She had learned to throw heavy objects with extreme accuracy.

Harold didn’t fare any better making it to adulthood. In his early years, he was a true loner who spent most of his time staring out windows. He dropped out of school after the 8th grade, not because of the lack of intelligence, but because of boredom. He felt he could do better than sitting in a classroom waiting for something to happen. When he did get involved in a specific project, it was carried to the absolute end. An example would be that from the time he quit school until this day, he carries a pocket dictionary. Any unfamiliar word (spelling or definition) is looked up and memorized.

The three of us worked in most of my folk’s restaurants. We normally worked three or four nights a week and either a Saturday or Sunday. We didn’t get paid; therefore, most summers were spent in hop fields or orchards. My parents didn’t dictate how we spent, or saved, but would brag about how well I handled my money, compared to how Harold handled his. My money went to buy school clothes and to replenish a meager checking account, while Harold spent and saved more secretively. He stuck his money in a big woolen sock and hid it. He apparently grew tired of my folks bragging about how well “Billy” handled his money. One day he grabbed his woolen sock, threw it on the table saying, “Billy does things his way. I do things mine!” Incidents like this sum up the differences between the two of us.

The only athletic endeavor we took part in together was learning to box. Ed Hale, our Native American landlord, started the Adam's Street Boxing Club in an abandoned storage area in our low-income neighborhood. Had there been State-aid or welfare, at least 65-75 % of the families living in our area would have qualified. The scar tissue around his eyes was proof that Mr. Hale had learned to box the hard way. He didn't charge to belong to the club. Every youngster who lived close by was welcome to participate in the boxing lessons, the roadwork, sit-ups, push-ups and tossing the medicine ball.

Some of the club's expenses were covered by "passing the hat" at the Friday-Night Fights, when the neighborhood came to watch the scheduled matches. Our opponents were kids we sparred with, or from the YMCA and the surrounding Indian reservations. Harold was the best boxer at the Adam's Street Boxing Club. He had uncanny body language, along with being left-handed.

Rather than improving our relationship, boxing made it worse. If we just looked at each other, it was time to fight. Any body contact caused fists to fly. The main reason I began weight training at such an early age (10-years old) was to get strong enough to defend myself against him. That was my short-term goal! My long-term goal was to get even stronger to kick his ass! Harold knew my intentions, so he began weight training to keep ahead of me. Fortunately, by my thirteenth birthday we were close to the same stature. It then became the game of who got in the first blow, plus the most thereafter.



*Many years later, the three Pearls were able to smile about their childhood.*

My fighting wasn't confined to the Adam's Street Boxing Club, or with Harold. It rolled over throughout my school years. One early altercation stands out more vividly than others. In the fourth grade, while playing soccer during recess, a boy wearing logger boots insisted on kicking me every chance he got. Mr. Elliott, the teacher refereeing the game, didn't interfere until I began punching my classmate. Perhaps because of my reputation, or the fact that I was getting the better of the fight, Mr. Elliott ran over to shove me around, as if the confrontation was entirely my fault. He threw up his guard, as if to take the boy's place. In retaliation, I threw a punch, a right that hit Mr. Elliott flush on the jaw. He went down like you wouldn't believe. Standing over him, I began thinking, "I'm in bad trouble! Knocking a teacher on his rear end isn't the smart thing to do." When Mr. Elliott

gained his composure, he simply got up, looked at me, then walked away. That was it! No repercussions, nothing, except that he stayed clear of me for the rest of my grammar school years. He eventually became one of my teachers in high school, but his lips remained sealed.

## Chapter IV - Absence of Malice

### Three Gates

*If you are tempted to reveal  
A tale to you someone has told  
About another, make it pass,  
Before you speak, three gates of gold.  
These narrow gates: First, "Is it true?"  
Then, "Is it needful?" In your mind  
Give truthful answer. And the next  
Is last and narrowest, "Is it kind?"  
And if to reach your lips at last  
It passes through these gateways three,  
Then you may tell the tale, nor fear  
What the result of speech may be.*

Author Unknown



*The early teens provided valuable lessons for Bill. Life was not a bowl of cherries.*

Most summers of my early teens, Harold and I hired out to work in local orchards or hop fields. We tagged along with our neighbors, the Miller family, in their beat-up 1934 Chevrolet, four-door sedan. The automobile transportation ended when Hattie Miller, the mother, rolled the car when she fell asleep at the wheel. Fortunately, nobody was badly injured. Everyone's transportation was then limited to bicycles. It wasn't unusual to ride twenty miles to and from work. To avoid the heat of the day, Harold and I began at 3:00 a.m. and quit around noon. This meant getting up around 1:00 a.m. to be on time.

Returning home one afternoon, a passing car crashed into Harold. His left leg became tangled in the car's rear bumper, which somehow whipped him as high as a telephone pole before he hit the pavement. He spent several days in the hospital with a

brain concussion and broken bones. The more lasting effects were that he seemed even more reclusive and withdrawn after the accident.

One evening, Mr. Miller got drunker than usual and raised more hell than normal, before neighbors phoned the police. That night ended with him shooting and killing the intervening police officer. Months later, he was convicted of first-degree murder. Years later, he had the honor of being the last person the State of Washington executed by hanging. Hattie was left to raise her four children by whatever means were possible.

Before and after the tragic event, all of us Pearl kids spent more time at the Millers' home than we did at our own. Genevieve Miller, the oldest of the three daughters, was Fontelle's best friend. Don Miller was Harold's age and a friend to both of us. When we stayed overnight, which was often, it was common to wake up to a plate of pinto beans supplemented by day-old bread.

On Don's sixteenth birthday, he and Harold joined the United States Merchant Marines, where they spent two years in the South Pacific before they then enlisted in the U.S. Army for an additional three years. Don's goal was to save enough money to enable him to pay for a college education when he was discharged. He regularly sent money to Hattie to deposit in a savings account; instead, she used it to help support the family, or for Saturday night binges. He returned home to find his dreams of a higher education flushed down the drain.



*Don Miller and Bill's brother Harold around 1943.*

Don and Harold had been discharged only a few months when the daily newspaper decided to do a follow-up on the family of the last person to be put to death by the State of Washington. All of the grief the Miller's had tried to put behind them was, again, to become front-page news.

Before the story broke, the "old gang" decided to meet at Sam's house for a beer party. As the evening progressed, Don asked, "Hey Sam, you still got that pistol I loaned you before I went into the Army?" Sam replied, "Yeah, it's around here somewhere." Sam found the gun and handed it to Don saying, "Its still loaded so be careful." A few beers later, Don walked to the middle of the room, stuck the pistol to his head and blew his brains, along with portions of his skull, over all of us.



Harold was so upset over Don's death, he moved to southern California. He continued weight training regularly, getting in such great physical condition he could have won major physique contests, if it hadn't been something his little brother was planning to do. When I opened my first health club in Sacramento, California, in 1953, Harold became my first employee. In 1960, I purchased George Redpath's Gym in Los Angeles and Harold came along. When we opened our last club in Pasadena, in 1969, it was the same. During all the years we worked together, it was a daily battle of who could get to whom first. Our hard-core fighting had ended, but by noon of each day we were either shaking our heads in disgust, or with laughter. A truce was accomplished around 1975 when Judy and I moved to southern Oregon, while Harold remained in the Los Angeles area.

Years would go by where the two of us would not hear from each other. In the year 2002, I phoned Harold saying, "I'm going to be in the Los Angeles area to receive the Spirit of Muscle Beach Award. Would it be okay if I stopped by to say hello?" (I would never dream of showing up unannounced.) "Hell yes," he said, "You can stay with us." I was so shocked by the invitation, I blurted out, "No! No! I can't stay with YOU." He asked, "Why can't you stay with US?" After a brief thought, I replied, "I don't know—I guess there's no reason why I can't stay with you." The next few days were some of the best we ever spent together. He graciously accompanied me to the Venice Beach awards ceremony. I was more than happy to share that small part of my life with Harold. His pounding on me throughout our childhood was the prime motivator to get me to where I am today.

# Chapter V - What Am I Doing Here?

## A Diamond in the Rough

*A diamond in the rough is a diamond, sure enough, And before it ever sparkled it was made  
diamond stuff.*

*But someone had to find it or it never would be found, And someone had to grind it or it  
never would be ground.*

*But it's found, and when it's ground,*

*And when it's burnished bright,*

*That diamond's everlastingly giving out it's light.*

*O teachers of our young folk,*

*Don't say you've done enough;*

*It maybe that your rudest is*

*A diamond in the rough.*

Author Unknown



*Don Burns (left), one of Bill's training partners who traveled to London, England, to watch Bill's final physique competition.*

Nobody took the time to tell me why I had to go to school. If someone had explained that it was a place to go to learn, it would have made sense. For me, it was a place to roost, until my folks came home from work.

Getting started was a series of difficulties. Most youngsters began school at the age of six, but because my birthday is in late October this meant waiting an extra year. For some reason that I've never understood, they placed me in kindergarten rather than the first grade. That alone was enough to make me hate school. Kindergarten sucked; all we did was play with toys and the one thing I hated most was, "You have to share." I'd fallen in love with a giant top that had a handle you pushed down to make it spin and whistle. The faster you pushed, the faster and

louder it spun and whistled. I was always first at the toy box to grab the top, and then take my place on the floor next to the door of the coatroom to begin pumping away. The teacher would eventually have enough and retrieve it, either to give it to someone else, or to place it back in the box. That would be it for school that day. At the first chance for escape, I was gone. Thinking there was nothing better to do, I'd wander the neighborhood. I had decided that looking in backyards, garages and old barns was far more interesting than sitting in a classroom waiting for a bell to ring.

I was expelled from school in the second grade. Going home for lunch on this occasion, the only things in the refrigerator that looked appealing were two 8-ounce bottles of Olympia beer. I drank the beer and headed back to school. I had been strategically seated in the front of the class where the teacher could keep an eye on me. That day she did a better than average job. I sat with my chin in my hand, my elbow on the desk, stupidly smiling at her. When my elbow slipped, she got the idea that something was amiss. For this unbelievable misbehavior, I was suspended from school for the rest of the week. On my first day back in class, they put me in with a group of "special" students who got a half pint of milk and a graham cracker during morning recess. Still, I wasn't happy; my graham cracker usually came broken in half and the halves didn't match.

Conditions didn't improve in the third grade. Walking away at recess or lunchtime so often led to the school's presenting an ultimatum: either I had to take the grade over, or attend summer school. Mom opted for summer school. At the rate things were going, she was afraid I'd be older than the teacher by the time I graduated from high school.

Two things kept me somewhat interested in school: learning to play the saxophone in the third grade and the game of marbles. Playing marbles with hard-core classmates was as challenging as learning to play the instrument. We played the game from early spring until the first snow. We played on the way to school, during recess, lunch hour and on our way home. It was normal to have the knuckles on our shooting hands so heavily callused the dirt wouldn't wash off. If there weren't holes in the knees of our trousers, we weren't considered serious contenders.

On the way to school, we played the game called tag. Your opponent would stop to shoot his marble a few feet ahead. It was your job to shoot and hit his marble with yours. If you succeeded, his marble belonged to you. If you missed, it was his turn to try to do the same.

If you were smart, you never used your good shooter when playing tag. The game was too risky. You only used marbles you could afford to lose. A good shooter was like a prized pool cue; it stayed in a special place only to be used on special occasions. My good shooter was a sight to behold. It was made from pure agate; a beautiful golden brown with several rings around it plus a gorgeous built-in moon. It cost fifty cents, which at that time was a fortune.

The most popular game of marbles was called Bull Ring. Bull Ring was a good way to win, or lose, a handful of marbles in a hurry. To play the game, you drew a circle on the ground about six feet in diameter. Each player then anted up the same number of marbles to toss into the middle of the circle. Next, a lag line was drawn. Each player stepped backward a certain distance before aiming his marble at the line. The player's shooter that got the closest was the first to start the game.

The game began with the first person shooting from anywhere along the outside line of the circle. If his shooter hit one of the anted marbles and knocked it out of the circle, while his shooter stayed in the circle, the marble knocked out belonged to him. He continued shooting until he failed to knock a marble out of the circle or until his shooter went out the circle. However, if his shooter didn't go out of the circle on his last attempt, the next player had the option of trying to hit his shooter to knock it out of the circle. If he succeeded, and his shooter stayed in the circle, it was sudden death; you were out of the game. Your anted marbles were history.

The big day had arrived. The playground was filled with classmates. I was competing for the over-all winner in the marble playoff tournament for my grammar school. A 6-foot circle, plus the lag line, had been drawn in white chalk. My opponent had tossed a dozen marbles into the ring to equal mine. The privilege of shooting first belonged to me. I was hot! My beautiful agate knocked two anted marbles out of the white chalked circle. This continued until only six marbles were left. Poor judgment caused me to miss my next shot. My agate stopped six inches inside the curved chalked line. (A very dangerous place for my agate to be.) My opponent took out a steel ball bearing about the size of a quarter. (We called them steelies.) He went down on his knees, wrapped a part of his first finger around the front of the steelie, and then cocked his thumb behind the rear. He placed his callused knuckles on the white chalk line before letting his steelie fly. It hit my agate with such force that my marble flew out of the circle with several feet to spare. That was it! The game was over. He had won. I had lost. My first reaction was to kill! Not because of bad sportsmanship but because his steelie had knocked a chip

out of my beautiful agate. Regardless of how the game ended, the chip was never going to go away. If you were to visit my office today, you will not see a series of physique trophies on display, but you will see a giant glass jar filled with more than two thousand marbles sitting on a shelf with my faithful agate resting on top, nicely wrapped in cotton, waiting for a miraculous recovery.

## Chapter VI - The Budding Entrepreneur

### My Granddad

*My granddad, viewing earth's worn cogs,*

*Said things are going to the dogs.*

*His granddad in his house of logs,*

*Said things are going to the dogs,*

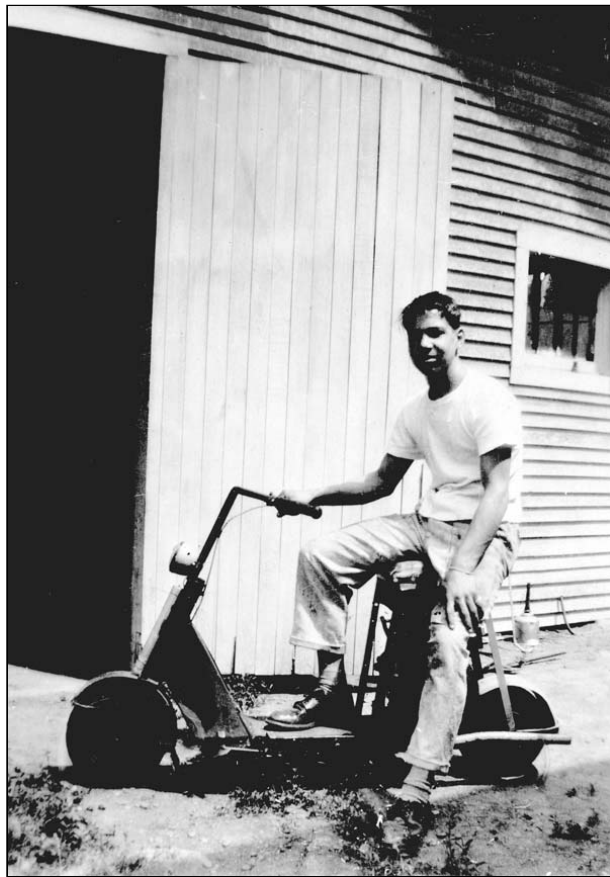
*His granddad in the Flemish bogs,*

*Said things are going to the dogs,*

*There's one thing I have to state:*

*The dogs have had a good long wait!*

Author Unknown



*Bill on one of his early modes of transportation, a 1937 Cushman motor scooter.*

As a youngster I never had enough money to do things correctly. I loved anything that was mechanical, especially if it could be



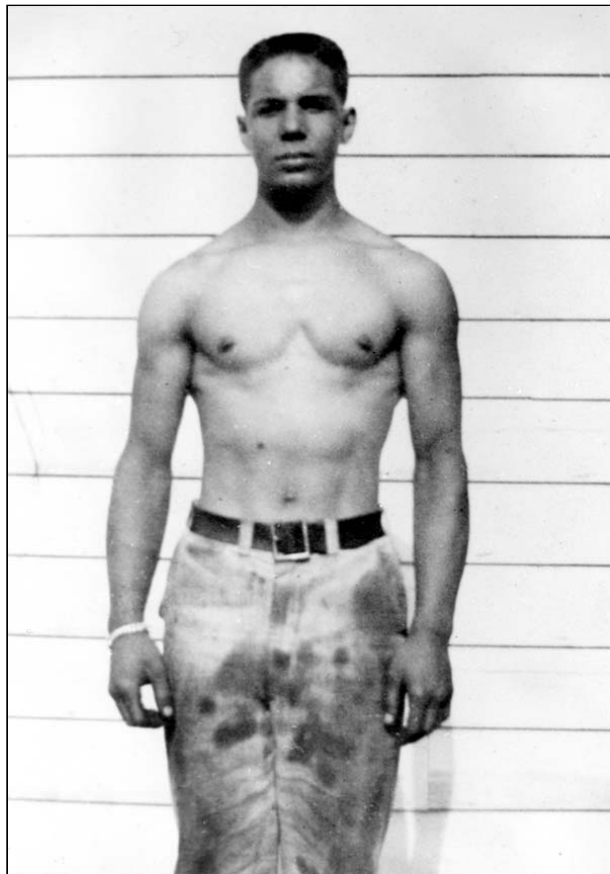
driven or ridden. Our house on Willow Street in Yakima, Washington, looked like a junk yard. Beat-up cars, motorcycles and bicycles encircled the property. Most of the cars on display were Model T Fords waiting for repair. Dad detested having trash everywhere. He nearly exploded when I drove home a ton-and-a-half flatbed truck that I parked on the front lawn. He sputtered, "I wish you'd get rid of those goddamned wrecks, along with the rest of the junk you got scattered all over the place! Why do you keep buying that crap?" I replied, "Dad! That's a good truck! You can haul all kinds of stuff to the dump!" His reply, "If I can't drive one of those things, how in the hell am I going to haul anything?" He had never learned to drive a vehicle with a transmission operated by three pedals.



*A 1924 Model T Ford that Bill bought for \$2.00 when he was eleven years old. He drove the car regularly without a drivers license until he was sixteen, and then failed the drivers test.*

I began dragging vehicles home in my pre-teens. My current collection has leveled off at thirty-two restored antique or classic automobiles, a few ancient motorcycles, Ingo cycles, motor scooters and several dozens of old ballooned-tired bicycles. Some of the older automobiles that are now in my compilation include an 1899 Marlboro Steam car, a 1907 Model N Ford, a 1908 Buick, a 1909 Ford and a 1910 Stanley Steamer.

My first automotive purchase was a 1924 Model T Ford touring car that had no seats, top or upholstery. I paid \$2.00 for the car when I was eleven years old. It had been stored in a barn and used as a roost for chickens. The birds had filled the body with their droppings. It took me days to dig out their remains and months to get the car to run. I “overhauled” the engine, found seats at a wrecking yard, rewired the lights, hooked a cow bell to the front axle, a red kerosene railroad lantern to the rear axle, and then drove it without a driver’s license until I was sixteen years old.



*The grease stains on Bill's trousers are an indication that his transportation had oil leaks. Bill commented, "Those were my school pants."*

My next major transportation investment occurred in 1943. The owner of Hank's Bicycle Emporium had a 1936 Austin Bantam automobile stored in the back room of his shop. The tiny car was

so cute; I'd go to the shop just to look at it. On one visit, the shop repairman came to work with a 1937 Cushman motor scooter loaded in the back of his pickup truck. The scooter had been neglected for years. He mentioned it was for sale. I mentioned, "I've got two nice Schwinn bicycles I'll trade." He agreed. I rushed home to tell Dad the good news. His response was, "NO! You'll never get the damned thing to run. It'll just sit here with the rest of that junk." His words fell on deaf ears.

I cleaned carbon off of the scooter's cylinder head, replaced the spark plug and wire, flushed out the gas tank, blew out the lines, cleaned the carburetor, changed the oil, replaced the brake and gas cables. Then I repainted it with green and yellow John Deere paint that was sprayed on by using a fly-spray applicator.



*Bill loved anything that could be driven or ridden.*

My biggest problem was tires. I not only didn't have money to buy tires, but finding them was nearly impossible. Because of World War II, everything was rationed: food, gasoline, leather, rubber goods, you name it. My brother-in-law came to the rescue. Through some military contact, he was able to get the correct tires and tubes. I skipped school the day they arrived to mount them.

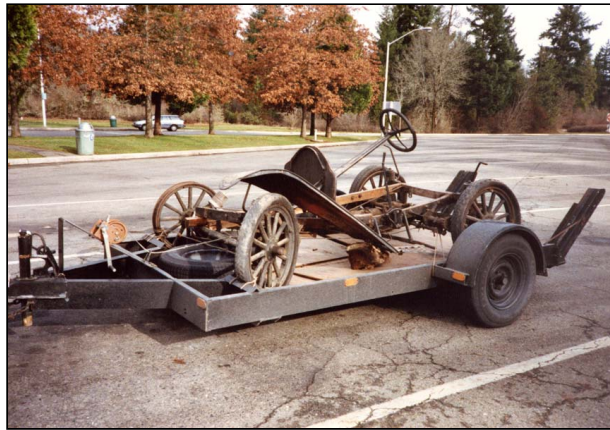
For the next several years I rode the scooter everywhere without major mechanical problem. Eventually, I sold it back to the repairman for \$250.00. Dad was so impressed, he promised to never question my business judgment again.

The most fascinating automobile I encountered by my continual snooping as a youngster remains a sad memory. Weekend mornings, I'd either drive the Model T, or ride the scooter through alleys looking for anything old that was hidden in backyards, garages or barns. By chance, I peeked through a knothole of a crumbling barn to find an automobile so ancient, it used a tiller for steering. I immediately rushed to the front door of the house. An older man greeted me with a giant frown as if to say, "What in the hell do you want?" With every other breath calling him, 'SIR,' I told him of my love for antique automobiles, then finished by asking, "Is it possible to see the car that is stored in your barn?" My charm worked. The carriage turned out to be the first automobile registered in the State of Washington, a 1903 Curved Dash Oldsmobile. It had spent its last 40 years, in the darkness of the barn resting on blocks.

For the next two years, I did everything imaginable to get Mr. Smothers to part with the car. I worked on his house, mowed his lawn, pulled weeds, took him shopping, and drove him to doctor's appointments, all the time doing it with an ulterior motive...I wanted that car. I eventually resigned myself to the fact that I was never going to be able to buy the car. My next plan of attack was to continue to be so overly nice that Mr. Smothers would take pity and GIVE me the car.

On a bright Saturday morning I stopped, once again, to take Mr. Smothers shopping. A truck with out-of-state license plates was backed up to the barn. The driver was winching the Curved

Dash Oldsmobile onto a trailer. I watched the loading process until the back of the old Oldsmobile disappeared down the alley. My desire to please Mr. Smothers disappeared as quickly. I had been taught a good lesson at an early age; wanting is one thing, getting is another.



*“Before” photograph of a 1909 one-cylinder Brush that Bill restored in the recreation room of their home.*



*“After” photograph of the restored 1909 Brush.*



*The oldest car in Pearl's current auto collection: An 1899 Marlboro Steam Car.*



*A 1907 Model N Ford with right-hand drive.*



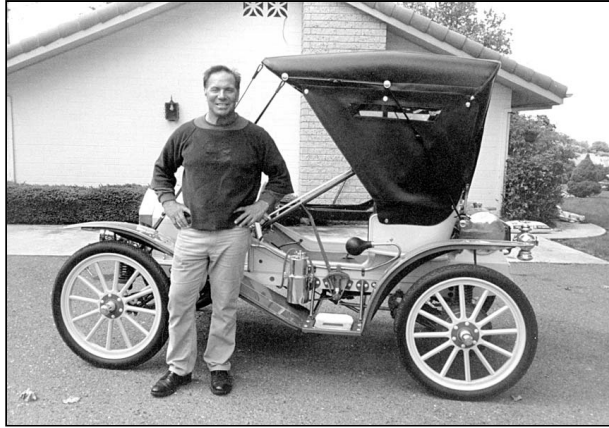


*Pearl's 1910 Model 10 Stanley Steamer.*



*Bill has owned this 1915 Model T Ford for over forty years. Bill and Judy have traveled thousands of enjoyable miles in this vehicle.*

Out of all the cars I've restored as an adult, my favorite is our 1909 one-cylinder Brush. The body, axles, frame, wheels and running boards were made of wood and only good for patterns. The rear wheels were chain driven, the engine and transmission apart in boxes. I paid a ridiculous price of \$5,000.00 for the car. What I bought were parts.



*Restoring the 1909 one-cylinder Brush was a four-year project. Bill commented, "I can run almost as fast as it can go."*

The only convenient place on our property to restore the Brush was in the recreation room of our home. The rest of my collection filled the available covered areas on the property. When the restoration was completed, the Brush had to be dismantled to get it through the front door.



## Chapter VII - Perspective

From the poem "The Power of Littles"

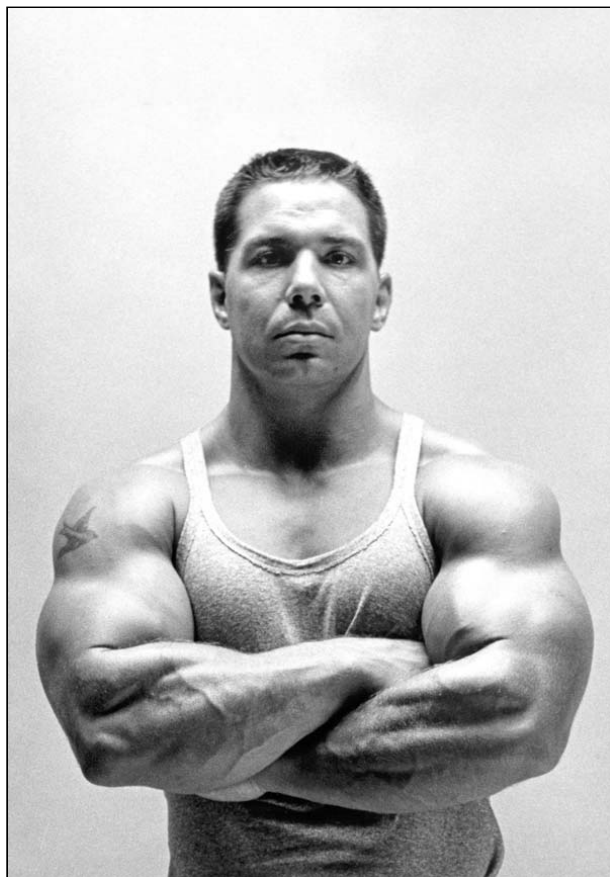
*Great events, we often find,*

*On little things depend,*

*And very small beginnings*

*Have oft a mighty end....*

Author Unknown



*The result of weighing 12 3/4 pounds at birth has had a lasting effect on Bill.*

A major factor that enticed me into weight training, at the early age of ten, was hearing people comment on the size of my feet and hands. That didn't bother me as much as the remarks that came because of my giant head. The result of weighing 12 3/4 pounds at birth has had its lasting affect. I now weigh 235 pounds, wear size 12 EE shoes, my pinkie ring fits most people's

thumbs and the only haberdashery that stocks hats large enough to fit my head is “Meyer the Hatter” located in New Orleans, Louisiana. Here’s one example of how the size of my head has contributed to my ambition to build my body to match it. Fontelle found a hat left hanging on a coat hook near a back booth of the restaurant we owned, at closing time. Pop said it had to be new. For someone to have left the hat meant the owner wasn’t accustomed to wearing it.

The hat was a gorgeous velvet gray fedora with a beautiful black satin band. The brim hung downward to duplicate the hat worn by Humphrey Bogart in the movie *The Maltese Falcon*. Stenciled on the inside sweatband were the numbers 7-7/8. The average hat size for men is between 6-1/4 and 7-1/8, which indicated that this hat had been designed to fit a huge head. My dad automatically tried it on. It was way too big. Harold was next; it covered his ears. Dad plopped it on my ten-year-old head to find it fit perfectly. He placed it back on the hook awaiting the owner’s return.

Weeks later, I became the proud owner. For the next few winters while other kids wore stocking caps and fur lined earmuffs, I was stuck wearing my Humphrey Bogart look-alike. Considering I was extremely self-conscious about the size of my head, wearing the adult man’s hat brought even more attention to the thing I was most sensitive about.

The “hat part” of my life ended on the evening our family went to dinner at the Golden Wheel restaurant in downtown Yakima. Dad drove his 1928 Pontiac coupe. The car had been converted into a makeshift pickup with room in front for three. We boys rode in the back with mother insisting, “Billy has to wear his hat to keep his head warm.” We were ushered to a back booth

equipped with a coat hook similar to the one in our restaurant. When the time came to leave, I was sure to be the last. With clear conscience, I left my Bogey Special hanging on the hook, just the way it had been left in our restaurant years before. My fervent prayer was that it would bring the next owner twice the pleasure it had bestowed upon me.

I recently told this story to a large group of firefighters attending the Phoenix, Arizona Fire Department Health and Fitness Training Seminar. Afterward, one of the attendees asked, “How long have you been training?” I replied, “This past August began my 62nd year. My hat size is still 7-7/8. The hang-ups I had, as a kid, are still with me today.”

## Chapter VIII - Vices

### 'The Circus'

*Hey, there! Loop-la! the circus is in town!*

*Have you seen the elephant? Have you seen the clown?*

*Have you seen the dappled horse gallop round the ring?*

*Have you seen the acrobats on the dizzy swing?*

*Hoop-la Hoop-la! the circus is in town!*

*Hey, there! Hoop-la! Here's the circus troupe!*

*Here's the educated dog jumping through the hoop!*

*See the lady Blondin with the parasol and fan,*

*The lad upon the ladder and the india-rubber man.*

*See the joyful juggler and the boy who loops the loop.*

*Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Here's the circus troupe!*

C. J. Dennis



*Twelve-year-old Bill and his fifteen-year-old brother, Harold.*

For a few summers of my pre-teens, five or six of us from the neighborhood spent our days like primates, running nude, swimming, hanging from trees, taking mud baths and existing off of wild berries on a remote part of the Yakima River. During that time, it seemed fashionable for everyone to smoke. My folks were hooked on Pall Malls. I chose a broader selection by picking up butts off the street, not caring about brands. I smoked regularly for about three years before coming to my senses one extremely cold day, while hitchhiking with my brother-in-law from Yakima to Pasco, Washington. We became stranded in the middle of nowhere. I began complaining about the cold. He remarked, "Have a cigarette. It'll warm you up." Puffing away, I began thinking, "How stupid can I be? Puffing on a cigarette, thinking it is going to make things better, is ridiculous." I tossed it into

the dirt to end my smoking career. Much less time was needed to cure me of chewing tobacco. I snatched a can of Skoal from our corner grocery store and broke the seal to the smell of sweet tobacco aroma. I filled my mouth and began to chew and swallow. In minutes, I was bent over heaving my guts out.



*A circus strongman made such an impression on the young Bill Pearl, it became the incentive for him to begin physically improving himself.*

My life continued without much change. Harold kept pounding on me, my folks were gone most of the time and Fontelle couldn't stand either of her brothers. My final decision to physically improve myself came by accidentally observing a circus strongman, just prior to the opening of the 1940 Washington State Fair. Living across the street from the Fairgrounds, I glanced out our front window and was shocked to see a giant African elephant standing next to the curb not twenty feet from

our door. The handler was nowhere to be seen. There was no waiting to get a closer look. In a flash, I was out the door looking up at the biggest, most magnificent creature I had ever imagined. As I continued to study the animal, to my amazement, he slowly bowed his head to the left, and then with his trunk, gently tossed the handler high enough to allow him to land standing erectly on the elephant's back.

The handler immediately was transformed into a full-fledged circus strongman. Dressed in leopard-skin tights, roman-sandal shoes and a red form-fitting T-shirt, he peered down at me like a genie from a bottle. Once he recognized that he had my full attention, he graciously bowed before going into a handstand on the elephant's back. For the next several minutes the master performer completed one acrobatic feat after another. Then, without warning, he stopped, sat on the elephant's shoulders, and gave a slight nudge with his knees, which caused the elephant to walk toward the entrance way to the fairgrounds. As they entered, the lumbering stride slowed as the strongman looked back and began waving his arm back-and-forth, as if motioning me to follow. I nearly died. "This guy wants me to follow! Maybe he'll teach me to become just like him. If he can do those amazing feats and is strong enough to control objects that seem bigger than life, then, sure as heck, he can teach me how to control my brother and find solutions for the rest of my problems." My folks felt differently. Our short conversation ended with, "NO!" But the decision was made. I wanted to grow up to be just like the strongman.



*At the age of 72, Bill still had not forgotten the circus strongman from his childhood that made such an impact on his life.*



# Chapter IX - Seeds of Change

## Life's Book

*No matter what else you are doing,  
From cradle days through to the end,  
You are writing your life's secret story,  
Each night sees another page penned.  
Each month ends a thirty-page chapter;  
Each year, the end of a part;  
And never an act is misstated,  
Nor even a wish of the heart,  
Each morn when you wake, the book opens,  
Revealing a page clean and white;  
What thoughts and what words and what doings  
Will cover its surface by night!  
God leaves that to you... you the writer...  
And never one word will grow dim  
Until someday you write the word "finish"  
And give back your life's book to Him.*

Author Unknown



*A poster made popular during World War I and still used in World War II.*

On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, my small world began to make a significant change—not for the better. With our floor model Philco radio blaring away, the music stopped for a special report on the bombing of Pearl Harbor. America was at war with Japan. Until then, my friend Toshi Takamura and I were sure of meeting every morning, five days a week, to walk to and from school. We met at a small convenience store that sold cigarettes, candy, gum, soft drinks and comic books. We also ate lunch together in the school cafeteria. He was an “outsider” and my natural instinct was to protect him. He paid me back by sitting next to me in class to help me with my schoolwork. After school, if either of us had money, we’d share a candy bar or a soft drink.

The morning after the bombing, we met as usual, making sure that nothing was said about being at war. However, as we walked

to school, someone driving by hollered, "You Lousy Jap!" Another, "Jap Lover!" At school, the teacher didn't call on Toshi to answer questions and the harassment he went through at recess made me even more determined to stick by him.

We continued meeting until the Christmas holidays. The first few mornings of the New Year, I was late for school waiting for him. I later found out Toshi, the one friend I could count on, had vanished from my life. His family had been shipped to an internment camp in central Oregon for the duration of the war.

Before long, due to rationing, the convenience store, where we had shared the after-school treats, also vanished. The war had begun taking its toll on my little world, causing me to become even more confused and resentful.

A year into the war, Dad closed the restaurant in Yakima. The difficulties caused by food shortages finally had taken their toll. We moved into a Victorian home on 13th and K Streets in Tacoma, Washington. Dad went to work for the Seattle/Tacoma Shipyards, building Kaiser Liberty Ships. The rest of us worked at becoming accepted in our new surroundings.

The neighborhood was predominantly Greek. Last names like Nitas, Doxikas and Topopolomus were as common as the name, Smith, in the rest of the United States. None of the kids wanted anything to do with Harold or me. We were the neighbors with the funny last name who couldn't speak their language.

The isolation continued for nearly the entire school year before acceptance took place. A beautiful two-story Catholic church covered half of the block across the street from our school. One morning recess, Harold decided to climb onto the roof of the church to smoke a cigarette. Thirty minutes later, all of the

school windows facing the church filled with eyes, watching the roof of the church go up in flames. Adding to the excitement, the outer wooden shingled walls soon joined the conflagration. As the fire grew, additional fire trucks arrived; next came newspaper reporters, taking pictures and asking questions. By the time the fire was extinguished, the only portion of the church left standing was its cement foundation.

Students were called to the principal's office. Someone had seen a boy climbing off the roof of the church on the day of the fire. They got around to questioning Harold. He admitted climbing on the roof, lighting a cigarette, flipping a match. "But," he asked, "What does that have to do with the church being set on fire?"

Harold became instantly famous. His unidentified name and admission to smoking on the roof of the church made headline news. Now all the kids in school and the neighborhood wanted to be like him even though we remained the brothers with the funny last name. By the time we departed Tacoma, both Harold's and my ability to speak the Greek language had improved immensely. There wasn't a Greek swear word that we couldn't enunciate as well as any Greek kid in the neighborhood.



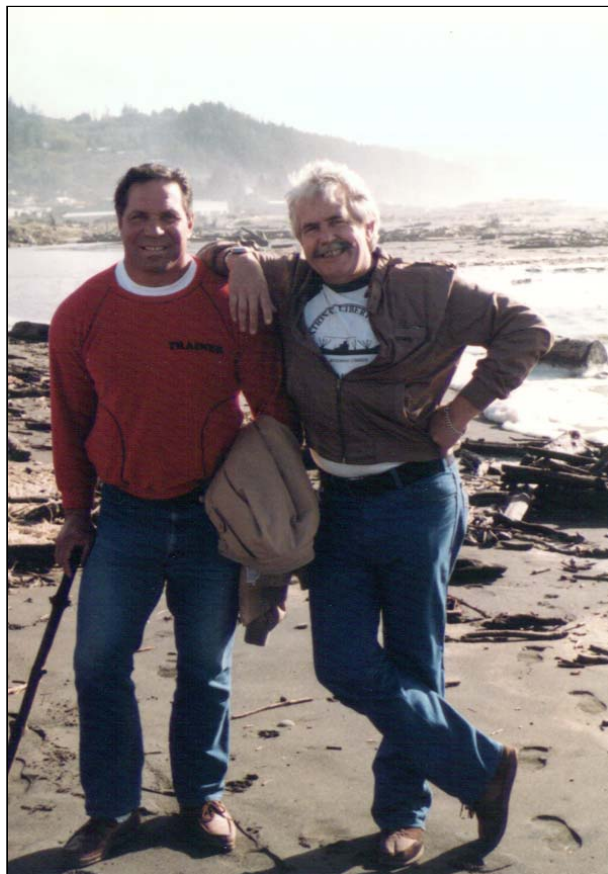
*Young school chums: Ed Parrish, Bill Pearl and Al Simmons.*

Our family moved back to Yakima and, once again, we were in the restaurant business. Dad bought a cafe in the seedy part of downtown and a house on Willow and 7th Avenue. We lived there until I graduated from high school. The one-story full basement, rectangular box, was situated on a double sized lot. The basement was used to launch my bodybuilding career. I had finally figured out what was necessary to achieve my long-term goal. I had to begin lifting weights.

I began by reading books about old-time strongmen, how they trained and then attempted to emulate what they'd done. The transition from lifting anything that wasn't fastened down occurred when the \$22.95 York Big Ten Special weight set I had ordered in late 1941 was delivered in 1945. The York Big Ten Special consisted of eighty pounds of assorted weight plates, a

five-foot bar, two dumbbell handles, collars, two kettle bell handles, a pair of iron boots and a wrist-roller.

By now, Al Simmons and I were seldom out of each other's sight. We were thirteen years old when we met and remained dear friends until his death in 1996. As a youngster, Al took me under his wing. I trusted nobody. His take on life was the opposite. He found good in everything. Al had the habit of kissing his parents hello and good-bye, while hugging everyone in between. Watching how he related taught me that if you are nice to people, they are usually nice in return; if you treat people with respect, they will usually treat you accordingly, and if you are going to discriminate, do it on an individual basis.



*Bill and Al, fifty years later.*

When notice came that the weight set was waiting at the freight docks, I didn't have \$5.00 to pay the freight bill. A pact was made. If Al would help with the freight bill, we would become training partners, but, if he stopped training, he didn't get any part of The York Big Ten Special.

We began working out in the basement three days a week. Our exercise bench was two heavy apple crates with a 2 x 12 inch board lying across them. Other than the training courses that came with the set, everything was trial and error. Fortunately, from the beginning, records were kept of every workout. I recorded our body weight, what exercises we did, how much weight was used and the number of sets and reps we performed. Every few months we'd analyze what seemed to be working, then adjust our training accordingly. I continued keeping accurate records for the next fifty years. Even with limited equipment, we made noticeable progress. By the ninth grade I was doing repetition one-arm snatches with a 100-pound barbell. As my size and strength increased, my mental attitude improved accordingly.

Al remained my hit-and-miss training partner all through junior and senior high school. During our last two years of school, we began training with two older, more advanced bodybuilders at the Yakima YMCA.

# Chapter X - Building Blocks of Character

## Looking Forward

*I dream of a glorious future,  
Of a bright and better day  
When every living creature  
God's mandates will obey;  
When every man will find a friend In every other man,  
And each will seek the good of all According to God's plan;  
When enmity shall disappear,  
And wars be waged no more,  
But peace and love and beauty  
Abound from shore to shore;*

Ruth May Fox



*Bill with Richard Schiffner and Jimmy Robinson, singing their hearts out during a high school function.*



The more involved I became in school, the more tolerable it became. Eventually my grades began to climb. I made the honor roll in high school, but if it hadn't been for music and sports, it's doubtful I would have stayed to graduate. Playing the saxophone, from the 3rd grade on, was one of the most significant events that could have happened. It gave me an interest. I wasn't a natural musician, but tenacity and constant practice paid dividends. I took part in band and orchestra all through school and my four-year Naval enlistment.

Jimmy Robinson was a natural. Everyone in his family was musically gifted. His older sister performed regularly in New York City Broadway Musicals. The younger brother was as talented as she. His parents operated a small, poorly stocked grocery store in the black area of Yakima. Mr. Robinson also acted as the lay minister for a one-room Protestant Church in that neighborhood. On Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings, the building would be rocking. Mr. Robinson would lead the small choir before preaching a rousing sermon. Jimmy's mother played the piano and sang along, as the children accompanied them on different instruments. When asked, I'd bring my saxophone to take part in the festivities. I was usually the only non-black in the congregation.

Jimmy and I organized a dance band with three others from our junior-high school orchestra. We played together through our remaining school years. In the summers of our junior and senior years, Jimmy and I spent most Friday nights with an older Mexican musician playing for itinerant farm workers at Granges throughout the Yakima valley. One evening, before a Grange dance, we stopped at a little outdoor food stand to order a hamburger and a soft drink. My food quickly arrived. Waiting a

few minutes, I remarked, "Excuse me, I believe you've made a mistake. We both ordered a hamburger and Coke." Pointing a finger at both of us, the waitress sarcastically replied, "We'll serve you, but we won't serve him!" Not believing what she had said, I asked her to repeat it. She barked, "We'll serve you, but we won't serve him!" Jimmy stayed calm, as rage overcame me. Her words hit like she had spit in my face. The end results were the hamburger and Coke sailing across the counter, with me screaming what could be done with the bill.



*Bill continued his musical career during his four-year Naval enlistment. He can be seen in the first row, far right, playing a bass saxophone for the USS Nereus dance band.*

The tables turned early one morning after we had played another outlying Grange. It was past 2:00 a.m. and all restaurants in Yakima were closed except for one in the black area of town. As we walked in and sat at the counter, all eyes zeroed in on me. Even though I counted on Jimmy to take care of me under such circumstances, it became less reassuring when this rugged-looking black man seated across the counter REALLY began staring. You could see his brain working as he reached his hand inside his upper-jacket pocket to pull out an object, just far enough to show what looked like the handle of a pistol, then shake his head as if deciding what to do, before sliding the object back into the pocket. This happened enough to make me more

than nervous. I whispered in Jimmy's ear, "Watch that guy over there. He's got a gun in his jacket pocket. He's gonna' shoot me! Let's get the hell out of here!" Jimmy shook his head and replied, "No he doesn't have a gun. Just settle down. You're gonna' be okay." The tension continued to build as we ate our bowls of chili, but immediately eased as we got up to leave. My suspected assassin decided that it was now safe to pull out his flask to pour a shot of liquor into his coffee. My relief was so great I felt like going over to shake his hand, asking if he would share.

# Chapter XI - Early Athletic Career

## Who Touches A Boy By The Master's Plan

*Who touches a boy by the Master's plan  
Is shaping the course of a future man,  
Is dealing with one who is living seed  
And may be a man whom the world will need.*

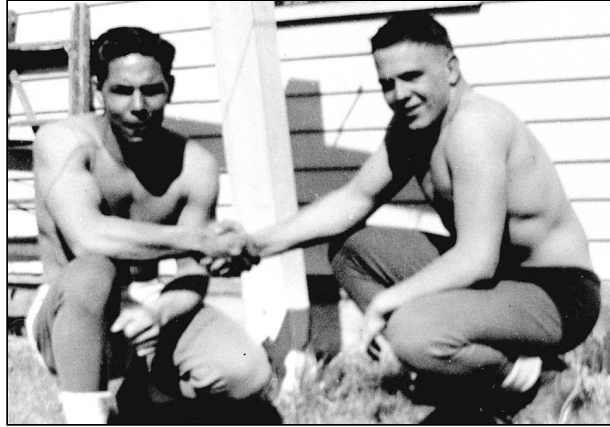
Author Unknown



*Throughout school, Al Simmons was Bill's weight training and wrestling partner. Al Simmons, Judy and Bill fifty-years later.*

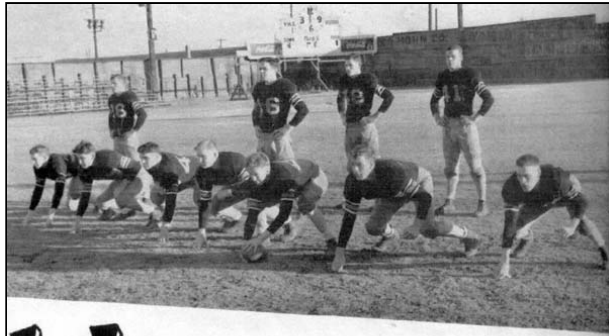
There wasn't a problem for me to win wrestling tournaments for the Yakima YMCA or lettering in most sports through school. Weight training made me stronger and more confident. Football wasn't my passion, but was a sure way of getting a higher education. Upon graduating from high school, several football

scholarships became available. Offers came from the University of Washington and Washington State University, along with several smaller schools in our local area.



*Bill and Al Simmons shaking hands. Wrestling had become almost as important as weight training.*

By now, wrestling had become more important than football, and almost as important as weight training. Al and I began wrestling while in junior high school. Norm Kelly, one of the advanced bodybuilders that we trained with at the YMCA, had taken us under his wing to teach us basic wrestling moves. In high school, we talked Norm Burke, a substitute teacher and former National Collegiate Wrestling Champion, into training with us at the YMCA. He was an even better coach than Norm Kelly. If there were problems taking us off our feet, he'd kick the outside of our knees until our legs gave way, or slap the sides of our heads until we were more than happy to give him the take down.



**VARSITY SQUAD**

Mal Lewis, end; Jack Brune, tackle; Ray Bakker, guard; Don Dexter, guard; Glynn Moore, center; Wayne King, tackle; Dean Hasbriek, end; Bob Hurst, right half; Bill Pearl, quarterback; Earl Miller, fullback; Ivan Bagley, left half.

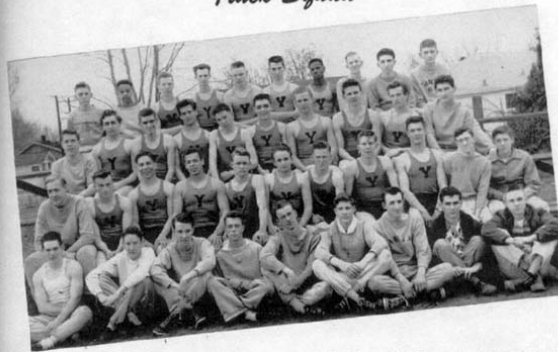
**A SQUAD**

**Row one:** Gordon Becker, manager; Howard Dugas, Bob Lane, Sid Mor Wai, Frank Bacon, Dean Hasbriek, Bob Hurst, Ron Howe, Harold Rainsford, Jimmy Robinson, Dick Robinson, Hayden E. Lindham, manager.  
**Row two:** Bob Burnie, manager; Jack Inions, Walt Perry, Virgil Bingham, Harce Hart, Don Bob, Gary Spohn, Pat McBarren, Jim Cosell, Jack Brune, Al Simmons, Leon Almski, Ray Bakker, Jack Larson.  
**Row three:** Coach Sutherland, Earl Miller, Paul Harrington, Don Dexter, Larry Manary, Ivan Bagley, Glynn Moore, Bill Pearl, Mal Lewis, Don Jones, Wayne King, Doug Biggle, Coach Myers.



*In the "Varsity Squad" photograph Bill is standing, second from the left. Bill is in the back row, eighth from the left, in the "A Squad" photograph.*

*Track Squad*



**first row:** Claude Henke, Wendell Webb, Glenn Kamppi, Jack Blossom, Maraden Hunter, Don Bouser, Don Provancka, Wayne Evans, Dick Terrill; **second row:** Jack Eddy, Lee Engkvaf, Bill Pearl, Ivan Bagley, Walt Searle, Chuck Baker, Delbert Keller, Bob Foley, Bob Schuba, Cecil Curry, Cloe Stapleton; **third row:** Al Simmons, Ed Parish, Bob Cheshire, Will Hughes, Stan Hooper, Bill Mays, Bob Shannon, Gerald Hodges, Joe Pratt, Jack Brune; **fourth row:** Stan Schanover, Clatley Waggoner, Glynn Moore, Ralph Long, Dean Hasbriek, Guy Skinn, James Jefferson, Kenneth Keller, Ed Reynolds, Dick Thomas.

*Foster Medley Relay*

Walt Searle, Bill Pearl, Bob Foley, Delbert Keller.

*880 Relay*

Bill Pearl, Ralph Long, Bill Charbonneau, Chuck Baker.





*Bill can be found in the second row from the bottom, third from the left in the "Track Squad" photograph. Bill is standing second from the left in the "Foster Medley Relay" photograph and first from the left in the "880 Relay" photograph.*

Mr. Burke's attitude was similar toward teaching school. Charles Lane, a student known for making teachers' lives miserable, was insistent on raising hell during a study hall session. Mr. Burke, acting as the study hall teacher, told him to stop. Chuck retaliated with a smart remark, which caused Mr. Burke to stand and motion him to step into the hall. Moments later, a loud crash was heard against the lockers and then a thump of something hitting the floor. Mr. Burke re-entered the room while adjusting his tie shouting, "Listen up! This job doesn't mean that much to me. I'm not going to put up with any crap." I proudly listened to his remarks before saying to the kid sitting next to me, "Ain't he great? I work out with him three times a week!"



*Bill wearing his father's only dress suit, in 1946.*



*Bill's main mode of transportation during junior and senior high school.*

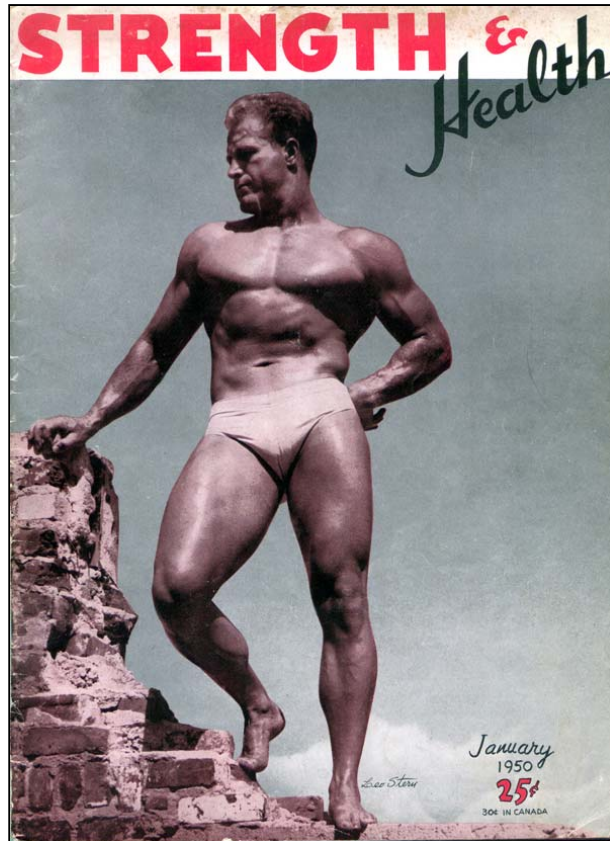


## Chapter XII - A Step Toward Manhood

### The Few

*The easy roads are crowded  
And the level roads are jammed;  
The pleasant little rivers  
With the drifting folks are crammed, But off yonder where it's rocky,  
Where you get a better view,  
You will find the ranks are thinning And travelers are few.  
Where the going's smooth and pleasant You will always find the throng,  
For many, more's the pity,  
Seem to like to drift along.  
But the steeps that call for courage, And the task that's hard to do,  
In the end result in glory  
For the never wavering few.*

Edgar A. Guest



*Leo Stern featured on the cover of Strength & Health magazine in 1950, the year Leo and Bill met.*

In our sophomore year of high school, Al Simmons got the idea that we should join the United States Marine Corps Reserves. For the next three years, the government paid us a small amount each month for meeting Tuesday nights to watch old war movies—no training—just movies. Not long after graduation, the Korean War began. Our reserve unit was on the active list to be called overseas. Al and I quickly decided that going to Korea, as Marines, especially after watching three years of people being burned to death by flame throwers, wasn't the smartest move. During a lunch break from our summer job of teaching swimming at the local public pool, we visited the United States Naval Recruiting Office. Returning to the pool, Al jokingly mentioned that we had joined the Navy. To save face, we enlisted the following day. Dad's first comment was, "Do you realize how long two years can be?" I countered, "Pop, we didn't enlist for

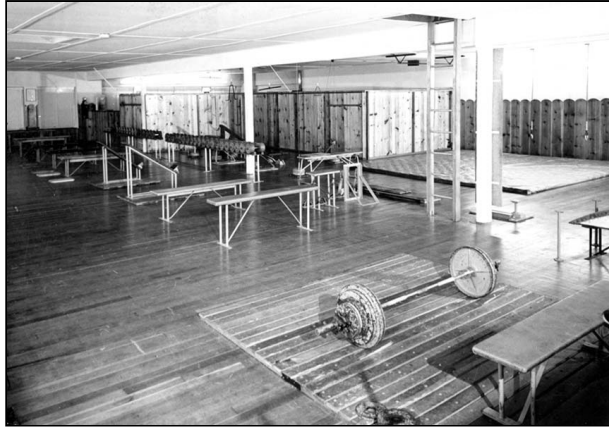
two years, we enlisted for four.” Shaking his head in disgust, he replied, “There goes your college education.”



*Leo Stern winning the 1946 AAU Mr. California title.*

We boarded a train for San Diego. The next three days held fantasies of exotic places; however, the moment the train stopped in San Diego, the dream state vaporized. After we were ordered to stand at attention, a Chief Petty Officer walked back and forth, before commenting, “Regardless of who you are, or how tough you think you may be, the United States Navy has a place for you. The more you screw up, the deeper the hole you dig for yourself. I strongly advise those of you with piss-poor attitudes to square yourselves away NOW! If not, you are going to have the longest and roughest four years of your lives.”

Liberty was granted four times over the sixteen weeks of boot camp. Most of that time I spent at Leo Stern’s gym. I could hardly wait to meet him and to train in the gym that had produced so many champions.



*An early photograph of Stern's Gym in the North Park area of San Diego, California.*

Leo had seen thousands of sailors like myself come and go. He invited me to look around, saying, "If you want to take a workout, it will cost you a dollar." After I explained that I only had enough money for bus fare to get back to the training center, he remarked, "Pay me on payday."

Boot Camp was different from anything I'd experienced. Taking orders and being harassed simply because someone had the authority to do so, didn't set well. Several incidents convinced me that sixteen weeks was about all one could take. Lights-out occurred in the barracks promptly at 10:00 p.m. There was to be total silence until 4:00 a.m.; if not, everyone suffered the consequences. Someone disobeyed, which resulted in the barrack's commander ordering the platoon out of our sacks (bunks), dressed and on the grinder in double time. The next two hours were spent running in place, doing jumping jacks and push-ups. The recruit ahead of me couldn't keep up. His added punishment was having his back literally broken by being stomped on.

**PICTURE STORY**

Photograph from the San Diego Historical Society



**A**fter he graduated high school in 1939, Leo Stern opened the Hillcrest Barbell Club. He won the first Mr. San Diego title two years later. World War II erupted, and Stern served for four years as a physical training instructor in the U.S. Air Corps.

In this 1946 photo, Stern shares the camera with his new Mr. California trophy (the other,

smaller trophy may be for placing third in the Mr. America contest that same year). Also in '46, Stern's Gym was established. Though it's unclear as to whether or not the 3831 Granada Avenue address is the original location, it's called "the oldest bodybuilding gym in California" by more than one online source.

— by Robert Mizrahi

*Article about Leo Stern. Leo's gym was one of the first in California.*

We normally finished classes at 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, which gave us time to prepare for the following day. Our clothing was washed outside, by hand, and then secured to a lanyard (clothesline) by thick pieces of string that had to be tied in square knots. Each afternoon the platoon leader would inspect the line to see if the clothing was properly hung, and clean enough to meet his satisfaction. One recruit's boxer-type undershorts failed the test. He was singled out during morning muster and then ordered to spend the rest of the day with the crotch of those shorts in his mouth, being reminded to suck out the dirt. The final eye-opener occurred during the last week of boot camp. While practicing rowing lifeboats in the bay, which separated the Naval Recruit Training Center from the Marine

Recruit Training Center, we came across two bodies dressed in Marine turnouts, peacefully floating side by side. We concluded that perhaps the Navy wasn't so bad after all.



*Judy, Bill, Leo and wife Bettye, back stage at the Victoria Palace, after the 1971 NABBA Mr. Universe contest.*

## Chapter XIII - A Winning Nature

### No Longer Forward

*No longer forward nor behind*

*I look in hope or fear;*

*But grateful, take the good I find*

*The best of now and here.*

John Greenleaf Whittier

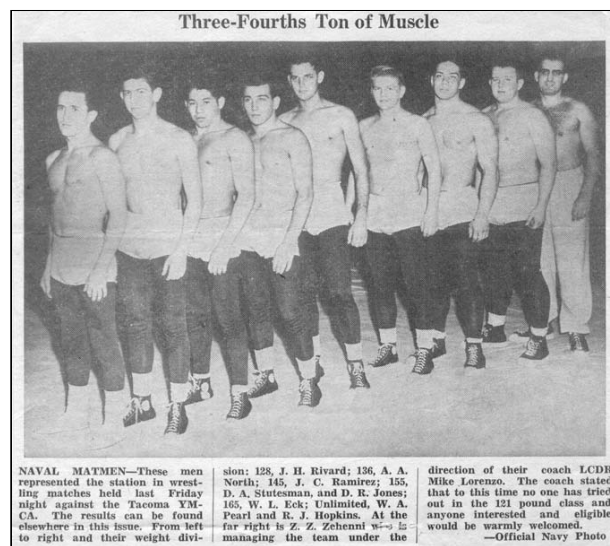


*One of the first photos of Pearl to appear in print. Photograph taken in 1952.*

Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station, north of Seattle, Washington, became my home for the next two years. My job was general maintenance, working in the bowling alley or overseeing the golf driving range. Before finally being assigned to the base theater, I was sent to movie operators school to learn to run 16-millimeter projectors. Then my job was changed to

driving to Seattle to pick up film, cleaning the theater and running the ticket booth and the projectors.

Prior to movie operators school (the only schooling I received during my four-year enlistment), Joe Ramirez and I had good reason to become friends. We were the lowest on the totem. If we weren't cleaning heads (toilets) or buffing floors, we alternated between working the golf driving range or the bowling alley. Just before noon on one particular day, Joe had been cutting grass while I worked the check-in counter at the bowling alley. He came running toward me with a sick look on his face, his left hand wrapped around his right. It was obvious that something had gone wrong. "What the heck happened, Joe?" I asked. "I just cut my finger off trying to dislodge a piece of wood that got stuck in the power mower!" I replied, "Bull shit!" Joe countered, "No! I really did!" I said, "Let me see."



*The Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station wrestling team. Joe Ramirez, third from the left. Bill is third from the right.*

I gently removed his left hand to pry open his clenched fist to find his index finger dangling by a thin thread of skin. Stupidly, I pulled it free with no idea what to do. A butt kit, used to dispose



of cigarettes, was close. It looked convenient. I tossed his finger in with the cigarettes and then ran to the base telephone to call the infirmary. Later, a corpsman came asking, "Have any of your guys seen the finger that got cut off?"

The next day Joe was back working the bowling alley with a huge bandage covering his hand, along with a metal splint protruding outward that held the severed finger in place, telling everyone, "If it mends, I ain't gonna' be able to move it."

We, unfortunately, slept in the same barracks, his bunk just above mine. Joe began sleeping on his stomach with his injured hand dangling about six inches from my nose. As the healing process took place, the smell was like something had died only to smell worse with time. The nightly finger dangling began causing me more pain than he was suffering. My solution was to sleep with my head at the foot of my bunk trying to keep as far away as possible from his "finger from hell." Thankfully, his hand did heal. After Joe was discharged from the Navy, he became the only licensed barber in the state of Colorado with an index finger that stuck straight out, as if giving directions to every snip of his scissors.

The weight room at the recreation center on Whidbey Island wasn't much better than what I had at home, or at the YMCA in Yakima: barbells, dumbbells, a squat rack, a home-made lat machine, a couple of flat benches and a sit-up board were scattered along the outside walls. The room also housed a boxing ring and a wrestling mat. Most weeknights the area was packed with personnel hitting speed bags, jumping rope, shadow boxing, lying around on the wrestling mat, or just gawking, which added to the confusion of those trying to get in a workout. By spending so much of my spare time in the room, I became another

permanent fixture. The base newspaper had featured me in an article on weight training, which caused the role of unofficial fitness guru to fall on my shoulders.

During the two years I was stationed there, I won the Thirteenth Naval District Wrestling Championships. In one invitational meet with the University of Washington, my opponent was slated to win that year's National Collegiate Championships. My weight training enabled me to counter most of his moves, more because of my strength than my ability. The last three minutes of our match began with the score tied at three points each. The referee started us in the down position, with the future National Champion riding me from behind. The referee hollered, "Wrestle!" I immediately went into a sit-out and then threw my body weight on his left shoulder to switch positions. During the move, I put so much pressure on that area, it caused the worst joint dislocation I'd ever seen. There was no way he could continue. Our team won the meet, while my opponent's chances of winning the Nationals went out the window.

## Chapter XIV - The Mesmerizer

### At Twenty

*At twenty I knew, and I knew I knew—*

*While at thirty, I wasn't sure.*

*At forty I knew that I didn't know*

*A lot I had known before.*

*At fifty I sigh, and wonder how*

*One who had known so much so young,*

*Can know so little now.*

Daphne Jemmett

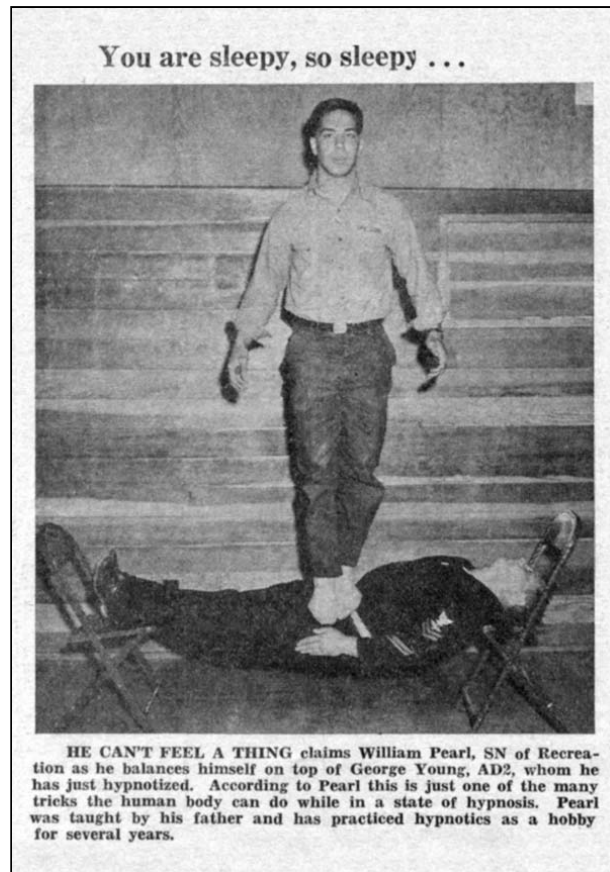


*Self-hypnosis became a tremendous asset to Bill's bodybuilding career. "Throughout my competitive years, before each training session, I'd program myself as to what positive results would come from the workout."*

I had, and still have, the ability to hypnotize and to self-hypnotize. I learned the art around the age of 16. My dad had

gone to school in Los Angeles, California, to become certified in hypnotherapy. When he needed a subject to practice on, his youngest son was willing. I began emulating his methods on my friends, and to my surprise, I became a better hypnotist than he. At parties or social events, someone would often mention my hypnotic talent. The usual response was, “Bet you can’t hypnotize me!” That comment, or anything similar, suggests that particular individual is a prime candidate to be hypnotized. My method, back then, was to have the subject sit in a comfortable chair with his eyes focused on an object. I would begin by stressing in a slow, powerful voice, “You must zero in on what I am saying, as you begin to relax. (Pause) Let’s start your relaxation with your feet and slowly work toward your head.” (Pause) I would guide him through the necessary steps. “Now that you are relaxed, your eyes are becoming tired—very tired. (Pause) Your head is becoming heavier—and heavier. (Pause) Your chin wants to rest on your upper-chest. (Pause) Rest your chin on your chest. (Longer Pause) Now. As I count to ten, you will become even more relaxed and sleepier. You will feel completely safe while having no anxiety or pain. (Pause) When I reach the number ten, you will be deep...deep...deep...asleep. (Longer pause) Number one—you are becoming very sleepy.” This would continue until the number ten had been reached.

Once assured that the subject was in a subconscious state, I’d lead him through a series of “whatever” to get a few laughs before I awakened him by saying, “On the count of three, you will be completely awake. Number one...you are beginning to wake up. (Pause) Number two...you are nearly awake and feeling fine. (Pause) Number three...wake up!”



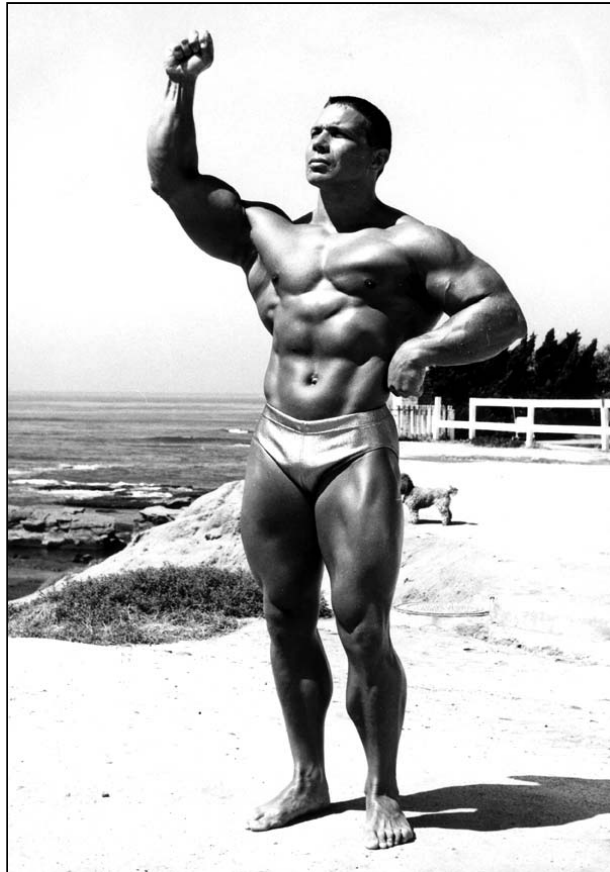
*Bill learned the art of hypnosis around the age of 16. He would use self-hypnosis on himself for most of his bodybuilding career.”*

Through school, practicing hypnotism was a way to have fun along with getting attention. This carried over to the recreation center at Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station. I developed such terrific subjects. Some could be put into a subconscious state simply by telling them something like, “When I count to three...and you hear my fingers snap...you will be deep asleep.”

Second Class Petty Officer George Young was one of those subjects. At one demonstration, the local civilian newspaper photographed me standing on George’s mid-section with his body suspended between two chairs. His feet were on one chair and the back of his head rested on the other—nothing in between. A few of my regular subjects sat watching. Later in the demonstration, I asked them to stand and, with a specific

command, they began singing silly songs and dancing around, as if having the time of their lives. A person under hypnosis will only do what they would do under normal circumstances.

Closing the demonstration, I asked if there were any questions. An officer raised his hand, “Can you help me stop smoking?” “SURE!” I said, “Come on up!” Once hypnotized I gave him the command, “From now on, every time you have the craving to smoke—the cigarette you put in your mouth will taste like crap.” I then counted to three. The officer glanced around as if he was still waiting to be hypnotized. I asked him to take out a cigarette and light it. A sick look came over him as the cigarette touched his mouth. He began licking his lips as if there was something on them that he didn’t want to mention. Because of this incident, I was upgraded to the unofficial non-smoking advocate for Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station.



*Self-hypnosis was a tremendous asset for Bill to become larger, stronger and more muscular.*

Self-hypnosis became a tremendous asset to my bodybuilding career. Throughout my competitive years, before each training session, I'd program myself as to what positive results would come from the workout. After each meal, I'd program myself as to what I wanted the food to accomplish. At night I'd lie in bed subconsciously thinking, "I'm going to sleep and when I awake, I'll be bigger, stronger and more muscular."

# Chapter XV - A Golden Opportunity

## Take a Lesson

*Take a lesson to thyself,*

*Loving heart and true*

*Golden years are fleeting by,*

*Youth is passing, too.*

*Learn to make the most of life*

*Lose no happy day.*

*Time will never bring thee back*

*Chances swept away.*

Author Unknown



*Pearl called the USS Nereus, and Stern's Gym, home for two years, while in the U.S. Navy.*

All through high school I worked on the school newspaper.  
Eighteen months into my Navy enlistment, I decided to strike



for a 3rd-class journalist rating. The rating would keep me out of mess duty and pulling night watches, while leaving a better chance of being stationed on another Naval base, or large ship, once my tour of duty at Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station had ended. My concern was getting stationed onboard a small ship where weights weren't available. I took the examination, placed high on the promotion list, then bided my time waiting for an opening. The promotion came just as my tour at Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station ended.

My new duty station was the Eleventh Naval District, Submarine Flotilla One, based in San Diego, California. I'd be training at Stern's Gym for the next two years.



*Bill and training partner Vic Zanotti prepare to head up the stairs to Leo's gym.*

I was assigned onboard the submarine tenders USS Sperry and USS Nereus. The tenders acted as enormous storage depots for the dozen submarines that tied up alongside. One of the two ships would anchor in the San Diego bay for six months, then rotate with the other to Hawaii for six months. There was only one billet, or job opening, for a journalist between the ships. I'd transfer from one to the other upon rotation, making sure not to leave San Diego. I didn't want anything to interfere with my training.

The Public Information Office, which I was assigned to onboard ship, consisted of a desk, two chairs, filing cabinet, wastebasket, electric typewriter and a Speed Graphic camera. My primary job was to help entertain civilian guests while at sea onboard the submarines. I would photograph them shaking hands with the ship's captain and then write a human-interest story that was sent to their hometown newspapers. Every story began the same, "Mr. X has spent the last three days as a guest of the United States Navy onboard the submarine X." The object was to get favorable publicity for the United States Navy, while showing the civilian population we appreciated their support.

The head of Public Information for the two ships was Commander William W. Williams. (A reserve officer called into active duty because of the Korean War.) Commander Williams was determined to obtain the rank of Captain before the war ended. He was the most self-centered individual I had ever met. When not entertaining civilian guests, he would order me ashore with his contemptuous attitude to run errands that seldom had anything to do with military responsibilities. One afternoon, returning from my last trip of the day, he stopped me as I entered the room, saying, "If you ever walk up to me again and don't

salute, I'm going to put you on report and have your ass thrown in the brig." My response was a salute and a "Yes, Sir!" However, I promised myself that once I was out of the service I would never "salute," or "sir" anyone I didn't honestly think deserved it. If only I could meet retired William W. Williams today, my response to any of his comments would be totally different.



*Bent-over rows was one of Bills favorite exercises.*

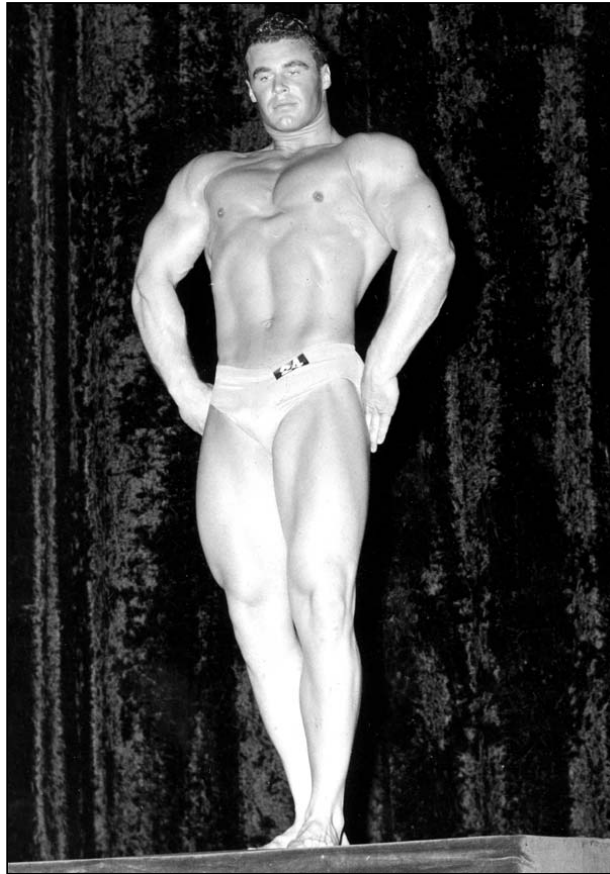
The only benefit of working for Commander Williams was that he took every course and opportunity to help with his goal to advance in rank. Frequently, a call to his office would end by him saying, "I'll be gone from this office for the next six weeks. I expect you to carry on as if I were here." He seemed to forget that most of my time was spent running errands for him; therefore, the minute Commander Williams abandoned ship, I was right behind, not to return until the day he arrived back onboard. Though, if truth were known, anyone could have easily found me—at Stern's Gym.

Stern's was a neighborhood gym located in the North Park area of San Diego. Originally, the upper-story of the building was used as a bowling alley. The downstairs housed a poultry business that slaughtered hundreds of chickens a day. There was no pick

up of garbage on weekends. On Monday mornings, it was all anyone could do to climb the stairs.

I had taken four workouts at the gym while in boot camp. My hopes were that Leo would not only remember me, but also notice the progress I'd made during the two years while stationed at Whidbey Island U.S. Naval Air Station. To my chagrin, he didn't. What he said was, "If you want to enroll, it's going to cost you \$15.00 per month, which includes instructions." In retrospect, it turned out to be one of the greatest investments of my life. The same principles he used on me were used on nearly all my members for the thirty years I was in the gym business. Leo recorded my measurements, made out a personalized training program, demonstrated the proper method to do each exercise, then ran me through the workout to make sure I understood. His closing words were, "Follow this program for six weeks. If you train regularly, then I'll make changes." I continued to keep records of how often and how long I trained, my body weight, the number of sets, reps and weight used for each exercise.

Years later, in an article written by George Coates for *Iron Man Magazine*, Leo commented, "When Bill first started to work out at my gym, I didn't pay much attention to him. He was just another well-built kid who seemed to be more interested in becoming stronger to improve his wrestling. Bill was the wrestling champion for the Eleventh Naval District. He had high hopes of representing the United States in the 1952 Olympic games."



*Keith Stephan, as he appeared at the Los Angeles Greek Theater for the 1954 AAU Mr. America contest.*

Being around Leo convinced me that the gym business was how I wanted to make a living once I was discharged from the military. When he left his gym for any reason, I took it upon myself to enroll new members, take them through workouts, pick up the weights in the gym and clean the showers. I spent most nights and weekends, when not onboard ship, on the couch in the gym's rest area. This gave me plenty of time to plan my future.

The big name at Leo's gym was Keith Stephan. He too had great hopes of becoming a champion bodybuilder. Keith was a few years older, a rugged 6-feet 2-inches tall, weighed about 240 pounds, with the looks of a budding movie star. His physique put mine to shame. We agreed to become training partners. Monday through Friday, Keith would get to the gym first and snooze on the couch. I'd climb the stairs all excited; he'd say,

“You get dressed and we’ll get going,” or, “Yeah, you go ahead. I’ll be right there.” Deep inside, nothing could have pleased me more. The longer he slept and the more I trained, the better chance I had to catch him physique-wise.

## Chapter XVI - I Know Where I'm Going

**From the poem "Lullaby Town"**

*There's a quaint little place they call Lullaby Town –*

*It's just back of those hills where the sunsets go down.*

*Its street are of silver, its buildings of gold,*

*And its palaces dazzling things to behold.*

*There's a peddler who carries, strapped high on his back,*

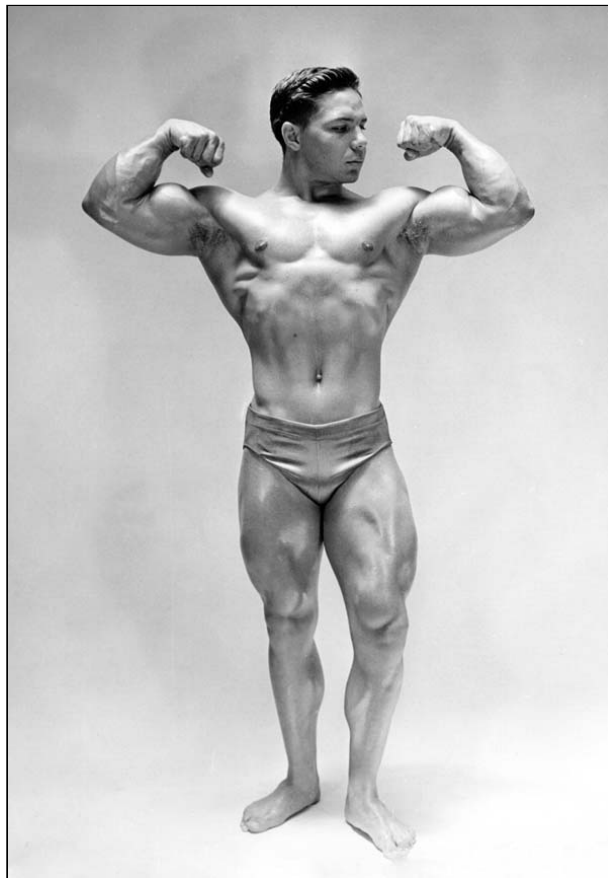
*A bundle. Now, guess what he has in that pack.*

*No, he's not peddling jams or delectable creams.*

*Would you know what he's selling?*

*Just wonderful dreams!*

John Irving Diller



*Hard work and desire were the only secrets Bill had for physical improvement.*

There came a time when I zeroed in on those things that would benefit me most, which meant other things had to go. Sometimes, determining what to relinquish and what to maintain isn't easy. I had won my weight division for the Eleventh Naval District Wrestling Championships the first year in San Diego. The following year, the competition was rougher. It was an Olympic-qualifying year and several of our wrestlers had an excellent chance to qualify for the United States Olympic wrestling team. That's when Leo and I began "mentally" wrestling with each other. He felt there was a real opportunity for me to succeed in bodybuilding if I focused on that alone. He told me, "Wrestling is a great sport, but you're not going to make a living at it unless you become a professional, or get a teaching credential and become a coach. You've already said that's something you don't want to do, so why waste your time on something that ends up taking you nowhere? Why not apply that energy and focus to things that you have the better chance of being successful at?"

Still, I resisted until two critical events took place. I competed in the Eleventh Naval District Wrestling Championship only to be eliminated in the first round. Weeks later, I won the AAU Mr. Southern California, and soon after, the AAU Mr. California title. My bodybuilding career had jumped into high gear. There were only a few weeks before the AAU Mr. America contest. That became our primary goal. The members of Leo's gym got behind me by taking up a collection for my airfare to the contest, while Leo personally financed the rest of the trip.



*Peri Scope*

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## RED CROSS GAINS \$826

### NEREITES, SUB CREWS GIVE DRIVE IMPETUS

Officers and crewmembers of the Nereus, Squadron Five submarines and Staff, and the Florikan poured \$826.11 into needy Red Cross coffers during the 1953 Red Cross Campaign.

Of this amount, \$454 was contributed by the Nereus, and \$111 came from the USS Aspro.

LTJG John H. Bilkey, SubRonFive Electronics Officer, in charge of this year's campaign was well pleased with results.

'The USS Nereus has received more actual benefit from the Red Cross than any other ship in the San Diego Bay area. I feel sure all officers and men of the Nereus and submarines attached to her command are proud to realize such a fine contribution to a worthy cause.'

Winners of the raffle conducted aboard the Nereus in conjunction with this year's Drive are as follows:

1st prize - 21" TV set won by the USS Aspro; 2nd prize - man's wrist watch won by LT E.P. Stillwell of the Nereus; and 3rd prize went to Chief Henry Dupree of the Commissary Department who won a

## ANOTHER WIN FOR BILL PEARL

Bill Pearl, J03, of SubFlotOne's Public Information Office walked half way to Indianapolis, Ind., on April fourth.

Ranking as 'Mr. Southern California' before that date, Bill walked away from Los Angeles as 'Mr. California.' And this latter event is supposed to be second toughest and largest next to the 'Mr. America' finals in the Indiana city.

The Nereus muscle-man repeated his previous victory in the 'best legs' division and also copped the 'most muscular' title. He brought three trophies home with him.

In winning, Bill bested 23 other contestants, some of whom had previously placed in 'Mr. America' and other top competitions.

Big Bill represented Leo Stern's gym, 3831 Granada ave. He and Stern are the only San Diegans to win the state crown.

With the national contest coming up on 8-9 June, Pearl says he's starting serious training for that coveted title this week. Should he win, a trip to Europe will be among his rewards.

Good luck, shipmate!



PEARL

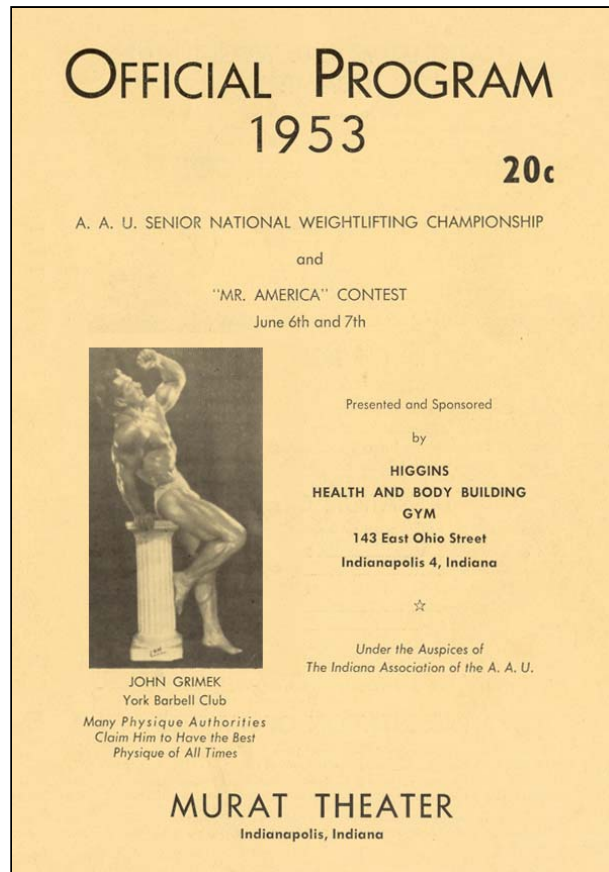
*An article that appeared in the April issue of the 1953 USS Nereus ship's newspaper.*

Before the 1953 AAU Mr. America contest, Stern phoned John Grimek asking if I could train at the York Barbell Company's gym a week before the event. Leo wanted John to critique my posing. Leo and I thought there wasn't a chance I'd win the competition, but there was a possibility to do well in the Best-Legs, Best-Arms or Most-Muscular subdivisions.

Leo later commented in an article for *Iron Man Magazine*, "Bill had fooled around with weights a lot but his serious training time, at the time he won the AAU Mr. California event, amounted to only two years, which is a relatively short period. Bill, however, surprised me by coming along, as quickly as he did. When he had first set foot in the gym, I recall him having a rugged type of physique that had possibilities, but at that time he was nothing more than a sturdy kid. He told me he had worked out at home, at the YMCA, and anywhere else he could locate

weights. His main interest at that time seemed to be his wrestling, at which he was very good. He responded quickly to coaching; he was an excellent pupil. I only had to tell him once how to perform an exercise. When I outlined his programs, he followed them to the letter. It's always been a practice of mine when working with anyone that they follow the workout exactly as written, and do as instructed, or there isn't any point in coaching them. The individual who is seeking instruction shouldn't be telling the coach what has to be done.”

In preparation for the AAU Mr. America contest, I spent at least two hours each day weight training, an additional two hours getting sun, plus an hour practicing posing. The trip to York, Pennsylvania, became a nightmare! My plane into Reading arrived so late my connecting flight had departed. That meant spending a sleepless night on a bench in the airport.



*The official program for the 1953 AAU Mr. America contest, held at the Murat Theater, in Indianapolis, Indiana.*

I became a nervous wreck wondering, “How should I treat this man? Should I call him John or Mr. Grimek?” He solved the problem, “Bill, I’m John. You’re finally here. I don’t suppose you’ve eaten. There’s a good restaurant we can go to. Hear you’re having trouble with your posing. What the hell is wrong with you? Anyone can hit four poses.” My response was, “Leo doesn’t seem to think so.” He laughed, saying, “Don’t worry, we’ll figure out something.” Years later, John commented, “It’s hard to believe that Bill’s posing ability wasn’t much in those days. He’s a master poser now, thanks to Leo’s making him practice year in and year out.”

The York Gym was located on the second floor of an old square brick building. Practically any gym on the West Coast would

have put it to shame. So many weights had been dropped on its floor, there were holes where you could see into the packaging area below. It was a surprise to see the number of world champions training there. One of the regulars, Jim Park, (1952 AAU Mr. America), would do an exercise, and then sit on the end of a bench to smoke a cigarette.

It was also surprising how many competitors for the upcoming contest were using the facility. It was anything but inspiring. Working out in the same gym with former Mr. America winners Grimek, Park, Jules Bacon, and watching world-class lifters Steve Stanko and Tommy Kono, along with many of those I was to compete against, left me feeling depressed. Leo was correct! I knew experience was the only good coming from this ordeal.

I wasn't eating worth a darn. My \$110.00 monthly Naval pay, along with the money Leo had given me, was going fast. After paying for my room at the York YMCA, I was down to living on cottage cheese, tuna fish and Hoffman's Hi-Proteen (not protein) tablets. The tablets were stored in 50-gallon drums in the York warehouse. People would walk by to snatch a handful. I figured, "What the hell." For the next five days my pockets were filled with an assortment of chocolate, vanilla and strawberry health food pills that consisted of 20 percent soybean and 80 percent refined sugar.

Leo was upset when I finally phoned. His first remarks were, "What's going on? How is the posing going? What did John decide that you should do? Are you drinking water like I told you?" I answered his last question first, "Yes, Leo, I'm drinking water." His concern was that I would dehydrate, which would cause me to lose even more muscle mass. He insisted that I carry a jug of water to constantly drink from. That's what I did. It not

only helped with hydration, but also helped to wash down the hundreds of Hoffman's Hi-Proteen tablets I was eating each day.

Grimek drove his new 1953 Packard Clipper to the contest. It was easy to understand why I was his only passenger. Two of his bad driving habits were breaking the speed limit and not seeing stop signs. I spent half of the trip saying, "Oh shit! Here it comes!"

I was unnerved even more when John reached into the car's glove compartment to pull out two giant Hershey chocolate bars. "You want some chocolate?" John asked. I replied, "No, I hadn't better." "Ah, eat the damned thing. It's not going to kill you." There I sat; my eyes glued to the road, eating a two-pound chocolate bar, sipping on water with my pockets full of Hoffman's Hi-Proteen tablets, on my way to compete in the biggest contest in the sport of American bodybuilding.

We stopped for a real meal halfway to Indianapolis. A police officer eating in the restaurant recognized John and joined us. Minutes later, a beautiful blonde walked past our booth to occupy the booth behind. In a hushed voice, the officer whispered, "That blonde is the prostitute the Oleo Margarine heir got into trouble with." The scandal had made headline news. The officer went on, "He was paying her \$500.00 a night for her services." John roared, "Jesus Christ, \$500.00 a night! What was the guy doing, buying the broad? He could have hired a harem for that price!"

The temperature was close to one hundred degrees when we arrived in Indianapolis. The room at the downtown YMCA had two beds, no windows, or air conditioning. Everyone on that floor shared a community bath. I sat on the bed, hot, hungry,

and feeling sorry for myself thinking, “If this is the real world of bodybuilding, I’m ready to head back to San Diego.” There was a knock on the door. I thought it was the young man who had propositioned me in the hall. I opened the door to find Leo standing there. “Leo! What in the hell are you doing here?” He slammed the door saying, “I could tell from the phone call that you were blowing it! You blow everything you do! Let me see the changes Grimek made in your routine.” He seemed happy with the results, which put me more at ease. The prejudging was on the following day, which meant encouragement of any kind was appreciated.

Six weeks earlier I had won the AAU Mr. California title and the subdivisions for Best-Legs, for Best-Arms and for Most-Muscular. I signed up for these same subdivisions at the prejudging of the AAU Mr. America contest the following day. I not only didn’t win any of these subdivisions, I wasn’t called back for comparisons. It was like I hadn’t been there.



*The 1953 AAU Mr. California contest. Seymour Koenig... third, Zabo Kozewski... second and Bill... the winner.*

Leo insisted, “You shouldn’t be discouraged. It worked out fine. You’re paying your dues. Next year you will do better, and the following year better yet.” With those encouraging words we

went to eat before spending the rest of the day in an air-conditioned movie theater.

York Barbell had sponsored the AAU National Weight Lifting Championships and the AAU Mr. America contest that year. Bob Hoffman, president of York Barbell, was a huge weightlifting fan, while he thumbed his nose at bodybuilding. The following day, the lifting began at 1:00 p.m. and finished around 9:30 p.m. The physique competitors were then called backstage, given numbers, and told to be ready by the end of the thirty-minute intermission. Everyone began changing into posing trunks, doing push-ups, while trying to get someone to help apply baby oil.

We were marched on stage to form a single line. The Master of Ceremonies introduced himself to the sleepy audience, and then half-heartedly announced, "This is the lineup for the 1953 AAU Mr. America contest." Dick DuBois was the heavy favorite. Micky Hargitay, who later married movie star Jane Mansfield, had gotten tremendous publicity. Irvin "Zabo" Kozewski had high hopes. He had placed second in previous AAU Mr. America contests. Tony Sillipani, Timmy Leong and Vic Nicoletti were also favored to place high, along with Malcolm Brenner, second place winner of the last year's competition.

Posing was done under a single light that hung from a bar, center stage. Dick DuBois, the first contestant, was called out to hit a front, side, back and optional pose. As he marched off, Malcolm Brenner took his place, hitting the same three poses plus the optional pose, which was left to Malcolm's discretion. This continued until all twenty-eight contestants had gone through their routines. We were then marched back on stage for a final look by the judges.

As we waited in the wings for the decisions, Zabo walked over, calmly saying, “Pearl, you won. DuBois is second and I’m third.” I replied, “I don’t appreciate your humor.” He stood his ground. “I’m not kiddin’. You won!” I still didn’t believe him. There was no way that I was going to win this contest! I had received the least amount of attention of any competitor. The Master of Ceremonies began announcing the top five winners. “Fifth place winner of the 1953 AAU Mr. America contest is—George Paine! (George walked out to receive his trophy.) Fourth place winner—Steve Klisanin. Third place goes to—Zabo Kozewski. Second place winner—Dick DuBois.” My heart about stopped. I had either placed sixth or lower, or I HAD won the contest. “The winner of the 1953 AAU Mr. America contest is—BILL PEARL from San Diego, California!”



*The biggest surprise of Bill's life came when they announced he was the 1953 AAU Mr. America. Pearl's first comment to Stern was, "Now, I'm really going to have to start training."*

A six-foot four-inch beauty queen, wearing a one-piece bathing suit, stood in the middle of the stage to make the presentation. Photographers were calling for a publicity shot. Not knowing what else to do, I hoisted Miss X into my bent arms as the trophy was placed in her outstretched hands. Her derriere settled three inches off the floor as camera lights flashed. The photo



appeared in newspapers throughout the country the following afternoon.

The stage filled with onlookers, as congratulations came from all sides. A feminine-looking man walked over to say in low-sensual voice, "I'm so glad you won. You don't look like the typical bodybuilder. You look more like a tennis player. I just love tennis players." I thought to myself, "That says a lot for my physique!"

Leo and I were back at the YMCA around 1:00 in the morning. All we wanted to do was sleep. A representative of Dave Garraway's *Today Show* knocked on the door with an invitation to appear that day on the show at 9:00 a.m. He had made tentative arrangements for us to leave Indianapolis at 6:00 a.m. A chauffeur-driven limousine took us to the airport where we boarded a flight to Chicago. Another limousine drove us from the Chicago O'Hare International Airport to one of the city's finest hotels, the Blackstone. A superb breakfast was served while the chauffeur waited. The TV interview lasted five minutes. It closed with Dave Garraway making flattering remarks, as I hit a couple of poses.

My world had changed overnight. The transition from staying at the YMCA in Indianapolis and worrying about money and food, to staying at the famous Blackstone Hotel in Chicago with all expenses paid, plus five hundred dollars for a five-minute guest appearance on a national television show, was cause for a drastic attitude change. I had reservations about handling all the attention, and my ability to do justice to the Mr. America title.

Finishing lunch at the Blackstone with a second piece of apple pie (my body weight had dropped from 213 pounds to 193 pounds on the day of the contest), Leo cautioned, "You've got to

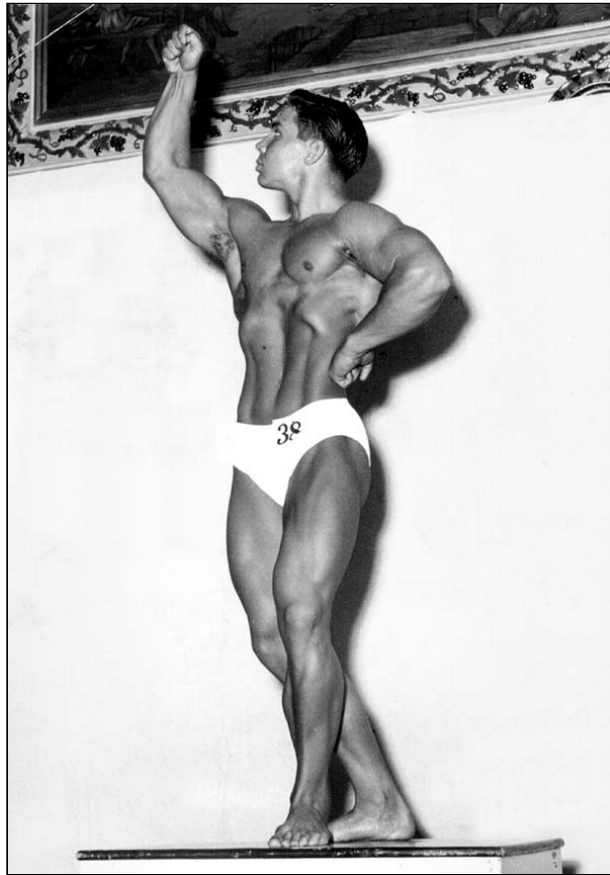
start conducting yourself like a champion. People are going to be looking up to you as a representative of our country. You've got to be professional about this. Stop trying to be being such a smart-ass. You're still the same fathead you've always been. And —it wouldn't hurt if you started paying back some of the positive things others have done for you.”

# Chapter XVII - Onward and Upward

## Mr. Meant-To

*Mr. Meant-to has a comrade,  
And his name is Didn't-do.  
Have you ever chanced to meet them?  
Did they ever call on you?  
These two fellows live together  
In the house of Never-win,  
And I'm told that it is haunted  
By the ghost of Might-have-been*

Author Unknown



*With a little more confidence, but no better physique, Bill had the symmetry and proportions to win the 1953 NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe contest.*

Leo and my thoughts immediately turned to the NABBA Mr. Universe contest held each year in London, England. There was no other place to go. I couldn't enter the AAU Mr. America contest again and had no intentions of competing in the Mr. San Diego contest, in which I had been second runner-up six months before.

Entering the NABBA Mr. Universe was a challenge in itself. A competitor had to be invited to compete, which I was, but I also had to get special permission from the United States Navy to travel to England. Captain Ralph E. Styles, commanding officer of the USS Nereus, made the necessary military arrangements.

A month before the competition, I was flown by military air transportation to Washington, D. C., to receive special orders that assigned me to the American Embassy in London. Getting to England was a four-day ordeal. The first stop was Moffet Air Force Base, near San Francisco, then to the Aleutian Islands, and onto the Azores Islands off Portugal, before landing at a military air base outside of London.

The NABBA Mr. Universe contest was serious business. In 1952, the promoters had separated the competition into two divisions, amateur and professional. Both divisions were divided into three height classes. The winners of each height class vied for the overall amateur and professional title.

Prejudging was long and drawn out. There were nearly 25 contestants in each of the six height classes. Each height class was judged separately. We were lined up in numerical order, then told to stand in a semi-relaxed position with our hands at our sides, feet together—and wait. Next, turn to the right, feet together—and wait; to the rear, feet together—and wait; another turn to

the right, feet together—and wait; back to starting position, hands at our sides, feet together—and wait.



*The judging panel for the 1953 NABBA Mr. Universe contest. Some of the same men sat in judgment of Pearl's physique for nearly twenty years.*

Once completed, each judge was given the option to call out certain contestants for comparison using the same procedure; to the front—and wait, to the side—and wait, to the rear—and wait, the other side—and wait, back to starting position—and wait.

Each contestant then went through a one-minute personalized posing routine before being called out again for comparisons, with each judge having the option to ask contestants to hit specific poses simultaneously. When the thirteen judges were totally satisfied, we were told to appear the following day for the finals.

The finals began at 1:00 p.m. in the London Palladium. The legendary theater buzzed with excitement. The curtains opened to a round of shouts and applause as a fifteen-piece orchestra played background music. Over one hundred twenty-five of the best physiques from around the world stood on the tiered stage, with flags from their respective countries waving in the background. Fortunately, I was positioned on the front tier,

center stage. My body weight was 215 pounds and my suntan apparently made me appear more “Afro” than Native American.



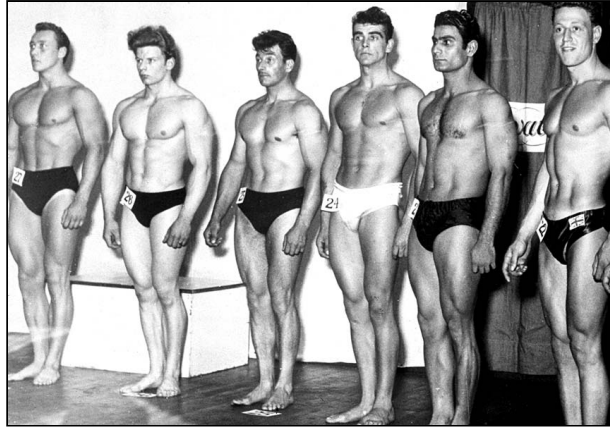
*Jules Bacon, 1943 AAU Mr. America, won his height class in the professional division of the 1953 NABBA Mr. Universe contest, while Bill won the overall amateur title.*

The stage lighting was superb. Two spots set at slight angles overhead created excellent shadows. Additional lighting shined from the orchestra pit causing the effect of more fullness to the physiques. Back lighting created a halo, as contestants went through their routines.

My turn was coming. They had gotten to number 38 in the tall-man’s amateur division. The Master of Ceremonies announced in a suave British accent, “Ladies and gentlemen... Number 38... the AAU Mr. America winner for 1953... Bill Pearl!”

I walked on stage determined to make the best possible impression. I wasn’t there for more exposure or experience, but to WIN! I became the first person to capture the AAU Mr. America and the NABBA Mr. Universe titles in the same year.

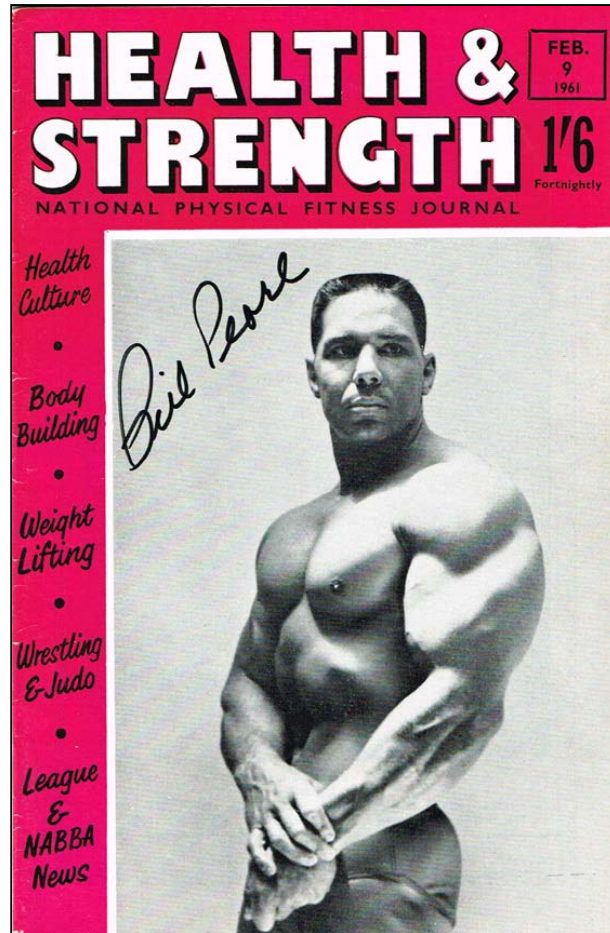
The actor Sean Connery was one of the competitors in my height class in the 1953 NABBA Mr. Universe contest. While on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, in 1999, Connery was asked about his appearance in the Mr. Universe contest. He remarked, “I was beaten by this ‘black’ kid from the United States, Bill Pearl.”



*A portion of the lineup for the 1953 NABBA Mr. Universe contest. Sean Connery, number 24, became better known as "James Bond 007."*

Captain Styles wanted to make certain the United States Navy received as much favorable publicity as possible from my two recent bodybuilding victories. He arranged for a special citation to be presented onboard ship. I was called out of ranks to receive the award. After handing me the presentation, he leaned forward and whispered, "Bill, get your uniform altered. Your jumper looks like there's room at the waist for two people." My reply, "Sorry, Sir. No can do, Sir. Naval regulations, Sir."

His support didn't end with the award. He arranged major television and radio interviews, had me writing fitness articles for a number of military publications, while civilian requests for articles, photos and posing exhibitions were also pouring in. Calls came to appear at grand openings and stock car races; even offers for movie roles were part of the requests. One producer suggested that I appear at several events, wearing a cape and mask. I passed by saying, "The United States Navy wouldn't approve."



*The British magazine Health & Strength featured Bill on one of its covers. Bill was extremely popular throughout Europe.*

My final days in the service were spent at the Coronado Naval Air Station. The day before discharge, a call came over the base intercom for all military personal to muster on the parade grounds at 14:00 hours in dress uniform. At least 2,000 gathered around a speaker's platform as the Commanding Officer stood on the podium. Looking at his watch, as if to be certain of the timing, he approached the microphone. He ordered us to form ranks on both sides of the platform before calling for parade rest. Minutes later, we were brought to attention as Military Police escorted seven men onto the parade ground. They were dressed in outlandish civilian clothing; ridiculous hats, pink and yellow shirts, ugly ties, off-colored sport coats with mismatched



trousers. One by one, their names and serial numbers were called out before announcing that they were a disgrace to the United States Navy. Each had been convicted of a felony crime. Their punishment was to be dishonorably discharged, before being handed over to civilian authorities for additional punishment. As they were handed their dishonorable discharge papers, we were again called to attention and then ordered to about face. With our backs turned, a drum roll was heard, as the seven men were marched off for further punishment.



*The awards won by Bill in 1953, his first year of body building competition, ranging from the 3rd place Mr. San Diego, to the prestigious NABBA Mr. Universe trophy.*

The episode was a reminder of the comments made by the Chief Petty Officer who had met us four years earlier at the train station in downtown San Diego with advice that apparently these seven men had not heeded. “Regardless of who you are, or how tough you think you may be, the United States Navy has a place for you. The more you screw up, the deeper the hole you dig for yourself. I strongly advise those of you with piss-poor attitudes to square yourselves away NOW! If not, you are going to have the longest and roughest four years of your lives.”

Before leaving the base, I was given additional words to consider, “You are still government property for the next 48 hours. We

suggest you act accordingly.”

## Chapter XVIII - Honing My Skills

### Look Up

*Look up and not down,*

*Look forward and not back,*

*Look out and not in,*

*Lend a hand.*

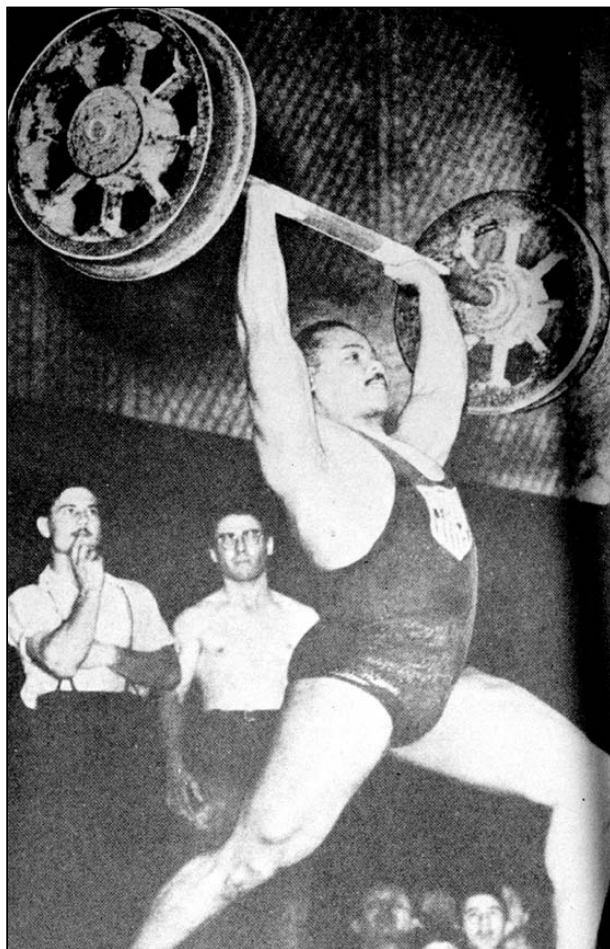
Edward Everett Hale



*By the mid 1950s, posing had become an intricate part of Pearl's bodybuilding career.*

Every few years, Leo put on *The Leo Stern Variety Show* in the North Park area of San Diego. The shows featured gym members, world-class weightlifters, gymnasts, hand-balancers and top bodybuilders. He'd rent a small hall, which seated around 300, and then advertise through word of mouth and posters. The events were always sellouts.

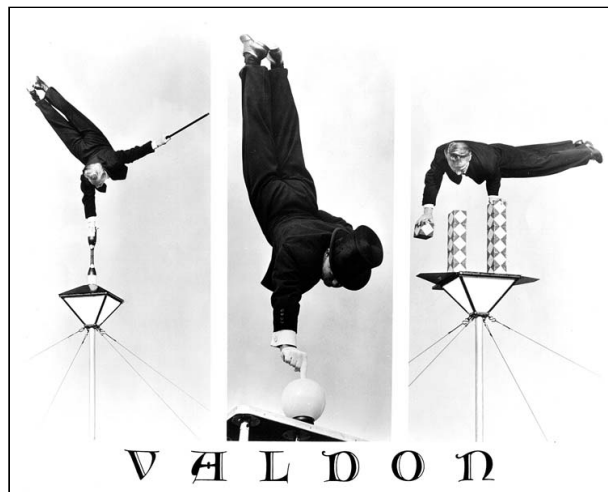
John Davis, world and Olympic heavyweight weightlifting champion, Huey Lyons and I were the main attractions one year. Huey's hand balancing brought the house down. He went from one astonishing balancing feat to another, finishing his act by doing a "one-finger handstand" on the base of a Coke bottle that had been turned upside down. I closed the show with a posing routine that was choreographed to music. Leo claimed this was the first time he had seen this done.



*The great John Davis jerking the famous Apollo Wheels overhead in Paris, France, in 1949.*

Hitting four poses to win the AAU Mr. America title with a slightly better routine for the NABBA Mr. Universe contest wasn't sufficient when it came to giving exhibitions and being paid to draw crowds. We had decided the best option was to

choreograph a posing routine around music. I began by practicing to a three-minute version of the very powerful theme song, “Exodus.” Leo helped with the selection of the thirty poses necessary to fill the time. He took photographs to make sure each pose was what we wanted. I scrutinized the photos, the position of my head, hands and feet, as well as the overall symmetry of each pose. We then arranged the photos on a large piece of cardboard. I practiced each position in sequence until it became second nature to know when to transition from one to the other, as it corresponded to the music.



*Huey Lyons performing a sample of his amazing acrobatic feats that he used for The Leo Stern Variety Show.*

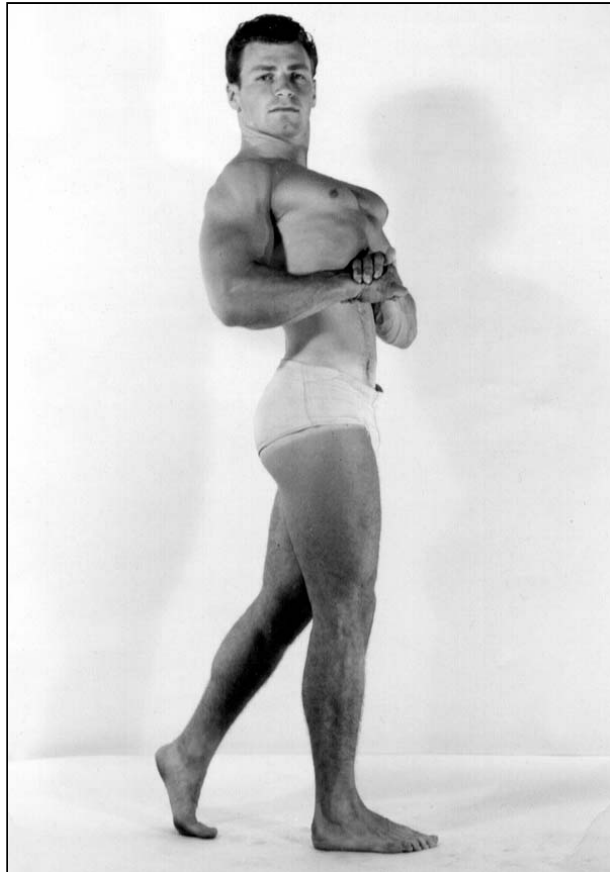
Posing remained an intricate part of my bodybuilding career. It not only kept me focused, but enabled me to broaden my ability to impact an audience by coming up with innovative routines. It wasn't long before other bodybuilders followed suit.

Choreographed posing routines eventually became a standard part of the sport of bodybuilding.

Leo and I had become a team. For the next twenty-five years, to the bodybuilding world our names were synonymous—Pearl and Stern. We both had specific jobs that one could do better than

the other. His job was taking care of details, mine was to be in shape and perform like a professional. He continually stressed the importance of staying in the public's eye, by subscribing to the saying, "If you are out of sight, you are out of mind." He felt I had the ability to make a long-term impact only if I could stay current through two or three generations of the sport. By winning the most prestigious bodybuilding contest every four or five years and giving exhibitions throughout the world for another fifteen, I was able to stay near the top through four generations of the sport.

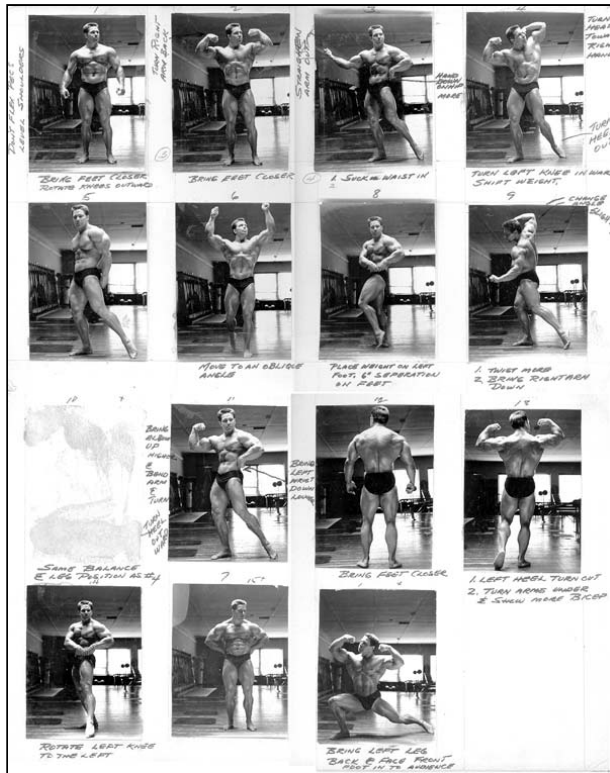
Stern wasn't, and still isn't, known for passing out compliments. Don Farnsworth, my long-time friend and training partner, was complaining about a shoulder injury. I said, "Call Leo. He's the smartest person I know when it comes to rehabilitating injuries. He'll be happy to help you." Don shook his head and replied, "You've got to be kidding! He's not going to help me, or anyone else. You're the last person Leo's ever befriended."



*Bill's long-time training partner, Don Farnsworth, in 1955.*

Another example of Leo's candor surfaced years ago while in Columbus, Ohio, after we had finished judging the Arnold Classic. A contestant staying at our hotel got on the elevator and immediately asked, "Leo, what the heck happened?" Apparently he felt he hadn't placed as high in the contest as he had expected. Leo casually replied, "Well—you somehow made your way to Columbus, Ohio. You entered a physique contest and looked like shit. Now—you're in an elevator. I'll let you take it from there."

Fortunately, I could always count on Leo. We had agreed to do an exhibition in a rough section of Brooklyn, New York, in the mid 1960s. Leo insisted that I have privacy before I went on stage. The promoter stuck me on the top floor of this one-hundred-year-old theater in a dirty, empty room, with two chairs and a light hanging from a frayed cord.



*Bill and Leo used photography to design the posing routines he used during his nearly 20-year career as a bodybuilder. Leo would shoot the poses and mount them on a large piece of cardboard with suggestions as to how each pose should be hit. It was Bill's job to practice and choreograph the routines to music.*

The audience became impatient when the event was an hour late in getting started. Halfway through the preliminaries, the crowd was throwing objects at the contestants. Sitting in the dingy room for over two hours, I could hear the tension mounting. Leo finally came to say, “You got about thirty minutes before going on.” I confided, “I have a premonition that I’m going to be shot and killed.” I wasn’t kidding. The audience had become so hostile that it worried me going on stage. Seeing how upset I had become, Leo paced the floor before speaking, “We can do one of two things. You can either refuse to go on or, when I do the introductions, I’ll tell those assholes if they have ideas about taking their frustrations out on you, they’re going to have to go through me.” Leo made the announcement. I went on stage and brought the house down.

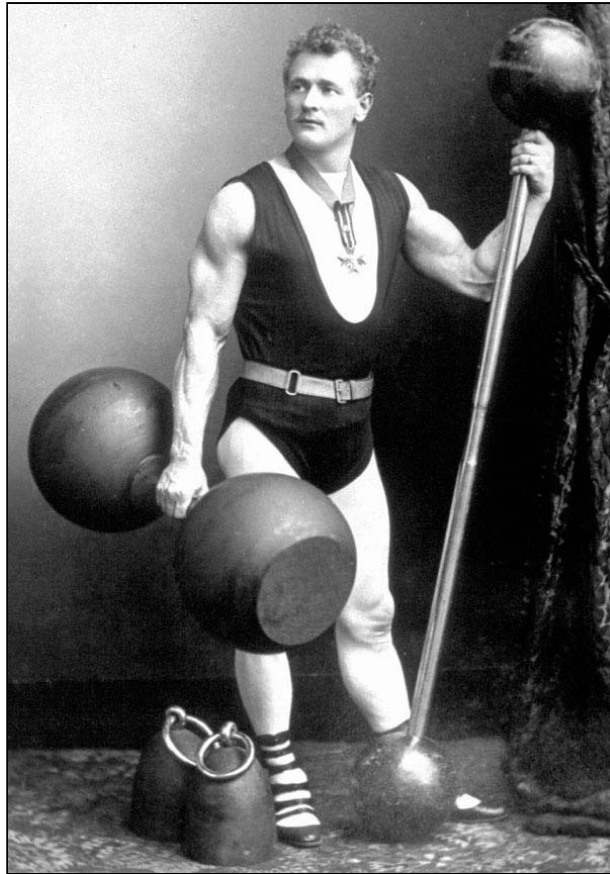


# Chapter XIX - My Heroes Have Always Been Ironmen

## 'Advice'

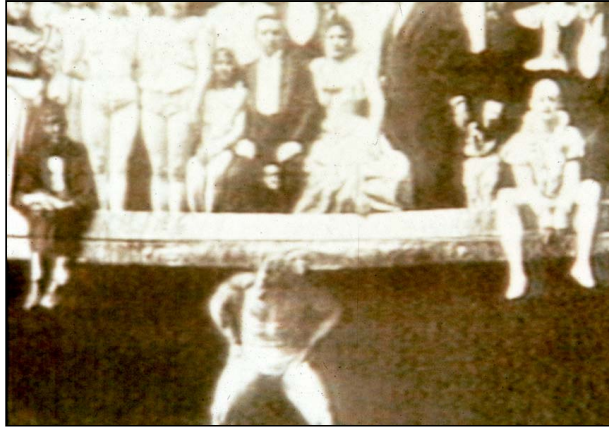
*Take the open air,  
The more you take the better;  
Follow Nature's laws  
To the very letter.  
Let the doctors go  
To the Bay of Bicap,  
Let alone the gin,  
The brandy, and the whiskey.  
Freely exercise,  
Keep your spirits cheerful;  
Let no dread of sickness  
Make you ever fearful.  
Eat the simplest food,  
Drink the pure, cold water,  
Then you will be well,  
Or at least you oughter.*

Author Unknown



*Eugen Sandow began his professional career as a wrestler and strongman at the age of 18. He stood 5' 9" tall and weighed 190 pounds. Some considered him, pound for pound, the strongest man in the world.*

Of all the physique stars I've admired, John Grimek and Friederick Muller topped my list. Friederick Muller was better known by his stage name, Eugen Sandow. At the turn of the 20th Century, he was the person most responsible for bringing physical fitness to the forefront throughout the world. He was born in East Prussia (Germany), in 1867, and began his professional career as a wrestler/strongman at the age of 18. He stood 5' 9" tall, weighed 190 pounds, while being touted as the strongest man in the world pound for pound.



*Sandow supports the Trocadero Company, with Florinz Ziegfeld sitting above his head, on December 21, 1895. The total weight was reportedly close to 4,000 pounds.*

Sandow performed in most major theaters throughout Europe before visiting the United States. In 1893, he met Florenz Ziegfeld at the Chicago's World's Fair, where he helped judge the first physique contest held in this country. Sandow gave a special posing demonstration so impressive that it surpassed anything seen in the United States. He also demonstrated a series of amazing feats, such as supporting 4,000 pounds on his shoulders. Ziegfeld was so impressed, he signed Sandow to a long-term contract with the Ziegfeld Follies, paying him \$3,500.00 per week. Sandow became an instant star. Everything masculine had his endorsement: Sandow Cigars, Sandow Cigarettes and Sandow Chewing Tobacco. Nearly every tonsorial parlor (barbershop) in the country had a photo of Sandow hanging on their walls to help sell moustache-wax.



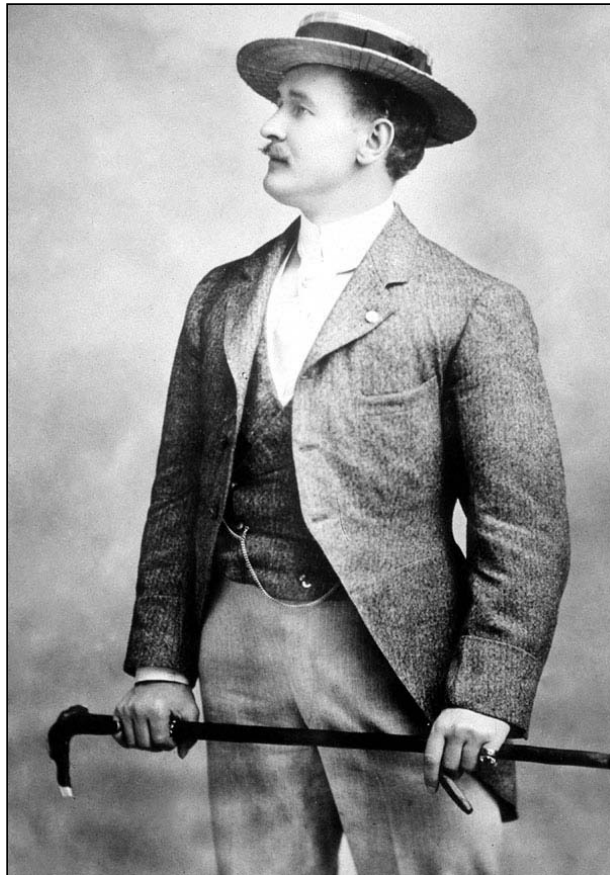
*“Sandow the Magnificent” (in tuxedo on left) judging the first physique contest held in the U.S. in the year 1893.*

Sandow moved to England in 1910, married, and fathered two daughters. His wife became increasingly jealous of his ever-growing popularity. To appease her, he stopped making stage appearances. He opened health clubs in some of the major cities in England and wrote several books on weight training, while also designing special fitness courses for the British military.

His domestic downfall came when he allowed the Royal Society of Natural History to cast his body in plaster as a part of an exhibition on the New Theory of Evolution by Darwin. The finished, life-sized statue presented him completely nude, which disgraced his prudish wife and ended their marriage.

He died in 1925, at the age of fifty-eight, reportedly after lifting the back of a large automobile while a friend changed a tire. Sandow supposedly lowered the car, then dropped dead from a brain hemorrhage. The story goes that his ex-wife discovered there were two showgirls in the car at the time of the accident. She became so irate that she buried his remains in an unmarked grave, then spent the rest of her life, and most of his money, collecting all the memorabilia she could find on him, only to

destroy it. What is known for certain is that Sandow was buried in an unmarked grave.



*Formal portrait of Sandow dignifying himself as an Edwardian businessman.*

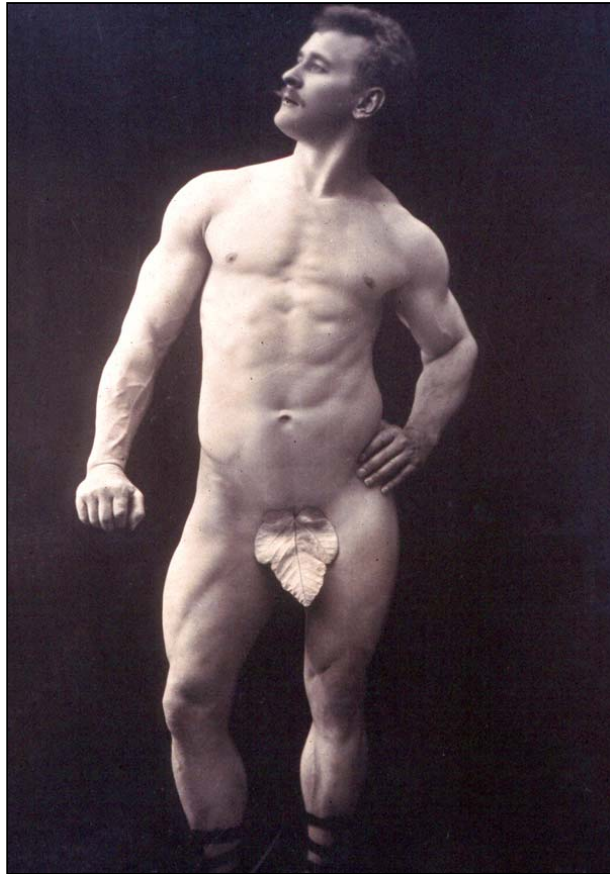
In the mid-1930s, John Fritze opened a health club in a part of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, called German Town. John Fritze was part of the clan of old-time bodybuilders and strongmen, from the 1910s through the 1930s, that Leo and I greatly admired. When I was asked to be a part of his annual Physique Extravaganza, we decided to pattern one of my posing routines after a routine performed by Eugen Sandow at the World's Fair in Chicago, Illinois, in 1893.

Growing up as a fan of Sandow, I had acquired memorabilia on him from collectors around the world including India, New Zealand, Australia, England, the United States, Canada and

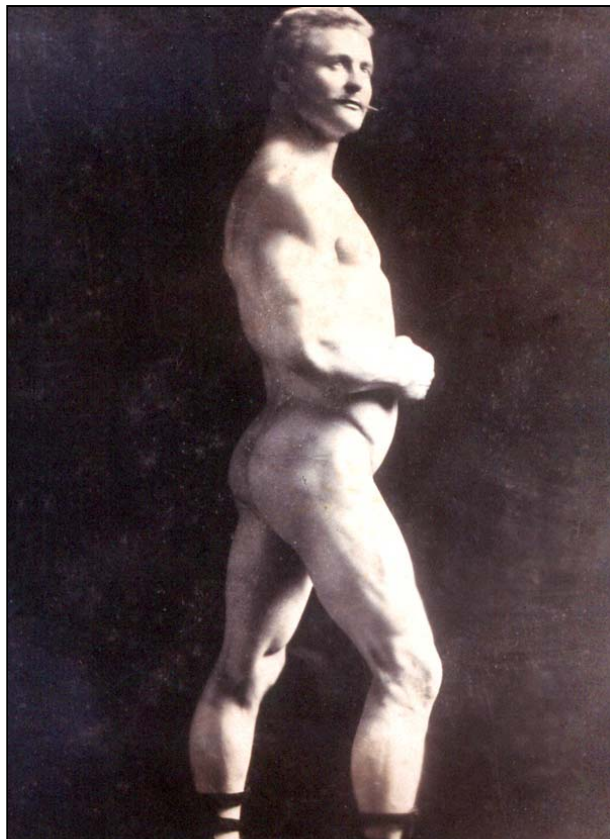
Germany. Several dozen photos and film footage taken by Thomas Edison showing his posing routine, as well as every book and exercise chart Sandow had written, are included in my collection.

We did our best to keep the Sandow routine as authentic as possible by not adding or subtracting from what photos or the film showed. This was more difficult than it sounds. Sandow posed exactly opposite from the way bodybuilders do today. If his stomach protruded from his swayback positioning—that's what I practiced. If one of his legs was planted like a tree stump—that's what I did.

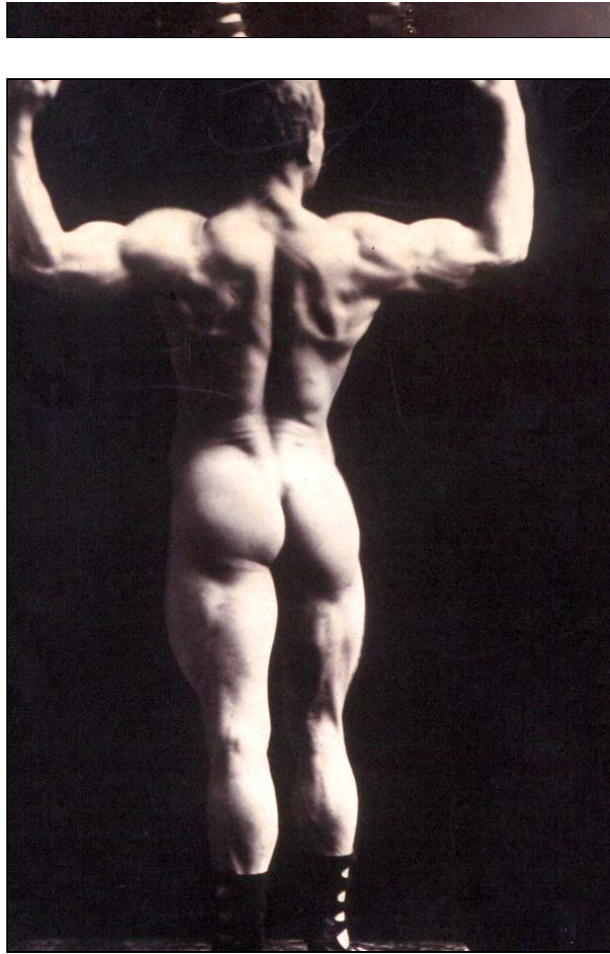
For more authenticity, my posing briefs were made of bearskin, and from a novelty/costume store in New York City, we ordered roman sandals, a fake moustache, along with a tin of white body powder to cover my body to give a ghost-like appearance.



*Three photographs of Eugen Sandow, in the year 1893, proudly posed with the aid of a fig leaf at the Chicago World's Fair.*







All of this was emphasized by the black, box-like enclosure we had built, just large enough to maneuver from one pose to the next. We decided that rather than having a single overhead light, we'd use a series of controllable small strobe lights and mini-spots, which allowed Leo to accent my physique from different angles.

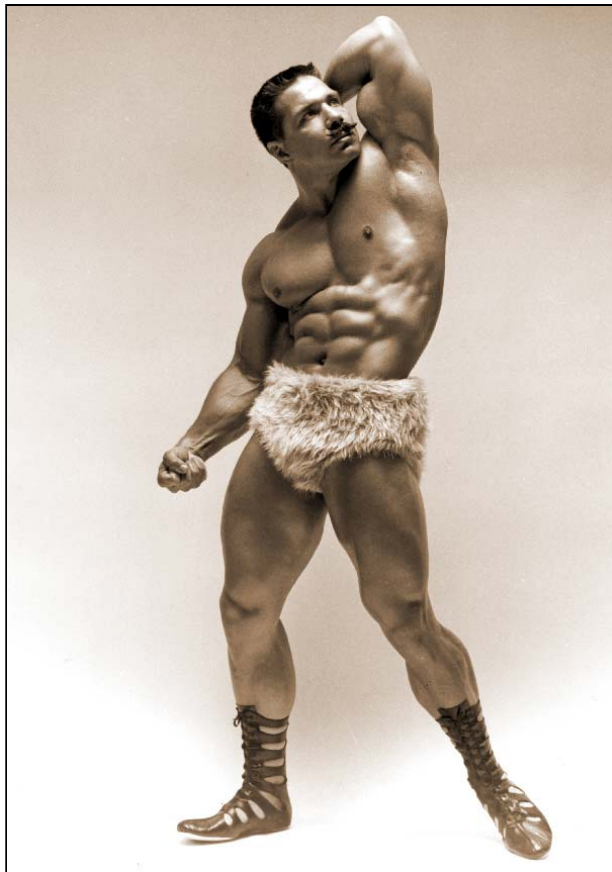
On the day of the exhibition, we were at the auditorium hours before opening to set up special overhead lights, mini-spots and props. When it was time to appear on stage, Leo took charge of the microphone and the house lights. He dimmed the theater until nearly dark before priming the audience. His voice thundered over the microphone, "Ladies and gentlemen—you are about to see a man with a true 20-1/2 inch muscular arm at a body weight of 222 pounds." Leo hit the mini-spot that focused



on my left arm, as I banged out an arm shot. “Now you are about to see a set of legs that have officially squatted over 600 pounds.” Two mini-spots became focused on my thighs, as I flexed them. He continued the buildup from one muscle group to the next and finished by saying, “NOW—the man who is acclaimed to have the greatest physique in the world today—Bill Pearl!”



*Three photographs of Bill emulating a portion of a posing routine of his childhood idol, Eugen Sandow.*





As the special overhead lighting covering my small portion of the stage began to glow, I stood statuesque for several seconds before the sound of “Exodus” was heard. A few bars into the music, my routine began. I held each pose for a count of six to eight beats, with four counts to transition from one pose to the next.

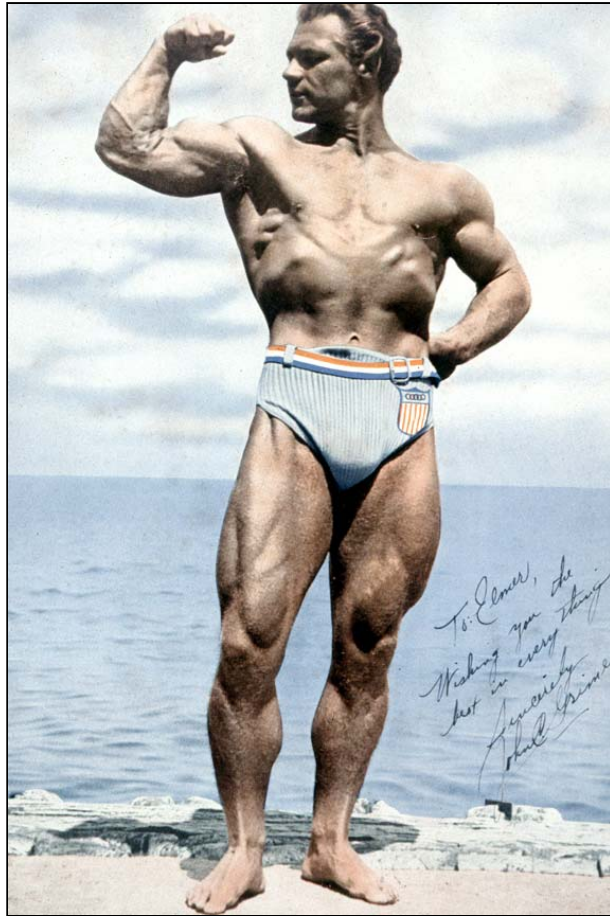
Minutes later, the music ended with me hitting what we called the “Statue-of-Liberty” pose. As the house lights rose and the overheads faded, I bowed to the audience and hurried offstage to get ready for the Sandow routine.

Leo again set the scene. “You are about to see a special event to honor the past greats who have made bodybuilding what it is today. Bill is going to emulate a posing routine performed by Eugen Sandow, at the World’s Fair in Chicago, Illinois, in 1893.”

The curtains opened with me standing in the boxed enclosure, my arms crossed over my chest, and my chin sticking out like Benito Mussolini's. Nickelodeon-type music began to play as small spotlights flicked on and off, causing my movements to emulate a "Keystone Cop" movie.

The applause grew as the routine progressed and ended with me standing, as I had begun—my arms crossed over my chest, but this time with a huge smile on my face. Listening to the crowd's reaction, I remembered myself as that ten-year-old kid standing in the front yard, watching the strongman on the back of the elephant, thinking, "That's exactly what I want to do with my life!" Hard work, plus years of dedication, had paid off.

John Grimek, my second all-time hero, was featured on the cover of the first physique magazine I had purchased. The photograph remains ingrained in my memory, as if it were yesterday. From the eighth grade on, when writing about someone I admired, John always got the nod. He was born in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, in 1910, and became the World's Best-Built Man and the World's Most-Muscular Man of his time. He was admired throughout the world, much like his predecessor, Eugen Sandow.



*Grimek achieved the highest total of any American weightlifter at the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936. He had shaken Adolph Hitler's hand just prior to this photograph being taken.*

Not considered a full-time strongman, Grimek performed many impressive feats of strength, which included lifting heavy weights, bending bars and spikes and hitting a thick iron poker across his forearm until it bent. He was the AAU American Weightlifting Champion of 1936, and several times North American champion. He also achieved the highest total of any American weightlifter at the Berlin Olympic Games of 1936. A few years before he died, John mentioned to me that he had shaken Adolph Hitler's hand just after receiving his medal.

John won the AAU Mr. America title in 1940 and again in 1941. Then a ruling was passed making it impossible for anyone to win the contest more than once. He went on to win the first Mr.

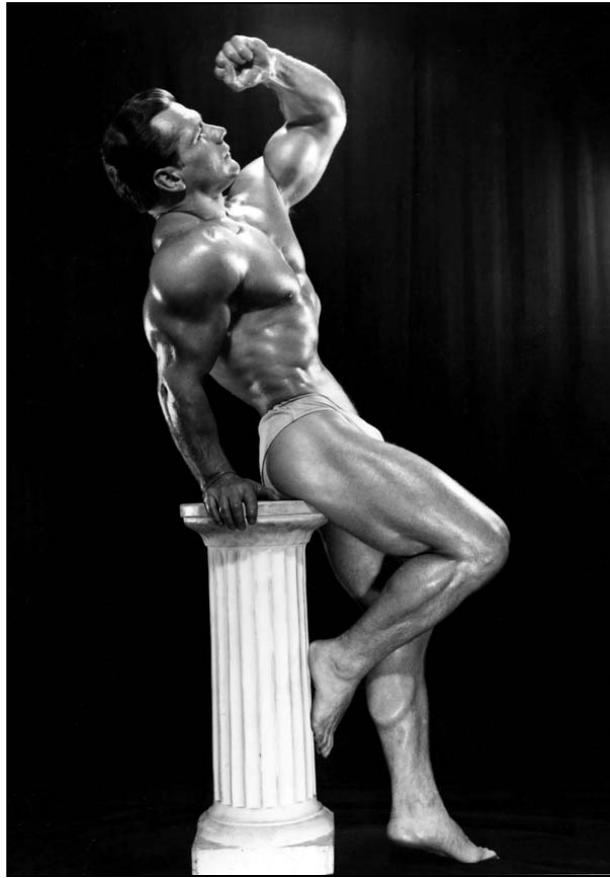
Universe contest held in 1948 and the first Mr. USA title in 1949.

Grimek and I appeared on the same stage at the annual *Ed Yarick Show* held in Oakland, California, in 1954. The event was based around a variety-show format: fourteen acts, consisting of bodybuilding, weightlifting and hand balancing. Former world heavyweight boxing champion Max Baer acted as Master of Ceremonies. The show opened with my posing routine and closed with John's routine of muscle control and posing. I was seated next to Clancy Ross (AAU Mr. America of 1945) when Grimek came on stage. I asked Clancy, "What do you think of Grimek's physique?" His comment, "He looks good for a midget! But there is no room in this game for midgets!" (Clancy and John had their differences over the years.)



*Three photographs of John Grimek. He was admired throughout the world, much like his predecessor, Eugen Sandow.*





The *Ed Yarick Show* of 1954 was John's final public posing exhibition. For the next several years, he turned over all the requests for appearances to me. He was responsible for my trip around the world, to India, Mexico, England, *etc.*

We corresponded regularly for the next forty years, with John always replying on the back of the letter I had written him. When my travels took me near York, Pennsylvania, I'd either phone or stop by. When he made trips to southern California, he reciprocated.

John visited our Pasadena Health Club in the mid-1970s and gave some excellent advice in the form of a comment. One of the members asked, "John, how long have you been training?" John replied, "I've trained regularly for the past fifty years." The



member's mouth dropped before replying, "Man! Why so long?" John blurted out, "What the hell! I had to live that long!"

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*Grimek and Pearl appeared on the same stage at the annual Ed Yarick Show held in Oakland, California, in 1954. The best seats in the theater sold for \$2.40.*

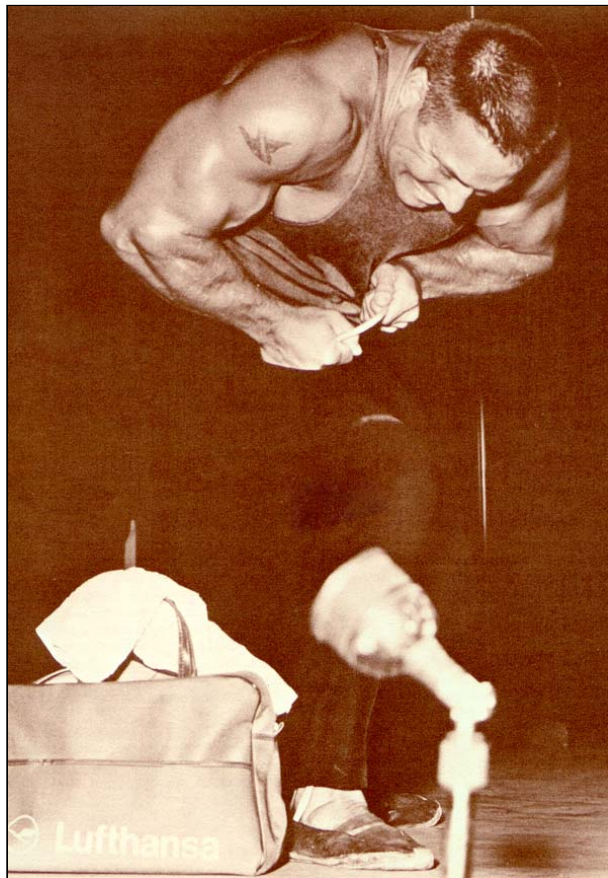
In the late 1990s, I was still learning from John. He remarked that his right hip was causing such pain that for the past few years he was only riding a stationary bicycle. Thinking back on John's career, with the importance weight training had had in his life, I decided in this instance not to follow in John's footsteps. Regardless of my injuries, I started out lifting weights—I would go out lifting weights. My final lesson learned from John came on the night he passed away: even the likes of the great John Grimek have to face the inevitable.

## Chapter XX - Fans, You 'Gotta' Love 'Em!

### If I Were A Voice

*If I were a voice, a persuasive voice,  
That could travel the wide world through,  
I would fly on the beams of the morning light,  
And speak to men with a gentle might,  
And tell them to be true.  
I'd fly o'er land and sea,  
Wherever a human heart might be,  
Telling a tale, or singing a song,  
In praise of the Right and in blame of the Wrong.*

Charles Mackay



*"Driving a 70-penny tent spike through your hand isn't a fun thing to do!"*

From the beginning of my weightlifting career, I took pride in the fact that I had practiced many of the feats that old-time strongmen were noted for. I attributed a lot of my added strength to those basic movements. In my prime, performing a seated press-behind-neck with 300 pounds, curling 100-pound dumbbells, doing palms-up wrist curls with 185 pounds, front squatting 500 pounds, and doing regular squats with 600 pounds—without the aid of wraps, belts, or a lifting suit... was part of my regular training.



*Tearing a matching pair of automobile license plates was a small part of Bill's feats of strength.*

However, when being paid to draw crowds, executing lifts that were close to my limit was not something I could do with assurance of success. I began to practice bursting hot water bottles, breaking chains, tearing auto license plates, bending horseshoes and tent spikes mainly because these items could easily be carried on tour; and with consistent practice there was less chance for failure.

Why did I add feats of strength to my more important presentations? Mostly, for additional respect and recognition. It

also helped separate my exhibitions from other contemporary bodybuilders' by making it harder for them to duplicate what I was doing.



*Harold Morrison, M.D., holds his hands over Pearl's eyes for protection, as Bill blows up and bursts a hot water bottle during a Rockwell International executive luncheon.*

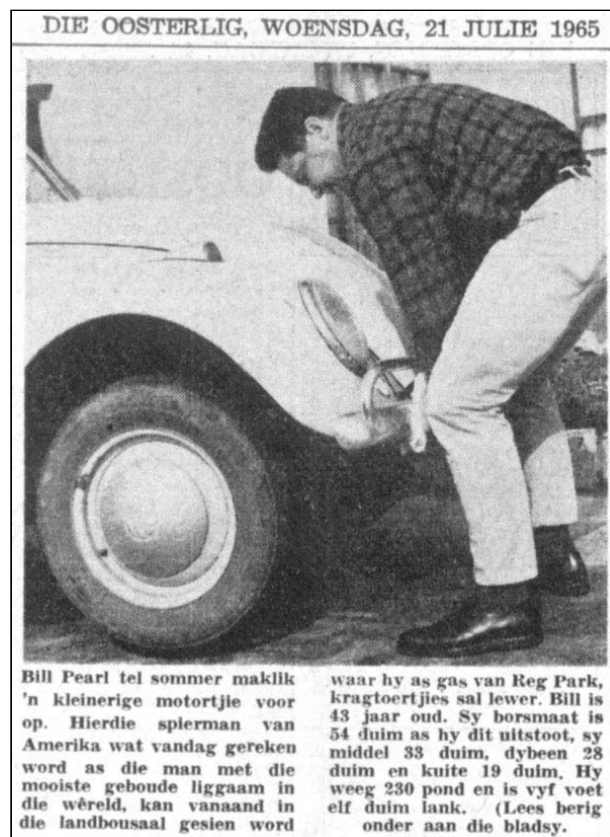


Many of the old-time strongmen were having difficulty accepting the current crop of bodybuilders. It seemed more emphasis was being placed on developing physiques that looked good on the beach, rather than on strength, or the benefits derived from weight training.

The old-timers viewed the younger generation of bodybuilders as opportunists who were using the sport as a steppingstone to get into movies and live stage, or as a way of being kept. There were exceptions: Chuck Sipes, Sergio Oliva, Marvin Eder and Bill

Seno. These, and several others, could hold their own against anyone.

I was another who had a different attitude than many of the bodybuilders of that era. Reading about Eugen Sandow, Louis Cyr, Siegmund Klein, George F. Jowett and John Grimek, while knowing that weight training had a history thousands of years old, which dated back to when ancient warriors used it as a system for survival, I wanted to show the old-time strength athletes the respect I felt they deserved.



*Bill lifting the front end of an automobile in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1965.*

When I began practicing feats of strength, bending a 60-penny nail was relatively easy. It is something that most people who use their forearms, wrists, and hands for heavy work can accomplish. I'd wrap the nail in a washcloth, place both hands around it, and

then press down hard until my knuckles touched, before interlocking my fingers and squeezing.

It took months of practice before I could master the 70-penny tent spike. The difference between the two is like comparing a mini-van to an SUV. A 60-penny nail is about the size of a lead pencil while a 70-penny tent spike is nearly twelve inches long and easily twice as thick.

I vividly recall the first 70-penny tent spike I bent. Using the same grip as on the 60-penny nail, I drove down with all my physical strength to the point where nothing was left, and then I mentally went one step further—PRESTO. This proved to me that although I'd always had the physical strength, I hadn't been pushing myself hard enough mentally. Once knowing it was possible, I became a specialist.

However, being a specialist doesn't mean you always succeed. Leo and I were finishing a two-week tour along the Eastern seaboard of the United States. Our last stop was Louisville, Kentucky. I was bending a spike when it slipped, which caused the sharp end to go through the palm of my left hand, coming out the backside. Raising my arm to show the audience what had happened, they apparently thought it was part of the act. The applause began as blood flowed. Leo stood watching from the wings as I yelled, "We've got a problem." He walked on stage; "What the hell did you do, run it through your hand?" "Yeah!" I said. "Pull the damn thing out!" He grabbed, pulled, but nothing happened. It took two stagehands, plus Leo, tugging like mad, to extract it.

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*The old-timers viewed the younger generation of bodybuilders as opportunists who were using the sport as a steppingstone to get into movies and live stage, or as a way of being kept.*

Returning to my dressing room with my hand twice its normal size, we found this burly young man waiting at the dressing room door. He had traveled three-hundred miles to challenge me to an arm wrestling contest for \$500.00. I looked at him, turned to Leo and said, “That’s your department. You take care of it.” It took days before I could close my hand, and months before I was back to bending spikes.

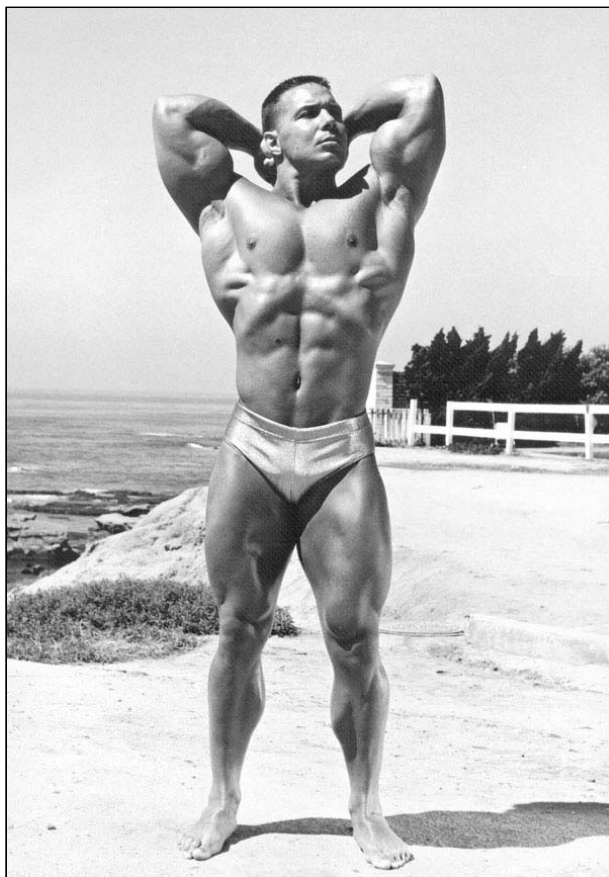


## Chapter XXI - Not Just Another Pretty Face

### When Life Seems Just A Dreary Grind

*When life seems just a dreary grind,  
And things seem fated to annoy,  
Say something nice to someone else.  
And watch the world light up with joy.*

Author Unknown



*During the mid-1960s, several bodybuilding contestants became disenchanted with the system that the AAU was using to judge physique contests.*

From the 1940s to the mid-1970s, contests of the American Athletic Union, (AAU), and the National Amateur Bodybuilding Association, (NABBA), were considered the epitome of physique contests. The AAU was not exclusively a bodybuilding organization; it sponsored all types of athletic competitions from



swimming to track and field. Owning the Mr. America title placed the AAU in a league of its own. The same applied to the NABBA Mr. Universe title. Winning either title had the prestige that winning the IFBB Mr. Olympia contest has today. The first IFBB Mr. Olympia contest was held in 1965. It was the brainchild of Joe and Ben Weider. They formed the IFBB in 1947 to compete against the AAU and the NABBA. Recognition of the Weider's organization was helped by the release of the movie *Pumping Iron* in 1977. The movie featured many of the IFBB Mr. Olympia competitors, Arnold Schwarzenegger, in particular. Arnold's stepping onto the scene in the mid-1960s had one of the most profound impacts on the sport since the reign of Eugen Sandow and John Grimek. The more coverage the IFBB received, the higher the jackpots grew. Money was the big incentive for more of the top bodybuilders to cross over to the IFBB. Neither the AAU nor the NABBA awarded cash prizes. Once the big purses were offered, a whole new attitude began to emerge in the sport.

Although the AAU Mr. America had a prestigious reputation that set it apart from other amateur competitions, it was not without screw ups. In the mid-1960s, the AAU Physique committee began to employ a new point system, based on factors other than the contestants' physique. Much like what happens in Miss America contests, they were looking for articulate, well-rounded individuals, who if called upon, could represent the sport at the highest level. Anything to prove the contestant was more than just a physique!

This lasted approximately five years before being abandoned. To say the interviews got out of hand is putting it mildly.

Contestants were showing up at prejudging in tailor-made suits,

shoes shined and nails manicured. Others carried diplomas, scrapbooks and “To-Whom-it-May-Concern letters” hoping to impress the judges.

The scoring system put some top competitors at a definite disadvantage. Harold Poole (runner up in the 1962 and 1963 AAU Mr. America contests) had the ideal physique to represent the sport at its highest level. The problem was that Harold was black and he stuttered badly. The judges’ thoughts were, “God forbid if he were asked to represent the sport as a public speaker.”



*Harold Poole, winner of the 1963 IFBB Mr. Universe and the 1964 IFBB Mr. America titles.*

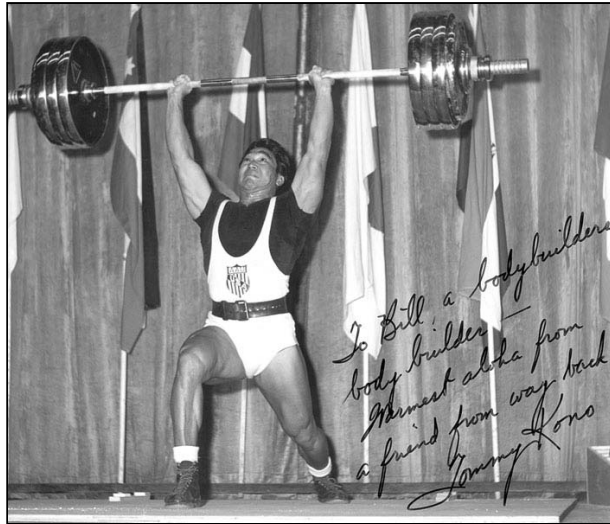
Mel Williamson was another of the many contestants to become disenchanted with the interview system. Mel felt competitors should be judged on their physique, posing ability and overall appearance. Much like Harold Poole, he had a lot going for him. He had a terrific physique, with a chest so thick you could balance a cup and saucer on his upper pectorals. He was also a

brilliant young man, who worked as a biochemist for the Dole Pineapple Corporation. He later produced the MLO health food line, which is still sold throughout the world.

His frustrations over being interviewed grew when at one particular contest the judges seemed more concerned about his athletic abilities than his physique. When questioned, he informed them that he was an expert archer with the abilities of the legendary William Tell. To prove this, he had brought his bow and arrows with the idea of shooting apples off their heads. Mel didn't win the contest, yet, seemed content with second place until one of the judges insisted on trying to console him by saying, "If it wasn't for your enormous handlebar moustache, you could have won the contest easily. I'm sure you'll win the next one, if you just cut it back." Mel took the judge's advice by entering the next contest with the right side of his moustache completely gone and the left side sticking out in all its glory.

The sport has many such odd, humorous and sometimes disillusioning incidents in its history.

In the late 1960s, for instance, Tommy Kono (possibly the greatest Olympic weightlifter the United States has ever produced) competed in the National Championships in San Jose, California. Tommy had represented York Barbell for several years. When he failed to win his weight class that year, York refused to pay his way back to Hawaii. The audience took up a collection for his return airfare.



*Tommy Kono, possibly the greatest Olympic weightlifter the United States has ever produced.*

Another example was when Larry Scott (former IFBB Mr. America, IFBB Mr. Universe and two-time IFBB Mr. Olympia winner) decided to enter the Diamond Cup physique championships held in Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1978. Acting as Master of Ceremonies, I made it a point to give Larry a tremendous build-up prior to his coming on stage. I failed to mention that Larry hadn't competed since winning his last Mr. Olympia title in 1966. When the head judge announced the top five competitors, Larry's name wasn't called. I asked him how it felt; he replied, "This is a very humbling experience. I believe people would rather remember me as I was, and not as I am."



*Larry Scott, winner of the 1965-1966 IFBB Mr. Olympia titles, has remained an icon in the sport.*

Here's one on me. Judy and I were home relaxing in our bathrobes having a cup of coffee one Sunday morning. There was a knock on the door. The greeting came from a stranger dressed in Levis and a form fitting T-shirt, with his fat belly hanging over his belt, "Are you Bill Pearl?" I said, "Yeah." After a long moment of silence he asked, "What the hell happened to you?" Trying to remain friendly, my response was, "Nothing has happened to me. The way I look is the way I look. Nobody can live what the magazines portray twenty-four hours a day." He responded by shaking his head, saying, "I drove all the way from New York for this? What a bunch of shit!" Needless to say, we didn't invite him in for coffee.



*All work and no play made Bill a dull boy.*

## Chapter XXII - Where Are The Clowns?

### Judged By The Company One Keeps

*One night in late October,  
When I was far from sober,  
Returning with my load with manly pride, My feet began to stutter,  
So I lay down in the gutter,  
And a pig came near and lay down by my side: A lady passing by was heard to say:  
"You can tell a man who boozes,  
By the company he chooses,"  
And the pig got up and slowly walked away.*

Author Unknown

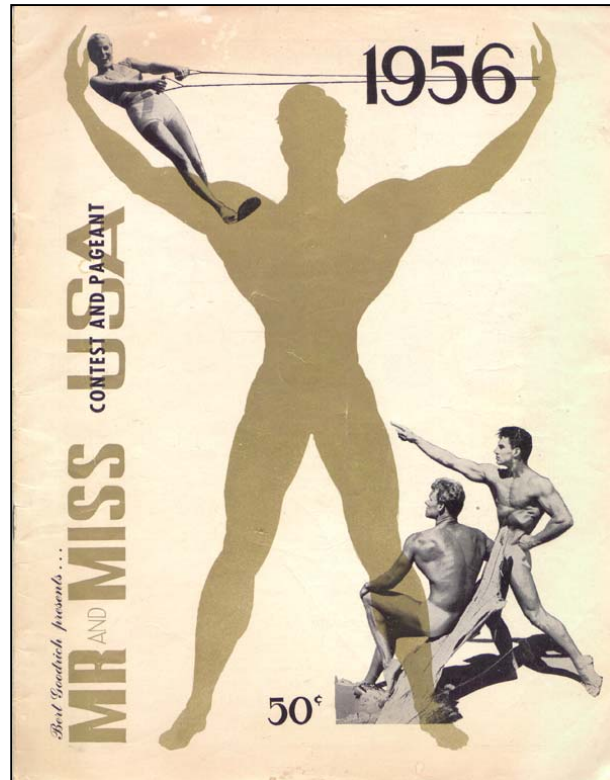


*Bill winning the 1956 Mr. USA contest.*

Bert Goodrich, winner of the 1939 AAU Mr. America title in New York (Roland Essmaker also won a Mr. America contest



held in Chicago, Illinois that same year), was the promoter of the Professional Mr. USA contest. The show was always a huge success. It attracted the top thirty-five or forty physiques in the country, while drawing five thousand to seven thousand spectators. Part of the lure of the competition was that each first-place winner received a \$1,000.00 cash prize. The 1956 USA was no exception. The lineup turned out to be the “Who’s Who” of the top American bodybuilders. Clarence Ross was my biggest concern. With Grimek’s retirement, Clancy had become the man to beat. Another concern was that he and Leo were best friends. They’d served together in the United States Army Air Corps, during World War II. Leo had coached him as he rose to fame in 1945 by becoming the youngest to win the AAU Mr. America title. I felt this put Leo in an awkward position because of his loyalty toward both of us. My concern was that if I did win the contest, it might have a bearing on their friendship. That was not the case. Clancy took the defeat with a smile. His response was, “I’ve had a good run. Youth must be served.”

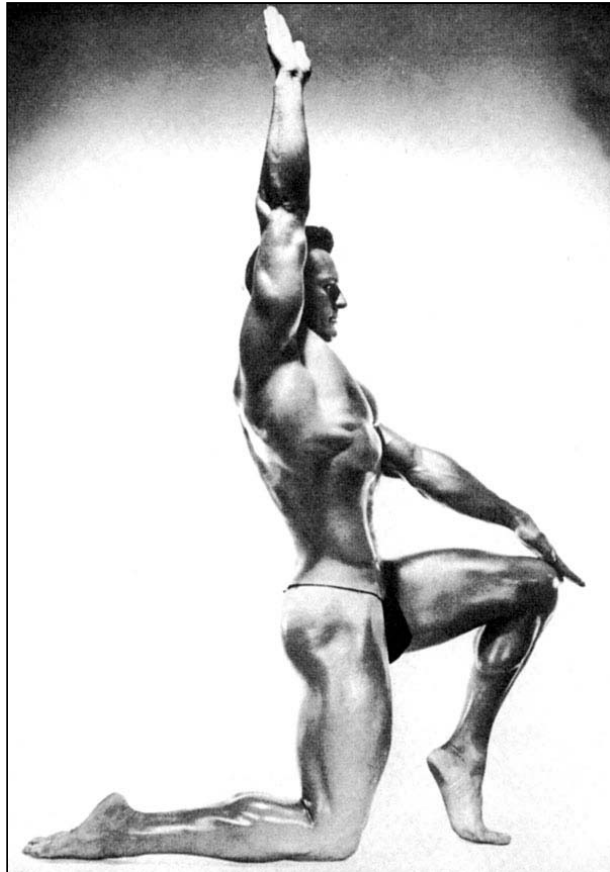


*Official program for the 1956 AAU Mr. and Miss USA contest and pageant.*

The following evening, Bert Goodrich invited Leo, his wife Bettye, Leo's seventy-five-year-old mother, my first wife, Sylvia, and me, to be his guests at a plush restaurant/night club in Hollywood. I assumed this was part of settling our account.

Mr. and Mrs. Goodrich, along with a dozen others, were seated at a long table when we arrived. Without any introductions, Mrs. Goodrich pointed toward the far end, saying, "Leave space in between our groups. We're expecting four more." Without reservation, I "diplomatically" replied, "Where's my \$1,000.00?" Bert dug into his pocket to hand me a check for \$500.00, explaining, "I gave the other \$500.00 to the second and third place winners." Not wanting to cause problems, I took a seat as Bert's press agent stomped on stage to announce that, "Bert Goodrich, our first Mr. America winner, and Bill Pearl, the winner of last night's Mr. USA contest, have just arrived. Please

come up.” We stumbled up the ramp with little acknowledgment from the patrons. The press agent looked at me like I was supposed to perform a miracle to get everyone’s attention. Bert finally broke the silence by saying, “ Bill! Do something! Take off your shirt and pose!” I turned to walk offstage saying, “You’re a former Mr. America winner. Take your shirt off and pose.”



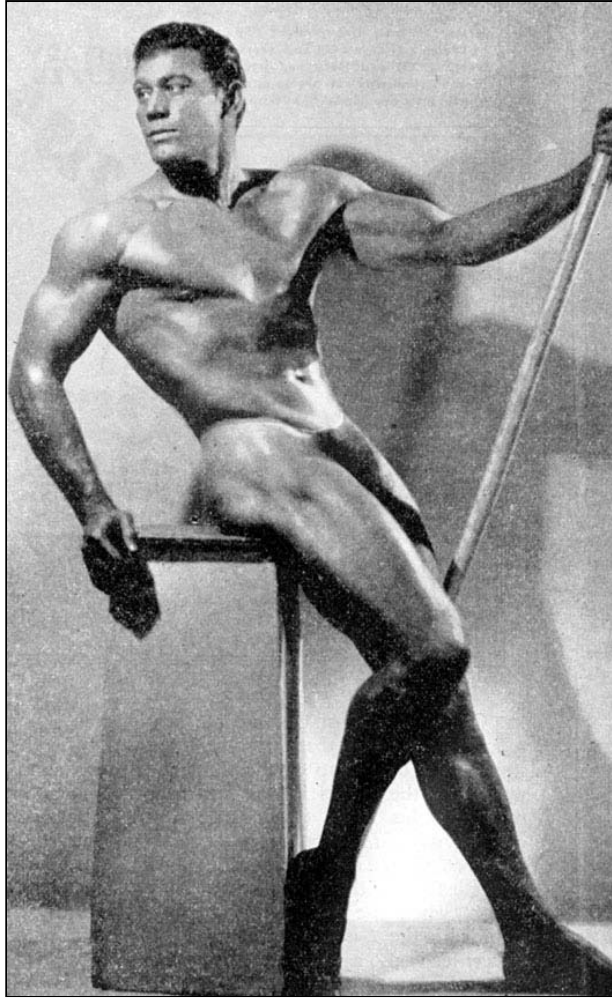
*Clancy Ross, winner of the 1945 AAU Mr. America contest. Clancy was also coached by Leo Stern.*



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*Clancy Ross commented to Bill after the 1956 Mr. USA contest, "I've had a good run. Youth must be served."*

A waiter came to inquire about drinks. Bert's wife blurted out, "Don't bother with them at the other end. They're a bunch of health nuts." Thirty minutes later, he was back to take food orders. One of their guests asked, "Hey Bert! Who's picking up the check?" Mrs. Goodrich shouted, "If Pearl thinks Bert's going to pick up the tab after the stunt he pulled, he's full of crap." That was it! I was out of my chair heading their way. As the press agent jumped up to protect them, I retaliated by grabbing and shoving him around while the rest of their party stayed seated. Mrs. Goodrich screamed, "Help! Help! He's a mad man!" I was ushered out of the restaurant as Leo's mother sat laughing, and clapping her hands, as if having the greatest time of her life.



*Bert Goodrich, 1939 AAU Mr. America*

## Chapter XXIII - Best Laid Plans

### The Optimist

*The optimist fell ten stories,*

*At each window bar*

*He shouted to his friends:*

*“All right so far.”*

Author Unknown



*A photo of Bill, as he prepared to guest pose for the 1956 Mr. Hawaii contest.*

I had committed to appear at Mitts Kowashima's Mr. Hawaii contest, two weeks after winning the Mr. USA contest. I had also committed to Sylvia to have a vasectomy before leaving for Hawaii. We were married in 1954 and by 1956 were blessed with two children, Kimberly and Philip, with our third, Reneé, on the way. With plans for a long marriage, our concern was that the

blessings would continue unless something drastic took place. My plan was to have the operation on Thursday, travel to Hawaii on Friday, do the exhibition on Saturday, and then spend three days on the beach relaxing. The doctor explained the procedure as, “There’s nothing to it. I’ll do it in my office. It won’t take more than thirty minutes. If you’ll take it easy for a few days you’ll be as good as new.”



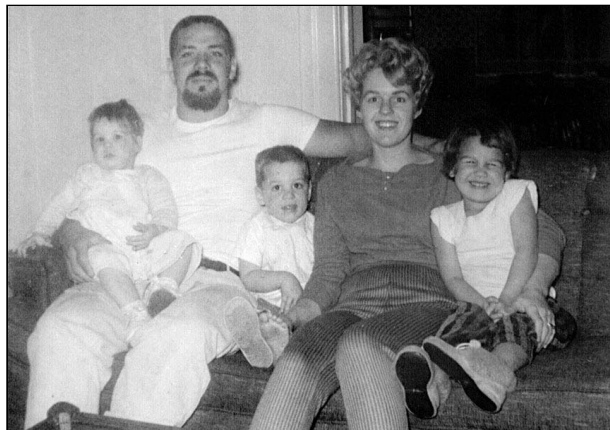
*Bill and his first wife, Sylvia.*

I got to the doctor’s office on time. His very young nurse pointed to a small operating room, saying, “Undress and put on a hospital gown.” She knocked before entering and began pulling instruments from a sterilizer. Glancing my way she remarked, “You haven’t shaved!” Rubbing my chin, I replied, “Yes I have. I shaved this morning.” Pointing at my crotch, she said, “You haven’t shaved. Lie on the table.”



The doctor arrived in great spirits. By now, his first patient of the day was anxious for him to get started. He donned a smock, washed his hands while his nurse waited to help with the rubber gloves.

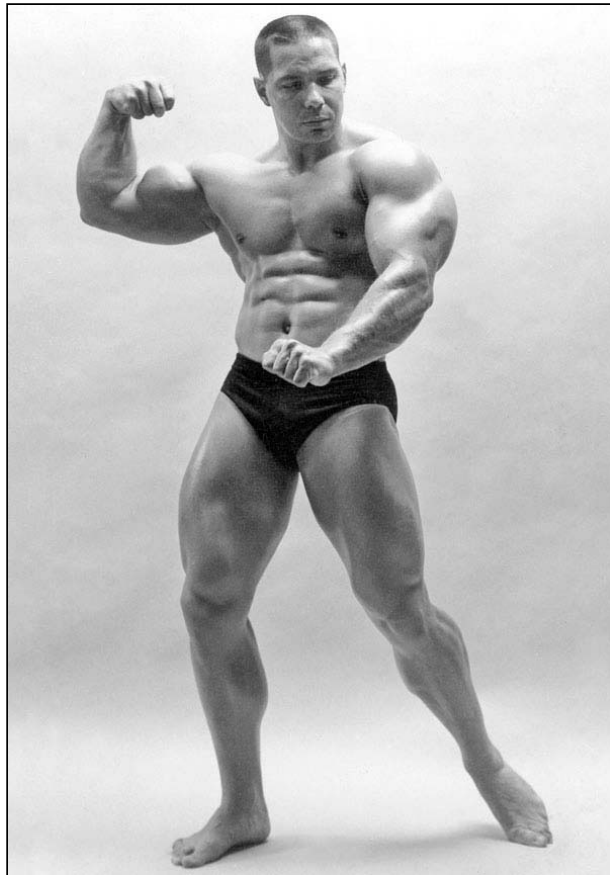
He reached for a huge syringe, raised it to eye level then began squeezing the plunger to remove bubbles, I said, “Where’re you going to stick that needle? I hate needles!” There was no need for reply. The nurse graciously assisted as he pulled my testicles to an all time high, saying, “You’ll feel a few little pricks.” Twenty minutes later, my ability to reproduce had ended.



*Bill with his youngest daughter, Renéé, son, Philip, first wife, Sylvia, and daughter, Kimberly.*

But, all is NOT well that ends well. As with the lack of communication about shaving, nothing had been mentioned about transportation. I’d ridden my bicycle to the gym and then rode the couple of miles to the doctor’s office. It was time to ride the couple of miles back. Upon arriving at the gym, I felt a slight discomfort and decided to investigate. A quick peek revealed my testicles were the size of grapefruit! My first thought was to call Mitts and let him know his guest poser had contracted elephantiasis. Instead, I talked myself into believing things would be back to normal by Saturday. When it was time to go on stage, there wasn’t room in my posing briefs for one testicle, let alone

two. It looked like someone had stuffed a pair of socks—along with everything else, into the confined area.



*As Bill appeared at the 1956 Mr. Hawaii contest as a guest poser.*

The contest was a sellout, as usual. After a tremendous introduction, I faced the audience with my hands crossed over the front of my trunks. As the stage lights grew brighter and brighter I hit my first pose. The only response was a loud gasp. My second pose—another gasp. This went on pose after pose—no clapping or words of encouragement, just gasps. Halfway through the routine, the gasps had convinced me that my testicles were stealing the show. As the music faded, I stood waiting for the applause that never came. There was complete silence. I felt like hell. Mitts stood silently in the wings, as I walked over to say, “I’m so sorry, Mitts! I laid a giant egg. I apologize.” He replied, “Laid an egg! You’re kidding! You were

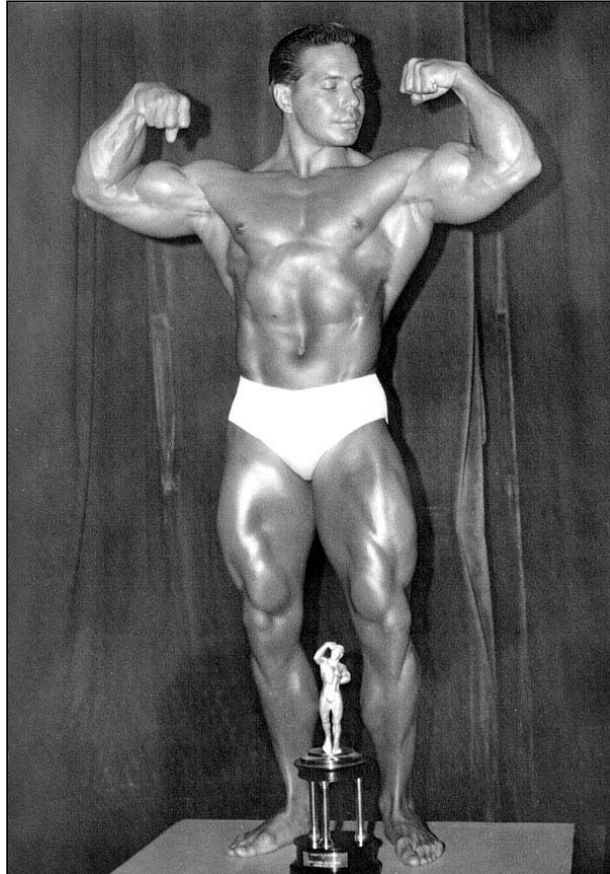
terrific! We've never seen anyone with that kind of size before.”  
To this day, I still wonder which size he was talking about; the  
size of my arms or the size of my “you know whats!”

## Chapter XXIV - Accolades

### Charity

*There is so much good in the worst of us, And so much bad in the best of us, That it ill behooves any of us To find fault with the rest of us.*

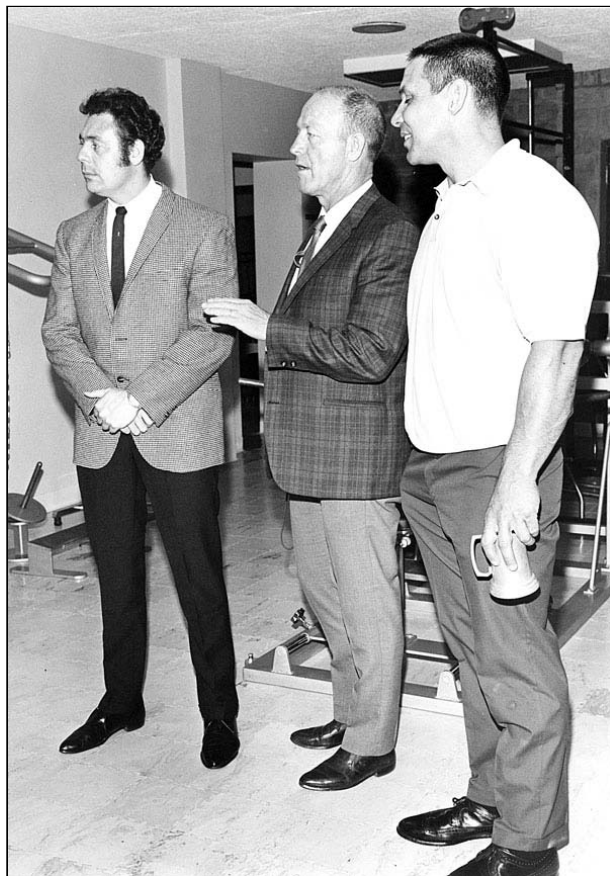
Author Unknown



*Bill's physique grew more mature as the years passed. He was now setting the highest standards. For the 1961 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe, the judging was 100% in Pearl's favor.*

I won the 1961 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest by taking every first place vote. George Coates, contributing editor for *Iron Man Magazine*, wrote the following: “Bill Pearl has charisma that not many people can match. I can remember being at the judging of the 1961 NABBA Mr. Universe Contest. I swear a lot of the contestants could hardly concentrate on their own posing, as all eyes were riveted on Pearl. John Grimek was a

great attraction and had tremendous stage presentation. Steve Reeves during his short run as a contestant, also seemed to have great crowd appeal. Reg Park and Clancy Ross were big crowd pleasers along with a few others, but when Bill Pearl appears at a show, as a contestant or guest poser, there appears to be an atmosphere unlike any other I've seen. It's almost as if the whole show revolves around this one man. "Can he be as fantastic as his pictures," seems to be the most repeated question. Bill Pearl never disappoints them! Most people can only gasp and shake their heads in disbelief at first sight of Pearl. Even the old hands who have seen him many times always end up by remarking, "He's even greater than he was last time."



*George Coates, Leo Stern and Bill have remained close friends for over 50 years.*

# Chapter XXV - East is East and West is West

## The Ballad of East and West

*Oh, East is East, and West is West,  
And Never the twain shall meet,  
'Till earth and sky stand presently  
At God's great judgment seat,  
But neither East nor West,  
Border, nor breed, nor birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face,  
Though they come from the ends of the earth!*

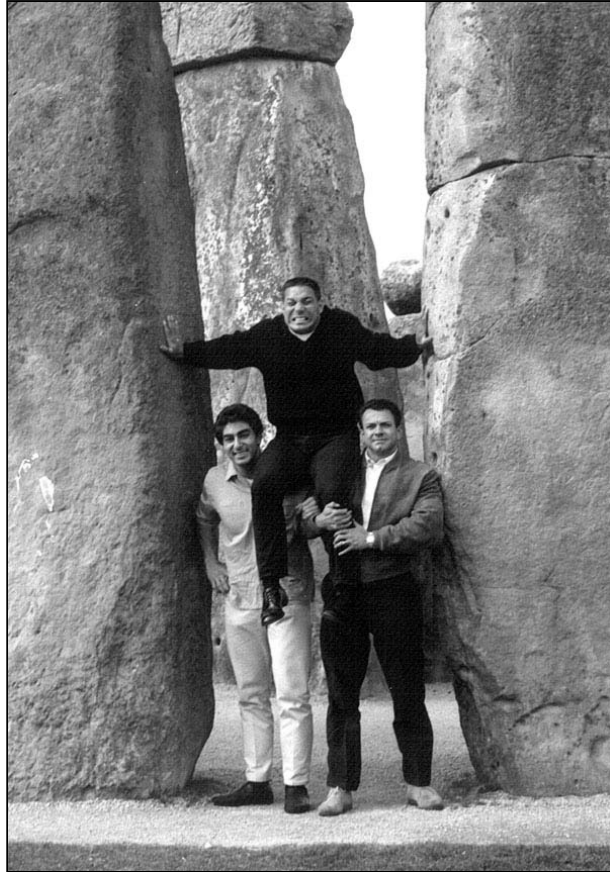
Rudyard Kipling



*Judy and Bill touring the "Big Apple", in 1966.*

By 1966, I was giving exhibitions as much overseas as in the United States, traveling throughout Europe, Mexico, Canada, the Far East and South Africa. One of my most memorable trips took me around the world. A top executive of a large industrial conglomerate in Bombay, India, had invited Grimek to visit his country. John declined with the recommendation that I take his place.

Landing in Bombay late at night, it was still deathly hot. It remained that way for the three-week tour. Going through customs was just a preview of the unique experiences ahead. The building reeked of odd smells, while people slept everywhere. It was impossible to walk without stepping on, or over, someone. Rhanjana Byjar, a former Ms. India, was waiting for me. She had been assigned as my guide and travel companion.



*Dennis Tinerino, 1967 AAU Mr. America, Bill, and Craig Whitehead, M.D., third place 1963 AAU Mr. America, do their best to make their mark on history.*

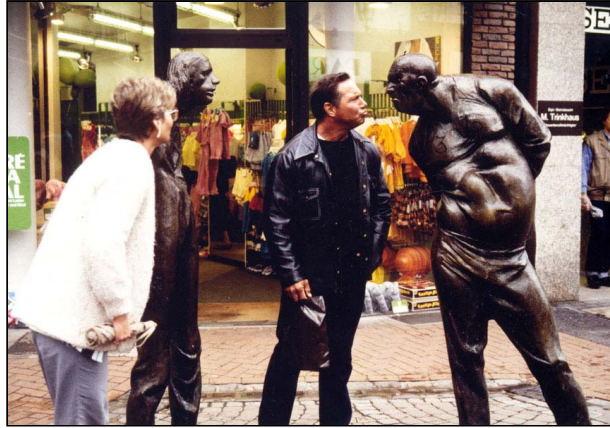
My suite at the Bombay Cricket Club, in downtown New Delhi, had no cooling system, except for an oscillating fan. The room was just large enough for a bed, dresser, closet and toilet. Every time the shower was used, cockroaches erupted from the drain to cover the floor. Eating in the club's dining room was another experience. My assigned waiter wore nothing but sandals, a loincloth and turban. One of his not-so-endearing habits was to remove a filthy towel from the front of his loincloth, wipe the table top, plates and chair, and then stand back to scratch his crotch. In an effort to achieve some sort of hygiene, I would go into the kitchen, have the chef throw a piece of water buffalo on the grill to cook until crisp, and then take it from the grill to be eaten with my bare hands.





*Photograph taken by Leo Stern of Bill as they toured Rome, Italy, in 1967.*

My first scheduled appearance was at the Cricket Club. It was estimated that nearly 25,000 attended my performance. A traveling film crew from London, England, filmed my performance, which later became a segment of the movie documentary, *Mondo Cane*. My portion of the film made me appear almost godlike. It showed people swooning, as I walked from the stage to the dressing tent. People in that part of the world had never seen anyone with my degree of physical development. I am sure any world-class bodybuilder would have had the same affect.



*Judy and Bill in Germany, in 1971. Talk about “Ugly Americans!”*

The trip continued to be one enlightening experience after another. We were standing at a public drinking well in one of India’s major cities. The man in front of us stepped out of line, removed his loincloth, had a bowel movement and then stepped back in line. Upon reaching the well, he sat on its rim to clean himself from the well water before filling his water jug. I passed on getting a drink but watched others fill their jugs and drink, as if nothing had taken place.



*Bill tours the Far East with business associate, Tony Cardoza.*

On a much more pleasant note, an older man came to one of my lectures with a large box filled with rare photographs of Eugen Sandow. He had been collecting them for over fifty years. They appeared to be his most prized possession; still, he insisted that I take them as a gift. Several times I offered to pay but he refused by stating that he didn't need money. As we talked, his teeth wiggled back and forth in his mouth like blades of grass being moved by the wind.



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*Advertising for the 1965 Reg Park Show held in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.*

On another occasion, I was introduced to a dignitary living in the city of Jubbulpore. He was the proud owner of a Hispano Suiza. (A car many collectors would die for.) He had purchased it new in Spain, in the early 1920s. The owner insisted that I take the car as a gift and have it shipped to California to add to my collection. I declined for several reasons, but mainly because a family of five was using the car for their home. My biggest regret returning to California was that I hadn't taken someone along to share the many unforgettable experiences.

## Chapter XXVI - An Unexpected Invitation

### Try Smiling

*When the weather suits you not,*

*Try smiling.*

*When your coffee isn't hot,*

*Try smiling.*

*When your neighbors don't do right,*

*Or your relatives all fight,*

*Sure 'tis hard, but then you might*

*Try smiling.*

*Doesn't change the things, of course—*

*Just smiling.*

*But it can't make them worse—*

*Just smiling.*

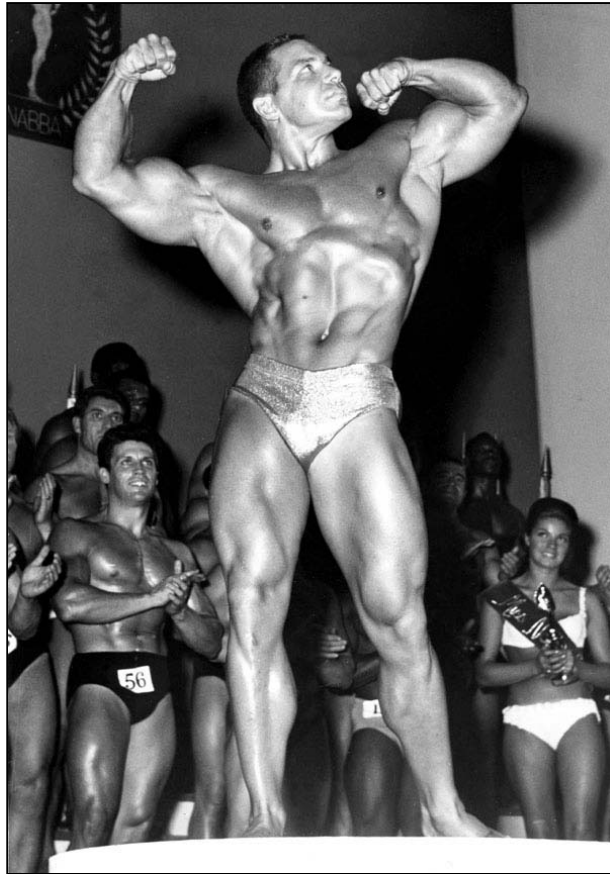
*And it seems to help your case,*

*Brightens up a gloomy place,*

*Then, it sort o' rests your face—*

*Just smiling.*

Author Unknown



*Many people felt Bill was the optimum in human development.*

I won the NABBA Professional Mr. Universe in 1967, again, by taking every first place vote. It was written, in major bodybuilding magazines, that I had secrets I wasn't sharing with the rest of the physique world. Oscar Heidenstam, editor of the British publication, *Health & Strength*, helped fuel the flames with his comments: "Let us be honest, focus was on the amazing Bill Pearl. Who, if anyone, could in any way match up to Bill? Surely the news that someone like Pearl is competing must inevitably deter those who come from a long way at considerable cost. Class 1... All the way it was Pearl, here we saw the supreme physique, posing, personality, the man himself, everything a champion should be. No superlative could describe this man. He was perfection itself, the master. It was easy for him, yet so inspiring. Who could be second to such a man? The NABBA

Overall Professional Mr. Universe for 1967 just had to be Bill Pearl...and was there ever a better one?"



*Pearl, 1967 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe at age 37, standing next to Schwarzenegger, 1967 NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe at age 21. Both men received 100% of the judges votes.*



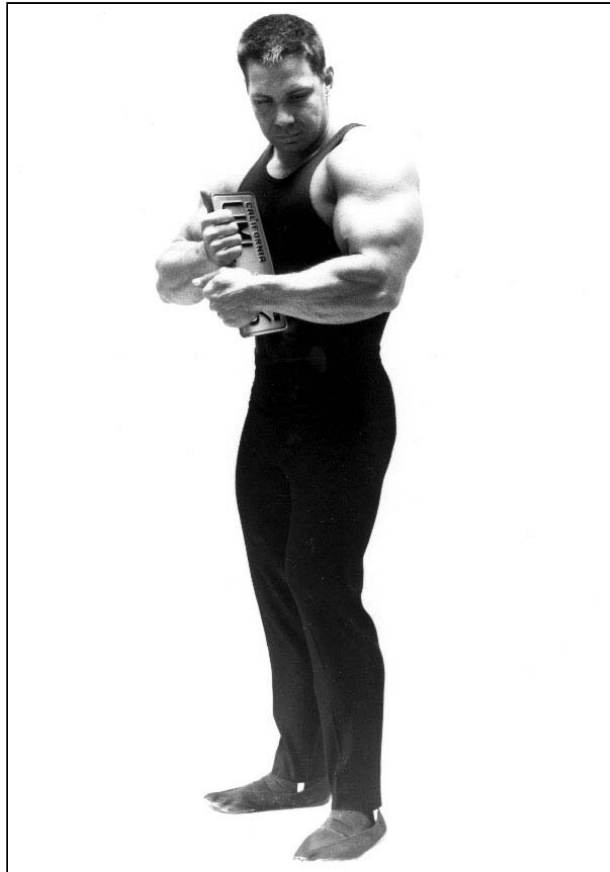
*Paul Wiyter, 1966 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe, congratulates Bill on winning the 1967 Professional Mr. Universe title.*

I had agreed to perform some feats of strength, rather than repeat a posing routine, if I was declared the overall winner of the 1967

professional contest. Leo, as usual, was there to assist.

He began priming the audience, as I changed into a black tank top, black gymnastic trousers and black sandals. I strolled back on stage carrying a duffel bag filled with auto license plates, horseshoes, 70-penny tent spikes, hot water bottles and lengths of chain.





*Tearing automobile license plates was a good way to cut your hands on the sharp edges.*



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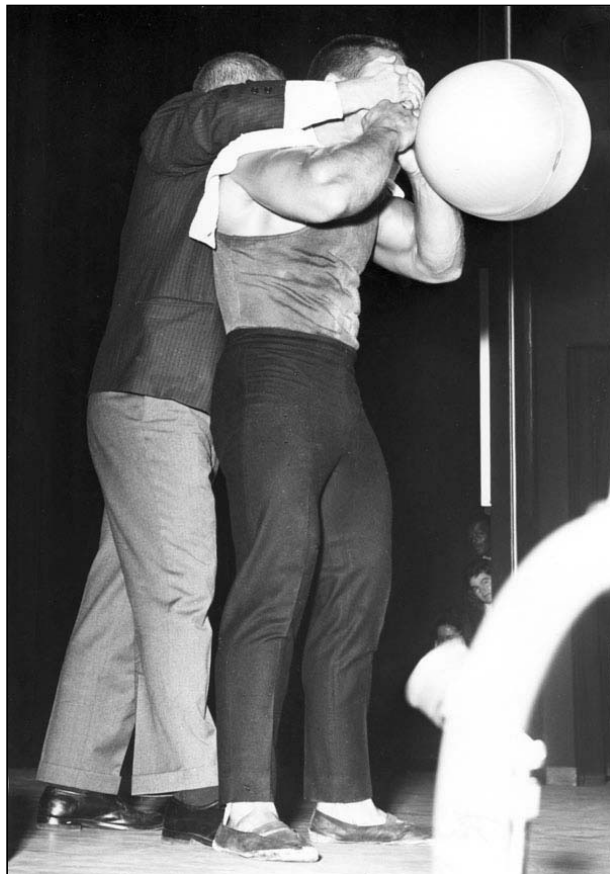
Thanking the audience for their tremendous reception, I dug into the bag for a pair of matching California auto license plates, which I displayed before I placed the plates together, making sure that the letters were aligned. I bent the top of the plates to cause a slight crimp before speaking into the microphone, “If everything goes according to plan, I’m going to tear these two automobile plates into four pieces.” Placing my right hand above the crimp, my left hand below, using my chest for support, with a pushing and twisting movement the plates tore in half. Showing them to the audience I casually mentioned, “You are going to have to be very careful when you do this, because there is a good chance you’ll cut your hands on the sharp edges.”

Next came a horseshoe. I tapped it against the microphone hoping for additional impact, and then gripped the shoe by both ends. With a loud grunt and a giant push/pull motion, it bent into the shape of an S. Wanting to make sure the audience was aware of what had happened, I pulled another from the bag to bend more slowly, still using the grunts for affect.

Bending the 70-penny tent spike was my toughest feat. With real effort, I bent it double, before tossing it into the audience saying, “I’ll give a \$1,000.00 dollars to anyone who can straighten the spike.” J. Paul Getty (the world’s richest man at that time) was seated in the front row. The spike accidentally landed in his lap. He apparently assumed this had been planned. Not true! Though I knew he was a fan of bodybuilding, I wasn’t aware he was in the audience.

Leo and I then made a big deal out of bursting a water bottle. Showing it to the audience, I dried my lips with the back of my hand hoping for an airtight seal. Leo stood behind me to place

his hands over my eyes for protection from when, or if, the bottle exploded. He began screaming out the number of my deep breaths into the water bottle. By number thirty-seven, the water bottle had grown to four feet in diameter. When the loud explosion occurred, small pieces of red rubber flew in every direction. You could almost feel the crowd's relief that it was over. I tossed the remains into the audience, bowed to the cheering crowd, as Leo and I exited the stage trying to look like it was all in a day's work. As the theater emptied, an older man jumped from his seat bellowing, "Bill Pearl is King! Bill Pearl is King!"



*The 1967 NABBA Mr. Universe contest with Leo Stern protecting Bill's eyes, as another hot water bottle bites the dust.*

A gentleman in a chauffeur's uniform was waiting as we exited the rear of the theater. "At your convenience and on behalf of Mr. J. Paul Getty, I would like to invite your party to be his

guests at his home, in Surrey, England, anytime in the near future.” I thought someone was playing a joke. I couldn’t believe J. Paul Getty, the world’s richest man, was inviting us to be house guests! I was awestruck to think that he knew we existed. Being my normal smart-ass, I said, “Please tell Mr. Getty that we’re extremely busy.” Arbitrarily I said something like, “It’ll have to be this coming Tuesday around 10:30 a.m.”



*J. Paul Getty's 16th century, three-story castle, with seventy-four rooms.*



*Leo Stern, Craig Whitehead, M.D., J. Paul Getty and Bill take a rest while touring Mr. Getty's home in Surrey, England, which rivaled any art museum in the world.*

Craig Whitehead, M.D., Leo Stern and I rode in a pristine 20-year-old Cadillac Limousine to what became one of the highlights of my world travels. We exited off the main road near Surrey, England, drove a few miles, crossed bridges, went through gates, continued on past what seemed like hundreds of

acres of manicured lawn adorned with centuries-old oak trees, before getting our first glimpse of Getty's 16th century, three-story castle, with its seventy-four rooms, which had once belonged to the Royal Family of England.

Mr. Getty proved to be a most gracious and humble host. This only added to my embarrassment at being so flippant about his invitation. In spite of the fact that he worked fifteen hours a day controlling his hundred-plus corporations, he took obvious pleasure in sharing his collection of treasures. Mr. Getty personally conducted us around the estate and through the castle, and then spent hours asking and answering questions.

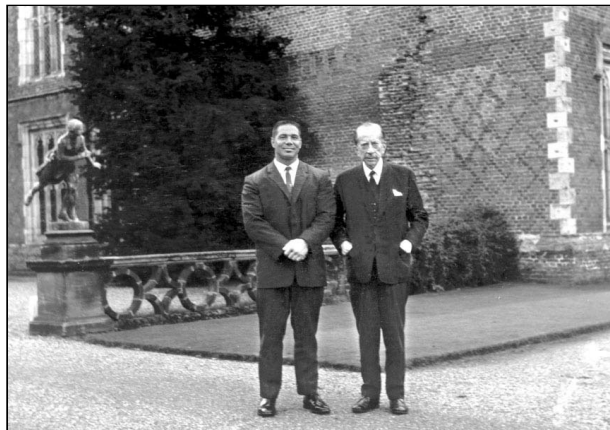


*Every room and hall of the Getty estate was furnished with priceless art work from the 16th and 17th centuries.*

His collection of antiquity rivaled any art museum in the world, yet he enjoyed these priceless artifacts as everyday furnishings. We walked through rooms and halls that were hung with tapestries from 16th and 17th century Europe. The carpets and furniture had been created for Louis XIV, XV and XVI, Marie Antoinette and others. The unfortunate Anne Boleyn (second wife of England's Henry VIII, who spent her last days in the Tower of London before being beheaded) had occupied one of

the massive bedrooms. The bedchamber was hung with linens used during her stay.

The tour continued to be even more breathtaking. Artifacts and sculptures of Greek and Roman antiquity lined the entrances on all three floors, accompanied by vases and urns of massive proportion. Covering most of the walls were some of the greatest works of the old masters, including: Gainsborough, Rubens, Rembrandt, Rafael, Tintoretto and even more representing Dutch, Flemish, Italian, Spanish and English artists of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries.



*Bill and Mr. Getty posing outside the Getty estate. Mr. Getty remained a thoughtful host to the end of their visit.*

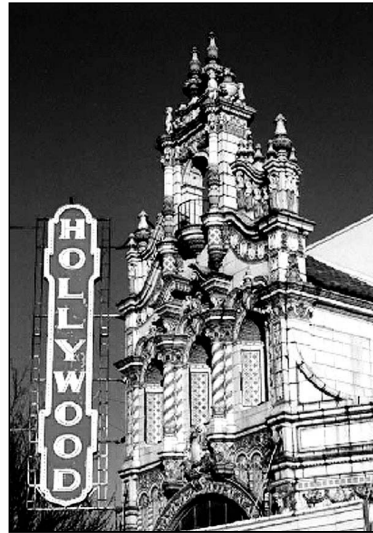
It was interesting to note the lonely aspect of Getty's dining table, which was at least thirty-feet long, set with one place setting and a bottle of A-1 Steak Sauce. We were equally impressed with the estate's security. The grounds were crisscrossed with wire dog runs, patrolled by dozens of Dobermans. At night, more Dobermans paced the halls of the castle until dawn.

Mr. Getty remained a thoughtful host to the end of our visit. After we signed his guest book, he showed us to the front steps and stood waving goodbye, until we saw him become a small figure in the distance.

## Chapter XXVII - Hooray For Hollywood

**All The World's a Stage (As You Like It.) All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts.**

William Shakespeare



*For Bill, Hollywood, California, was a far cry from Yakima, Washington.*

There is a slight possibility I could have had an acting career if I'd pursued it with half the intensity that went into my weight training. In the mid-1960s, several movie roles became available. In the movie *Muscle Beach Party* starring Annette Funicello, they were simulating a bodybuilding competition. The director didn't have a clue about physiques. He only cared that the most photogenic bodybuilder appeared as the winner, which wasn't me. I told him, "I've beaten most of these guys in real competition. If I'm not the winner, I'm out of here!" He didn't argue, as I was marched off the set.

In *Jupiter's Daughter* starring Esther Williams, a specific scene was going to skyrocket me to stardom. Ms. Williams was supposedly exploring an ancient city that had been submerged underwater for thousands of years. I was one of a dozen bodybuilders hired to act as live underwater statues, while she

swam over, around and under us. The scene was shot outdoors in a huge water tank during the coldest time in southern California's history. The extras were obliged to be on the set from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Ms. Williams had a beautiful portable heated dressing room to lounge in, while we stood around in wet bathing suits. A few days into the shooting, I decided that dying from hypothermia wasn't worth the fame and fortune. I again walked off the set.



*Bert Goodrich (in suit), Joe Gold (number 12), Steve Reeves (number 13) and Zabo Kozewski (kneeling).  
All were movie stars.*

Working in television wasn't much better. Problems on the *Regis Philbin Show* began the moment his co-host complained how disappointed she was that I hadn't lugged a 150-pound barbell all over Hollywood, so Regis could impress their audience by lifting it. Everything went downhill from there. The first question out of Mr. Philbin's mouth was, "Bill, why do so many homosexuals weight train?" My response was, "Regis, I can't speak from firsthand knowledge, but probably because it is one of the best ways to stay physically fit."

Better success came from working on the weekly television show, *The Hollywood Palace*. When the casting director wanted someone who looked athletic, or was needed to cushion the fall



of a guest celebrity, I got the call. I worked with Steve Allen, Groucho Marks, Edie Adams, Ed Wynn, Ernie Kovacks, Betty Davis, Gloria Swanson, Sammy Davis, Jr. and Juliette Prowse, the terrific dancer from South Africa. She couldn't resist asking, "What are you? A holdover from *Kismet*?" (*Kismet* was a New York stage play that had featured several bodybuilders and had closed several years earlier.) One of the perks that came with working on *The Hollywood Palace* was the time spent at Western Costumes being outfitted. On a segment featuring Forest Tucker of *F-Troop*, an American Indian was needed for a stand-in. While being fitted in full Native American regalia, I noticed an old opera hat sitting on a shelf, with an arrow stuck through it. The hat had been used in the movie, *Northwest Passage*, starring Spencer Tracy. I loved the movie. I loved the hat and loved it even more as it sat waiting to be tried on. To my great pleasure, it fit my giant head perfectly. I stood admiring myself in a mirror thinking, "Hat, where were you when I was a ten-year-old kid?"

My most successful film venture came with the starring role in the movie *Voodoo Swamp*, produced and directed by Arthur Jones, who later became famous as the owner and inventor of Nautilus exercise equipment. The movie was filmed in Louisiana and Florida, but nearly died on a cutting room floor in California. Arthur still insists that it had the potential of becoming a "cult classic."



*The role Pearl played in Voodoo Swamp was the part of a good guy/bodybuilder, who was under the spell of the lady witch doctor.*



Arthur personally came to Sacramento, California, to offer me the part in *Voodoo Swamp*. Whether I possessed any acting ability had little bearing on his decision to hire me. He was looking for the world's most muscular white man, and I apparently filled the bill.

My role was to play the part of a good guy/bodybuilder who had gone to New Orleans, Louisiana. I somehow had gotten lost in the Everglades only to be found by a lady witch doctor who had the ability to put me under her spell. This changed me into a monster that allowed me to do horrific things, on her behalf. Fortunately, I was recaptured before the filming ended and brought back to civilization, to return to the good guy/bodybuilder.

When filming began, my wardrobe consisted of underwear, socks, a shirt, trousers and shoes. Over the next four weeks, my clothing was ripped bit by bit with the idea of making me look more ragged while showing more muscle. Towards the end of shooting, I was down to wearing a half torn T-shirt with pants that looked like cutoffs. Thankfully, filming ended on time. My only item of clothing left in reserve was a pair of boxer shorts.

# Chapter XXVIII - An Unconventional Character

## Should You Feel Inclined to Censure

*Should you feel inclined to censure  
Faults you may in others view,  
Ask your own heart, ere you venture,  
If you have not failings, too.  
Let not friendly vows be broken;  
Rather strive a friend to gain.  
Many words in anger spoken  
Find their passage home again.  
Do not, then, in idle pleasure  
Trifle with a brother's fame;  
Guard it as a valued treasure,  
Sacred as your own good name.  
Do not form opinions blindly;  
Hastiness to trouble tends;  
Those of whom we thought unkindly  
Oft become our warmest friends.*

Author Unknown

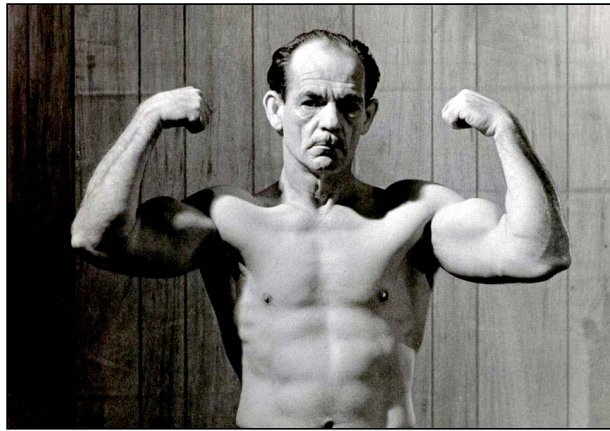


*"Look out below!" Bill in the movie Voodoo Swamp produced by Arthur Jones, in 1958.*

It's impossible to overlook this opportunity to give you more insight on the Arthur Jones I know. He is, by far, one of the most unique individuals I've ever met. Mike Mentzer (former IFBB Mr. America winner) attempted to describe Arthur by stating, "Arthur Jones is not a relaxing person to be with. He does not lightly exchange words. He spews facts, torrents of them, gleaned from studies and perhaps more important, from practical application of theory, personal observations and incisive deduction. You don't converse with Arthur Jones: you attend his lectures. He is opinionated, challenging, intense and blunt."

I am in total agreement with Mike. This is just a taste of our on-again/off-again relationship, which began in 1958. Early one Monday morning, while I was opening the door to my Sacramento gym, Arthur appeared out of nowhere. He was

wearing khaki pants, a khaki shirt and jacket that half-covered a .357 Magnum pistol strapped to his belt.



*One of the most unique individuals Bill has ever met.*

In his heavily southern accented, no-nonsense, baritone voice, he began the introduction, “You’re Bill Pearl. My name is Arthur Jones. I’m from Slidell, Louisiana. I’ve come to see if you’re interested in participating in a ‘gawd’-damn movie I’m going to produce. I’ll need you for about a month. It’s going to be filmed in Florida and Louisiana.”

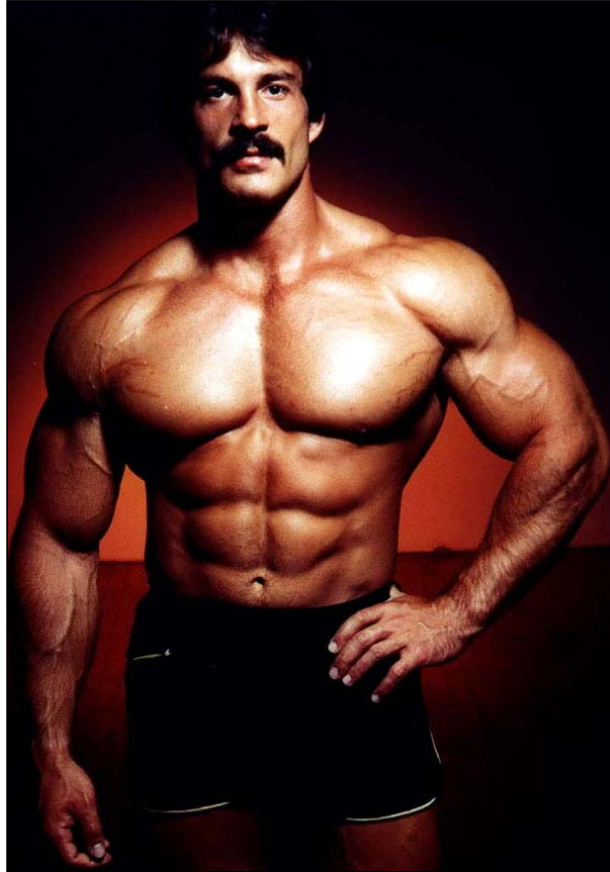
I asked, “Do you make movies for a living?” He articulated every word with a slight pause in between to make sure that he wouldn’t have to repeat himself, “Hell, no. I have a large wildlife game reserve in Slidell that supplies most of the animal parks and zoos throughout the country with reptiles, exotic birds, monkeys and other ‘gawd’-damn wildlife that I capture in South America. But I’m not new to the film business. I’ve made several documentaries.” “When do you plan to start filming?” I asked. “As soon as I can get your ass down to Louisiana.” “What am I supposed to do in this movie?” “Whatever it takes to make the ‘gawd’-damn thing sell!” “How much are you willing to pay?” “How much are you worth?” We agreed on a price and, to this

day, I've never picked up a tab when we've been together. His pride seemed offended whenever I've tried.

During those few days in Sacramento, it became obvious that we were from different worlds. Arthur had a definite opinion on everything. When it came to bodybuilding, he was convinced that the fastest muscular gains came from doing, "One set per muscle group—three days per week—while training to failure."

On politics, I asked, "Do you think John F. Kennedy will become the next President of the United States?" His reply, "It really doesn't matter. Some right-thinking Texan will take care of the son-of-a-bitch."

Our differences became more obvious during the filming of his movie *Voodoo Swamp*. Arthur could survive on Coca-Cola and cigarettes while holding court with whomever until the wee hours of the morning, and then expect everyone to be ready to go at his beck and call. I needed food, rest and consistency.



*Mike Mentzer was exceptionally strong and dedicated, a throw-back to the old-time bodybuilders.*

We clashed about a week into the filming. Six of us were jammed in his new Oldsmobile station wagon traveling to shoot a scene that had me trudging up to my neck in swamp water filled with leeches. The car radio was tuned to a country station blaring so loud it was impossible to think. He made matters worse by chain smoking in the closed vehicle. I was dragging from lack of sleep, and a white bread bologna sandwich wasn't my idea of a balanced diet.

Things came to a head when he began playing 'grab-ass' with the script girl sitting between us. I sat thinking, "This is ridiculous." I flicked off the radio and shouted, "Stop the car!" Arthur retaliated with, "Why? You got a 'gawd'-damn problem?" I shouted, "I've got several problems! First, I can't breathe! Second, I don't do well on bologna sandwiches! Third, I've had as much



sleep this past week, as I normally get in a night. Now you two decide to start screwing around. Either there are some drastic changes, or I'm out of here!" He apologized by saying something like, "I didn't realize you were so 'gawd'-damn sensitive."

The more violent side of Arthur erupted while we were shooting a night scene that had me throwing a stunt man off a bridge into a large pool of water. We had done the scene several times, which always ended in a big splash, but on the final take, there was a thud. The stunt man had landed on the bank rather than in the water. With a loud moan he cried, "Arthur—if we're going to do this again, make sure Mr. Pearl tosses me further to the left!"

A carload of teenage boys had stopped to watch the filming. As they drove away, a crew member called out that he was missing an expensive camera. He was insistent that the teenagers had taken it.

In less than a block, they were pulled over. Arthur ran to their car screaming, "Did one of you steal my 'gawd'-damn camera?" There was no response. Arthur pulled out his pistol, drew back the hammer, placed the barrel in the middle of the driver's forehead saying, "Boy, I'm going to ask you one more time, before I scatter your 'gawd'-damn brains all over this car! Did one of you steal my 'gawd'-damn camera?" His reputation must have preceded him. The driver stuttered, "Honest Mr. Jones, we did not ta—ta—take your camera." Not satisfied, Arthur told me to begin searching the car. Fortunately, one of his crew ran up screaming that they had found it stored in the back of the station wagon. It seemed everyone but Arthur let out a sigh, as he eased back the hammer of the gun.

In our final days of filming, Arthur had rented a beautiful old mansion on the outskirts of New Orleans. I was to be kept imprisoned in the mansion while recovering from the lady witch doctor's spell. They had me tied to beds, chairs, or whatever, to prevent me from causing more harm. Arthur had left instructions for Shorty, the head cameraman, to shoot a scene in the enormous living room where I was tied between two large pillars.

Shorty, like Arthur, was a chain smoker. He had a bad habit of setting lighted cigarettes on everything, which began to take its toll on the beautiful antique furnishings. What upset me even more was that he'd drop the butts on the marble floors, and then grind them out with the soles of his shoes. I finally told him, "Shorty, you do that one more time, and I'm going to bounce you on your can." Sure enough, the next cigarette out of his mouth went on the floor to be ground to death. I jerked out of the ties and hit him so hard it knocked him, the camera, the tripod, the lights and canisters of film onto the floor.

Arthur heard the commotion and ran into the room shouting, "What-n-the-'gawd'-damn-hell's going on here?" Shorty looked up, saying, "He just hit me, and I bet he broke the camera." Arthur asked, "Why in the hell did you do that?" I replied, "Because he has destroyed half of the antique furniture in this house with his lousy cigarettes and is now doing the same to the marble floors. It's going to cost you more money for repairs, than you'll make from the movie." Arthur looked at Shorty and said something like, "You stupid moron. I should blow your 'gawd'-damn brains out." I returned to Sacramento without ever seeing the finished version of the movie.

Several months later, Arthur invited me to view his latest film that he shot and produced in Africa. The screening took place in

a private Hollywood studio. I had no idea what to expect, but knew it would not be a sequel to the movie *Lassie*. The least violent part of the two-hour documentary was the opening scene. It showed several natives dragging an enormous crocodile from a lake. The natives were close to losing limbs, as they struggled to get the crocodile subdued and turned over on its back, before Arthur stepped in with a huge knife to slit open its belly to pull out a young boy.

After another lapse of time, Arthur phoned from the Los Angeles International Airport asking if he could stay with me for a few days. I had moved from Sacramento to Los Angeles and was living close to the airport in the apartment above the Manchester Gym with a spare bedroom—so—“Sure!”

He was back to supplying animal parks and zoos with reptiles, exotic birds, monkeys and other ‘gawd’-damn wildlife. He was headed for the Galapagos Islands, located six hundred fifty miles west of Ecuador.

After keeping me up most of the night, he went to a corner cafe the following morning for coffee. I walked into the spare bedroom to find several large stacks of one hundred dollar bills lying on the bed, which had not been slept in. The apartment had been broken into a couple of weeks before, which caused me more than a little anxiety seeing somewhere between \$35,000.00 and \$50,000.00 in cash lying out in plain view. When Arthur returned, I suggested that he find a better place for his money. Later, I asked, “Why are you carrying so much cash?” His answer, “Money talks, especially American money.”

Weeks went by before another phone call from Arthur, which originated from the Los Angeles International Airport’s freight

depot. Offering no explanation, Arthur barked, “Bill, this is a matter of life and death! I want you to immediately go to the produce mart in Los Angeles. Pick up five-hundred pounds of ‘gawd’-damn bananas! Bring them to the United Air Lines freight depot as quickly as possible.” (The telephone went click.)

I was at the produce mart in twenty minutes. I found an outdoor fruit stand and didn’t bother shopping prices or explaining why I was buying five-hundred pounds of “‘gawd’-damned bananas;” I didn’t know myself.

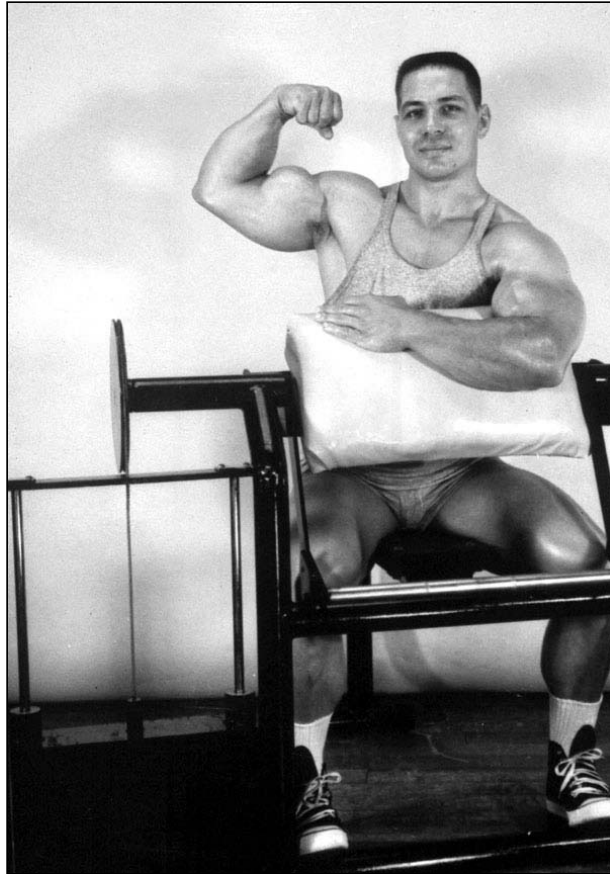
The United Air Lines freight depot’s loading dock was filled with crates of exotic birds. Arthur was running around screaming, “The ‘gawd’-damn things are going to die if they don’t get food and water. You continue filling the water dishes, I’ll do the rest.”

He eventually calmed down, but insisted he had to travel in the cargo hold of the airplane to be sure the birds were fed and watered on their trip to Slidell. He was told to go the United Air Lines main terminal to obtain permission.

Standing next in line at the ticket counter, I watched Arthur get a pained look on his face while, through clenched teeth he screamed, “My ‘gawd’-damn hemorrhoids are killing me.” The female ticket agent and everyone close by gasped as he loosened his pants and jammed his right hand down the back of his shorts to take care of the problem. Squaring himself away before stepping up to the counter, he offered the agent his tickets with the hand that had just performed the miracle. She bellowed out, “I can’t take this! I’m calling my supervisor!” He looked at me, saying, “What the ‘gawd’-damn hell’s wrong with her?”

When we first met in Sacramento, one of our original discussions had been on strength training. Arthur had shown particular

interest in a new Selectorized arm-curl machine that had been designed by my friend Bob Clark. The machine used an off-centered cam that caused the resistance to vary as the user curled the lever arm through its range of motion.

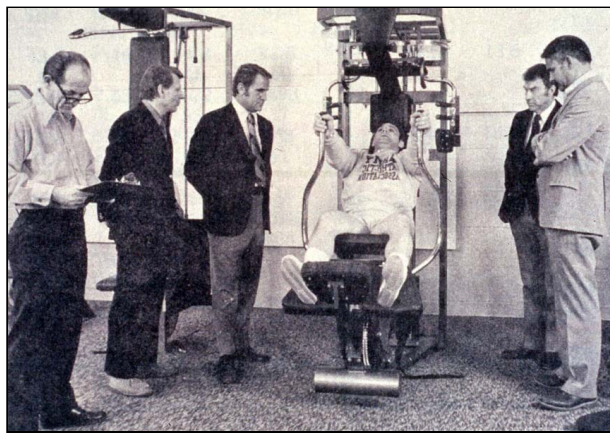


*Arm curl machine with an off-centered cam, designed by Bob Clark, in the year 1958.*

There was no need to explain Clark's concept of using the off-centered cam to alter the resistance of an exercise to Arthur. He was well aware of the benefits. In fact, he went on a tirade that not only covered strength curves, but also the amount of energy stored in muscles, the recovery time between workouts, and the benefits of shorter, all-out effort training sessions. He was so convincing, my hard-core bodybuilders couldn't wait to give his system of training a try. Twelve years later, when he launched his new line of Nautilus exercise machines, he was still using the same pitch.

Arthur founded Nautilus Sports/Medical Industries, in 1970. His new line of exercise machines became so popular over the next ten years, it was said that more money was spent on Nautilus than on all other commercial gym equipment being sold.

The first version of his machine was previewed in Culver City, California, at that year's AAU Mr. America Contest. I acted as Master of Ceremonies. My training partner, Chris Dickerson, became the first Afro-American to win the title.



*Arthur Jones, far left, conducting a demonstration of the Nautilus Chest Press to a group of prospective customers.*

Arthur had transported the prototype from Slidell, to Culver City, in a rented trailer. To save money, he stayed at our home in Pasadena. His 13-year-old son, Gary, remarked with confidence, “We can put another inch on your arm in a month, if you will use the machine.”

The Nautilus multi-station unit that sat in the lobby of the Culver City convention hall looked like a bad substitute for the popular Universal multi-station unit. Arthur’s unit was cumbersome, poorly built, painted blue and equipped with lever arms to hold free-weights. It was immediately nicknamed “The Blue Monster.” Its best selling points were Arthur’s gift-of-gab

and the off-centered cams, which were pitched to everyone who would listen.

I later commented to Arthur that trying to compete against the Universal multi-station unit might be a mistake. I suggested that he design separate pieces of equipment incorporating the off-centered cam and then promote his theory of training, which could only be done “on his machines.” How much influence my suggestion had on his decision to do this is anyone’s guess, but that’s what eventually evolved.

At the beginning of the Nautilus reign, Arthur used the editorial pages of *Iron Man Magazine* to promote his concepts. Issue after issue was filled with his opinions on training. The magazine was so hard-core, its readers were more than willing to give Arthur’s theories a try, if they could get their hands on his equipment. Sales of his units were going out of sight. Prospective buyers were phoning my gym day and night to confirm what Arthur was preaching. There were so many calls, in fact, that it started interfering with my ability to run my business. He convinced me that my time wasn’t being wasted. In exchange, he was going to give me the new Nautilus Biceps/Triceps and Torso Pullover machines, plus an exclusive written Nautilus franchise for the State of California.



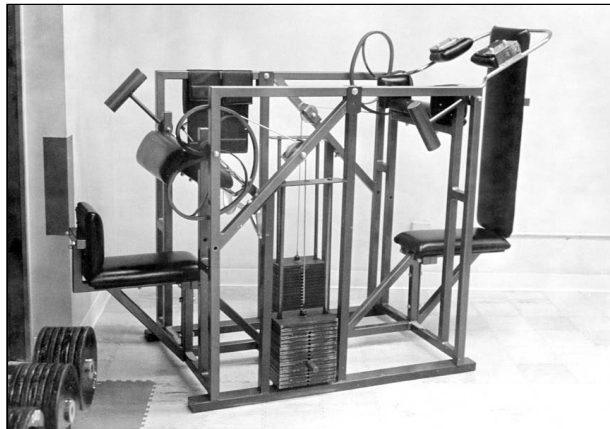
*An evolution of Iron Man Magazine over a sixty-year period.*

He then tried to convince me that bodybuilding had changed since my last competition in 1967. The only way I could win the 1971 NABBA Professional contest was by following his training principles, along with incorporating the Nautilus machines into my programs. It mattered little that I'd done quite well with free weights for twenty-five years. When the Biceps/Triceps and Torso Pullover machines arrived, I placed them in the living room of our home for my own personal use. Later, to Judy's relief, they were transferred to the gym, where they became so popular it was nearly impossible to get near them.

Our relationship became more strained when I informed Arthur that I had replaced the lever arms of my Nautilus machines in the Pasadena Health Club with weight stacks. Arthur went ballistic saying, "You ruined the 'gawd'-damn biomechanics by



doing that.” My reply was, “Arthur, you’re wrong. The movement is even better. Because of the weight stacks you now start the motion from a dead stop rather than having a swinging motion. Besides, there are no weight plates to pick up, the machines are more simple, safer and faster to use.” “Yah... but... but,” he sputtered. Later it occurred to me that Arthur might not have been so upset because I ruined the ‘gawd’-damn biomechanics of his machines, as he was with the fact that he was now going to have to add weight stacks to the machines he was currently manufacturing. It was possible that he didn’t have the capital to make the conversion at that time.



*The relationship between Arthur and Bill became more strained when Bill replaced the lever arms of the Nautilus Biceps/Triceps machine with weight stacks.*

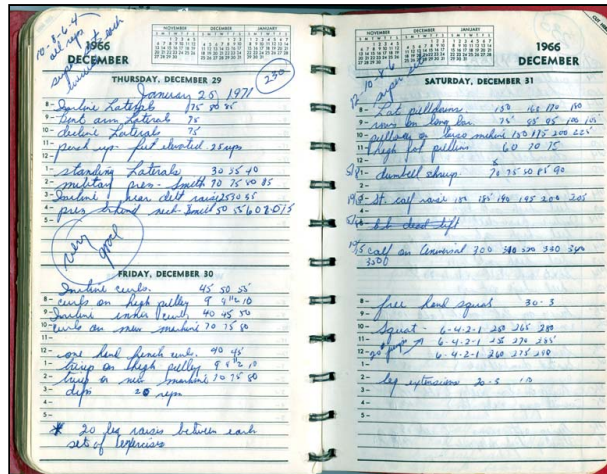
It came down to where I either had to replace the lever arms on my machines, or he was going to renege on the exclusive Nautilus franchise for California. Stupidly, I told him it would be a relief to get back to running my gym. That remark probably cost me millions of dollars from the profits of the sales of Nautilus in the State of California, over the next several years.

Matters didn’t improve when I publicly questioned Arthur’s theories regarding the advantages that came from training on the Nautilus Isokinetic machines. Much of the promotional material

in the early days of Nautilus was based on the claim that free weights were obsolete, injury-causing antiques. I disagreed. He claimed that three twenty-minute workouts per week on Nautilus equipment could produce a physique like mine. Again, I disagreed by stating, "Nobody who has trained exclusively on Nautilus has won a major physique contest." This enraged Arthur to the extent that he began threatening Leo and me with phone taps and hit men. Why he included Leo is anyone's guess.

He used *Iron Man Magazine* to wage his war, which became more venomous with each issue. The final straw occurred when he commented that it was "rumored" that my training partner, twenty-eight-year-old Willie Stedman, had died because of anabolic steroid use, which I supposedly had supplied. It was sadly true that Willy had died, but the cause of death was pneumonia, brought on by a lethal strain of Asian flu. I contacted Peary Rader, the owner and publisher of *Iron Man Magazine*, threatening a lawsuit if a retraction wasn't printed.

I kept training for the 1971 NABBA Mr. Universe, using the same methods that had brought the best results in the past. By now, Arthur was so irate it was "rumored" that he had given Sergio Oliva \$5,000.00 to come to Florida to train on Nautilus with a promise of another \$5,000.00, if he won the contest.



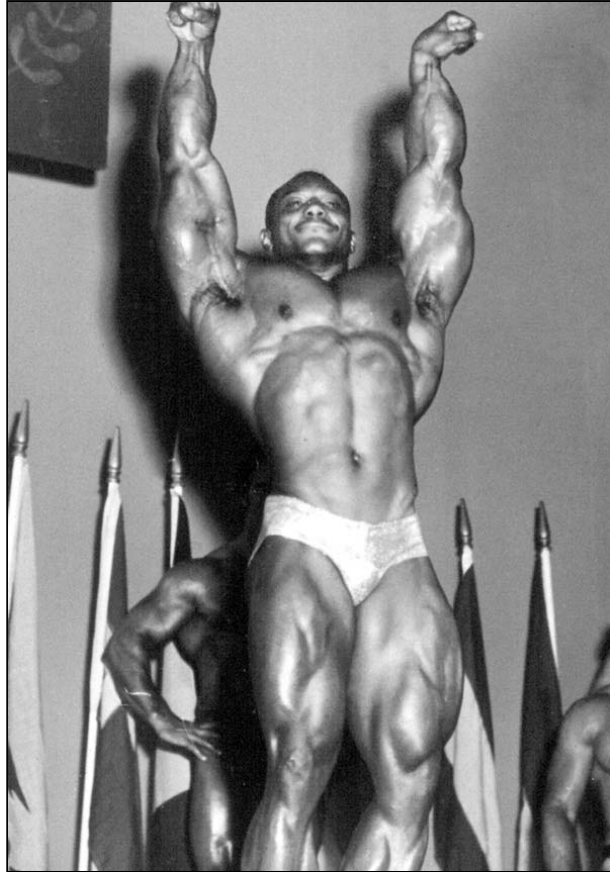
*The training program Bill used just prior to the 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest.*

To rattle me even more, Arthur sent recent photos of Sergio with a note reading something like, “What do you think about this?” I sent the photos back with a note, saying, “I have never seen YOU looking better. There is a good chance, if YOU can stay in that kind of condition, YOU might place high in the contest.”

Before leaving for London, I gave my final warm-up exhibition in Brooklyn, New York. The backstage was loaded with bodybuilding celebrities: Boyer Coe, Mike and Ray Mentzer, Dave Draper to mention a few. Again, Arthur appeared out of nowhere. He began showing everyone recent photos of Sergio, asking for comment. When he noticed I was ignoring him, he turned, handed me the photos, saying in a loud voice, “What do you think?” I replied, “He looks great—you look like shit.” Turning a couple of shades of red, possibly more out of embarrassment than anger, he began muttering something about getting his gun. Before he finished the sentence, I said, “If you come back with a gun, I’m going to stick it up your butt and blow your brains out!”

On Friday, September 18, 1971, the Victoria Palace in London, England, was packed for the 23rd annual NABBA Mr. Universe

contest. Leo, his wife, and Judy were seated near the front row, Arthur several rows behind. The audience anxiously waited until the last announcements were made. “Ladies and gentlemen, the 1971 NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe for 1971 is—Ken Waller of the United States.” The Master of Ceremonies, Cecil Peck, went on, “The 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe is (he stopped for a long pause) Bill Pearl!” The crowd went wild. After I received the trophy, Reg Park walked over to congratulate me while Sergio Oliva and Frank Zane walked offstage.



*Sergio Oliva on stage at the 1971 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe contest.*



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*Bill credits Reg Park for a great deal of his success by setting the highest of standards.*

A few years elapsed with no word from Arthur; then again a knock on our door. Arthur, his wife, and their business partner, Dan Baldwin, were standing on the porch. I remarked, “If you’re man enough to come to our home, the least I can do is invite you in.” Once seated, it became obvious that everyone was on his best behavior—except Judy. The following is her version of that day:

“One peaceful Sunday morning, there was a knock on our door. I opened to find Arthur, his wife, and Dan Baldwin, standing on our porch. I closed the door in their faces before leaving to tell Bill. He shook Arthur’s hand, as if nothing had happened. The next is his recollection as to my obstinate refusal of hospitality. When Bill offered them coffee, my reply was, “We don’t have coffee in the house. We’re not drinking caffeinated products.” He then offered them tea. My response was, “We only have herbal tea.” He then asked if they would like milk or sugar. I informed him, “ We don’t have any milk or refined sugar, only brown raw sugar.” The response was, “That’ll be fine.”

Once Judy sat with our guests, she couldn’t help but admire Arthur’s intellect and vision. He began describing a system for health clubs that would incorporate a membership card that could be swiped into the terminal of several exercise machines, which received their resistance from a computer controlled electronic motor. The machines would record the member’s workout and at the end of the training session, print a read-out, or store the material for future reference. Arthur was describing in the early 1970s what became in the 1990s the Lifecircuit® and Lifecenter®, produced by Life Fitness. The visit ended peacefully

with never a mention of any break in our relationship or why he had suddenly decided to “drop by.”

We stayed in touch, but with long gaps in between. I appeared on two of his weekly *Wild Cargo* television shows. My job was to take gunnysacks filled with venomous cobra snakes and dump them on the floor of the television studio as the cameras recorded Arthur’s ability to toy with deadly reptiles. On another occasion he flew me from Las Vegas, Nevada, to Los Angeles, California, in his private jet. Months later, I attended a lecture at the University of Virginia where he was extremely hard on the medical profession, telling the audience what a ‘gawd’-damn bunch of misfits they were. Later, I toured the Nautilus factory in Deland, Florida, which was indeed impressive.



*Robert Mills and Bill encouraging a Lifecircuit® user during the 1995 FIBO Show in Essen, Germany.*

With time, we grew even further apart. When I phoned, his usual reaction was, “What the ‘gawd’-damn hell do you want?” His latest comeback when asked how he was doing, was, “I’m sitting here waiting to die.”

Our last face-to-face visit occurred in 2001 at his home in Ocala, Florida. At the age of seventy-nine, he claimed to be in poor health, but his mind was as sharp as ever. Sitting on a sofa,

wearing only a bathrobe that revealed everything from his chest down, his first words were, “It’s been 43 years, 5 months and 26 days since we first met.” The next couple of hours were spent rehashing research he’d done on negative training in the 1980s. The rest of the time was taken up by his recitation of the mistakes I’d made over the years. I was able to point out a few of his. Yet, I couldn’t help but thank him for the profound impact he’d had on my life. I closed the visit by saying, “Arthur, you’ve been a good teacher.” His reply, “Well, school is over! This is the last ‘gawd’-damn time we’ll see each other.” As I reached to shake his hand, he lit another cigarette.



## Chapter XXIX - To Each His Own

### Good Timber

*The tree that never had to fight  
For sun and sky and air and light,  
But stood out in the open plain  
And always got its share of rain,  
Never became a forest king  
But lived and died a scrubby thing.  
The man who never had to toil  
To gain and farm his patch of soil,  
Who never had to win his share  
Of sun and sky and light and air,  
Never became a manly man  
But lived and died as he began.  
Good timber does not grow with ease,  
The stronger wind, the stronger trees,  
The further sky, the greater length,  
The more the storm, the more the strength, By sun and cold, by rain and snow,  
In trees and men good timbers grow.  
Where thickest lies the forest growth  
We find the patriarchs of both.  
And they hold counsel with the stars  
Whose broken branches show the scars  
Of many winds and much of strife  
This is the common law of life.*

Douglas Malloch



*Bill and George Coates doing a job on the marble statue of Grimek in the York Barbell Hall of Fame.*

During the 1940s and 1950s, John Grimek's physique was so outstanding most everyone in the sport followed his principles of training. If John trained a specific way, it had to be right. When I saw photos of Grimek, my eyes were automatically drawn to his massive calves. Every article published that mentioned his calf training was a repeat of what had previously been written: three sets of standing calf raises, for twenty to twenty-five reps, using moderate weight, three days a week. This method for training calves became gospel. If anyone wanted calves like Grimek's, you did what John did.

What most readers, including myself, failed to realize was that John's calves would have been amazing regardless of the three sets of standing calf raises, for twenty to twenty-five reps, using moderate weight, three days a week. I never thought to question

why my calves hadn't responded to his program. I should have known better. By keeping training records, it was obvious that my body responded best to several sets, less reps, heavier weights... why would my calves be different?

With that in mind, I designed a training program for calves around what I knew the rest of my body responded to. I continued doing standing calf raises but increased the sets from three to fifteen... (five sets, toes facing out... five sets, feet straight... five sets, toes facing in.) I dropped the repetitions to twelve, used nearly all the weight that I could handle and still do the exercise properly. I did these five days per week rather than three days. The results? My calves jumped from 17 to 19 inches in three months. The results were so encouraging, I decided to step out of the mold of doing things simply because others had done them a certain way. I decided to become more reliant on myself to find the correct answers for the degree of physical development I was hoping for.

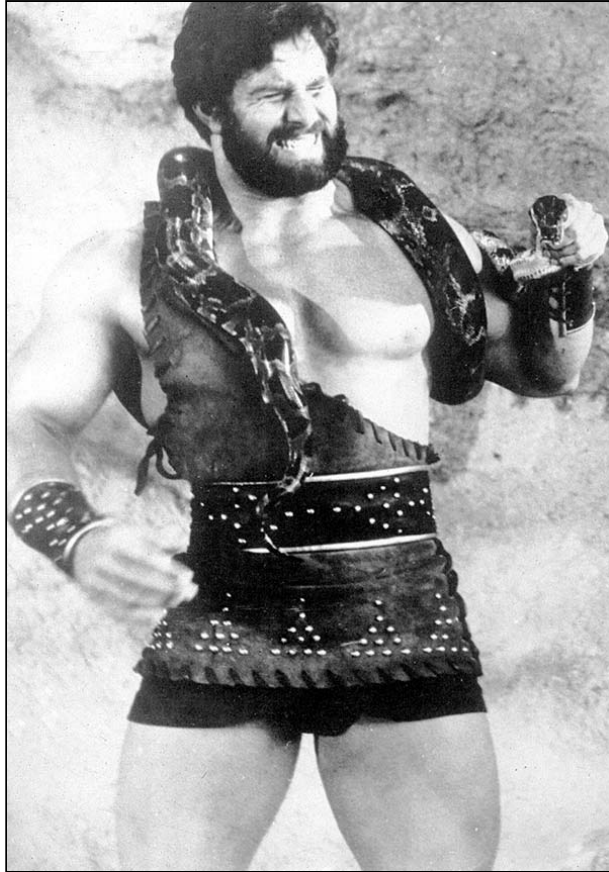
I met Reg Park in London, England, in 1953. He had already acquired the notoriety that I was hoping for by winning the NABBA Mr. Universe in 1951. What drew me closer to him, other than his being another of my heroes, was that we had similar thoughts on weight training. When either visited the United States, or England, we made it a point to work out with each other.



*Reg Park and wife, Marian, visit Sylvia and Bill at their home in Sacramento, California, in the mid 1950s.*

We agreed to share training ideas. I began splitting my workouts according to body parts: Mondays, Wednesday and Fridays: abs, chest, shoulders, triceps, biceps and calves. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays: abs, back, thighs, calves, forearms and neck. The results were so impressive, I couldn't wait to pass this on to Reg.

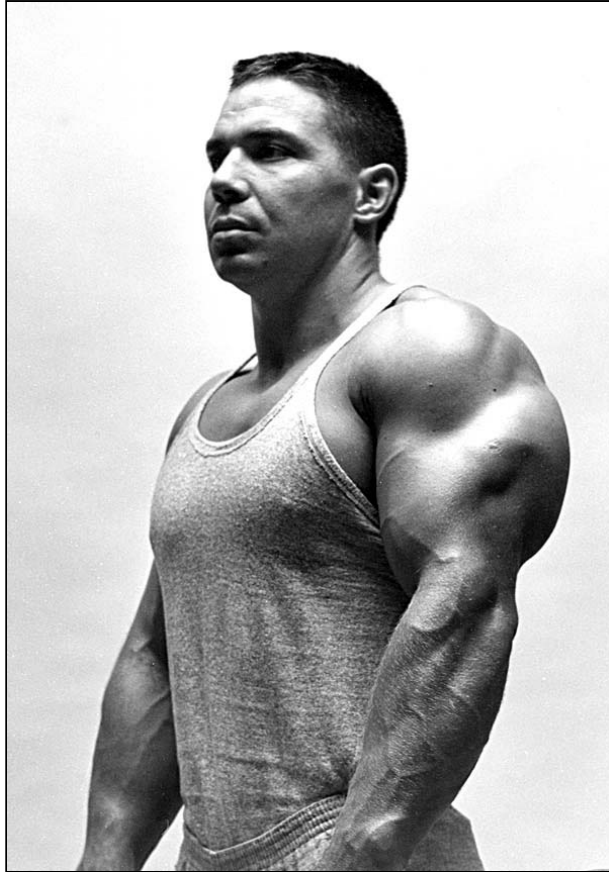
In a return letter, he commented that he was experimenting on a different system of training: a muscle group in the morning, another in the afternoon, and another in the evening. I can't remember how he was splitting this program, but do remember that his strength was increasing by leaps and bounds. He was doing sets and reps of bench presses with over four-hundred pounds and knocking out five-hundred-pound full-squats, without the aid of a spotter or training partner.



*Reg Park, a man's man in every sense of the word. The photograph below is from the movie Hercules and the Captive Women.*

Even though our training regimen varied, we were following a similar approach. Whereas the average bodybuilder would do regular bench presses for three sets with ten to fifteen repetitions and then stop, we went so far as to do regular bench presses, incline bench presses, and decline bench presses for five sets with six to ten repetitions.

We followed this type of regimen for each muscle group for four to six weeks before making changes that might have included a different group of exercises, a variation in the sets or repetitions, possibly pyramiding the weight up and down, perhaps super-setting, tri-setting—anything that sounded legitimate.



*Bill's upper arm measured over 20 inches at a body weight of around 220 pounds.*

At that stage of my training, more time was spent reading anatomy and physiology books than bodybuilding magazines. My conclusion was that the best exercises (if there are such things) were those that worked muscles through a complete contraction and extension, while doing the movements from different angles; standing, seated, inclined, or declined had the most positive affect.

Triceps became my most impressive muscle group because of heavy overhead movements. I chose those types of exercise by studying how the muscle attached to the skeletal structure. I again concluded that any overhead movement done by keeping the upper arms in a vertical position overhead, while lowering a weight in a concentrated semicircular motion until the forearms and biceps touched, before returning the weight to the overhead

starting position, would affect the large head of the triceps more than any other movement. I then determined that it was also important to work all three heads of the muscle. I made sure this happened during each triceps training session.

Through those, and several other types of innovations, Reg and I brought in a new era to bodybuilding. We came up with workable programs that were producing more size, shape and muscularity. We weren't afraid to share with others. We did this via photographs and articles that appeared in physique magazines throughout the world.



*Ray Routledge winning the 1961 NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe title.*

Bodybuilders who migrated to the P-Street Gym in Sacramento, California, were using these principles. They were winning major contests on the West Coast and returning home to win State

Championships. Ray Routledge (winner of the 1961 AAU Mr. America and 1961 NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe) was a slight exception. It seemed he had nothing but time on his hands. He would hit the gym around 5:00 each evening, do a set then sit for five or ten minutes. It was always the same story come 10:00 p.m. closing time, "Just a couple more sets," he'd say. Twenty minutes later, again it was, "Just a couple more sets." My alternative was to lock him in the gym with the threat of bodily harm if he exited during the night leaving the deadbolt unlocked.



# Chapter XXX - Pre-contest Strategy

## The Champion

*The average runner sprints*

*Until the breath in him is gone;*

*But the champion has the iron will;*

*That makes him carry on.*

*For rest, the average runner begs,*

*When limp his muscles grow;*

*But the champion runs on leaden legs His spirit makes him go.*

*The average man's complacent*

*When he does his best to score;*

*But the champion does his best*

*And then he does a little more.*

Author Unknown



*At this stage of Pearl's bodybuilding career, he had changed to a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet and was still able to maintain his massive size.*

It is likely that I could have won the NABBA Mr. Universe title several years in a row but that wasn't my objective. Every four or five years, a new crop of bodybuilders would emerge, which caused my curiosity and ego to step in. I'd give myself a year in advance to prepare for the competition. During that time, everything revolved around the upcoming contest. Not capable of handling heavier weights or training with more intensity, attitude and eating habits were the main items to focus on.



*It is likely that Bill could have won the NABBA Mr Universe title several years in a row, if that had been his interest. He competed in a total of eleven contests during his nearly twenty-year bodybuilding career.*

Rather than gaining several pounds of body weight months prior a competition, and then cutting down, I would purposely drop body weight to where my body fat registered somewhere between three to five percent, before deciding on the body weight and percentage of lean muscle mass I wanted to carry for the contest. My decision was always a heavier body weight with more lean muscle than my previous competitions. Our family diet had changed to lacto-ovo-vegetarian by the mid-1960s, which made this more difficult to do. Red meat, fish or fowl were no longer part of our eating habits. (Our family is still lacto-ovo-vegetarian.) My pre-contest weight loss regimen consisted of three small meals per day, totaling between 2000-2500 calories. Protein and some fat were the main sources of these calories, along with moderate quantities of fresh fruits and vegetables. A

typical breakfast might be three poached eggs, low fat cottage cheese, and fruit; lunch was homemade soups, full of lentils, beans, cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, celery and onions; and supper most likely would be an omelet, a big salad and a diet soft drink. Treats would be extra fruit, high in fiber but low in calories.



*Billy Knight, Mr. Australia, and Brad Krayer were two of Bill's best training partners.*

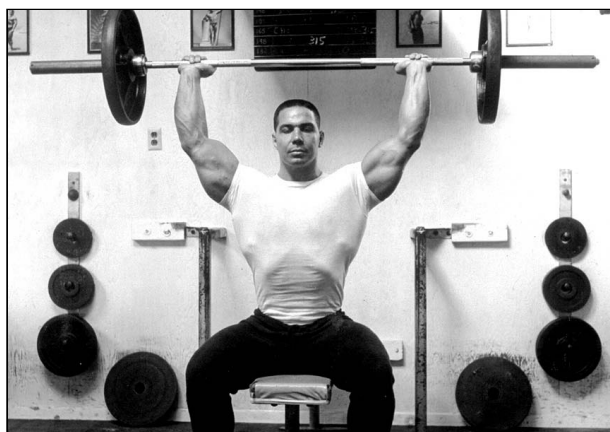


*Terry Edwards, Rocco Castalino, Mike Tonkinson (seated) and Kevin Robbins were also great believers in early morning training.*

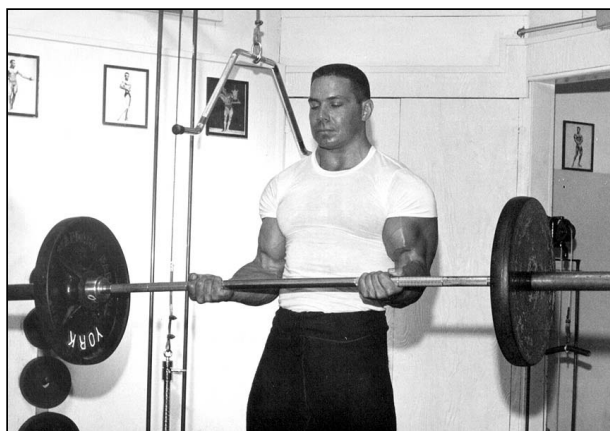
I did not go from eating like a bird to feasting like a monster. It was more of a gradual increase of food and with time, protein and complex carbohydrates became even more important. I would begin adding milk and egg-white based caseinate protein drinks and larger quantities of assorted fresh vegetables and fruit throughout the day to gradually increase my caloric intake.

Getting close to contest time, I'd consume around fourteen ounces of milk and egg protein powder per day.

Posing, eliminating body hair and getting sun were just part of the attitude change. Here, self-hypnosis came into play. After each meal and training session, I'd relax for a few minutes, programming myself to become bigger, stronger and more muscular. At night I'd lull myself to sleep saying, "When I awake I will be bigger, stronger, and more muscular." All thoughts revolved around getting bigger, stronger and more muscular. I never thought, smaller, weaker, or less muscular. Nothing could be small! Small wouldn't get it. Big was going to get it.



*One of the more powerful bodybuilders, Bill was credited with a seated-press-behind-neck of 300 pounds and curling 100-pound dumbbells.*



*Bill curling a 135-pound barbell.*

There was no time for negativism. Training began at 4:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday. Partners were chosen that could be counted on to spot for each other, help change weights and encourage one another to train harder. It was a win/win situation. Much of my success came from never resting on laurels. Leo and I always thought I could do better. We were never satisfied.

# Chapter XXXI - Win Some... Lose Some

## Hold Fast Your Dreams

*Hold fast your dreams!*

*Within your heart*

*Keep one still, secret spot*

*Where dreams may go,*

*And, sheltered so,*

*May thrive and grow*

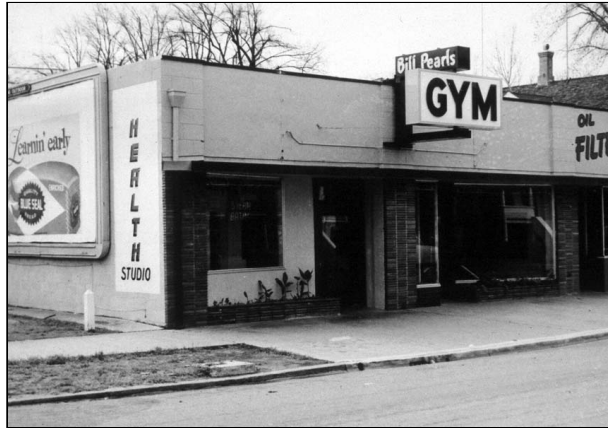
*Where doubt and fear are not.*

*O keep a place apart,*

*Within your heart,*

*For little dreams to go!*

Louise Driscoll



*Pearl's first health club in Sacramento, California, was opened in 1953, on a \$2,800.00 bank account.*

My four-year military enlistment had ended. My plan was to get into the gym business. Don Farnsworth, my ex-Navy friend, kept hounding me to come to Sacramento. The city had a population of 200,000 with one poorly operated health club and a YMCA that was no better. We spent several days looking for real estate agents or landlords who would take a twenty-three year old with a \$2,800.00 bank account seriously.



*Jack LaLanne shaking hands with Bill's long time friend, Don Farnsworth. Don was responsible for Bill opening his first gym in Sacramento, California, in 1953.*

Finally, we found a suitable location close to downtown Sacramento on 19th and P Streets. The building took one front window space plus the back of three other businesses to make up the 4,000-square foot, L shaped, non-air conditioned area. I signed a five-year lease, thanked Don for sharing his apartment, bought an army cot, then moved in.

The gym became my home for the next several months. During that interval, Sylvia Frazier and I were married. Following a two-day honeymoon in Las Vegas, Nevada, she returned to San Diego, California, to live with her family, until I was able to afford an apartment in Sacramento.

The previous tenant of the gym area seemed to have forgotten an enormous printing press that straddled a 5-foot wide, 20-foot long, and 4-foot deep cement pit lodged in the middle of the to-be exercise area. As my rent-free status was about to end and my phone complaints went unanswered, I reverted to my religious upbringing of “an eye for an eye.” I began removing the most intricate parts off the printing press to toss them into the bottom of the pit, which was half filled with printers ink. When the press



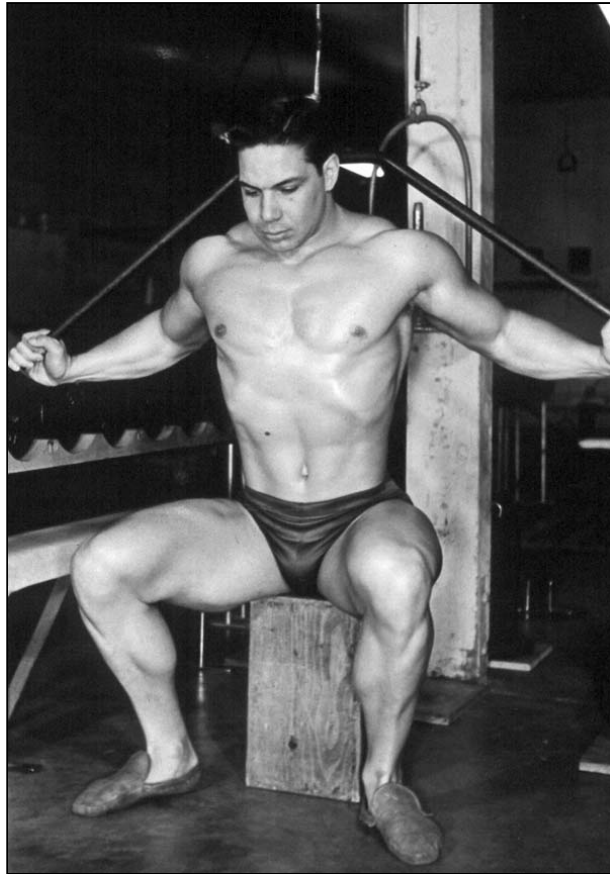
was finally moved, we immediately filled the pit with sand and concrete.

Bill Pearl's Gym was a crude affair. The majority of the equipment had been built at the Naval Recreation Center in San Diego. The locker room consisted of two benches and a Sears Roebuck metal shower. A friend painted "BILL PEARL'S GYM" in twenty-four-inch letters on the front window. My only affordable advertising was word of mouth. Most of the small profit was saved to rent an apartment. The leftover went for gym improvement. Over the next few years of bartering and scrimping, the gym became one of the best-equipped facilities in northern California.



*Bill Pearl's Gym was full of home built equipment. None of the members complained.*

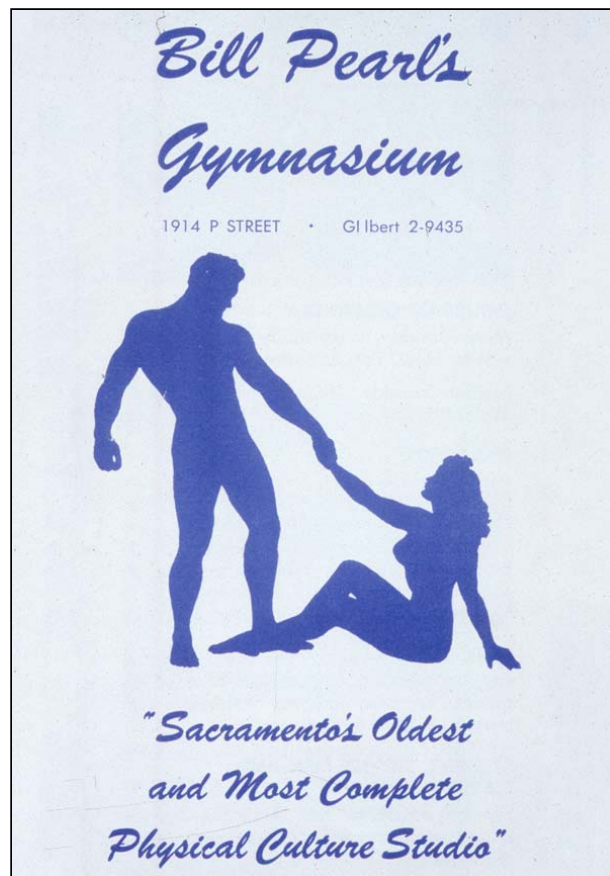




My biggest profit ultimately came from selling health foods. I slowly converted the front of the gym into a well-stocked health food store by continually reinvesting, until shelves were filled with vitamins, minerals and other health-food products. Three huge glass-door refrigerators overflowed with whole grain breads, fertile eggs and certified raw-dairy products. The store, in time, paid the entire overhead of the business, which included buying the property.

During that time, Jim Drinkward and Ray Wilson had begun opening American Health/Silhouette Health Studios in several of the larger cities throughout the United States. Their clubs were equipped with mirrored walls, carpeted floors, chrome exercise equipment, childcare facilities, with many advertising indoor swimming pools and bowling alleys. It was nearly impossible for small, independent health club owners to compete against them

because of their mass-marketing ability and low membership fees. (A year membership: \$48.00 cash, \$60.00 on installments.)

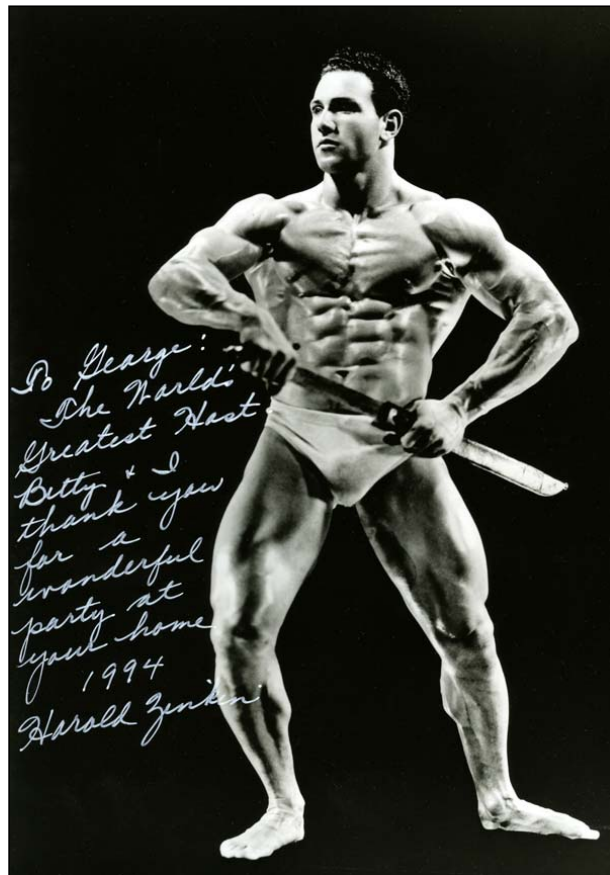


*Bill's wasn't only the oldest and most complete gym in Sacramento in 1953; it was the only gym in Sacramento.*

Harold Zinkin, another individual in the fitness industry I had grown to admire, acquired a licensing agreement from American Health/Silhouette, which allowed him to open facilities under their name in scattered parts of the United States.

My early admiration for Zinkin came from the fact that he not only won the first Mr. California contest, held in 1941, but went on to win the 1945 AAU National light heavyweight Weightlifting Championships, while placing second to Clancy Ross in the AAU Mr. America contest the following day. In his spare time, Harold was a regular at Muscle Beach, performing gymnastic feats that, to many, seemed impossible. He was equally

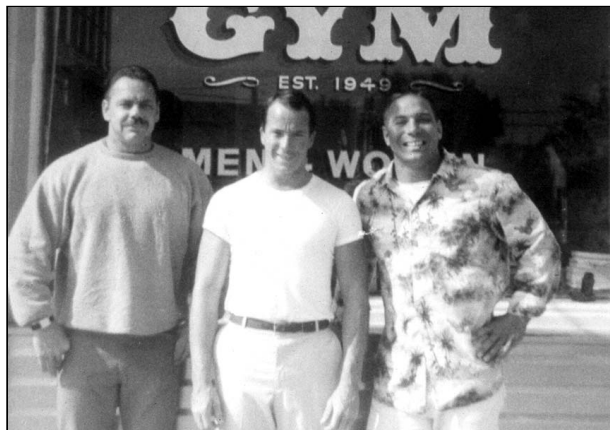
as successful in business. He and Bruce Conner opened the second health club in the Los Angeles area in 1948. Harvey Eastman had opened the first in 1947. Zinkin's club was years ahead of its time. It offered separate facilities for women and men, a special rehabilitation area; and I believe a chiropractor was on staff.



Harold established another quality health club in Fresno, California, in 1953. He also began fabricating the legendary Universal multi-station exercise machine. The machine was designed to enable several people to exercise different muscle groups at the same time. The black, five-station unit, equipped with weight stacks, sold for \$1,895.00. The unit became so popular practically every health club, YMCA, and college gym in the United States purchased one. Universal Gym equipment

became so popular that the name, Universal, is still what people ask for when inquiring about a multi-station unit.

Harold then commenced to open American Health/Silhouette studios throughout central California, in conjunction with his other business ventures. Zinkin approached me about opening additional clubs in northern California. I would manage the facilities and pay him a percentage of the gross receipts. It was an opportunity too good to overlook. Along with his expansions in central California, we opened two studios in Sacramento, others in Lodi and Davis, California, one in Reno, Nevada, and changed the Sacramento P-Street Gym to American Health/Silhouette.



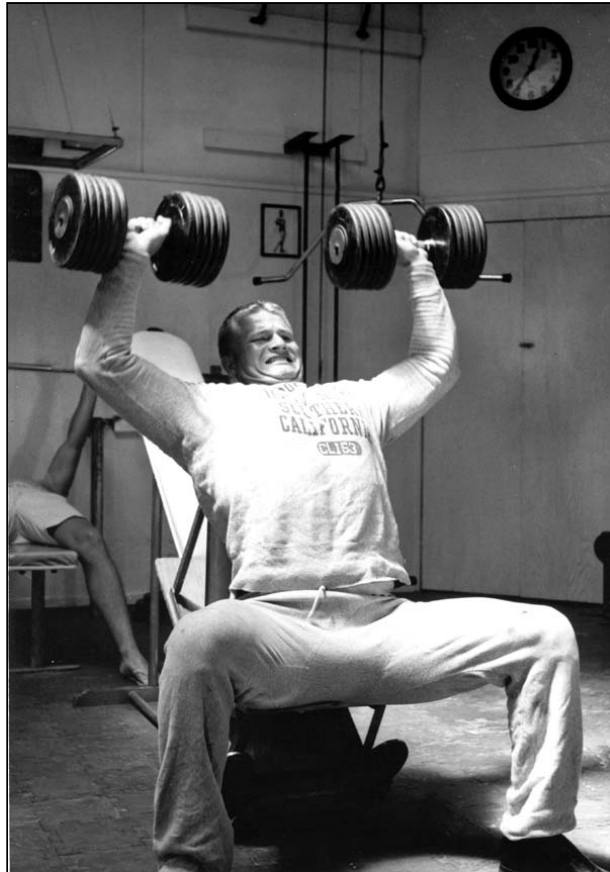
*Harold, Bill's brother, a gym member, and Bill, in front of the Los Angeles Manchester Gym. Photograph taken in 1964.*

Over the next few years I paid a price for this financial success. My family life was a disaster. There weren't enough hours in the day to remember my wife and children, let alone my employees. My few workouts were being done at different YMCAs and eventually something I never thought would happen did. I quit training all together to strictly concentrate on business.

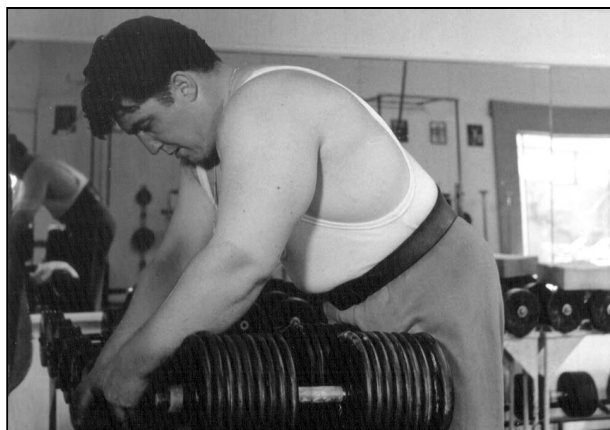
The demise of my marriage was just a part of my life's continued downward spiral. Next, American Health/Silhouette's main

corporation declared bankruptcy. I found myself at the age of thirty able to put everything I valued into a cigar box and close the lid.

My way of starting over was leaving Sacramento with a stack of bills and some cash from the distress sale of the P-Street Gym. The money went as a down payment to buy George Redpath's Gym, on Manchester Boulevard in south central Los Angeles.



*Dallas Long, M.D., pressing a pair of 135-pound dumbbells.*

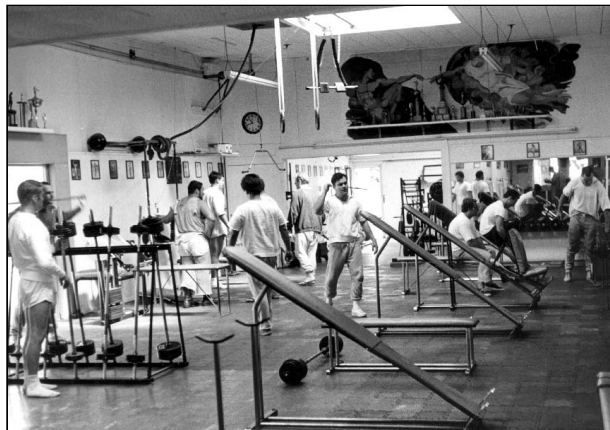


*Pat Casey preparing to incline press a pair of 210-pound dumbbells.*

Redpath's Gym had been in operation since 1949. It was the first coed gym in the United States. It had a reputation for attracting all walks of life. National and Olympic track athletes, Dallas Long and Rink Babka; Jim LeFever and other great players from the Los Angeles Dodgers; world power lifting champions, Pat

Casey, Bill Thurber and top athletes from the University of Southern California regularly used the facilities.

Once word spread that I had purchased the gym, it began attracting even more hard-core athletes and bodybuilders. Our mission statement should have read: Bigger and Stronger is Better. Chuck Ahrens and Steve Marjanian complained that 150-pound dumbbells weren't heavy enough. Dennis Tinerino, before winning major physique titles, left New York City to spend his summers training there. Chris Dickerson, another prize pupil, got his start at the Manchester location.



*A typical Saturday morning at the Manchester Gym. Notice the rings and climbing rope hanging from the ceiling.*

On Saturday afternoons, from 2:00-5:00, the doors were open to anyone wanting to train, free of charge. It turned the gym into an even larger three-ring circus. People came to watch; others came to impress. One monster, with hands like a Neanderthal man, challenged all-comers to a finger-pulling contest and ended up getting his finger broken. I won the 1961 and the 1967 NABBA Professional Mr. Universe titles mainly because of the intensity I trained around. You had to be good to hang with them.



## Chapter XXXII - A Time To Cast Away

### If You Can Smile

*If you can smile when things go wrong*

*And say, "It doesn't matter."*

*If you can laugh off care and woe*

*And trouble makes you fatter;*

*If you can keep a happy face*

*When all around are blue—*

*Then have your head examined, Bud,*

*There's something wrong with you!*

*For one thing I've arrived at:*

*There are no "ands" or "buts";*

*The guy that's grinning all the time*

*Must be completely nuts.*

Author Unknown



*Bill consulted with the aerospace program as a personal trainer for executives and some of the astronauts for over ten years.*

Craig Whitehead, M.D., migrated from Florida to use the Los Angeles Manchester Gym, while preparing for the 1963 AAU Mr. America contest. Craig became acquainted with Harold Morrison, M.D., Chief Medical Director for North American Rockwell Corporation, the company heavily involved in the Apollo Space Program. Dr. Morrison invited Craig to their corporate office in Downey, California, to speak to the executives on the benefits of regimented exercise programs. He told them it would help curb heart attacks and reduce the high levels of stress that many of the employees were experiencing. Craig did such an excellent job that the company introduced a healthy-heart menu in the executive's dining room and set aside specific hours in their fitness facility strictly for them.



*Bill, Al Christensen and Craig Whitehead, M.D., in Winterhaven, Florida, in the mid-1960s.*

Craig recommended that Dr. Morrison hire me as a consultant to act as their personal trainer. I became a part of the program for the next ten years and was paid an hourly wage that equaled that of a practicing attorney.

Working with such an elite group broadened my scope on the health and fitness market in ways I had never considered. Physical fitness could be sold at a high cost to those who had the means and desire, but didn't have the knowledge to succeed on their own. The Los Angeles Manchester Gym wasn't the ideal location to attract that class of clientele. It was situated on the fringes of the Watts area, which was damaged badly during the 1965 five-day race riots. Harold (my brother) and I spent five nights on the roof of the building armed with two loaded shotguns and garden hoses during that time.



*Dr. John McCarthy, President of North American Rockwell, takes a run on a manually operated treadmill, as Harold Morrison, M.D., and Bill offer encouragement.*

My final decision to sell the Manchester Gym occurred while my children were visiting for a summer. Judy and I had decided to take them to an Italian restaurant close by. Three young black men proceeded to park in the space I had already two-thirds occupied. In an effort to avoid trouble, I backed our car out to give up the space. As we walked toward the restaurant one of them waited belligerently. I stopped and said, "Hey Man! You forgot to do something!" He sneered and said, "What'd I forget to do...you\*&#@\*^?" I said, "You forgot to thank me for the parking space." He took a swing. I knocked him to the pavement and his friends came running back to help, as all hell broke loose.

We made it to the open door of the restaurant as one of the three blacks screamed, "I live a couple of blocks from here. I'm gonna'

get a gun to blow your Mother %#% head off!” Minutes later, with the children crying and Judy insisting that we leave, I turned to find the three standing on the sidewalk holding tire irons. With one synchronized move the tire irons were air-born. One hit in my groin area while another clipped the side of my head. Picking up the closest iron, I went after them even though it was difficult to walk. In the short time it took us to reach our car, the parking lot had filled with a horde of blacks throwing objects. I backed the car out towards the alley just as a machete skittered across the trunk and bounced over the roof. I stopped and threw the tire iron, hoping to knock someones head off, but it bounced harmlessly on the ground.

Back at the gym the kids were still crying. Judy was nearly speechless as they went upstairs to the apartment. Harold went inside to bring out the two loaded shotguns we had used for protection during the riots. We cruised the neighborhood for hours. Thankfully, we didn't find the original three. Life was too short to do something even more stupid than I'd already done.



*Bill and Dr. Morrison gazing inside the Apollo 11 space capsule, after its return to earth from the moon in 1969.*

Bill Pearl's Manchester Gym was history. I was looking for something to do. Chuck Fish phoned, "Bill! I need your help.

The Herald Examiner (one of the two daily newspapers in Los Angeles) has gone on strike. I 'gotta' get a bunch of guys together to drive strikebreakers across the picket lines. It'll be a piece of cake. All we 'gotta' do is pick'em up at a certain place, drive'em to work, and then escort'em back when their shifts are over. If anyone gives us shit we'll pound their 'friggin' heads in!" That was easy for him to say. Chuck held the World Wrestling Federation record for breaking bones and putting opponents out of commission. But, with nothing better to do with my time, and thinking the strike would probably last a few days, I said, "Why not?"

The first night on the job, a hit-and-run driver broadsided the new Pontiac station wagon I was responsible for, sending half of the passengers to the emergency room. By the end of the first week, I had changed more flat tires and cleaned more car windows than I care to remember. Unbelievably, the second week was worse. While waiting at the gate of the newspaper's parking lot, someone called out, "My God! It's Bill Pearl! Bill, roll down your window, I'm a big fan of yours." Trying to stay impartial to both sides, I did. The union worker leaned forward, spit in my face and began throwing punches.



*NASA scientist, Ray Stoddard, Bill, and Los Angeles Dodger's pitcher, Sandy Koufax, get an orientation on the material used for space flight.*

The strike continued for months with no sign of either side giving in. All of the windows in the block-long newspaper building were bricked over. Armed guards patrolled both the outside and the inside, twenty-four hours a day. Even at home, Judy became afraid for either of us to leave our apartment.

The job came to an end on the night I dropped two non-union workers off at the Royal Motel in midtown Los Angeles. A man dressed in a long black coat stepped from a telephone booth, drew a pistol, shot both men dead, then ambled towards the station wagon.

# Chapter XXXIII - A Dream Realized

## Stick To Your Task

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;*

*Beginners are many, but enders are few.*

*Honor, power, place, and praise*

*Will come, in time, to the one who stays.*

*Stick to your task till it sticks to you;*

*Bend at it, sweat at it, smile at it too;*

*For out of the bend and the sweat and the smile Will come life's victories, after awhile.*

Author Unknown



*Bill Pearl's Pasadena Health Club was a success from its opening day.*

The next several months were spent traveling the Los Angeles area selling Universal Gym equipment. This was an excellent opportunity to find a location for the dream gym I had planned. A fourteen-thousand square foot, two-story building, with ample parking and a separate house on the property, became available. The location was ideal. Pasadena, California, had a population of quarter million, with the affluent neighboring cities of San Marino, South Pasadena and Sierra Madre to draw from. The location was within walking distance of the California Institute



of Technology and the Pasadena City College. The competition was a YMCA and the run-down Pasadena Athletic Club.

Bill Pearl's Pasadena Health Club was a success from the opening day. The gym was divided into three separate facilities. The upstairs was for women only. The downstairs was divided into two areas where the front half was a general conditioning area, with specific hours for men and women, and the back half of the building was allocated to advanced bodybuilders. We turned one of the front offices into a health food, training and accessory store. The profits from the store paid for the building and most of the overhead.



*Ladies hours at the Pasadena Health Club.*

We limited the membership of the club to one thousand yearly members. After the first year, there was a waiting list of prospective members. Our retention rate was over 80 percent. One of our best forms of advertising was the large glassed-in membership board, displaying every member's name in small white plastic letters under the month of the year he had enrolled. When the person renewed for the second year, a red dot was put after his name. Those who'd been members for five years or longer had their names displayed in gold letters. It wasn't uncommon for members who only sporadically used the club to

renew their memberships just to keep their names and position on the board.

Personal trainers weren't allowed to instruct our members; instead, everyone was given special staff attention. At least one trained staff member was in each of the three areas from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., six days a week. If a member began missing workouts, he was phoned to find out why. Special greeting cards were sent to let them know they were appreciated. We mailed monthly written reports to medical doctors and therapists who referred their patients. The adjoining lounge area had a color television with fresh coffee brewing. Lockers, towels, soap, toiletries, hair dryers, tanning beds and a shoeshine machine were available at no additional cost to the members.

It was essential for the club to have facilities for hard-core bodybuilders, if for no other reason because I needed a place to train. As much thought went into equipping that area as the rest of the gym. Many of the top bodybuilders in the Los Angeles area became members when the gym first opened; others straggled in. It wasn't long before the hard-core membership read like the "Who's Who" of bodybuilding. Chris Dickerson, Jim Morris, Dr. Clint Beyerle, Dave Johns, C.F. Smith, M.D., and Bill Markakis were just a few of the more prominent bodybuilders who trained there. I looked the other way while young Bill Kazmaier (who later became the World's Strongest Man) and Dr. Sal Arria (co-founder of the ISSA Certification Course for Fitness Trainers) slipped in for periodic workouts because they couldn't afford a membership.

The club had the ability to draw from around the world. Mary Peters, accompanied by her coach, Buster McShane, came from Belfast, Northern Ireland, prior to her winning the pentathlon

gold medal for Great Britain, in the 1972 Munich games. Shigeru Sugita traveled from Osaka, Japan, to spend months training at the gym preparing for the NABBA Amateur Mr. Universe, which he won in 1976. Nineteen-year-old Mr. Egypt showed up one morning carrying a small bag of clothing. “Mr. Bill Pearl, my name is Christopher Solow. I have come from Cairo, Egypt. It has taken me two years to get here. I have worked my way from Egypt, to Lebanon, to Holland, and then to the United States, to become one of your disciples. I have no money to pay you. If you will take me on as a student I will work for you for nothing.” I asked him, “Do you have a place to stay?” “No.” “When did you have your last meal?” “When I left New York a few days ago.” I gave him \$20.00 and told him he could sleep in the gym. After following me around for a few weeks, there wasn’t anything I could say or do that he couldn’t do better. He became one of our most loyal employees.



*Buster McShane and Mary Peters, who finished her training for three different Olympic games at Pearl's Gym.*

We operated the club from 1968 until the end of 1979. The death of a member started me thinking more about the future than the present. It was a Monday morning. The gym was loaded with members. Don was standing at a built-in counter where training programs were filed. I asked, “How you doin’ Don?”

“I’m doing great Bill! Never felt better. Just got a haircut. I’m going to get in a workout before taking my lovely wife to lunch,” he said.

Immediately after those words, he dropped to the floor, dead. The five medical doctors training in the gym failed to revive him. The coroner’s office instructed me to cover the body and not to move it. It lay where it fell, for over six hours. During that time, at least a hundred members stepped over it and not one asked who it was or what had happened. I decided to start doing more of the things I’d been “waiting to do when I had more free time.”

# Chapter XXXIV - Another Goal Achieved

## Books are Keys

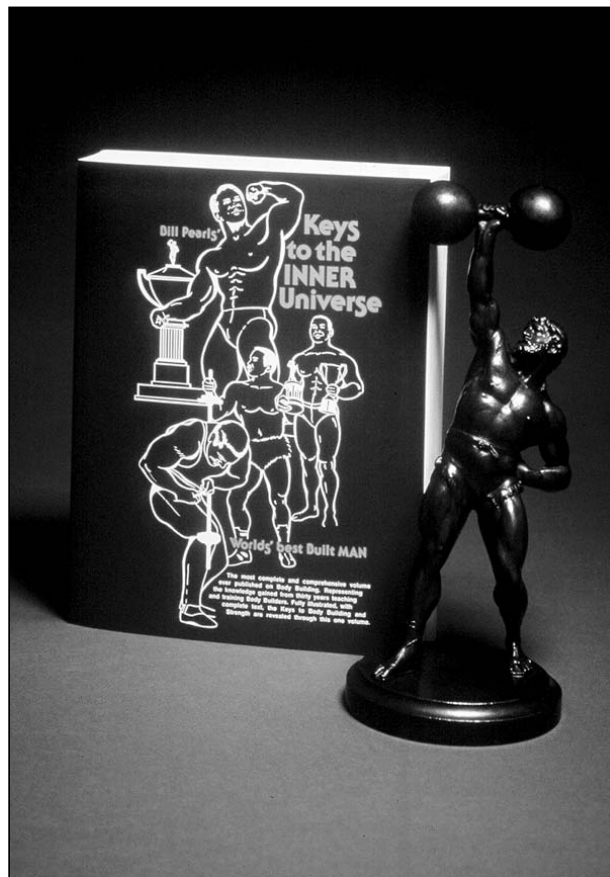
*Books are keys to wisdom's treasure;*

*Books are gates to lands of pleasure;*

*Books are paths that upward lead;*

*Books are friends. Come, let us read.*

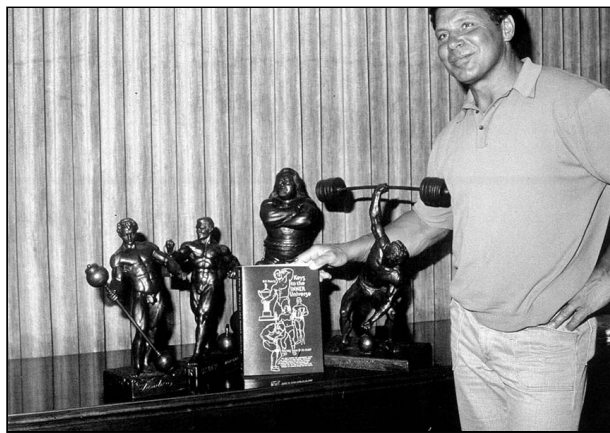
Author Unknown



*Many call Keys to the Inner Universe the Bible of Bodybuilding.*

Writing Key's to the Inner Universe was one of the things that I had been putting off. It became a four-year project. Two experiences (one from my youth and the other when I was an adult) are mainly responsible for the book. As a child, I often saw advertisements in magazines for the Charles Atlas training courses. In the advertisements a skinny kid was shown at the

beach with his girlfriend. A big bully walking over kicked sand in the skinny boy's face, before taking the girl away. The next portion showed the 98-pound weakling with a terrific physique, simply because he had taken the Charles Atlas course. The bully was now afraid to kick sand in his face and he got his girlfriend back. During those early years, I couldn't afford the cost of the Charles Atlas program. Instead, I saved to buy a weight set. As a result I've weight trained for the past several decades.



*Writing Keys to the Inner Universe became a four-year project for Judy and Bill.*

Charles Moss, M.D., was the most influencing factor for me to write *Keys to the Inner Universe*. Dr. Moss began encouraging me to write a book on fitness when we first met, in Sacramento in 1954. After his retirement from the United States Air Force in the late 1960s, Dr. Moss became a member of our Manchester Gym in Los Angeles and continued to encourage me to get started.

It was through John Grimek that Dr. Moss and I met. Charlie had accompanied John from York, Pennsylvania, to watch our posing exhibitions at the 1954 *Ed Yarick Show* in Oakland, California. I recall how impressive Dr. Moss appeared in his United States Air Force uniform. His jacket was adorned with rows of medals and service ribbons, and complemented with gold

clusters of a colonel pinned to his shirt collar. Fourteen years later he walked into the Manchester Gym, wearing a similar uniform, but the gold clusters were gone. Sergeant stripes were now sewn on his sleeve.

His difficulties came while he was in charge of a large military medical hospital in Turkey. He had two major concerns for American military personnel imprisoned there. The first was his inability to get better medical treatment for them; the second, the fact that families of these servicemen were forced to raise money to ransom them to freedom.

Dr. Moss had lodged several complaints and made special trips to Washington, D.C., where it became apparent there was more concern about keeping friendly relations with the Turkish government than with the welfare of a few rowdy American servicemen. To bring this miscarriage of justice to the attention of the American people, Charlie wrote a stinging, unauthorized article that was published in a major U.S. magazine. His reward was being discharged from the United States Air Force as a regular, but he was allowed to finish the last few years of his career in the reserves, at a rating of Master Sergeant.



*Charlie Moss, M.D., was the influencing factor for Bill to take up writing. Dr. Moss and John Grimek's close relationship dated back to the mid-1930s.*

*Keys to the Inner Universe* had its inception one Sunday morning. Dr. Moss, Judy, and I were talking about moving from smoggy Pasadena. I had just gone through a series of tests at the University of California, Santa Barbara, to determine how a hard-core bodybuilder would compare to elite track and field athletes strictly from a health and fitness standpoint. Dr. James Wright (author of the book *Anabolic Steroids and Sports*) had conducted the study. He commented that my results would have been even better if I didn't smoke. "What are you talking about?" I said, "I haven't smoked a cigarette since I was eleven years old!" He informed me that my lungs appeared to have the damage of a two-pack-a-day smoker. We concluded that the smog backed up against the San Gabriel Mountains was the culprit.

We decided that if Judy and I were to write a complete training manual, illustrating nearly every basic exercise done with barbells/dumbbells and the most commonly used exercise machines in health clubs, and showing the beginning and ending position of each exercise, with a brief description as to how the movements should be executed, I could act as a personal trainer anywhere in the world that had postal service (as long as everyone used the book, as a reference guide.) *Keys to the Inner Universe* grew to 648 pages and weighs over five pounds.

It took two years to photograph the beginning and ending positions of the 1,800 exercises that went into the book. Steve Green, a member of the Pasadena Health Club, came to the gym every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon, to shoot photos of me doing exercises. Joan Pledger, another member, spent several hours a day for four years, hand-illustrating Steve's photographs. Harry Montgomery, also a member, gave us working space in the layout department of TypeCraft to put the



book together. Four years later, as the printing press began to roll, Harry said, “Bill, I hope you know what you are doing. You’re going to have so much money into this project, you’ll never get it back.” My reply was, “Harry, don’t you worry about it. All we have to do is sell 50,000 copies. We’ll be fine.”

The first copy of the book went to Dr. Moss. We had spent over \$250,000.00, without having a clue what to do with the 9,999 copies stored at TypeCraft. My first thought was to get expert marketing advice. My immediate thoughts turned to Joe Weider. Joe took several minutes to scan the book before commenting, “Here’s what I would do. I’d carry a copy wherever I went and show the book to everyone that I came into contact with. When it got to the point where it started to make me puke to talk about it, I’d know I was making progress.”



*Betty and Joe Weider pose for photograph with Bill. Joe has been a big supporter of Bill for over fifty years.*

The next call went to Arthur Jones. I flew to Slidell, Louisiana, to spend two days and nights at his home listening to him talk about everything BUT the book. He had tossed his autographed copy on a table, never bothering to leaf through it. On the third day, I grew tired of his bullshit and said, “Arthur, you know why I’m here. I want your advice on how to market my book.” He looked at me as if I was the most stupid person on earth and

replied, “ADVERTISE, you silly bastard! ADVERTISE!” I called a cab and left for the airport.

We began doing everything we could imagine to market the book: running \$5,000.00 half-page, color ads in *Muscle and Fitness*, sending copies to the editors of the other major physique magazines. We visited health clubs, providing them with displays and leaving copies on consignment. We set up a booth at every fitness, sporting goods or bodybuilding show of consequence. Often our friend, Tom Lincir of Ivanko Barbell, shared his booth with us.

Within the first year we were averaging \$40,000.00 a month in sales out of the house on the Pasadena Health Club’s property. At any given time, there were two to three thousand copies of our book stored in the house, along with packaging and shipping materials. It was like a maze, getting from the front to the back. There was only room to eat and sleep, while trucks kept coming to either deliver or to pick up shipments.

Once distribution began, I started inserting into each book a flyer and a comprehensive feedback sheet stating that Bill Pearl would personally train a select number of students via mail. All the individual had to do was “fill out the following information and immediately return it to Bill Pearl’s Physical Fitness Architects.” We were averaging fifty letters a day with the filled-out information, along with checks or money orders to cover the cost. The volume of requests became impossible to control. There weren’t enough hours in the day to sell the book and handle the personal training, let alone run the gym.

Twenty-five years later, the book is still averaging sales of 10,000 copies per year in the United States alone. It has been translated

into German, Italian, Danish and Spanish. I'm still using the marketing tool that was suggested by Joe Weider. I carry a copy when speaking to audiences who are involved in fitness and give the book away as a gift. I do this by ending my presentation saying, "I have brought a gift for someone. To be fair, and to give everyone a chance, I'm going to ask a question. The first person to answer the question correctly will receive this book as a gift. (I then hold the book up.) If someone can tell me the author of the best book ever written on resistance weight training, this book, *Keys to the Inner Universe*, is yours!" The name "Bill Pearl" rings throughout the audience.



*"If someone can tell me the author of the best book on weight training... and I'm not looking for the name Arnold Schwarzenegger... this book, Keys to the Inner Universe, is yours as a gift."*

## Chapter XXXV - When Will We Learn?

### As A Man Soweth

*We must not hope to be mowers,  
And to gather the ripe gold ears,  
Unless we have first been sowers  
And watered the furrows with tears.  
  
It is not just as we take it,  
This mystical world of ours,  
Life's field will yield as we make it  
A harvest of thorns or flowers.*

Johann Wolfgang Van Goethe

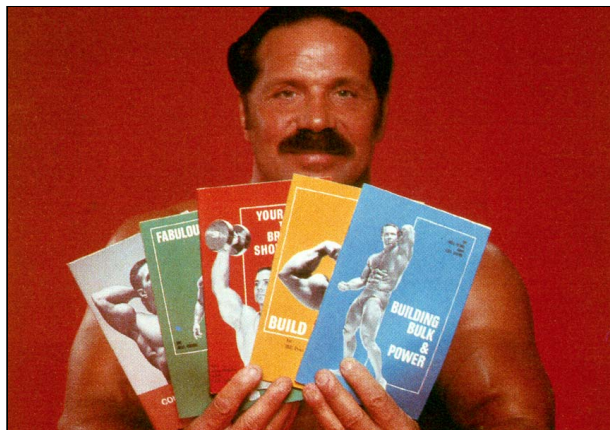


*Richard Hadder, Dave Johns, Bill, and Jim Morris celebrate the two hundredth birthday of the United States of America by wearing Bill's "All American" T-shirt.*

As previously mentioned, the names Pearl and Stern became synonymous in the bodybuilding world for twenty years, much the same as ham and eggs or barbells and dumbbells. We

collaborated on numerous business ventures. One of the first items we marketed was a form-fit T-shirt made by a company that Leo and George Redpath owned and operated. Next came a line of posing briefs in a variety of styles and colors. The briefs were manufactured exclusively for us by Elon of California, a San Diego-based company owned by Haydon Tallieffero, a friend and bodybuilding enthusiast.

Then, in the early 1960s, Leo and I put together a series of training booklets: *Building Bulk and Power*, *Complete Chest Development*, *Fabulous Forearms*, *Your Key to Broad Shoulders* and *Build Big Arms*. Countless thousands were sold through small ads in major physique magazines. Following our example, Vince Gironda, Reg Park, Larry Scott, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Chuck Sipes, Frank Zane and others produced training courses of their own.



*Leo and Bill sold countless thousands of their training booklets before other champion bodybuilders began to saturate the market.*

T-shirts remained a big seller. In 1976 we produced the Bicentennial Stars and Stripes “All American.” It continued to sell long after the two hundredth birthday of the United States.

Within our Pasadena Health Club, Judy and I operated a small health food store that carried the most popular brands of

products, mainly formulated for elite athletes. Among our best selling products was a line called “Scientific Nutrition.” John Balik, now better known as the publisher of *Iron Man Magazine*, was a major distributor of the line.

For several years, I had “Scientific Nutrition” products privately labeled under Physical Fitness Architects and continued to sell them through mail order and Bill Pearl Enterprises, our Phoenix, Oregon-based fitness store.

In the late 1970s, we were approached by a group of attorneys regarding a new business venture. They planned to offer a licensing agreement to anyone wanting to open health clubs in the United States and Canada. If agreed, the gyms would be called Bill Pearl’s Fitness Plus. For the use of our name, Judy and I were to receive stock in the corporation, in addition to a percentage of the gross receipts from the clubs. It sounded too good to be true. It was. We should have walked away.

Bill Pearl’s Fitness Plus began advertising the sale of the licensing agreement. The number of takers and inquiries were surprising. As the business grew, the attorneys suggested that we take a more active role in the overall operation. To show good faith, we were asked to purchase additional stock and sit on the board of directors. Two years later, there were sixty-nine health clubs using the name Bill Pearl’s Fitness Plus. Like an idiot, I convinced Judy that we should leave our percentage of the gross receipts on the books to help with company expansion.

In its third year, Bill Pearl’s Fitness Plus applied to the attorney general’s office of the state of California to be granted a permit to offer a franchise rather than a licensing agreement to anyone in California. The idea was to start franchising gyms in California

and then expand to other states, while offering the licensing agreement until this took place. Our corporate office in the Orange County area of southern California staffed twenty to twenty-five people who took care of the daily operations, telemarketing and advertising, and ran the week-long training school gym owners and staff were required to attend.

In 1982, the economy of the U.S. took a downturn. Some of the newer operations had difficulty meeting their obligations to Bill Pearl's Fitness Plus. They were told by the operation officer to take out loans and borrow on their homes and cars, or were threatened with lawsuits. New prospects considering getting involved with the company were being badgered to death. It became apparent that well-meaning people, not in a financial position to wait out the storm, were being pushed into making business decisions that could jeopardize not only them, but also their immediate families.

The financial picture of the U.S. remained stagnant. Finally, at a quarterly board meeting, Judy and I stated our concerns, then resigned from the board of directors. We also declined to renew the agreement that allowed the corporation to use the name Bill Pearl. Lawsuits were immediately filed by some of the gym owners against the Florida-based corporation.





*Bill Pearl's Championship nutrition products were formulated for elite athletes.*

Even though our main office was in California, most of the board of directors of Bill Pearl's Fitness Plus had no tangible assets in California. Judy and I lived in California with assets that could be attached. The judge ruled in favor of one defendant, but thankfully didn't award the million dollars the defendant was suing for. However, the judge did pierce the corporate code and ruled that Judy and I personally pay back all franchise fees. By the time the suits were settled, the only things we had to show for our efforts were more gray hair and diminishing trust in our fellow man.

Again in 1982, Herman Lewis, a biochemist, and owner of Shamrock Labs in Dublin, California, approached me with the idea of a Bill Pearl's Championship Nutrition line, which included over sixty different products.



The line was distributed through health food stores, super markets, sporting goods chains and health clubs and sold extremely well as long as I remained visible in the fitness industry.



*Bill Pearl's Weight Gain products were huge sellers.*

After many years of ups, downs and frustration at the mercy of vendors who went out of business, made radical changes in pricing, or otherwise changed the game plan, Judy and I decided that we did the best with things we could produce ourselves. Our books have proven that people were searching for information and variety in their exercise regimen. I designed a series of training program cards and posters, depicting numerous choices to help with program changes essential to maintaining interest and results. We promote them on our website [www.billpearl.com](http://www.billpearl.com) in two series: a home series using barbells, dumbbells and a minimum of home equipment, and a pro-series, consisting of nine posters, each devoted to a body part and using commercial gym equipment.

Always looking for new projects and challenges, I imagine I'll continue to search for the "goose that laid the golden egg" until they close the lid on the box.

## Chapter XXXVI - A Sad Farewell

### People Liked Him

*People liked him, not because  
He was rich or known to fame;  
He had never won applause  
As a star in any game.  
His was not a brilliant style;  
His was not a forceful way.  
But he had a gentle smile  
And kindly word to say.*

Edgar A. Guest



*Bill conducting a seminar in Derby, England, in 1987. He promised himself this would be the last time he would appear in public in a pair of posing briefs.*

Judy and I began commuting from Pasadena to our small ranch in southern Oregon, one week each month, in 1975. Our first project was to convert our large barn into a private gym. A select group of friends were invited to use the facility and it has remained that way.

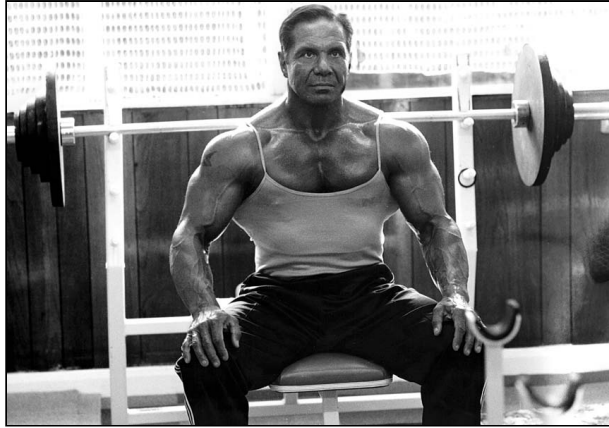


*A view of Pearl's private gym, which is housed in a converted barn on his small ranch in southern Oregon.*

John McGinnis (a gym owner and physique promoter) from Derby, England, came to visit during part of his trip through the United States. He convinced me to give a posing exhibition at the 1987 Derby Classic. I promised myself and everyone I cared for, this would be the last time I'd be seen in public in a pair of posing briefs.

During the time between John's Oregon visit and my 1987 commitment, McGinnis contracted stomach cancer. In Oregon he was full of life, but by the time Judy and I arrived in England, he was barely holding on. Yet, he was insistent that the contest not be canceled and was adamant about introducing me onstage.

It became apparent that John had been too sick to properly promote the contest. The NABBA Mr. Universe contest was taking place the weekend before the Derby Classic. I thought if I volunteered to give a free posing exhibition at their contest, it would draw attention to John's. They declined my offer. One promoter said, "It's not worth our time having you onstage, but we will make an announcement that you will be posing at John's show the following weekend." In the matter of a few short years, I'd gone from being one of the highest paid modern bodybuilders giving exhibitions to offering to pose for nothing.



*Photographs of Bill taken in Derby, England, thirty-four years after winning his first NABBA Mr. Universe title.*



The day of the Derby Classic wasn't what we had imagined. John was lying on the floor of his office trying to conserve strength. By 4:00 p.m. he had become comatose and was rushed to the hospital. Just before the show's curtains opened, we phoned to inform his wife that it was a full house. She replied, "I just told John. He whispered 'Thank you,' then closed his eyes and died."

## Chapter XXXVII - New Beginnings

**Pass It On** Have you had a kindness shown?

*Pass it on.*

*'Twas not given for thee alone.*

*Pass it on.*

*Let it travel down the years, Let it wipe another's tears, Till in heaven the deed appears.*

*Pass it on.*



Henry Burton

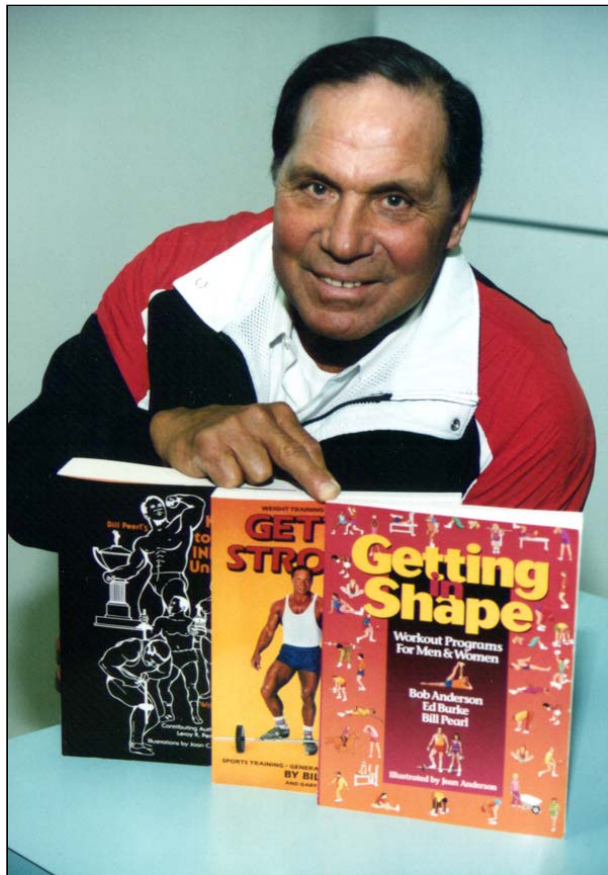
*Pearl plays farmer.*

The first year in Oregon was terrific. Building the home gym, working out six days a week, remodeling other structures on the property and mowing acres of weeds kept us busy. Then boredom set in.

We purchased a piece of commercial real estate in the small town of Phoenix, Oregon (just on the outskirts of Medford). We established Bill Pearl Enterprises, a general fitness store that sold weightlifting equipment and nutritional supplements. Our mail order business, which included book sales, was moved to the new location. This gave us more to do each day than we could get done. Shortly after, Lloyd Kahn (owner of Shelter Publications, publisher of Bob Anderson's best seller *Stretching* and of

*Galloway's Book on Running*) contacted us. Lloyd had seen *Keys to the Inner Universe* while visiting Bob Anderson. He wanted to publish a smaller and more mainstream version of the book.

*Getting Stronger* was published in 1986. It has become one of the best selling books written on resistance weight training. It has been translated into four languages, with sales of over 600,000 copies in North America and a million worldwide. Twenty-four of the country's top coaches, trainers and athletes (including two world-record holders and eleven Olympic coaches) helped in developing the strength training programs featured in the book.



*Keys to the Inner Universe* remains Pearl's favorite. "Those looking for the best free-weights reference have little choice but to turn to this book."

Regardless of the success of *Getting Stronger*, *Keys to the Inner Universe* remains my favorite. It continues to sell at a surprising rate for the reason that over the past three decades, exercise

machines have become so popular most people have forgotten how to use free weights. Those who are looking for the best reference guide to incorporate free weights back in their training regimen have little choice but to turn to *Keys to the Inner Universe*.

# Chapter XXXVIII - When Opportunity Knocks

## Three Things Come Not Back

*Remember three things come not back:*

*The arrow sent upon its track—*

*It will not swerve, it will not stay*

*Its speed; it flies to wound, or slay.*

*The spoken word so soon forgot*

*By thee; but it has perished not;*

*In other hearts 'tis living still*

*And doing work for good or ill.*

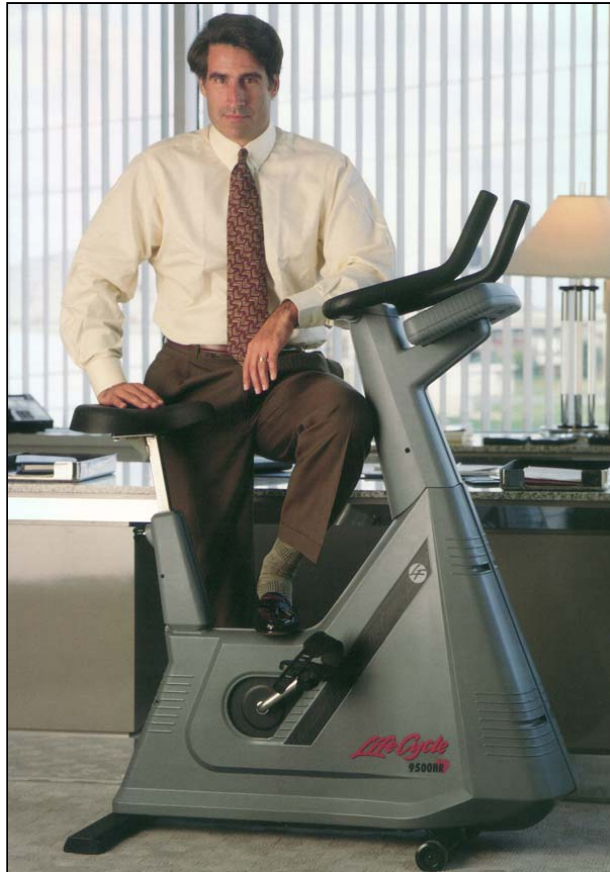
*And the lost opportunity*

*That cometh back no more to thee,*

*In vain thou sweepest, in vain dost yearn, Those three will nevermore return.*

Author Unknown





*Augie Nieto, former President of Life Fitness, Inc., kept Pearl in the public's eye by involving him in the promotion of their fitness products. Bill is still consulting for the company.*

“Hello, Bill, this is Paul Ward. We used to train together at Stern’s Gym nearly forty years ago. Do you remember me?” How could I have forgotten Paul? He had played professional football, obtained a Ph.D, coached at several colleges, acted as an Olympic athletic trainer and was still winning Master’s National Power-Lifting Championships. He also conducted numerous research studies on all aspects of weight training. “I’m working as a consultant for Life Fitness and Health and Tennis, the chain of fitness centers. We’re designing a new line of computerized strength training machines called Lifecircuit®. I’d like to send you some information to obtain your input.”



*Dr. Paul Ward played professional football, coached at several colleges, acted as an Olympic athletic trainer and still found time to consult with major exercise equipment manufacturers.*

He described Lifecircuit® as if the concepts were new, yet his comments were surprisingly similar to those Judy and I had heard from Arthur Jones in the early 1970s. “The machines offer the user a set-up test that automatically determines the correct weight to begin an exercise. The resistance can be increased, or decreased, just by pressing a button. In addition, you can automatically increase the negative resistance of the eccentric part of the movement. Here’s what I’m talking about. Let’s use a barbell curl as an example. The positive movement, known as concentric, occurs when you curl a barbell to shoulder height. The negative motion, known as eccentric, happens while lowering the barbell back to arm’s length. In theory, if a person is capable of curling 100 pounds to shoulder height, then that

person is capable of correctly lowering 140 pounds back to the starting position. Our new machines are the only ones that have the built-in capabilities to do this. If you don't want to use an additional negative workload, press another button which will cause the workload for the positive (concentric) and negative (eccentric) to become the same as if you were using free-weights or standard exercise machines.”



*Bill's relationship with Life Fitness requires him to travel as much as 200,000 miles each year.*

I asked, “How difficult is it for someone like me, who is not comfortable pushing buttons, to program machines? And another thing, do they have the feel of barbells and dumbbells?” “That’s the main reason for the call. If you like what’s in the information, we want to invite you to Irvine, California, to train on the equipment. Hopefully you’ll give us feedback before we introduce the “circuit” to the members of Health and Tennis.”

The conversation with Paul convinced me that the Lifecircuit® machines had a potential to revolutionize the fitness industry. Their unique features accommodated the needs of people from beginning to advanced bodybuilders and those working with injuries, teaching people how to exercise correctly, while helping to eliminate the need for personal instructions.

Paul phoned again a few days later. “We’re on our way to Oregon. I’m bringing Ken Germano, the marketing director of Life Fitness, with me.” When they arrived, Ken left most of the conversation to Paul. Ken seemed more interested in my work schedule and if I had the time and enthusiasm to assist with the promotion of the new product line.



*Ken Germano was mainly responsible for Pearl going to work with Life Fitness, in 1986. Bill is still traveling worldwide for the company.*

I made the trip to Irvine to train on the prototype machines. Speaking with Augie Nieto, president of Life Fitness, I commented, “Your new machines could have a larger impact on the fitness industry than Universal or Nautilus!” He smiled and asked, “Would you like to come to work for us?” My reply was, “No! Not unless I have every piece of the new line in my barn to train on.”

Our barn was transformed into one of the most high-tech fitness facilities in the state of Oregon. Everyone using the “circuit” became a part of an experiment. The gamut ran from 80-year-old neighbors to former Mr. Olympia winner Chris Dickerson. We began using the machines for pre-exhaustion training, negative-only training and super-setting, along with incorporating them into programs with standard weight equipment and free weights.



*Inside view of Bill's high-tech home gym, better known as the "Barn."*

I designed training programs based on the records that I kept, to demonstrate the unique versatility of the equipment. Nobody from Life Fitness questioned me on my presentation of the line. In fact, Life Fitness hasn't questioned me on anything I've done for the company over the past two decades. Their confidence in me has been one of my biggest motivators for not retiring.

Here is a side note that may benefit up-and-coming bodybuilders who have hopes of finding a career in the fitness industry. At the same time Life Fitness approached me, they also approached Lee Haney, who was, at that time, the current and several times Mr. Olympia winner. The plan was to match Lee Haney (the young bull) with Bill Pearl (the old bull). I had the greatest respect for Lee and was looking forward to working with him. I later heard that Lee's business manager had asked for a huge sum of up-front



money to get him involved. Augie Nieto (president of Life Fitness) said, “NO!”



*Arnold and Augie discuss business tactics, as Bill keeps his back to the camera to show off his bald spot. He later commented, “It’s the only thing besides my waist that continues to grow.”*

Years later, while in Atlanta, Georgia, I stopped by Lee Haney’s gym. He asked, “Are you still working for Life Fitness?” The old bull had to speak up, “Yes!” I said. “And I’d like to share something with you that may be helpful in the future. Back in 1988, the amount of money your manager asked Life Fitness for, and you didn’t receive—I did. It just took me longer to get it.” The point being: I felt Lee had passed up the opportunity to work for the greatest exercise equipment manufacturer in the world. Instead of looking at the big picture and the potential benefits of association, the individual Lee had relied on simply looked for the “quick buck” as the bottom line. In reality, what

Lee passed up were dividends that would have continued long after people had forgotten the number of times he had won the Mr. Olympia contest. My length of time working for Life Fitness is proof. I still act as a spokesperson promoting the company by traveling hundreds of thousands of miles each year. The most exciting thing for me is seeing so many of the young people, who were a part of the original team, still with the company and now filling executive roles.

# Chapter XXXIX - The Inner Self

## Answer To Prayer

*We ask for strength and God Gives us difficulties which make us strong.*

*We pray for wisdom and God sends us problems,*

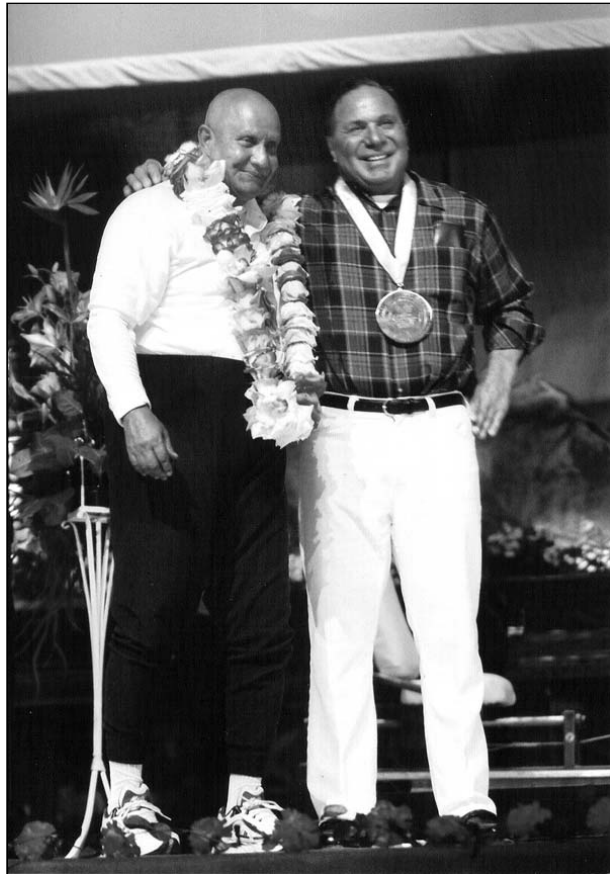
*The solution of which develops wisdom.*

*We plead for prosperity and God gives us dangers to overcome.*

*We ask for favors—God gives us opportunities.*

*This is the answer.*

Author Unknown



*Seventy-one-year old Sri Chinmoy being congratulated by seventy-two-year old Bill, after performing feats of strength Bill would not have attempted in his youth.*

My father had mixed emotions about Christianity. He felt it was largely responsible for the demise of the Native Americans. Nothing anyone could say would alter this belief. There may have



been a slight change in dad's attitude during my parent's older years, when they became involved in the Church of Latter-Day Saints.

As previously mentioned, I regularly attended church services during junior and senior high school. The last two years of my military enlistment I joined a Bible study group. I spent hours reading the Bible, (both testaments), the Talmud, the Book of Mormon and the Testimony of Buddha. Comparing each to the other, I attempted to better understand the different philosophies. This resulted in me NOT becoming a better Christian—just more confused as to what is right and what is wrong.



*Sri Chinmoy welcoming Bill and Judy to Jamaica, New York, to celebrate the first anniversary of Guru's weightlifting career in 1986.*

A young woman came to our fitness store in 1985, dressed in a sari. She introduced herself as Kelly Chamblis, but preferred to be called by her Sanskrit name, Mandahbi. (The name given to her by her spiritual teacher, Sri Chinmoy.) Mandahbi had recently attended a large world peace concert organized by Guru Sri Chinmoy and his followers in New York City. She learned that Guru had just taken up weight training and mentioned that she lived close to our business. Guru apparently knew of my

background and asked if I would answer some basic questions regarding his strength training. Her first visit lasted fifteen minutes. A few days later, she was back asking more questions and taking notes.

After several very pleasant meetings, Judy and I became curious. We began asking questions about Sri Chinmoy. The more we learned, the more fascinated we became. We discovered he is best known for his peace meditations at the United Nations, his concerts, and his literary and artistic achievements. He has written over fifteen hundred books, painted millions of pictures, and plays numerous musical instruments. Guru expects his disciples to be nearly as active in their own way. His followers operate several spiritual centers and varied business ventures around the world, attempting to promote world peace through non-violent efforts.



*Bill and Judy with good friends and Sri Chinmoy devotees, Asbrita Ferman and Abakash Konapiaty.*

For the next several months, we stayed in touch with Guru mainly through Mandahbi, as I continued to play the role of weightlifting coach. In late June of 1986, we were invited, along with other world champion bodybuilders, weightlifters, Olympians, dignitaries and students, to attend a large gathering in Jamaica, New York, to celebrate the first anniversary of Sri

Chinmoy's weightlifting career. Carl Lewis and Al Orter were guests, along with Terry and Jan Todd, both world champion power lifters.

Guru and a group of his students met the two of us at the La Guardia International Airport. Our first impression, especially of Guru, was overwhelming. The kindness in all of their hearts was obvious; yet, as they walked toward us, an aura of light appeared to surround Guru. His first words were, "Oh my, Bill and Judy Pearl! I've been waiting years for this! I've finally gotten to meet you. I have respected Bill since I was a young boy, living in India. I think of him as my soul brother. I am so happy to finally get to meet you both in person. Thank you so much for coming."



*"Two most precious Pearls" according to Sri Chinmoy.*

Ashrita Ferman and Abakash Konapiaty were assigned as guides for our stay in New York. Abakash is an avid weightlifting enthusiast, along with owning a modern printing facility in the New York City area. Ashrita has the ability, plus the energy, to have held seventy-four of the records found in the *Guinness Book of Records*. Both are extremely intelligent, patient and completely devoted to Sri Chinmoy. Like all of his students, they give credit to Guru for their inspiration to attempt to make a positive difference.

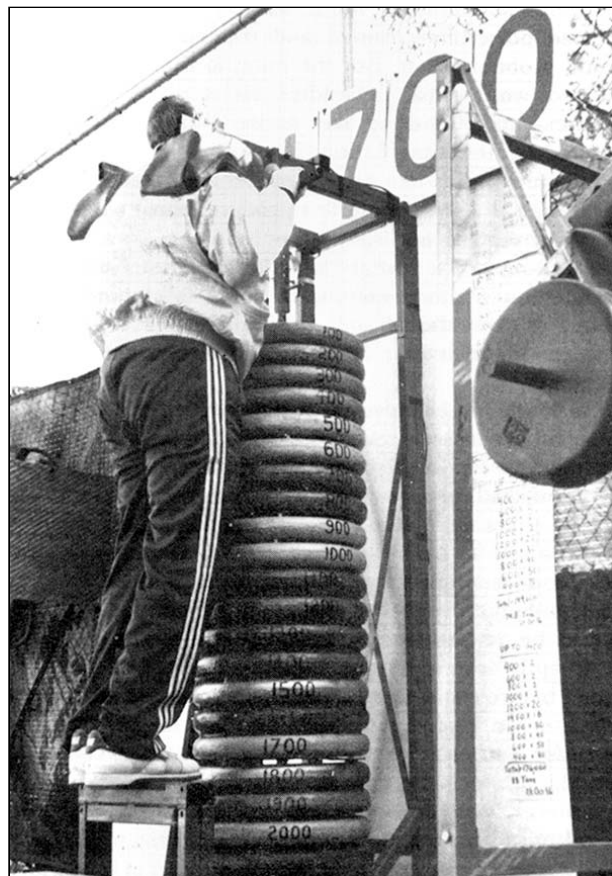
From the airport we were driven to a five-star hotel, handed the key to a room decorated with bouquets of flowers, a large basket of fruit, and given time to freshen up. Later, Abakash drove us to a vegetarian restaurant owned by another of Guru's students. Guru sat at our table and talked mostly about my bodybuilding accomplishments and seldom referred to himself. His only spiritual comment was that he constantly prayed for a oneness-world filled with God-loving people. Those sitting close by were particularly eager to hear what Guru had to say and listened to every word.



*The 12th time that Sri Chinmoy had lifted Mahasamrat Bill Pearl overhead with one arm. Bill is the most lifted person in Sri Chinmoy's "Lifting Up the World with a Oneness-Heart" program.*

Nearly a thousand people attended the evening performance. A mixed choir opened the presentation by singing East Indian spiritual songs that Guru had composed. Through the four-hour

marathon, Guru performed one feat of strength after another, never failing to complete an attempt. The total amount of weight he lifted that evening was 157,000 pounds. Two of the feats I remember clearly were of him supporting 1,700 pounds on his shoulders and then doing a partial calf-raise. The other was to raise two 500-pound dumbbells, held in racks a few inches below arm's length, and support them overhead. Making this even more difficult to believe was that Guru was fifty-four years old, weighed 148 pounds and had seriously weight trained for only sixteen months.



*Sri Chinmoy raised 1,700 pounds using a standing calf-raise machine on 31 October 1986.*

During a short break in his performance, I was asked to come onstage to demonstrate a standing-side-lateral-raise (a movement Guru felt may help improve his shoulder strength). I demonstrated the exercise and then handed the pair of 10-pound



dumbbells to him. After completing three repetitions, he stopped and said in a loud voice, “This is too heavy. I can’t do this.” I was shocked! All evening Guru had lifted weights that I would never attempt, yet, when it came to Sri Chinmoy—his outer person—10-pound dumbbells were too heavy.

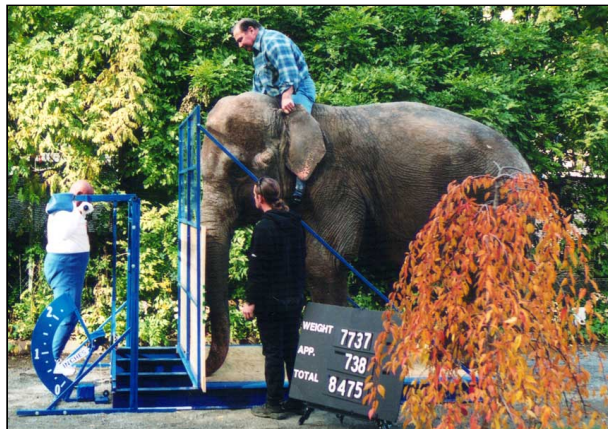
Time didn’t seem to enter into the equation. It was well past midnight before several hundreds of his followers traveled to another location to be fed and to listen to Guru play musical instruments and sing spiritual songs that were foreign to my ears.



*Bill commenting to a packed audience of Sri Chinmoy's followers, "Everywhere this man walks, he leaves stepping-stones for people like you and me to follow."*

Soon after Judy and I returned home, articles and photographs of Guru began appearing in fitness magazines. It was mentioned that I was one of the guests who had witnessed the lifting event. Some of the phone calls and letters I received were to question the legitimacy of what had been written, especially the pressing of two 500-pound dumbbells; also the 1700-pound standing-calf-raise. My response was, “I saw him stand erect with the 1700 pounds on his shoulders and do what could be considered a partial calf-raise. Regarding the 500-pound dumbbells—Guru did not press the weight overhead; he supported the weight overhead at arm’s length.”

Terry Todd (a true historian on weight training) had also witnessed the lifts and apparently became determined to set the records straight. His written rebuttal as to what actually took place brought additional publicity for Guru. It was not the type of publicity either Guru or anyone who loves and respects him was looking for. With the hopes of putting an end to the negative publicity, I volunteered to edit future articles on his lifting events to make sure the lifts were described in more accurate terminology.

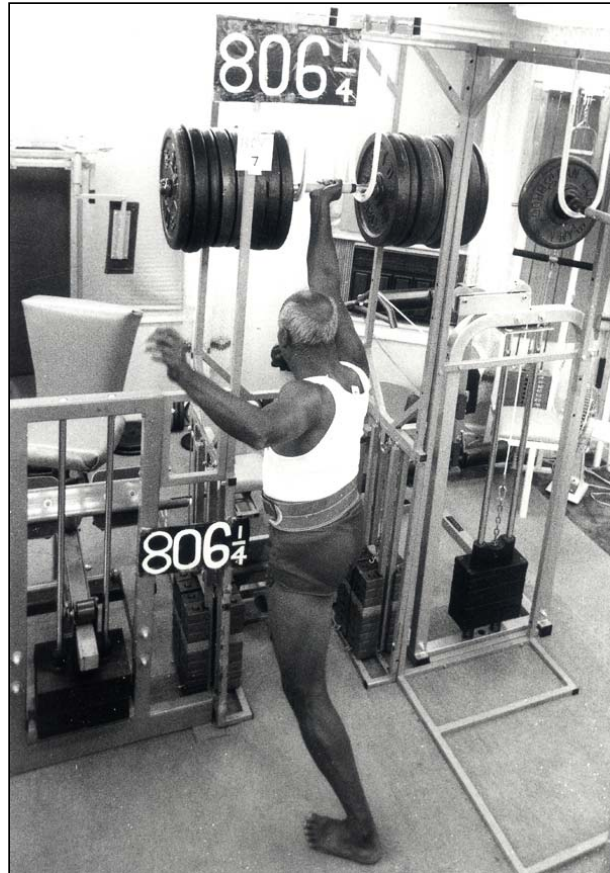


*Minnie, the thirty year old Asian elephant, obligingly received Mahasamrat Bill Pearl as a rider, while she patiently waited to be lifted a few inches off the ground by Sri Chinmoy.*

Guru continued to handle heavier weight in manners that were not considered traditional in the weightlifting world. This seemed to cause more confusion among the die-hard bodybuilders and weightlifters because he wasn't squatting, pressing, snatching, cleaning, or dead-lifting.

In November of 1986, I received a photo of Guru standing under a dumbbell weighing an incredible 1007 3/4 pounds. The dumbbell was supported on a rack just short of Guru's overall height. Several of his disciples swore Guru had raised the weight and supported it at arm's length for the briefest period of time. What astonished me, even more than the horrendous weight, was

that Guru completed the lift using one arm! It was beyond my comprehension that anyone could have that amount of faith to believe such a feat was humanly possible.



*With one arm, Sri Chinmoy lifted 1,007 3/4 pounds, more than six times his body weight, on 10 November 1986.*

I telephoned Guru, to congratulate him while suggesting that the photo not be published. I was afraid that—like in the past—it would cause more bad publicity. It was published and my assumptions were correct. My defense for Guru was, “Regardless of whether it is true, or not, doesn’t alter my respect and admiration for Sri Chinmoy. Anyone with such conviction and inner faith to believe they are capable of such an amazing feat deserves all of our respect and admiration.”

I later commented to Guru that the average person who wasn’t a weightlifter couldn’t understand the difference between objects



weighing 500 pounds to those weighing 2000 pounds. To them they were just numbers. But by lifting objects the general population could better relate to, such as automobiles, large animals, or platforms of people, then nobody would question how the lifts were done or how much the objects weighed. He took my advice and added those types of feats to his lifting events. The outcome was nothing but praise and additional amazement from those who attended his events.



*Bill commented to Guru, Sri Chinmoy, that the average person who wasn't a weightlifter couldn't understand the difference between an object weighing 500 pounds and those weighing 2,000 pounds.*

Judy and I attended Guru's World Peace Concert in 1988. We were offered the Sanskrit names of: Bhavatarini Judy Pearl and Mahasamrat Bill Pearl. We gratefully accepted the compliment and began using the names in conversations, and events in association with Guru and his students. Over the years our Sanskrit names have become even more special as we have grown to learn the love that goes with them.

Our relationship grew even stronger during the 1990s. I began acting as Master of Ceremonies for Guru's special lifting events. On November 17, 1999, a celebration of his 14th weightlifting anniversary was held at York College in Jamaica, New York. The auditorium was filled with dignitaries and world-class athletes

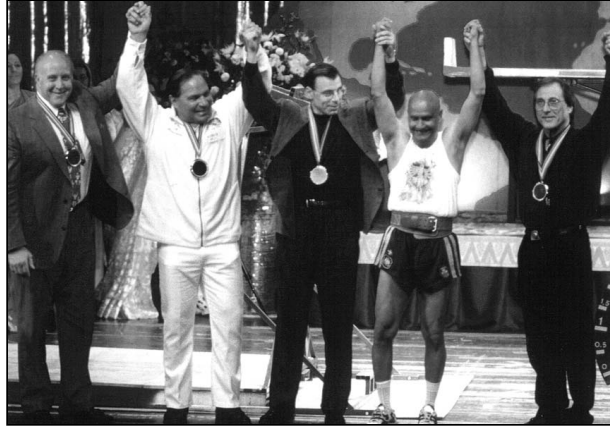
from around the world. I began the evening by saying; “It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Sri Chinmoy fitness marathon. This evening you are going to see some amazing feats of strength performed by a sixty-eight year old man weighing 167 pounds. In no way do I classify this person as a world’s strongest man; I think of him as a world-class religious leader. Today you are going to see some amazing feats of strength that I myself—and I have been in the industry for fifty-five years—would not even attempt to perform. I seriously doubt that any top athlete in the world would attempt to duplicate what you are going to see. I believe you are in for a big surprise at what a small man with a gigantic heart and soul can accomplish.”



*“I have no idea how far my Lord will carry me. Whatever goal he has set for me, most devotedly I shall follow him. His compassion and guidance are my outer strength and inner power.” Sri Chinmoy*

The audience was not disappointed. Guru performed sixty-five different feats, which included lifting four grand pianos that were placed on a platform. He continued to please his fans and loyal students by lifting several guests ranging from the one-hundred-ten year old Hindu spiritual leader, Swami Bua-ji, to Monsignor Thomas Hartman. (Guru’s close friend for nearly twenty years) Closing the event, I followed Guru to center stage where I extended his right arm, as the audience stood to applaud his efforts. He remarked, “I have no idea how far my Lord will carry

me. Whatever goal he has set for me, most devotedly I shall follow. His compassion and guidance are my outer strength and my inner power.”



*All supporters of Sri Chinmoy, from left to right, Mike Katz, Bill, Wayne DeMilia, Sri Chinmoy and Frank Zane.*

I had the privilege to be part of another lifting event performed by Guru in late 2002. He continues to conduct peace concerts throughout the world, drawing crowds numbering in the thousands and continues to meet with dignitaries and high-ranking public officials from different countries to promote world peace through non-violent efforts. If I may use myself as a testimonial, Sri Chinmoy and his students have been tremendously successful. For the past seventeen years, they have brought a world of peace into Judy's and my life through their non-violent loving efforts. I find myself no longer questioning what is right and what is wrong. That decision has been left to God.

# Chapter XL - In Conclusion

## Growing Smiles

*A smile is quite a funny thing,*

*It wrinkles up your face,*

*And when it's gone, you never find*

*It's secret hiding place.*

*But far more wonderful it is*

*To see what smiles can do;*

*You smile at one, he smiles at you,*

*And so one smile makes two.*

*He smiles at someone since you smiled, And then that one smiles back;*

*And that one smiles, until in truth*

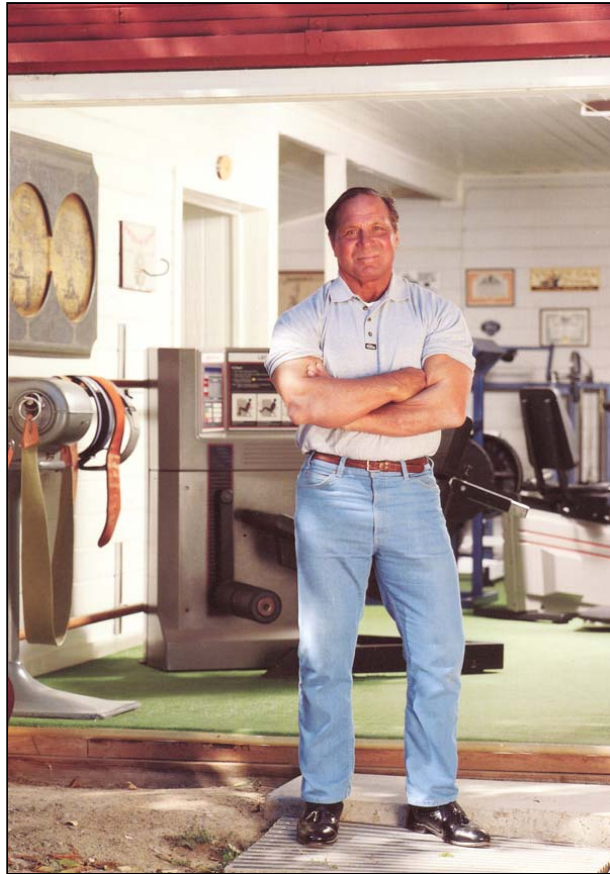
*You fail in keeping track.*

*Now since a smile can do great good*

*By cheering hearts of care,*

*Let's smile and smile and not forget That smiles go everywhere!*

Author Unknown



*Bill's closing remarks, "I am a victim of habit. I love knowing what I am going to do day-in and day-out, but still I remain the same inquisitive kid who wondered what was in all the old barns I could not see into."*

As a youth, it bothered me to think that people were laughing at seeing my weaknesses and imperfections. I thought that by becoming big and powerful enough to defend myself, it would make my problems and insecurities disappear. Attempting to achieve this goal has taken so much time, effort and focus that other aspects of my life have suffered.



*As a youth, Bill was concerned that people were seeing his weaknesses and imperfections.*

Always watching people and observing what works for them has been a part of my life. Curiosity and analysis were major reasons for my success. In early childhood, curiosity and analysis came in the form of emulating the people who had the success I wanted. In my pre-teens it was a circus strongman. After my sister gave me my first subscription to a physique magazine, it became John Grimek. In high school, it was Norm Burke, my wrestling coach. As an adult, I turned to Leo Stern. Each held slightly different qualities that I wanted for myself.

# Still Sizzling at 63

**A**t the age of 63, veteran bodybuilder **BILL PEARL** is living proof that nutritious eating and weight training, rather than Ponce de Leon's legendary Fountain of Youth, can stave off the debilitating effects of old age.

"I'm probably as enthusiastic today as I was in 1953 when I began competitive bodybuilding in San Diego, California," explains Pearl. "I still train six days a week, three hours a day, from 3:30 to 6:30 am."

Born in Prineville, Oregon, and reared in Yakima, Washington, Bill Pearl was Mr. America in 1953, Mr. U.S.A. in 1956, and Mr. Universe in 1953, 1956, 1961, 1967, and 1971.

His training is a modified version of 40 years ago. "I just don't handle as much heavy weight as I used to. I don't care if I can bench press 400 lbs for one repetition or five any more, because I've found that if I do get an injury it just takes forever to heal. I still handle relatively heavy weights, but I train faster with the same amount of intensity."

Pearl also limits the amount of animal fats and refined sugar in his diet, as excess amounts of both have been proven to cause obesity and illness. Ironically it was an inferiority complex that first motivated him to weight train.

"When I was 11 years old I weighed 111 lbs, but I had a size seven and five eighths inch head," Pearl

**A true PEARL in bodybuilding's CROWN - SETH SANDROMSKY's tribute.**

**SIXTY SOMETHING - SOMETHING SEXY.**



*Bill commented, "I plan to continue weight training until they put the lid on my coffin."*

With the time and effort that has gone into making my career, two positives come to mind. I have earned financial security and a reasonable amount of fame. Much of my financial success has come from investing in commercial real estate. In every business I've owned, I've purchased the property.

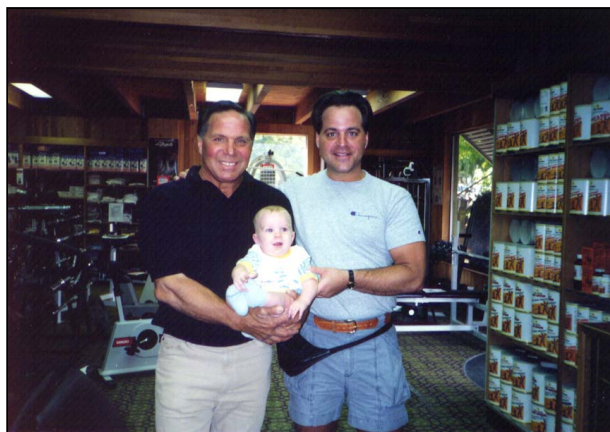
Yet, fame has brought some disappointment. For the large part, professional bodybuilding is synonymous with the word "freak." The result for me has been concealing what I have spent most of my life trying to achieve, by wearing baggy clothing and taking my shirt off in public only when required as part of being a professional bodybuilder. When the job was done, I'd go back into hiding.





*Attempting to achieve his goals has taken so much time, effort, and focus that other aspects of Bill's life may have suffered, mainly his immediate family.*

The feeling of being an outsider has always made me cheer for the underdogs. My wish is always to see them beat the odds. I've learned through trial and error that you can better your chances of winning by being friendly and having a positive attitude. It also helps to zero in on people's names and use eye contact. Being a good listener and wearing a winning smile also knocks down barriers. This is particularly true of the smile. If you smile at a group of three, the odds are that all three will smile back.



*Bill, Spencer and Phil: Three generations of Pearls.*

I've tried to remain cordial to most everybody. I want to be noted as a nice person who is self-reliant and doesn't depend on anybody other than his immediate family. I don't want anything



given to me, nor do I want anybody hindering my progress. I'm more serious than jovial. If someone showers me with gratitude, I become nervous. I have very few "best friends," a lot of "friends," and a ton of "acquaintances." I am a victim of habit. I love knowing what I am going to do day-in and day-out, and I still remain the same inquisitive kid who wondered what was in all the old barns I could not see into.

Along the way, I've discovered that although being big and powerful doesn't earn you respect or acceptance, it may give you the self-respect and confidence to expect to be treated the way you treat others. For me, acceptance has come to mean being appreciated for what I am.



*Dog remains man's best friend.*

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